

Studies in Hebrews



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Studies In Hebrews #1

With this issue we begin a series of studies through the New Testament book of Hebrews. A study of Hebrews is rich and rewarding. The book is unlike other New Testament books, especially in the unique picture which is presented of Jesus.

Introductory Material

One of the perplexing things about the book of Hebrews is that the author does not identify himself. Several have been suggested as the author such as Paul, Barnabas, Luke, Priscilla & Aquila and Apollos. Since the author does not identify himself in the book, all such conclusions are guesswork. We must conclude as Origen did, "God alone knows." It is best for us to call him "the writer of Hebrews" or "the Hebrew writer."

Even though we do not know by name the writer of Hebrews we do know a few things about him. He was well acquainted with his readers' spiritual condition (5:11-14). He was well aware of their past (6:10; 10:32-34). He was certain they could do better spiritually than they were doing (6:9). When you read the book it is clear he had a thorough understanding of the Old Testament, thus showing he had Jewish influences upon him.

Another question we need to answer about the book is, "Who were the recipients of the book?" Most of our bibles have "The Epistle to the Hebrews" at the beginning of the book. This title would indicate the book was written to Hebrews, or Jews. But this title to the book was added later. For us to learn who the book was written to we need to look inside the book itself.

Some "scholars" have put forth the idea that the book was written to Gentiles [Moffatt & Windisch]. Their position is based on Hebrews 3:12. They feel that if Jewish Christians are being addressed, their relapse into Judaism would not involve "*falling away from the living God*" because they would still be worshipping the God of Israel. Therefore, at least in their mind, the book had to be written to Gentiles.

There is plenty of proof from the book itself to show

the book was written to Jews who had become Christians. (1) Hebrews 6:1 says, "*not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works.*" The "*dead works*" would seem to refer to the Jewish rites and ceremonies that were mere works void of any spiritual cleansing for the soul (see 9:9-14). (2) The continual appeal to the Old Testament scriptures by the author shows the author was confident his readers were well acquainted with those scriptures. Jews, not Gentiles, were taught the scriptures daily. (3) The recipients seem to accept the Levitical priesthood. In 7:11 the writer says, "*Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood...*" If it were written to Gentiles, they would naturally answer the author, "*we never thought there was!*" The Jews, not the Gentiles, would relate to the things said by the writer in the book about the priesthood. (4) Hebrews 10:32-34 speaks of the recipients as having been persecuted by others. When the Jews obeyed the gospel they were persecuted by unconverted Jews (Acts 8:1). Generally speaking, Gentiles who obeyed the gospel were NOT persecuted as the Jews were. Therefore, the recipients of the book would have been Jews. From these and other pieces of evidence we can conclude the book was written to Jewish Christians -- people who were born to Jewish parents and perhaps raised as Jews but who had obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ.

From where was the book written? This question seems to be answered in 13:24 when the writer says, "*They of Italy salute you.*" The book seems to have been written from Italy. From which city in Italy is not stated but it may have been Rome, since Rome played such an important role in early church history.

What was the destination of the book? Some have suggested places such as Alexandria in Egypt, Syrian Antioch, Colossae, Ephesus, Cyprus or even Rome itself. It seems apparent to me, however, that it was sent to Jewish Christians living in the region of Palestine. If the persecutions of 10:32-34 are those referred to in Acts 8:1, which seems to be an acceptable conclusion, then it is clear the book was sent to Jewish Christians living in Palestine. We would conclude this because those living outside of Palestine suffered relatively

little from the Jews for their conversion to Christ. From 8:4 it seems there were those who still offered sacrifices according to the Law. At the time the book was written this was done very little outside of Palestine. Whether or not our conclusions are correct about the books destination, always remember they were Jewish Christians.

It is clear from the book that it was written prior to 70 A.D. This is seen from the fact the Temple in Jerusalem was still standing (see 8:4; 9:8; 10:1ff). An exact date is really not important. Just remember it was BEFORE 70 A.D.

The purpose of the book is stated in 13:22 when the writer describes his work as a "*word of exhortation*". These Jewish Christians had been faithful and zealous at one point (10:32-34), but at the time the book was written they were immature (5:11-14), weak (12:12,13) and perhaps at the very point of falling away (2:1; 3:12). Because of the possibility of their returning back to the Jewish religion and turning their back on the Lord, the Hebrew writer sent this letter in hopes it will cause them to realize the superiority of the Law of Christ to the Law of Moses and thus be sufficiently encouraged to remain in faithful service to the Lord. ☺

Studies In Hebrews #2

The Old Avenue Of Revelation (1:1)

The book of Hebrews begins by showing how God revealed Himself to men "*in time past*" -- to the fathers in the prophets. God dealt directly with the fathers of each household during the Patriarchal period [see Abraham Gen.12; Isaac Gen.26; Jacob Gen.28]. However, during the Mosaical period God expressed His will to men through prophets such as Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, etc.. But these revelations were in differing proportions and made in different ways. As the prophet Isaiah said, "*here a little, there a little*" (Isaiah 28:10-13). To say the least the revelations of God "*in time past*" were far from perfect.

The New Avenue Of Revelation (1:2-14)

In contrast to the revelations "*in time past*" which were not complete the Hebrew writer now shows how God, "*in these last days*", speaks unto us by His Son, Jesus Christ. In the transfiguration of Matt. 17 God said, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him*" (v.5). Jesus Himself affirmed He was God's spokesman in John 5:19 and 12:49. Since Jesus is now God's spokesman, we should listen and heed the message which He speaks.

Seven facts about Jesus are presented to show He and His message are superior to the old spokesmen

and the old message (v.2,3). (1) "*whom he hath appointed heir of all things*". As an heir inherits things from the father, so has Christ inherited all things from the heavenly Father (Psa.2:7,8; Jn.17:15). (2) "*by whom also he made the worlds*". The Son was present with the Father in the creation and the Son had an active part in that creation (Jn.1:1-3,10,14; 1 Cor.8:6; Col.1:16,17). (3) "*who being the brightness of his glory*". We see God the Father through the Son (Jn.1:18; 14:9). (4) "*the express image of his person*". Christ is the exact representation of the nature of God (Col.1:15; 1 Tim.3:16). (5) "*upholding all things by the word of his power*". The very word of the Son is powerful (Matt.8:26,27; 24:35; Rom.1:16; Col.1:17). (6) "*when he had by himself purged our sins*". Christ made purification from sins possible by the sacrifice of Himself. (7) "*sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*". Jesus is at the right hand of God reigning as King over God's kingdom (Eph.1:20-22).

Jesus is next shown to be superior to angels (v.4-14). Why does the Hebrew writer go to the trouble here to show superiority over angels? The word 'angel' means messenger. Genesis 19:15; 22:11 and Exodus 3:2 show angels worked as messengers of God. In fact, according to Deut.33:2; Acts 7:53; and Gal.3:19, angels had some part in revealing the Mosaical Law. Hebrews 2:2 refers to this law as "*the word spoken through angels.*" So the function of angels is in the area of revelation.

The Hebrew writer wants to show that Jesus, as God's messenger *"in these last days"*, is superior to the angels, who were His messengers with the Old Law. (1) Jesus has a more excellent name than the angels (v.4,5). They are mere servants while Jesus is God's SON. [See also v.7; Eph.1:21 and Phil.2:9-11.] (2) The angels were instructed to worship Christ, not the other way around (v.6). (3) Jesus is addressed as God and His kingdom is to be for ever and ever (v.8,9). Jesus is God and King, not the angels. (4) Jesus is eternal (v.10-12). He laid the foundations of the earth and although the

earth will perish, He will continue the same. (5) No angel has ever been invited to sit at the right hand of God (v.13). But Jesus as God's Son is now seated there (Eph.1:20-23). (6) Angels are ministering spirits doing service for those that shall receive eternal salvation (v.14). Jesus, however, is the one that has made such salvation possible.

If Jesus is so superior to the fathers, prophets and angels, then surely His message is also superior to the message revealed *"in time past"*. ☞

Studies In Hebrews #3

We Must Not Neglect The Salvation Through Jesus (2:1-4)

Having established in chapter one that Jesus is superior to the fathers, prophets and angels, the Hebrew writer stops to issue the first of many warnings. He exhorts them to *"pay all the more attention to what we have heard"* (Moffatt translation). The recipients of the book, Jewish Christians, were apparently on the brink of turning from Christ to go back to Judaism. The writer argues since Jesus is so superior to the fathers, prophets and angels then we should pay much closer attention to the message revealed through Jesus.

To further clarify and press the point the author compares *"the word spoken through angels"*, the Law of Moses (cf. Acts 7:38,53; Gal.3:19), and *"so great a salvation"*, the message of Christ which they had heard (v.1,3). *"The word spoken through angels"* proved steadfast by virtue of the fact that those who transgressed or disobeyed that law received their just reward, or punishment. Such people died *"without compassion"* (10:28) since they were deserving of such punishment. The recipients of the book were well aware of the steadfastness of the Law and the just punishment for those who would disobey it. The author then asks, *"how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?"* In other words, since Jesus is so superior to the messenger of the Old Law, there can be no doubt His message will also prove steadfast and render punishments greater than those for the

Old Law. If there was no escape from punishment under the Old Law then surely there will be no escape under the Law of Christ. Indeed, *"how shall we escape"?* There is great danger in neglecting the Law of Christ.

Jesus Is The Perfect Representative Of Man (2:5-18)

The subject left off in chapter one verse 14, showing the superiority of Jesus, is now resumed. The author first shows the lowliness and dignity of man in general (v.5-8) by referring to Psalms 8:4-6. In comparison with all God created man is quite small. Yet God is mindful of us and supplies us with those things we have need of. As far as rank is concerned, man is *"a little lower than the angels."* God crowned man with glory and honor and put him in a position of authority over all that He had created (cf. Gen.1:26). *"But now we see not yet all things subjected to him."* When man sinned in the Garden of Eden (cf. Gen.3) he lost the glory and honor God had crowned him with and he lost authority over some things previously subjected to him. Death, for example, was no longer subject to man (cf. 1 Cor.15:21,22).

Even though Jesus was above angels in rank (1:4-14), He humbled Himself and became a man (Phil.2:5-8), one *"a little lower than the angels"* (2:7,9). Why would Jesus for a time become lower than angels?

First, to restore man to his former glory (v.9-13). He

suffered a death crowned with glory and honor for every man (v.9). By such He is able to bring "*many sons unto glory*" (v.10). He was also made perfect, wholly fitted, to be our author, or leader, in salvation (v.10; cf.5:7-9). Since He became a man like you and I, He is one of us and therefore calls us brethren (v.11-13). As His brethren we shall be glorified with Him (cf.Rom.8:16,17). Jesus became a man so he could restore man with the glory and honor he lost in the Garden of Eden (see also Rom.8:29,30).

Second, to destroy the power of Satan, redeeming man from the bondage of death (v.14-16). When man sinned in the Garden of Eden he lost power over death. Jesus became flesh and blood like you and I so He could, through the death on the cross, "*bring to nought him that had the power of death...the devil*" (v.14). When Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected from the dead on the third day, He conquered over death and Satan (see Gen.3:15; Matt.16:18; 1 Cor.15:21,22). By this

triumph over death He was able to deliver us from the bondage of death (v.15; cf.Jn.8:31-36). What man lost in the Garden of Eden Jesus regained at Calvary. Jesus lowered Himself to become a man to help men. He did not lower Himself to help angels (v.16).

Third, to become qualified to be man's High Priest before God (v.17,18). When Jesus lowered Himself to become a man He became "*in all things...like unto his brethren*" (v.17). This was necessary so He could become a "*merciful and faithful High Priest.*" To be merciful is to be compassionate or sympathetic. By experiencing the infirmities and trials of life He was able to feel the necessity of being faithful in the office of High Priest which involves two responsibilities: offering sacrifices and making intercession. Jesus had to become a man so He might sympathize with us and so He might be faithful to the great trust committed to Him to be our High Priest. Indeed He has been faithful in offering THE atoning sacrifice for all men.☞

Studies In Hebrews #4

The Superiority Of Jesus To Moses (3:1-6)

Although Jesus is above angels in rank He lowered Himself to become a man so He could be a merciful and faithful High Priest, to destroy the power of Satan, to deliver those in bondage to sin and to help those who are tempted (Heb. 1 & 2). Based upon these things, "*Wherefore*"(3:1), the writer calls upon his readers to "*consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus*". He wants them to fix their attention on Jesus and come to understand some important things about Him.

This is the only place where Jesus is referred to as being an Apostle. An apostle literally is "one who is sent forth." By considering the apostles of Jesus we can understand some things about His being an apostle. First, none of them chose to be apostles, but rather were chosen to be such by Jesus (Jn.15:16; Lk.6:13). They were "sent forth" by the one who chose them. In the same way Jesus did not choose to become an apostle but was appointed such (3:2; cf.1 Jn.4:14). Second, none of

the apostles of Jesus chose for himself the work he would do or the message he would proclaim. They were "sent forth" with a particular work and message (cf.Mk.16:15). Likewise Jesus was "sent forth" from the Father with a particular work and message (Jn.6:38-40). Truly Jesus was an apostle. Moses also was an apostle of God (cf.3:2). He was never called an apostle but was referred to as "one sent" (Ex.3:10,13,15; 4:28; 5:22; 7:16).

There are three ways in which Jesus is shown to be superior to Moses. First, Moses, as a man, was a little lower than the angels (2:7). However, Jesus was above angels in rank (chapt.1). Therefore, Jesus is superior to Moses. Second, the builder of a house is always worthy of more glory than the house itself (3:3,4). In other words, Moses was a part of the house (Nation) of Israel whereas Jesus, as God, built the house. Therefore, Jesus is superior to Moses. Third, Moses was a servant in God's house whereas Jesus is a Son over God's house (3:5,6). Since Jesus is a "*Son over*" and Moses a "*servant in*" then Jesus is superior to Moses. The apostleship of Jesus is superior to that

of Moses and, therefore, His message should be heeded. It would be a tragic mistake for the Christian to reject Christ even for Moses.

The Danger Of Unbelief (3:7-19)

In 3:6 the author states that Christians are the house of God (see also 1 Tim.3:15; 1 Cor.3:9; Eph.2:19-22; 1 Pet.2:5) if we will "*hold fast...firm unto the end.*" Here he goes from argument to exhortation. He exhorts them to hold fast by showing them the consequences of not holding fast. He first quotes from Psalms 95:7b-11. The Psalmist alludes to Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan through the wilderness. An entire generation of Israelites were not permitted to enter the promised rest (land) "*because of unbelief*" (3:19). They

doubted the power of God to drive out the inhabitants of the land. They perished in the wilderness because of their unbelief. Since unbelief caused many of the Israelites to perish under Moses, Christians, under Jesus who is superior to Moses, will surely perish if we make the same mistake. The Hebrew writer, therefore, encouraged them to "*take heed*" and "*exhort one another day by day*" (3:12,13). There is danger in unbelief! This is why it is important for us, as brethren, to not only assemble together regularly but also be in contact with each other throughout the week. If we do not "*take heed*" and "*exhort one another day by day*" then unbelief will creep in and many will not be able to enter into our promised rest as discussed in chapter 4. 🙏

Studies In Hebrews #5

Our Promised Rest (4:1-13)

Chapter 3 dealt with how a generation of the Israelites were not able to enter into their promised rest, the land of Canaan, because of unbelief. This unbelief caused them to be disobedient to the will of God (3:18). The Hebrew writer used these facts to emphasize to his readers the importance of taking heed and exhorting one another day by day (3:12,13) so they would not become guilty of the same under a system far superior to that of old.

He continues the thought into chapter 4 of entering into a promised rest. The promise of rest for the Israelites was fulfilled when they took possession of the land of Canaan. But a promised rest yet remained (4:1). David referred to this rest long after Israel entered Canaan (4:7,8). The reader is encouraged to have fear lest they fall short of this promised rest.

What is the "*rest*" which is yet promised the people of God? We have seen before that the rest a generation of Jews were not able to enter was the promised land of Canaan. But it seems there is another rest they were not able to enter into because of their unbelief. Verse 6 points out that there remains a rest which some should enter into, which rest the Israelites failed to enter because of

disobedience. But what was the "*rest*" they could not enter which is yet promised God's people? In verse 3 the writer quotes Psalms 95:11 where God refers to this rest as "*my rest*". In what sense does God speak of "*my rest*"? Does it simply mean "*the rest which I bestow*" or does it mean "*the rest which I myself enjoy*"? I believe it refers to the later. In verse 4 the author refers to Genesis 2:2,3 where God is said to have "*rested on the seventh day from all his works*". He entered into rest upon completion of the creation, which rest continues even unto now (cf.4:3). He then quotes again from Psalms 95:11: "*They shall not enter into my rest*". In other words, they not only were not able to enter into the promised land of Canaan because of their unbelief, but they were also not able to share in the rest which God enjoys. Had they believed and obeyed the Lord's will, they would have entered the promised land as well as entered His rest upon their deaths. The "*rest*" which is yet being promised to the people of God is the same rest which He entered into upon completion of the creation. The fact we enter into this rest after death is seen from verse 10.

This message of "good tidings" had been preached unto them (4:2), as it has also been preached unto us and as it had been preached to the Jews of old. The Jews heard the message of the promised rests,

yet they failed to have the message, heard and understood, mixed with a faith which would cause them to obey the Lord's will (cf.4:6). The message, then, did not profit them. For the message of a promised rest to be profitable to us we must hear and understand and believe to the point of obeying all the Lord wants us to do.

"The word of God", which a generation of Jews perished for not believing and which is preached to us today, is "living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (4:12,13). God's word has been revealed to tell us of His wonderful promise of rest. But we must believe AND obey to receive the promised rest. No one will be able to claim a right to the promised rest who does not have a genuine faith which caused them to want to obey all the Lord's desires. Stripped of the ability to appear to be something that we aren't, we are utterly at the mercy of God. Therefore, "let us...give diligence to enter into that rest" (4:11).

Jesus, A Great High Priest (4:14-5:10)

The high priesthood of Jesus was first mentioned in 2:17 where He was shown to be a merciful and faithful high priest. It was briefly mentioned again in 3:1. Our writer now brings us back to this subject.

In the earlier passages He was merely referred to as a high priest. In this passage He is referred to as *"a great high priest"*. This greatness is demonstrated in several ways. First, His priesthood is great because He *"hath passed through the heavens"* (4:14). The high priest of the Mosaic system passed through the veil into the most holy place to offer the blood of an animal sacrifice. Jesus, however, passed through the heavens into God's very presence. Having made a sacrifice of Himself He offered His own blood to the Father (cf.9:11-14,24-26). Second, Jesus' priesthood is great because He *"hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"* (4:15). Having been made a man like each of us (cf.2:9,14-18), He is able to understand our plight and help us

accordingly. Third, Jesus' priesthood is great because He is fully qualified. The qualifications for a high priest are given for us in 5:1-4. A high priest must be (a) able to sympathize with those whom he represents. In being able to sympathize with those whom he represents it is necessary that he be a man (5:1). Aaron and his successors, who represented the nation of Israel in the presence of God, were themselves Israelites, exposed to the same pressures and trials. They were to have inward feelings which were in keeping with their sacred work (5:2). Feelings of mercy, compassion and gentleness. In the days of our Lord these personal qualities were lacking in the high priests. They were more concerned with themselves and other things rather than bearing *"gently with the ignorant and erring"*. Our author has already made it quit clear Christ meets this qualification (cf.2:14-18). A high priest must also be (b) divinely appointed to his office. No man of his own accord could rightly set himself up as high priest. Aaron, the first of Israel's high priests, occupied his office by divine appointment (Ex.28:1ff; Lev.8:1ff; Num.16:1; 17:5; 18:1ff; Ps.105:26), and so did his heirs and successors (Num.20:23ff; 25:10ff). *"So Christ also glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but He that spake unto Him, Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee"* (5:5). He was divinely appointed to serve as our high priest.

A high priest is to *"offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins"*. He is to make offerings for the sins of the people he represents. Our high priest, Jesus Christ, has offered Himself for our sins. But the salvation this sacrifice brings is only for those who will *"obey Him"* (5:8,9). We must obey the will of our high priest before the sacrifice He has made will benefit us. This is easy to understand since we must have a faith that will cause us to obey the Lord before we can enter into God's rest (4:1,2,6).

The Danger Of Immaturity (5:11-6:8)

In discussing the high priesthood of Jesus the writer touched on the idea of Jesus being a high priest *"after the order of Melchizedek"* (5:6,10). He has *"many things to say"* about Melchizedek but feels hindered in doing so because his readers have *"become dull of hearing"* (5:11). He thus takes the time to address the dangers of such a condition.

Their spiritual immaturity resulted from their laziness. *"By reason of the time"* they should have grown to be teachers of the word but were, rather, still in need for someone to teach them the basics of the faith (5:12). When we first obeyed the gospel we were not expected to be able to begin right away teaching others the gospel. We were expected to partake of the simple things of God's word (cf. 1 Pet. 2:1,2). By making constant use of these simple things we have our *"senses exercised to discern good and evil"* and we become full-grown children of God (5:13,14). Within a reasonable period of time each child of God should be able to teach the *"good tidings"* (4:2). A sad picture indeed is the person who has been a Christian for several years and is still unable to teach God's plan for salvation to a lost friend. But this is the picture of the original readers of Hebrews. Since they were yet immature, they are encouraged to leave the *"doctrine of the first principles of Christ"* and *"press on unto perfection"*

(6:1).

To stress even more the dangers involved, the author points out the consequences of spiritual immaturity if it continues uncorrected (6:4-8). He pictures a person who has experienced what it means to be a Christian, realizing the spiritual blessings they had received (6:4,5). To reject the blessings realized as a Christian is on a par with crucifying Jesus Christ again and putting Him to an open shame (6:6). The writer states the ramifications of such rejection -- *"it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance"*. The impossibility of the situation is with man, not with God. God does not wish for any to perish (11 Pet. 3:9). But having known and enjoyed the life of a Christian and knowingly and willingly rejected that life, what else is there to motivate such a person to repentance? There is clear danger in prolonged immaturity. ☹

Studies In Hebrews #6

A Word Of Encouragement (6:9-20)

In discussing the high priesthood of Jesus the writer touched on the idea of Jesus being a high priest *"after the order of Melchizedek"* (5:6,10). He has *"many things to say"* about Melchizedek but felt hindered in doing so because his readers had become *"dull of hearing"* (5:11). He thus took the time to address the dangers of such a condition (5:11-6:8). After rebuking and warning his readers so sternly the Hebrew writer continues by balancing his sternness with words of encouragement. He states that he is confident of better things from them than prolonged immaturity; things which accompany salvation (6:9). He reminds them that even though they had not grown and progressed as they should have, they still had accomplished some things for the Lord (6:10). He then exhorts them to *"show the same diligence unto the fulness of hope even to the end"* (6:11). They got off to a good beginning in the Christian life but had been sluggish in their growth. He, therefore, encourages them to go on as they had begun: with diligence. He further urges them to be *"imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises"* (6:12). If they would imitate the faith and patience of the men of old they would be

able to receive the promise of *"entering into his rest"* (cf. 4:1).

Our author here, and more fully in 11:8ff., presents Abraham as the supreme example of a man who received promises from God. God's faithfulness to His promise to Abraham is a token of His faithfulness in regards to two of His other promises, one concerning the Priesthood of Jesus after the order of Melchizedek and the other concerning entering into His promised rest.

The specific promise of God under consideration here is that made to Abraham after his offering up Isaac: *"By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah... that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens...and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice"* (Gen. 22:16-18). This is a reaffirmation of the promises given to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3, but this time it is reinforced by the oath of God. When the promise was first made Abraham and Sarah had no children, without which the promise could not be fulfilled. In due time Isaac was born, with God's help, to fulfill these promises. Yet it was Isaac whom

Abraham was commanded to offer up to God. By faith and patience (cf.6:12,15) Abraham obeyed the will of God and *"obtained the promise"*. Much of God's promise to Abraham would not be fulfilled for many years, but in the restoration to Abraham of his son (cf.11:17-19) upon whose survival the promise depended Abraham did, in a very real sense, *"obtain the promise"*.

Our author emphasizes the fact that when God repeated this promise to Abraham He confirmed it with an oath, swearing by Himself (6:13,16). When men swear an oath, they swear by someone or something greater than themselves. *"As the Lord liveth"* was the oath of Israel (cf.1 Kings 1:29; 2:24; etc.). Since God has none greater than Himself by whom to swear, when He wishes to confirm His promises in this way, He must swear by Himself. *"As I live"* is found in divine oracles throughout the Old Testament (cf.Isa.49:18; Jer.22:24; Ezek.5:11; etc.). This oath was used to show the *"immutability"*, unchangeable nature, *"of his counsel"* (6:17).

The writer shows we have *"strong encouragement"* by *"two immutable things"* (6:18). This encouragement will cause us to *"lay hold of the hope set before us"* which is an *"anchor of the soul"* (6:18,19). But what two immutable, or unchangeable, things give us strong encouragement? (1) The promise of God itself, because *"it is impossible for God to lie"* (6:18; cf.Tit.1:2). Since *"the Lord is not slack concerning his promise"* (cf.11 Pet.3:9) we can be encouraged to have a hope which is both *"sure and steadfast"* (6:19). (2) The oath of God by which the promise is confirmed (6:16). By these two unchangeable things we have a *"sure and steadfast"* foundation for our hope in the fulfillment of the promise. This hope, then, becomes an anchor for our soul. But to what immovable object does our anchor moor us to? Our writer tells us it is *"that which is within the veil"* (6:19). *"That which is within the veil"* is heaven and the throne of God itself (as is made clear in chapter 9). Our hope is fixed there because Jesus is there, seated at *"the right hand of the Majesty on high"*

(cf.1:3). Abraham rested his hope in the promise and oath of God; but we have more than that to rest our hope upon: we have the fulfillment of His promise in the exaltation of Christ, who *"as a forerunner...entered for us"* (6:20). With the promise of God, His oath and Jesus ascended to heaven as a forerunner for us, we have a hope which is a true *"anchor of the soul"* being both *"sure and steadfast"*.

Melchizedek (7:1-3)

It has been our author's desire to expand on the priesthood of Melchizedek since he introduced the subject in chapter 5:6. Now the writer develops this idea in detail as he discusses Jesus being a priest according to this order.

In the first three verses of chapter seven, Melchizedek is described. Our author gets his information from Genesis 14:17-20 and Psalms 110:4, which are the only places in the Old Testament where Melchizedek is mentioned.

The first thing stated about Melchizedek is that he was both *"king of Salem"* and *"priest of God Most High"* (7:1). This Salem was the city of Jerusalem (cf.Psa.76:2). It is stressed that Melchizedek was *"king of righteousness"* and *"king of peace"* (7:2).

Our author makes an argument based on what the Biblical text did not say about Melchizedek (7:3). Nowhere do we find any mention of his parents or descendants. Neither is there any record of his birth or his death. These are ideas which are predominant in the Old Testament with famous characters. The writer is saying that as far as the biblical text is concerned, this king/priest had no beginning and no ending, no ancestors and no descendants. He is likened unto the Son of God Himself, who being God has no beginning and no ending, no ancestors and no descendants.

Already we can see how Jesus is a High Priest *"after the order of Melchizedek"*. Our writer will, however, make the concept even clearer as he continues.☺

Studies In Hebrews #7

The Greatness Of Melchizedek (7:4-10)

In considering Melchizedek the writer says, "*Now consider how great this man was*" (7:4). Our author puts forth three arguments to show the supremacy of Melchizedek.

1. Abraham, the father of the Israelite people, gave tithes to Melchizedek by giving him a tenth of the chief spoils from the battle with the kings (v.4; cf. Gen. 14:13-24). The sons of Levi, who were later commanded to receive tithes of the people of Israel (v.5), were yet in the loins of Abraham. Therefore, "*through Abraham even Levi, who receiveth tithes, hath paid tithes*" (v.9). Abraham recognized the greatness of Melchizedek when he gave him tithes.

2. Melchizedek, who received tithes of Abraham, "*blessed him that hath the promises. But without any dispute the less is blessed of the better*" (v.6,7). Since Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham and blessed him, and the lesser is blessed of the greater, then it follows that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham. It also follows that the priesthood of Melchizedek was more excellent than that of the sons of Levi who though yet unborn, were in the loins of Abraham. Since Abraham was blessed of Melchizedek we understand that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham, the father of the Israelite Nation.

3. The writer next shows the greatness of Melchizedek's priesthood to that of the Levites by showing the mortality of the Levites and the apparent immortality of Melchizedek. "*And here men [Levites] that die receive tithes; but there one [Melchizedek], of whom it is witnessed that he liveth*" (v.8). Since immortality is better than mortality, the priesthood of Melchizedek is greater than that of the Levites.

By these three arguments Melchizedek is shown to be greater than both Abraham and Levi, who was already in the loins of his father Abraham (v.10). The priesthood of Melchizedek is, therefore, greater than the Levitical priesthood. Furthermore, since Christ's priesthood is "*after the order of Melchizedek*" (cf. 6:20), His priesthood is also

greater than the Levitical priesthood. The author proceeds to develop this contrast even further.

The Superiority Of Jesus' Priesthood (7:11-28)

This discussion of Melchizedek being greater than both Abraham and the sons of Levi raises the question, "*Now if there was perfection [complete redemption, remission of sins] through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron?*" (v.11). Jehovah had indicated long before that the one who would sit on His right hand as king (Ps. 110:1), by an oath of Jehovah would be made priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4; see also Zech. 6:12,13). The writer of Hebrews has shown clearly that Jesus is both seated at the right hand of God and a priest after the order of Melchizedek (1:3,13; 5:5,6,10; 6:20; 7:17; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2).

Since the priesthood has been changed, "*there is made of necessity a change also of the law*" (v.12). Our writer explains: "*For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no man hath given attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests*" (v.13,14). Aaron could not serve as priest under any other law than the law of Moses, and no non-Levitical priest could serve under the law of Moses (cf. Num. 18:7). Therefore, if the priesthood has changed there has obviously been a change of law as well.

To further verify the removal of the old order (priesthood, law, and imperfection) and the introduction and permanence of another the Hebrew writer presents the following three facts:

1. The endless life of the new priest and His priesthood. "*And what we say [verses 11-14] is yet more abundantly evident, if after the likeness of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest, who hath been made, not after the law of a carnal*

commandment, but after the power of an endless life: for it is witnessed of him, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (v.15-17). By the law of Moses each new priest had to be a descendant of Aaron and they assumed the priesthood because of the law of succession made necessary by death; that is, regardless of how personally holy or desirous his predecessor was in remaining on and on as priest, they could not continue in the office beyond death. In contrast, the priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek rests on the power of His endless and sinless life. God made Him a "priest for ever" (cf.5:5,6; 6:20; 7:20,21). Since He would never die in this office, His eternal priesthood would make unnecessary the appointment of another priest after Him.

2.Our priest is able to "save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him" (v.25). Since the Levitical priesthood could not provide perfection [complete redemption, remission of sins], there was a need for another priest to arise (v.11). Jesus is that priest and through Him we are able to have full and complete forgiveness of our sins. Furthermore, He "ever liveth to make intercession for them" who draw near to God. The priest after the order of Aaron could intercede for the people for a while but their intercession was always cut short because of death. With our High Priest their is constant intercession available for us since He "ever liveth".

3.The superiority of Christ's priesthood to the Levitical priesthood is further established by the

moral perfection of our High Priest. The writer puts it thus, "For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected for evermore" (v.28). No priest after the order of Aaron was morally perfect or perfect in the office of high priest. On the other hand, the moral perfection of our High Priest was always complete, but His perfection as High Priest and as author of eternal salvation had to be accomplished through suffering. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (2:10). In being made like His brethren, sharing their flesh which is subject to temptation, He qualified Himself to become a merciful and faithful high priest (2:17). "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted" (2:18). This was furthered affirmed when he said, "though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation; name of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek" (5:8-10).

Clearly our High Priest, Jesus Christ, and His priesthood are far superior to the Levitical priest and their priesthood. With such a great High Priest why would any Christian want to turn back unto anything else? 🙄

Studies In Hebrews #8

Hebrews 7:1-10:18 discusses the priesthood of Christ and stresses its superiority to the priesthood of Aaron. We have already seen in chapter 7 the greatness of Jesus' priesthood. Beginning in chapter 8 we have a detailed discussion of the priestly work of Jesus. The writer develops three major ideas: tabernacle, covenant and sacrifice. The tabernacle was the place of the priests' work and the place where man had access to God, the covenant set forth the terms by which people could be acceptable to God and the sacrifices provided the means whereby people could approach God. The author of Hebrews considers these three ideas

to show the superiority of Christ's priesthood to that of Aaron.

A More Excellent Ministry (8:1-6a)

After showing in chapter 7 the greatness of Jesus' priesthood the writer now wants his readers to understand that "we have such a high priest" (8:1). His words in chapter 7 were not expressing the rank Jesus will one day possess. Jesus NOW is serving as a great High Priest. Jesus NOW has "a ministry the more excellent" (8:6a).

This ministry of Jesus is a superior ministry because of the place of His work. He discharges the duties of His office in the *"true tabernacle"* (8:2). That which is genuine and not a fake or a cheap imitation is called the true thing. Jesus serves as a High Priest in the true, genuine, authentic, tabernacle *"which the Lord pitched, not man"* (8:2). Priests after the order of Aaron served in a tabernacle which was merely *"a copy and shadow of the heavenly things"* (8:5). Their tabernacle was a prototype of the true sanctuary. Thus we understand the injunction God gave Moses in the mount: *"make all things according to the pattern"* (8:5; cf. Ex.25:9,40; 26:30; 27:8; Num.8:4). Moses did not build the true tabernacle. He built, by God's directions, a cheap imitation of the true tabernacle which the Lord Himself built.

What is the true tabernacle? It is implied in these verses that it is heaven itself (8:1,2,5). Later the writer refers to it as *"the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation"* (9:11). Further he said, *"For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us"* (9:24). Jesus now serves as our High Priest in the true, heavenly, tabernacle. At the right hand of God He is continually prepared to make intercession for us (cf. 8:1; 7:25). The tabernacle of the Jews was to serve as a miniature heaven on earth - an earthly model of God's true throne and sanctuary. A *"greater and more perfect tabernacle"* was needed since Jesus could not be a priest at all in the earthly tabernacle since He was from the tribe of Judah (8:4; 7:14).

The ministry of Jesus, and thus His priesthood, is superior to that of Aaron since the place of His ministry is far superior to that of Aaron.

A Better Covenant (8:6b-13)

We noticed in chapter 7 that since the priesthood had been changed, *"there is made of necessity a change also of the law"* (7:12). Our writer explained by showing Jesus to be from the tribe of Judah (7:13,14). Aaron could not serve as priest under any other law than the law of Moses, and no non-Levitical priest could serve under the law of Moses (cf. Num. 18:7). If the priesthood has changed

there has of necessity been a change of law as well. The writer of Hebrews now considers this new covenant.

Jesus has already been shown to be the *"surety (guarantee) of a better covenant"* (7:22). He is now said to be the *"mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises"* (8:6b). A mediator is a go-between, one who mediates. In this context Christ is the mediator between God and man (1 Tim.2:5).

Since *"the law made nothing perfect"* (7:19) and since its sacrifices could not *"make perfect them that draw nigh"* (10:1), the first covenant was judged faulty and a place had to be sought for a second, *"better covenant"* (8:7,8). It seems the *"better promises"* upon which this new covenant was enacted are the things found in Jeremiah's prophecy which our writer quotes (8:8-12) and which we now analyze.

The covenant Jesus mediated is not only a better covenant, but it is also a new covenant. *"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah"* (8:8). In the Greek language there are two words for *"new"*. One (KAINOS) means new in kind or character. This is the word used here as well as in verse 13 and in 9:15. The other word (NEOS) signifies new in respect of time (it is often translated *"younger"* in the N.T.). This word is used in 12:24 when the writer speaks of Jesus being the *"mediator of a new covenant"*. The covenant is new in both kind (character) and in respect to time.

Being new, it would have the following new distinguishing qualities:

Different: This new covenant was promised to be *"not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers"* (8:9). Jehovah promised to make it different from the first covenant, which was faulty (cf. 8:7,8). The first was a covenant of law; the second is a covenant of grace and faith (cf. Rom. 3:24,27; 8:2). The first was only for the Jews; the second is for all people of all nations and, therefore, it is evangelistic in nature since through it people enter this new spiritual relationship with God. The fact it is a *"better"* covenant shows it is a *"different"* covenant.

Spiritual: *"I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them"* (8:10). Under the first covenant the law pertained mainly to external rites and ceremonies, to controlling the outer, physical man. The new covenant would be different in that it would relate particularly to the inner man, and would be designed to control the heart. It regulates the conscience and the principles of the soul rather than merely external matters.

This new covenant would not be written on tables of stone or brass, but on the heart of man itself. There it would be written in more longer lasting characters than if engraved on tables of stone.

Clearly the prophet was emphasizing in these words the spiritual nature of the new covenant.

Their God - My People: *"I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people"* (8:10). This same goal was to be achieved under the first covenant. There God said, *"I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God"* (Ex.6:7). There was a difference, however. Under the first covenant they were a physical nation, separated from others by natural birth and divine selection as a nation. Under the new covenant they are His by a spiritual birth (John 3:1-7), a new creation (2 Cor.5:16,17), individuals who offer themselves willingly to become the spiritual nation of Israel. The relationship spoken of here is different since it is strictly spiritual in nature.

All Shall Know Me: *"They shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen, and every man his brother saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest of them"* (8:11). Under the first covenant the individuals were physically born

into the family of God's people. The males were circumcised on the eighth day and later they were taught to know Jehovah and His law. The order was: birth (to Jewish parents), circumcision (for the males), teaching (of God and His law). Under the new covenant things are completely turned around. For one to be in covenant relationship with God they must first learn of God and His will for us today (cf.Mk.16:15,16; Rom.10:13,14). We must then undergo a spiritual circumcision, a cutting off in the heart of our affections for the sinful things of this life (cf.Rom.2:28,29; Col.2:11,12). Finally we must experience a new, spiritual birth (John 3:1-7). It is by this new birth that one enters into God's new spiritual family.

Sins Remembered No More: One of the chief flaws of the first covenant was the fact it could not provide redemption for its people. *"In those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year"* (10:3). Those sacrifices only typified and awaited the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross of Calvary. For the new covenant God promised, *"I will be merciful too their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more"* (8:12). Now complete remission of sins is possible (Acts 2:38); that is, they can be blotted out (Acts 3:19) and remembered no more against us. A true spiritual relationship between God as Father and the sinner as son (or daughter), based on a knowledge of God and the complete forgiveness of sins, is certainly better promises than were offered in the first covenant.

Since the new covenant, that which sets forth the terms for people to be acceptable to God, is superior to the first covenant, the priesthood of Jesus is superior to that of Aaron.☞

Studies In Hebrews #9

In chapter 8 the Hebrew writer began a detailed discussion of the priestly work of our High Priest, Jesus Christ. To discuss the priestly work of Jesus he develops three major ideas: tabernacle, covenant and sacrifice. The tabernacle was the place of the priests' work and the place where man had access to God, the covenant set forth the terms by which people could be acceptable to God and

the sacrifices provided the means whereby people could approach God. The superiority of Christ's priesthood to that of Aaron was shown in chapter 8 by discussing the superior tabernacle and covenant involved in His priesthood. Beginning in chapter 9 the author discusses the superior sacrifice offered by our High Priest.

Sacrifices Under The Levitical Priesthood

The Ancient Tabernacle (9:1-5)

The writer of Hebrews begins chapter 9 with a description of the ancient tabernacle and of the utensils used in it. In the first tabernacle (in these verses the writer refers to the two rooms in the tabernacle calling each of them a "*tabernacle*"), which is called the Holy Place, was found the golden candlestick, or lampstand, which was used as a general source of light in the Holy Place (Ex.25:31-40). It was placed on the south side of the Holy Place, to the left when entering. It was kept burning continually by the priest with olive oil. Also in the Holy Place was the table and showbread. The table was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. It was placed on the north side of the Holy Place, to the right when entering. Upon the table were dishes, spoons, flagons, bowls and, of course, the showbread (Ex.25:23-30). The 12 cakes of showbread were placed on the table in 2 rows of 6 with pure frankincense put upon each row (Lev.24:5-9).

Through a second veil, the first being at the entrance of the Holy Place (Ex.26:36), lay the second, innermost compartment of the tabernacle. Our writer refers to this room as the "*Holy of holies*". This was the most holy place to the Jew, being the dwelling place of God itself. We are told this room had "*a golden altar of incense*". The King James Version refers to it as a "*golden censer*". It is unclear from the language used here whether the writer refers to the incense altar, upon which incense was to be burned both morning and evening (see Ex.30:1-10), or the censer used by the high priest to burn incense once a year with the coals from off the incense altar (see Lev.16:11-14). From Exodus 30 it seems clear that the incense altar itself was to be placed in the Holy Place near the entrance to the Most Holy Place. From Leviticus 16 it seems equally clear that the incense censer was stored outside the Most Holy Place and carried in with incense once in the year. It would seem to me that the author has reference to the incense altar itself since he is listing the pieces of furniture which was found in the tabernacle. By speaking of the Most Holy Place as "*having a golden altar of incense*" the writer may be saying the altar of incense had a special connection with the Holy of

holies, as indeed it did (see Lev.16 and Ex.30).

Also in the Holy of holies was "*the ark of the covenant*" (see Ex.25:10-22). This "*ark*" was something like a chest with a lid on top. It also was made of acacia wood, overlaid with gold. It is referred to as "*the ark of the covenant*" because inside was stored the two stone tablets upon which were engraved the terms of the covenant (9:4; Ex.25:16,21). Also inside the ark was "*a golden pot holding the manna*". While the Israelites were wondering in the wilderness God miraculously fed them with quail and manna (Ex.16:13-20). God commanded Moses to set some of the manna aside for a memorial of the care God gave them in the wilderness (Ex.16:31-36). "*Aaron's rod that budded*" was also found in the ark. When God directed Moses to build the tabernacle, He also directed which tribe was to devote their lives to the service of God in the tabernacle. He told them to place twelve rods, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel, "*in the tent of meeting before the testimony*". The next day the rod belonging to Aaron had budded, signifying God's choice for the priesthood (Lev.17). This rod was set aside in the ark. When "*the ark of the covenant*" was placed in the Holy of holies of Solomon's temple, "*there was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb..*" (1 Kings 8:9).

Above the ark was the "*cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat*". Exodus 25:17-22 gives a thorough description of this part of the ark. The "*mercy-seat*" was a golden slab serving as the lid to the ark. In 4:16 our author referred to the "*throne of grace*" Christians can boldly go before to obtain mercy and find grace in time of need. The "*mercy-seat*" was the earthly counterpart of the "*throne of grace*". The "*cherubim of glory*" were two gold figures which faced each other and overshadowed the mercy-seat. They also served to support the invisible presence of the God of Israel (see 1 Sam.4:4; etc..).

The writer of Hebrews tells us, "*of which things we cannot now speak severally*". It is not the intent of our author to describe and discuss the rooms or furniture of the tabernacle at length. He wishes only to refresh their memory of these brief facts. Having done this, he now proceeds to briefly discuss the services performed in the "*first*" and "*second*"

tabernacles.

Priestly Service (9:6,7)

With all the necessary preparations made, the priest *"go in continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services."* The priest would enter both morning and evening to perform the duties of their office. They would trim the lampstands (Ex.27:20f) and at the same time burn incense on the incense altar (Ex.30:7f). Weekly the appointed priests entered into the Holy Place to put fresh loaves on the table of showbread (Lev.24:8f). These were the principle services which were to be performed in the Holy Place. Any member of the priesthood could discharge these duties.

Into the second tabernacle, the Holy of holies, only the high priest could enter. Even they were restricted from entering except on the tenth day of the seventh month (Tishri) of each year. They actually entered the Holy of holies twice on that special day. On the first occasion he carried the blood of the bullock which had been sacrificed as a sin-offering for himself and his household. The blood was sprinkled on and before the mercy-seat. Then, when a goat had been offered as a sin-offering for the people at large, he entered a second time to offer that blood on behalf of the people, again sprinkling the blood on and before the mercy-seat. Consider three brief thoughts from these verses: (1) except for this annual occasion, the way into the throne-room of God was barred for all Israelites, even for the high priest; (2) when the high priest did have permission to enter into the Holy of holies, his entry was safeguarded only if he had sacrificial blood to offer; (3) this sacrificial blood was not really effective, because fresh blood had to be shed and a fresh entry made yearly into the Holy of holies.

The Lesson: Lack Of Access (9:8-10)

The Holy Spirit signifies, or makes plain, *"that the way into the holy place hath not yet been made manifest"*. By *"holy place"* our writer refers to the true Holy of holies, or heaven. If the way into this holy place had been possible, then the high priest, and ALL Israelites, would have had free access to God. But since God dwelled among them in the Holy of holies and since only the high priest were

permitted to enter therein, and that only once in the year, there was not true access to God under the priesthood of Aaron. Such lack of access to God would continue *"while the first tabernacle is yet standing"*. Up to this point in chapter 9 the writer has been using *"first tabernacle"* to refer to the outer compartment of the sanctuary. Here, however, he uses it to refer to the sanctuary of the first covenant, comprised of the Holy Place and Holy of holies together. The phrase *"while the first tabernacle is yet standing"* raises the question of whether access to God was possible at the time the book of Hebrews was written. The present tense in this phrase is historic present, indicating present at the time of the revelation which is under consideration. The revelation of the Holy Spirit to signify that the way into the holy place was not yet manifest is the record of the tabernacle arrangements and the Levitical offerings found in the Old Testament. So long as that old tabernacle, and the other structures which replaced it from time to time, was yet standing, there could not be direct access to God. As long as it was in continued use, the people would have to go before God through the high priest. We will soon see that access to God was possible when the book was written.

The physical tabernacle in the wilderness was only a figure. It was a mere *"copy and shadow of the heavenly things"* (8:5), a prototype of the true sanctuary. The tabernacle of Christ's ministry is referred to as *"the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation"* (9:11). Further we read, *"For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us"* (9:24). The tabernacle of Christ is the true tabernacle, heaven. It served as a pattern for the making of the physical tabernacle in the wilderness (see 8:5; Ex.25:9,40; 26:30).

"Gifts" and *"sacrifices"* were offered in the physical tabernacle, but they could not, *"as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect"*. Notice the point of the writer. The sacrifices in the earthly sanctuary were not able to bring *"perfection"* to the worshiper because they did not have an effect on their conscience. The real barrier to man's free access to God is an inward and not a carnal one; it exists in his conscience. Only by attaining a pure

conscience can man be set free to approach God without reservation. And the "gifts" and "sacrifices" of the earthly tabernacle were useless in accomplishing this, "being only...carnal ordinances".

THE Sacrifice Under The Priesthood Of Christ Eternal Redemption (9:11-15)

Our writer speaks of Jesus as "*having come a high priest of the good things to come*". What "*good things to come*" has Jesus become High Priest of? It would seem to me the answer is found in the verses we just studied (9:8-10). They were looking forward to a time when "*the way into the holy place*" would be made manifest. This would be "*a time of reformation*". The realization of those hopes is found in Christ. He is the High Priest of "*the good things that have come*" (RSV).

He is High Priest of "*the greater and more perfect tabernacle*". As we have already noticed, this is heaven (see 9:24). Jesus is a High Priest which goes into heaven itself to offer to God the blood He has to offer. Having a greater place to serve as High Priest, His priesthood is superior to that of Aaron.

Under the Levitical Priesthood goats were offered for the sins of the people and calves for the sins of the High Priest himself (see Lev.16:3-15). Our High Priest has not made sacrifice of these animals but of Himself, a man who lived without sin (4:15; 1 Pet.1:18,19). Note three areas of difference between the Old Testament sacrifices and the sacrifice of Christ: (1) The Old Testament high priest had to make two sacrifices-- one for himself and one for the people. Christ, being sinless (4:15), needed to make only one sacrifice, for the sins of all men. (2) The Jewish priest offered the blood of perfect animals as a substitute for sinful man. Christ, being Himself perfect, offered Himself. (3) The animals used in the sacrifices of old had no choice in the matter. They were killed. Jesus, however, has "*put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*" (9:26; also 9:14). His was a voluntary sacrifice.

Having offered Himself as our sacrifice He "*entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption*". After Christ shed His own

blood on the cross He entered into heaven itself to offer the blood to God. In so doing He obtained "*eternal redemption*" for those who would obey Him (5:9). He entered "*once for all*" because by His sacrifice the conscience of men could be cleansed (9:14).

This sacrifice of the Son of God is not only effective in cleansing our conscience and allowing us, who will obey Him, to draw near to God, but it also provided eternal redemption for some who had lived under the first covenant (9:15). Those who lived faithful to the law God had for them never actually received forgiveness of sin or redemption because "*it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins*" (10:4). However, the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross provided eternal redemption for them. The blood of Christ flowed backwards as well as forwards from the cross.

Since Jesus has made such a superior sacrifice to God, the way into the holy place has been opened. Now man can "*draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace*" (4:16; 7:25).

The Necessity Of Christ's Death (9:16-23)

Having touched on the idea of an "*eternal inheritance*" in verse 15, our writer now speaks of the need for the death of the one who made the testament, or will, which provided this inheritance. A testament is of force ONLY after the testator has died. Therefore, Jesus, the testator, had to die before His promise of eternal redemption could be received by His followers.

Another reason Jesus had to die on the cross was to dedicate the new covenant with His blood. The Law of Moses was dedicated with the blood of calves and goats. The blood was sprinkled on "*both the book itself and all the people*" (9:19). The "*tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry*" were also sprinkled with blood to dedicate them to the Lord's service. The writer says, "*I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood*" (9:22). God directed that blood be used to symbolically cleanse many things. [Some things were to be cleansed with water and fire and others with the ashes of a red heifer (9:13; Num.19:2-10)] He goes on to say, "*apart from shedding of blood there is no*

remission". There is only one thing which can take care of the filth of sin, blood.

The blood of animals was only able to provide cleansing of *"the copies of the things in the heavens"* (9:23). The physical tabernacle and its utensils and even the people were cleansed and fitted for the worship of God by the sprinkling of animal blood. But these were but copies of the spiritual realities. The spiritual realities themselves would require a superior sacrifice to be cleansed and dedicated. What *"heavenly things"* needed to be cleansed? The context tells us. It is the defiled conscience of men and women (9:9,10,14). As the physical tabernacle was the dwelling place of God and had to be free from defilement for Him to be in their midst, so are we also a spiritual building unto Him (see Eph.2:22; 1 Pet.2:5) and thus we must also be cleansed from defilement for Him to dwell among us (1 Pet.1:19f). We are sanctified unto *"obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ"* (1 Pet.1:2).

Only ONE Sacrifice Needed (9:24-26)

As we have already noted Christ *"entered in once for all into the holy place"* (9:12). The priest under the Levitical system had to continually enter the Holy of holies, yearly, to offer new blood because no remission of sins was obtained from the previous offering. But the sacrifice of Jesus is effective enough that it needed to be offered only once. Through the one offering of Himself He *"put away sin"* and *"obtained eternal redemption"* (9:12,26). Since sin is *"put away"* and redemption obtained,

there is no need for our High Priest to continue making offerings for sins. All who will obey the Lord's will can have the blessings of this sacrifice (see 5:8,9).

The Return Of Our High Priest (9:27,28)

It is appointed by God that all men die once, and then face judgment. Christ, being a man also had to die once. this He did in the offering of Himself on the cross *"to bear the sins of many"*.

The Israelites who watched their high priest enter the Holy of holies would await his reappearance. His reappearance was a welcome sign to those waiting for him because it said God had accepted the high priest and the sacrifices he had offered on their behalf.

Christ, our High Priest, will also reappear one day. But, unlike the priest of old, He will appear *"apart from sin"*. The priest of the earthly tabernacle reappeared having no true effect on sin. Christ will appear apart from sin in that sin was *"put away"* by the sacrifice of Himself during His first appearing. His reappearing will not be for the purpose of taking care of the problem of sin, but to usher those who had obeyed His will and were waiting for Him into the eternal home of heaven.

With the promise of this return, the Jewish Christians reading this book should have been encouraged to remain faithful to the Lord, not growing faint or weary but persevering in patience and faith.☺

Studies In Hebrews #10

Since 8:1 the Hebrew writer has been involved in a detailed discussion of the priestly work of Jesus. In discussing the subject he developed three major ideas: tabernacle, covenant and sacrifice. The tabernacle was the place of the priests' work and the place where man had access to God, the covenant set forth the terms by which people could be acceptable to God and the sacrifices provided the means whereby people could approach God. The superior tabernacle and covenant of Jesus was discussed in chapter 8. The writer brings to a close

in 10:1-18 the discussion of the superior sacrifice of Jesus which was begun in 9:1.

The Once For ALL Sacrifice Of Jesus Mosaic Sacrifices Inadequate (10:1-4)

The Mosaic law and everything it prescribed was merely *"a shadow of the good things to come."* A shadow of something bears the rough image of the real thing. Many things of the old system were mere shadows of the real things found in Christ. The law

of Moses shadowed the gospel of Christ. Aaron's high priesthood shadowed the high priesthood of Jesus. Levitical sacrifices shadowed the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Purification in the Old Testament pictured complete redemption in Christ. Earthly Canaan rest shadowed the heavenly rest. The tabernacle pictured the church. [See 8:1- 6a and 9:23-26 on shadows]. The shadow/reality on the mind of our author is the Law of Moses (shadow) and the "good things to come" (reality). What was the "good things to come"? Jesus became "a high priest of the good things to come" (9:11). He is a high priest in the new and better covenant prophesied through Jeremiah (8:6; Jer.31:31-34). The "good things to come" was the new order of things under Christ. The things of the old system were mere shadows of the real things of the new system.

On the Day of Atonement lambs were slain for the high priest and for the people (cf. Lev.23). Every year more lambs would have to be slain, going through the same process all over again. This was necessary because those sacrifices could not make them spiritually perfect (cf. 9:8-10,13,14). When they committed sin their conscience would say, "You've committed sin and you must pay the price for sin." Since "the blood of bulls and goats" doesn't take away sin, when they made their offering for sin their conscience would continue to say, "You've committed sin and you must pay the price for sin." Their conscience was not made clean since the sin remained. The annual atonement was a reminder to the Jew that God had not forgotten their sin or its penalty.

Since the sacrifices under the Law of Moses did not remove sin but served as a reminder that God remembered their sins and the penalty they would have to pay for those sins, it is clear these sacrifices were inadequate. Sinful man needed a sacrifice which would do much more than these.

Therefore, First Taken Way To Establish Second (10:5-10)

In 10:5-7 the writer of Hebrews attributes the words of Psalms 40:6-8 to Jesus. There are three things we want to briefly note from this passage in Psalms. First, God finds no pleasure in "whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin". God never desired

His people to offer animal sacrifices for the sake of the sacrifice. The sacrifices were intended to be a tangible expression of a devoted and obedient heart. It meant a man was taking something dear to him and giving it to God to show his love. The idea degenerated till the sacrifice was thought to be the way of buying God's forgiveness. God wants us to sacrifice our will for His will. He finds no pleasure in the sacrifices themselves. Next note that a body was prepared for Jesus. "The Word became flesh" (Jn.1:14). In Philippians 2:5- 8 Paul makes the same point when he says Jesus took "the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; ...found in fashion as a man." The body which was prepared for Jesus by God was given back to God as a "living sacrifice". And finally, note Jesus said, "I am come...to do thy will, O God." Jesus, in the body prepared for Him, busied Himself with doing the will of His Father who had sent Him. We remember the words of the Father when Jesus was baptized of John, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Father was well pleased with His Son because His Son was not just making sacrifice of animals as the law dictated, but He was making a sacrifice of a different sort. He was making the sacrifice of wholehearted obedience to His Father's will.

In these words of the Psalmist our author sees the first covenant being taken away so a second covenant could be established in its place (10:8,9). By being what the sacrifices of the old system foreshadowed, Jesus was able to fulfill the Law of Moses (cf. Mt.5:17), thereby taking it away, and establish a new, superior, covenant which had been prophesied about by Jeremiah. Without the old covenant first being taken out of the way the new covenant of Christ could not have been established.

Sacrifice Of Jesus Is Adequate (10:11-18)

To show the adequacy, and, therefore, superiority, of the sacrifice of Jesus the author of Hebrews points out that the priest of the old system had to continually go through the same process of offering sacrifices for sins (see again 9:23-28). Their work of making offerings for sin continued daily in the temple. This process was never ending because those sacrifices could "never take away sins" (10:11). Our author is emphasizing that since the

sacrifices of old could not take away sins, they continually had to be repeated. As they completed one sacrifice they had to begin preparing for the next. Since it was never ending, the priest of the old system never sat down in the presence of God.

In contrast to this repetition of sacrifices Jesus offered Himself *"once for all"* having *"perfected for ever them that are sanctified"* (10:10,14). He *"offered one sacrifice for sins for ever"* (10:12). We do not need repetitious sacrifices since the one sacrifice of Jesus has taken care of the problem of sin. Since the one sacrifice of Jesus was able to take away sins, He *"sat down on the right hand of God"* (10:12). The priest of the old order continually stood to offer never ending sacrifices because their sacrifices could NOT remove sin. The sacrifice Jesus made of Himself DOES remove sin. He is, therefore, able to be seated at the right hand of God.

Jeremiah prophesied of a new covenant which

would provide what animal sacrifices could not provide. It was prophesied, *"their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"* (8:8-13; 10:16,17; Jer.31:31-34). This is in direct contrast to animal sacrifices. *"In those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year"* (10:3). By the offering of animal sacrifices no sin was ever forgotten. Since the sacrifice of Jesus is able to remove sin, they are remembered no more.

"Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (10:18). There is no need for sin offerings to continue to be made since remission has already been found in the one sacrifice of Jesus. The sacrifice of the new covenant is certainly adequate to remove sin.

Why would any Christian who has Jesus as their high priest seated at the right hand of God want to turn back to the inadequate and inferior Mosaic system? 🙄

Studies In Hebrews #11

From Hebrews 1:1 thru 10:18 our writer has presented several arguments to convince his readers, Jewish Christians, that they should remain faithful to Christ instead of going back into Judaism. To do this he has shown the superiority of: 1> Christ to the angels (1:4-14); 2> Christ to Moses (3:1-6); 3> Christ's priesthood to Aaron's priesthood (7:1-10:18); 4> Christ's covenant to the covenant through Moses (chapter 8) and 5> Christ's sacrifice to animal sacrifices (9:1-10:18). Any Jewish Christian of the day reading this epistle surely was impressed with the importance of remaining faithful to their Lord, Jesus Christ.

In 10:19-25 our writer draws out the practical implications of the spiritual truths he has already established. These verses, as we shall show, lay a foundation for the remainder of the epistle.

A Threefold Exhortation

The author of Hebrews wants to exhort his readers to do three things: *"draw near...hold fast...consider one another"*. Before considering these three points,

however, he wishes to sum up some of the arguments he has been making.

He begins by saying we have, *"boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus"* (v.19). The *"holy place"* under consideration is heaven itself (see 9:8,24). This ability to enter into the heavenly sanctuary through Christ is contrasted with the restricted symbolic entry into the presence of God in Israel's earthly sanctuary. Access into what symbolized heaven was limited to the High Priest and even he was not permitted into the holy of holies but once in the year on the day of Atonement. We now have *"boldness"* to enter in. He has already issued an invitation to his readers to draw near with boldness: *"Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace"* (4:16; see also Eph.3:12 & 1 Jn.5:14). We are able to enter in with boldness because of the *"blood of Jesus"*. He has already told us in 9:12 that Jesus *"through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption."* Jesus has procured for His people equal right to enter in by means of that same blood. The child of

God now has what was not available under the old law.

He continues by describing the way into the holy place. It is *"the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way."* The Latin word for priest is "pontifex", which means a bridge-builder. The priest of the Old Testament, and now Christ as our *"great priest"*, is one who builds a bridge between man and God. Under the priesthood of Aaron the priest was limited in what he could do because there was only one way into the presence of God, through the veil separating the holy place from the holy of holies, and God had strict regulations as to who could go in by that way; the high priest once a year. But Jesus, being a *"great priest over the house of God"* (v.21; see 3:6), has built a *"new"* bridge between man and God. It did not exist until He built it and entered Himself into the holy place by it.

It is not only new but *"living"*. Christ Himself, being ever-living as His people's sacrifice and priest, is the way to God (see Eph.2:18). We remember the words of Jesus in John 14:6: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me."* Jesus is Himself the bridge between man and God. Our author himself makes this point when he said, *"through the veil, that is to say, his flesh."* When Jesus *"gave up the ghost"* (Mk.15:37) on the cross, the veil separating the holy place from the holy of holies *"was rent in two from the top to the bottom"*(Mk.15:38). This rending of the temple veil symbolized the unveiled access man now has to God. The way into the holy place is through the veil of the body of Jesus Christ. His body was rent so the blood could be shed, which blood enables His people to enter in. Our author looked upon the veil as symbolizing our Lord's human life, presented to God when He *"suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit"* (1 Pet.3:18).

The writer, having emphasized again the access we now have to God, now turns his attention to three exhortations. Remember that our author is attempting to convince his readers to remain faithful to the Lord rather than turning back to Judaism. These exhortations are designed to do just that. Also note that the writer does not demand something of them which he himself is not willing to

participate in. In each exhortation he says, *"Let US."* These are, therefore, things which we should also strive to heed.

Let Us Draw Near

"Let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water" (10:22).

Having now a way to enter in the holy place, our writer encourages us to *"draw near"* (see again 4:16). The *"better hope"* of Christ's new covenant is that *"through which we draw nigh unto God"*(7:19). We are able to draw near because of the sacrifice Jesus made of Himself, which sacrifice provides a better hope. Under the old law what drawing near was possible, the high priest once in the year, provided no real hope for the remission of sins. Now we can truly draw near unto God knowing our sins will be forgiven because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

How do we draw near? Through offering up *"a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name"* (13:15,16). In this process of drawing near there is prayer (1 Tim.2:8; Acts 2:42; Phil.4:6,7; 1 Thess.5:17); worship in song (Eph.5:19; Col.3:16); and the thanksgiving offered in other acts of worship such as the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor.11:23-29).

We are to draw near *"with a true heart."* Jesus said, *"..true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:23,24). The idea in both passages is a heart of sincerity; one which manifests the proper attitudes towards God. We are not merely to draw near unto God because it is on our list of things to do, but because we want to draw near. We should draw near because of a desire of our heart to have an intimate relationship with our creator.

Our drawing near must also be *"in fulness of faith."* The idea is of unwavering confidence; a fulness of faith in God and our High Priest which leaves no room for doubt (see also Col.2:2; 1 Thess.1:5;

Rom.4:21; 14:5). We are to draw near unto our God fully persuaded that *"he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him"* (11:6). It is this unwavering confidence that our writer will address at length in chapter 11. We must draw near with faith which has no room for doubts.

We must also have *"our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience."* Our author has already contrasted the lack of conscience cleansing under the old law with the cleansing of the conscience available through the blood of Christ (9:9,13,14). Aaron and his sons were ceremonially cleansed by the sprinkling of the blood of animals (see Exod.29:15-21). New Testament priests (Christians-1 Pet.2:5,9) were and are actually cleansed by the blood of Jesus (1 Jn.1:7). This cleansing with the blood takes place when the individual first becomes a N.T. priest, which takes place when the individual is baptized into Christ Jesus. It is, in fact, in baptism where we come into contact with the shed blood of Jesus (Rom.6:3-11).

We are also told to have *"our body washed with pure water."* Priests under the law were consecrated to the priesthood by a complete washing of their bodies before donning their priestly garments (Exod.29:4). Penitent believers are inducted into Christ; hence, become N.T. priests, by baptism (Gal.3:26,27; Rom.6:3,4). Other N.T. passages speak of baptism in similar terms: Tit.3:5--*"washing of regeneration"* and Acts 22:16--Ananias told Saul, *"arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins"* (see 1 Pet.3:21).

A Jewish Christian who heeds this exhortation will surely remain faithful to Lord.

Let Us Hold Fast

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised"(10:23).

The Hebrew writer has already encouraged his readers to hold fast to their confession: 3:14--*"for we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end"* and 4:14--*"...let us hold fast our confession."*

When we obeyed the gospel of Christ we confessed our faith in Jesus as the Son of God (see Lk.12:8,9;

Rom.10:9,10; Heb.13:15; Mt.10:32). By confessing Jesus to be God's Son and our Lord, we confessed that we were putting all our hope in Him. The Jewish convert was confessing that they were no longer putting their hope in the works of the law, but in the sacrifice Jesus made of Himself on the cross.

Our writer encourages them to *"hold fast"* to that confession. They are to *"keep secure, keep firm possession of"* (Thayer) that which they had confessed to be the basis of their new hope in Christ. How would they do that? By continually reminding themselves of the promises made by their Lord. They had put all their trust and hope in Jesus based upon the promises He had made. They needed to remind themselves of those promises and remember that *"he is faithful that promised."* The writer has already stressed the encouragement that should be found in the promises of God. He said God's faithfulness to fulfill His promises gives us encouragement, *"who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us: which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and stedfast and entering into that which is within the veil"* (6:13-20). God's faithfulness to fulfill His promises gives us the encouragement to *"hold fast"* our hope that it *"waver not"*.

If the recipients of Hebrews would remember the promise of salvation, and the lack of such under the old law, and remember the faithfulness of God to fulfill His promises, they would have the encouragement necessary to remain faithful to Christ.

Let Us Consider One Another

"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh" (10:24,25).

After encouraging his readers to *"draw near"* and *"hold fast"*, both of which deals with things they needed to do on their own, he now encourages them to think of each other. They would be more apt to *"draw near"* and *"hold fast"* if they would encourage each other in these endeavors.

The word *"consider"* here comes from an original

expression which meant "to diligently inspect." The writer had already used the word to encourage his readers to "diligently inspect" *"the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus"* (3:1). Here he is telling us to "diligently inspect" each other so we will be in a position to provoke them unto *"love and good works."*

The idea of provoking is to *"stimulate."* We are not to stimulate to things evil, such as provoking to wrath (Eph.6:4), but to things which are good; namely, *"love and good works."* The things we say and do with our brethren should be such that they will be stimulated to a greater degree of love. We are to incite one another to love God, Christ, the faith, and fellow-Christians. And we are to stimulate one another unto good works. In other words, the things we say and do with our brethren should be such to incite them to greater service in the Lord's kingdom. In our considering one another we may note an area where they are not as active as they ought to be. We should strive to say or do something to stimulate them to activity in that area. We are to "diligently inspect" one another to see where we need to encourage one another.

The writer then considers one particular opportunity where they, as brethren, would be able to *"consider"*

and *"provoke"* one another: their worship assembly. We are told not to forsake *"our own assembling together."* Undoubtedly our author has in mind the frequent assemblies the early saints had. Notice these assemblies, in this context, were to be for the purpose of *"exhorting one another."* They are intended to help us fulfill the admonition of verse 24. When we choose to do something else of this world rather than assembling with our saints to encourage them and be encouraged by them, then we forsake an important work. Every child of God should desire to attend every service, knowing that there they will have the opportunity to fulfill a host of Christian obligations.

If the Jewish Christians reading this epistle would seek to *"consider one another to provoke unto love and good works"*, they would be able to encourage other Christians to remain faithful to Christ and be encouraged to do the same themselves.

What else does the writer of Hebrews need to say to encourage them to remain faithful to Christ? We will see that in the remainder of the book he expands upon various things found in this paragraph to further stress these convincing points.☺

Studies In Hebrews #12

Willful Sin (10:26-31)

As he has done before (2:1-4; 3:7-19 and 5:11-6:8), the writer sounds out a warning. *"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgement, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries"* (10:26). The context of these words suggests something much more serious than what Paul called being *"overtaken in any trespass"* because such a person as that was to be restored (Gal.6:1). He has already shown that Christ, as our High Priest, can *"succor them that are tempted"*, sympathize with them in their infirmities and *"bear gently with the ignorant and erring"* (2:17f; 4:15f; 5:2). What the writer has in mind is that *"falling away from the living God"* he spoke of in 3:12, that

apostasy against which he warned his readers in 6:4-8. If one knows the truth, and then knowingly and willingly turns and rejects that truth, there remains no sacrifice for them to appeal to. They are left without a sacrifice to be benefited from since they rejected the *"once for all"* sacrifice of Jesus (10:10,12). All that remains for such an individual is a *"fearful expectation of judgement"* (10:27).

Rejecting the Mosaic law resulted in sore punishment. *"The soul that doeth aught with a high hand...the same blasphemeth Jehovah; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people"*(Num.15:30). They were to *"stone them to death with stones"* (Deut.17:2-7). They were to die since they had blasphemed Jehovah in rejecting His laws. Such sinners died *"without compassion"*(10:28). The willful sinner under Christ

can expect *"much sorer punishment"* since by their sin they had *"trodden under foot the Son of God...counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace"* (10:29; see again 6:4-6). Those who willingly turn their back on the law of Christ to engage in sin show contempt for God's only begotten Son, show they regard *"the precious blood of Christ"* (1 Pet.1:19) as powerless and insult the Holy Spirit. *"Sorer punishment"* surely awaits such sinners. *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (10:31; cf.Matt.10:28).

Verse 26 began with the simple word *"for"*. The word connects what was before with what follows. Our author had just addressed the custom some had of forsaking the assembling of the saints together (10:25). He then says, *"for if we sin wilfully..."* As we consider 10:26-31 we must not miss a point he is making--*"forsaking our own assembling together"* is one example of sinning wilfully. Such shows contempt for God's Son who died for us. It is as if your only son died saving your neighbor from a fire and then that same neighbor skips the funeral to satisfy selfish desires. Such forsaking shows disrespect and contempt for the one who gave his life for others.

We can draw near to God with confidence (10:19-22), or we can fall into His hands terrified (10:26-31).

The Need To Persevere (10:32-39)

As he did with the stern warning of 6:4-8, so the warning of 10:26-31 is followed with words of encouragement. He knows the strong words he has been giving could tend to discourage them if left alone. Since this would defeat his purpose (13:22), he continues with words to reassure and encourage.

They are first reminded of their endurance and faithfulness in *"former days"* (10:32-34). They were made to endure *"a great conflict of sufferings"* shortly after they were *"enlightened"* with the truth of the gospel (cf.6:4,5). In all likelihood the persecutions of Acts 8:1 are referred to. Some had endured *"being made a gazingstock...by reproaches and afflictions"* while others became *"partakers with them that were so used"*. Those who had not been

made a public spectacle in this persecution had compassion and offered help to those who were persecuted, even though such put them in a position where they also could have been *"made a gazingstock"*. Out of love they had *"ministered unto the saints"* (6:10). They also *"took joyfully"* the spoiling of their physical possessions. Because of their faith in Christ and their support of those who were made a gazingstock, they suffered loss of the things of this world. They endured such losses *"joyfully"* because they knew a possession was awaiting them which was both *"better"* and *"abiding"* (see also Matt.6:19-21). The words of Jesus may also have been on their mind, *"Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven"* (Lk.6:22,23). Because of their faith in Christ they suffered persecutions. They are commended for their endurance of such persecutions.

Having commended them for their faithfulness and endurance in *"former days"* the Hebrew author now encourages them to maintain their boldness and develop patience (10:35-39). Earlier in this epistle the author said, *"but Christ as a son, over his house; whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end"* (3:6). He encouraged them to maintain boldness to be identified as God's house. Here he tells them maintaining that boldness will bring *"great recompense of reward"*. Note again the words of Jesus in Luke 6:23: *"Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven"*. This boldness had helped them before to endure persecutions and it would prove helpful for such in the future.

They needed to be patient to be able to fulfill the will of God and in the end *"receive the promise"*. Earlier he told them to be *"imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises"* (6:12). He said of Abraham, *"having patiently endured, he obtained the promise"*(6:15). Abraham, through his descendants, received God's promised rest. The Hebrews needed to maintain their boldness and develop patience so they could receive the promised rest yet remaining (cf.4:1). They needed to understand *"the Lord is not slack concerning his*

promise" (11 Pet.3:9). Habakkuk 2:3,4 is used to encourage them to be patient: *"yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry."* In using this passage the Hebrew writer apparently has in mind the coming of Jesus in judgment upon the nation of Israel (see 12:25-27; Matt.24; Rev.22:7,20), which coming occurred in 70 A.D. In their patience they are to live by faith, not turning back to the old ways. He expresses confidence in his readers when he says, *"we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition: but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul."* He

expresses confidence in their living by faith and in so doing encourages them to continue steadfastly in the life of a Christian.

In closing the chapter he spoke of those who had *"faith unto the saving of the soul."* In chapter 11 he gives numerous examples of those who lived by faith and in so doing illustrates to the Hebrews, and to us, what kind of faith we must have to save our soul. Such examples will prove very useful in encouraging the Hebrews to remain faithful unto Christ.☺

Studies In Hebrews #13

"Now Faith Is..." (11:1,2)

At the close of chapter 10 the Hebrew writer said, *"we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition: but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul"* (10:39). These words expressed confidence that his readers would remain with those whose faith would save them instead of returning to the Jewish religion, wherein was no salvation. Continuing into chapter 11 with this thought the author of Hebrews defines what he means by faith. Faith is defined as *"assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen"* (11:1). The NIV translates it, *"being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."* It is faith which stands under and supports (*"substance"*--KJV) the things we hope for. It is a conviction of things we cannot see because it is a conviction in things in the spiritual realm, or things of the past or future. By such a surety and certainty *"the elders had witness borne to them"* that they were faithful (11:2,39).

People Who Lived By Faith (11:3-16)

The author of Hebrews could have gone into a detailed explanation of faith at this point but he chose, rather, to show what saving faith is by showing the lives of men and women who lived by faith. Drawing from Old Testament characters his readers were will acquainted with, he shows that the faith that saves is the faith that obeys.

He begins with Abel who *"by faith...offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain"*(11:4). The story of Cain and Abel is recorded in Genesis

4:1-5. Since *"faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (KJV-Rom.10:17), we understand both Cain and Abel were given instructions from God about these sacrifices. Abel alone had the kind of faith that saves because he had the kind of faith that motivated him to do whatever his heavenly Father would tell him to do. He had a faith that obeyed. Through his faith, Abel had *"witness borne to him that he was righteous"* (see also Matt.23:35; 1 Jn.3:12). The faith that saves is the faith that obeys.

He next considers Enoch (11:5,6). *"Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him"*(Gen.5:24). God's law is that all men die (cf.9:27). Enoch, however, did not see death. According to our author, this was due to his faith. The faith of Enoch was seen not just at the time of his translation. Before that time he was found to be *"well-pleasing unto God"*. But *"without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him"*. For Enoch to have been well-pleasing to God he had to have faith in God. We also must have faith in God before we can be well-pleasing unto Him. He had a faith which allowed him to avoid the corruption of the grave.

Next he considers Noah (11:7). *"By faith"* he *"prepared an ark to the saving of his house"*. When we consider the circumstances of Noah's story we see his great faith. God warned Noah of something which had never happened before (*"things not seen as yet"*): a *"flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from*

under heaven; every thing that is in the earth shall die" (Gen.6:17). Noah, out of a "conviction of things not seen" (11:1), was moved to do all God had commanded him to do (Gen.6:22). He possessed saving faith because the faith he had moved him to obey God's will. Again, the faith that saves is the faith that obeys.

Finally, there is Abraham and Sarah (11:8-12). *"By faith" he "obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance" and "became a sojourner in the land of promise". He obeyed by faith because he did what God said "not knowing whither he went". Once again we see the kind of faith that saves: faith that causes one to do whatever God directs them to do. Sarah also is seen a character of faith. She was well beyond the years to bear children, being 90 years old (cf.Gen.17:17). Since she "counted him faithful who had promised", she was able to conceive seed. Because of the faith of Abraham and Sarah, they began the great Israelite nation which eventually numbered "as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the sand, which is by the sea-shore, innumerable".*

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises" (11:13). Even though they did not themselves receive the fulfillment of God's promises, they, by their faith in God, kept going. They kept God's promises before their minds realizing they were strangers on earth who desired a better country. With such faith "God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God" (11:16).

Faith In Difficult Times (11:17-40)

In this final section of chapter 11, the writer dwells upon examples of faith put to the test. Living by faith often calls for making tough decisions, courage, and endurance. The original readers of Hebrews needed to have that kind of quality faith. So do we!

The author of Hebrews first looks at Abraham as an example of faith put to the test (11:17-19). Abraham's faith was put to a test many of us

perhaps could not pass. He was told to offer his only son, Isaac (see Gen.22:1-19). Abraham's faith in God was such he was willing to kill his own son to obey his Father and remain well-pleasing unto Him. This he was willing to do in spite of the fact the promises of God to Abraham were supposed to be fulfilled in his son Isaac (see Gen.21:12). He knew that to obey God's commands would not set at naught God's promises. He knew if he obeyed everything God told him to do, he would be taken care of and, some how, the promises made to him would be fulfilled, even if this meant raising Isaac from the dead (11:19). Abraham passed this test of his faith.

Another example of faith put to the test is found in Moses (11:23-28). By faith he *"refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God".* The choice he made reflected the kind of faith he had in God. Another test of his faith came when he went to Egypt to lead God's people out of their bondage. Once again his faith was strong enough to do as God had directed him even though it meant going before a powerful and wicked Pharaoh. Time and again Moses had the kind of faith that saves: faith that obeys and faith that passes all tests.

Several other examples of living by faith and faith put to the test are given, but the author realizes he cannot continue because of so many who are wonderful examples of faith in the Old Testament. In summary fashion he mentions several more names of outstanding people of faith (11:32) and alludes to several things done or endured through the centuries by faith (11:33-38).

All these *"obtained a good report through faith" yet "received not the promise" (KJV-11:39). They had lived their lives in faith and were, therefore, acceptable before God. Yet God's appointed time had not yet come so the promises they sought after remained unfulfilled (cf.Gal.4:4). In all these examples of faith we see how faith truly is "assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen" (11:1).*☞

Studies In Hebrews #14

The Race Set Before Us (12:1,2)

Chapter 12 begins with the word *"therefore."* What is it "there for"? It connects what has just been discussed with what follows. In chapter 11 the writer gave example after example of men and women who lived a life of faith *"unto the saving of the soul"* (cf.10:39). He continues by encouraging his readers to have the same kind of faith: *"let us also."* To encourage his readers to this end, the writer uses the analogy of running in a race. He draws upon several aspects of the race.

First, he mentions we are *"compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses."* As we run in *"the race that is set before us"* we find ourselves in the midst of a crowded stadium. These *"witnesses"* are all those men and women in chapter 11 who have already competed in this race of faith and obtained *"a good report through faith"* (cf.KJV-11:39). The point is not so much that these victors of the past are actually looking down on us as we take our turn in running in this race; but that by their loyalty and endurance they have borne witness to the possibility of living the life of faith. It is not so much they who look at us as we who look to them-- for encouragement. As we run in this race we should find great encouragement in the host of others who have already completed the course and received the incorruptible crown. They, by their life, cheer us on to victory.

Second, the writer encourages us to *"lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us."* The runner in any race, if they want to be the victor, will lay aside everything which might prove a hindrance to them in reaching the finish line. We also must be willing to put aside anything which might hinder or distract us in running this race. This certainly would include putting away every sinful activity and thought (see Gal.5:19- 21). Paul said, *"they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof"* (Gal.5:24). Things which are right in and of themselves can also hinder or distract us. In such matters it may well be that what is a hindrance to one entrant in this contest is not a hindrance to another. Each one must learn for himself what in his

case is a weight or impediment and proceed to lay it aside so they will be able to run the race properly.

Third, we must *"run with patience"* the race before us. Already he has encouraged them to be patient: *"For ye have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise"* (10:36). The race we are entered in is a long distance race; it is for the remainder of our lives. The idea of patience here is more the idea of perseverance; a determination, unrushed and yet undelayed, which goes steadily on and refuses to be distracted. It masters difficulties rather than being distracted by them. Mastering each difficulty produces more and more patience (see James 1:2-4). If we want to be a victor, we must run with patience.

Fourth, there must be concentration. Every successful participant constantly has his eye on the goal. As a participant in this spiritual contest we are to be *"looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith."* Why? Because He is the example of one who completed the race victoriously. He is our example for running this race: *"For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps"* (1 Pet.2:21). *"For the joy that was set before him"* He *"endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (v.2) He showed us how to run this race: with our eyes on the goal! As we proceed through the course of our Christian race, let's keep our eyes fixed on Jesus to follow His victorious steps toward the goal.

The Value Of Endurance (12:3-17)

The Jewish Christians to which this epistle was written were immature (5:11-14), weak (12:12,13) and perhaps at the very point of falling away (2:1; 3:12). They were in need of the endurance which they had manifested earlier in their Christian life (see 10:32-36). The Hebrew writer proceeds by emphasizing the value of endurance.

They are asked to *"consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself."* Jesus

"endured the cross, despising shame" (v.2). He was able to endure because of "the joy that was set before him." To stop and consider how Jesus was able to endure should help them "wax not weary, fainting in your souls" (v.3). Furthermore, they are reminded that their suffering was not as bad as it could be (v.4). Jesus, and many of the witnesses of chapter 11, endured suffering unto death. Looking upon Jesus, and the many witnesses of chapter 11, should encourage us to persevere in the race set before us.

They had "forgotten the exhortation which reasoneth with you as with sons" (v.5). The exhortation here referred to is described through verse 11: "the chastening of the Lord." The word "chastening", and related words, "denotes the training of a child, including instruction; hence, discipline, correction, 'chastening'" (Vine, page 175). The word carries the usual idea of correcting by punishment, but it also includes correction by instruction. In 11 Timothy 3:16 Paul said, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction (chastening) which is in righteousness." He speaks of the instruction or training which is in righteousness. In Hebrews 12 the writer uses chastening in both the corrective sense and in the instructive sense to stress the value of endurance. The child who is chastened, whether it be corrective or instructional, is a child who has a father that loves them. The Hebrews were surely the beloved children of God since they were being chastened by the trials they were suffering and being chastened with the instruction of the Lord as contained in the letter itself. "As many as I love, I reprove and chasten" (Rev.3:19). Knowing they were the beloved children of God would encourage them to endure all these things and help them to yield "peaceable fruit...of righteousness" (v.11).

He continues with several exhortations which would help them to endure. He encourages strength, straightness, and healing (v.12,13); peace and sanctification (v.14); grace and purity (v.15-17). Without each of these things they would not be able to endure the temptations and trials awaiting them.

Mount Zion (12:18-29)

To further encourage his readers to remain faithful

to Christ rather than revert to the Jewish religion, the author of Hebrews continues by presenting yet another contrast between the old way under Moses and the new way under Jesus.

The awesome circumstances under which the law of Moses was given at Mount Sinai is first pictured (12:18-21). He speaks of the terror in the hearts of the people because the mountain was so charged with the holiness of God. "Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder" (Exod.19:18,19- RSV). Then, "when all the people perceived the thunderings and the lightnings and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled; and they stood afar off, and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, let us die'" (Exod.20:18,19-RSV; see also Deut.4:10-12; 5:22-27). As William Barclay put it, under the old covenant all that man could expect was "a God of lonely majesty, complete separation from man, and prostrating fear" (Hebrews, page 186). The recipients of this epistle had received a new and better relationship with God.

The mount they were "come unto" was far more glorious than mount Sinai was terrifying (12:22-24). They were "come unto mount Zion." Mount Zion was an example of endurance. "They that trust in Jehovah are as mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever"(Ps.125:1). They had come unto mount Zion, God's "kingdom that cannot be shaken" (v.28). By coming unto mount Zion, through their obedience to the gospel, they had come unto "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem"; "to innumerable hosts of angels"; "to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven"; "to God the Judge of all"; "to the spirits of just men made perfect"; "to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant" and "to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel." Note that the recipients of this epistle had already come unto each of these things. We too have come unto each of these if we have obeyed the commands of the new covenant mediated by Jesus.

Some of those at mount Sinai refused to listen to God. They said to Moses, *"You speak to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die"* (Exod.20:18,19-RSV). Having come unto mount Zion we are encouraged to *"refuse not him that speaketh"* (v.25). God now speaks *"unto us in his Son"* (1:1,2). We need not fear our God but listen and obey His every command. Once again the writer shows that since there was no escape

under the old covenant, there surely will be no escape under the new and greater covenant of Christ (see 2:1-4).

"Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire"(12:28,29).☞

Studies In Hebrews #15

The writer of Hebrews has been trying to convince his readers to remain faithful to Christ rather than returning to the old ways of the Law of Moses. To do this he has shown the superiority of Jesus. He is superior to angels (1:4-14) as well as to Moses (3:1-6). His priesthood is superior to that of the old law (7:1-10:18). His covenant is better than the covenant given through Moses (chapter 8). His sacrifice, Himself, is far superior than the sacrifices offered under the old law (9:1-10:18). The revelation of Jesus is better than that of old (1:1-4). The promises offered by the covenant of Jesus are better than those offered by the old covenant (8:6). And the hope offered by Jesus is superior to that offered through Moses (cf.6:13-20). He also seeks to keep them from returning to the law of Moses by encouragement. He encourages them to (1) obey the word of Christ (2:1-4); (2) remain faithful to enter the promised rest (4:1- 5:10); (3) press on to spiritual maturity (5:11-6:3); (4) be faithful in their worship and service to God (10:19-39); (5) have saving faith like those of old (10:39-11:40) and to (6) persevere in their faith (chapter 12).

He has given His readers every reason to remain faithful to Christ. He closes his *"word of exhortation"* (13:22) with several reminders for his readers.

Relevant Reminders (13:1-9)

He first reminds his readers about love (13:1-3). The recipients of this letter have already been urged to encourage and stimulate one another (3:13; 10:24,25). Mutual encouragement and stimulation is important but it must be done out of a motive of love for our brethren or it will be to no profit (cf.1 Cor.13:1-3). Peter tells us we are to *"love one*

another from the heart fervently"(1 Pet.1:22). This love must also be expressed to strangers. The hospitality of Abraham to strangers, which turned out to be angels, is given to illustrate how we are to show love to strangers. This love must also be seen toward those who are in prisons.

He also reminds them to maintain purity (13:4). The relationship of marriage is to be an honorable and pure relationship. Sexual relations outside the marriage is anything but honorable and pure. Those who practice such will be judged in due time.

He reminds them to be content with what they have (13:5,6). Paul put it beautifully in his epistle to Timothy: *"But godliness with contentment is great gain: for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content"* (1 Tim.6:6-8). Paul followed those words with a warning about the love of money (cf.1 Tim.6:9,10). We can be content with what we have since we know God will never fail us but will always take care of us.

He encourages them to imitate the faith of those who had ruled over them (13:7). Three times in this chapter the writer refers to their spiritual leaders or rulers. In verse 17 they are instructed to obey those who rule over them and in verse 24 they are asked to convey the writer's greetings to their rulers. The reference in verse 7 is apparently to those spiritual rulers who had already left this life (*"had the rule over you"*) whereas verses 17 and 24 has reference to those still living and ruling over them (*"have the rule over you"*). The clear reference in each of these places is to the elders who were watching *"in behalf*

of your souls" (v.17). They are encouraged to imitate the faith demonstrated throughout the lives of those elders who had already left this life. They, like those in chapter 11, apparently had the kind of faith needed to endure the trials and temptations of life to receive the crown of life in the end. We too should imitate the faith of godly elders now departed.

There is also a need for stability (13:8,9). Jesus is unchanging and unchangeable. Therefore, Christians must also have this stability by standing firm in the word of Christ. We must not allow ourselves to be carried away by the teachings of men. Spiritual maturity is the only thing which will guard against such instability (cf. Eph.4:11-16) and we become mature only by the constant use of God's word (Heb.5:12-14).

"We Have An Altar" (13:10-16)

As God's children we have an "altar" different from that of the Jewish system. The sacrifice made on this new altar is that of Jesus Himself (v.12). Jesus "suffered without the gate" and shed His blood "that he might sanctify the people." The writer has already shown the superiority of the sacrifice of Jesus to the sacrifices of the old system (cf.9:11-10:14). The sacrifice of Jesus on the new "altar" indeed meets the need of man by providing remission of sins by the blood shed in the sacrifice.

The writer adds, however: "whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle" (v.10). Those that "serve the tabernacle" are all those who continued to adhere to the Mosaic system. Under the old system the sacrifices on the annual day of atonement were burned outside the camp instead of being eaten as were other sacrifices. "And no sin-offering, whereof any of the blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the holy place, shall be eaten: it shall be burnt with fire" (Lev.6:30). It was to be "carried forth without the camp" to "burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung" (Lev.16:27). Since Jesus is the reality of what the old atonement sacrifices were mere shadows, those adhering to the old law could not partake of the sacrifice of Jesus.

"Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (v.13). In telling them

to go "without the camp" he was telling them to leave Judaism completely and altogether. They needed to quit serving the altar within the camp and start serving at a new "altar" where Jesus sacrificed Himself for everyone's sin. At the new altar, they were to "offer up a sacrifice...to God continually" (v.15). Under the old system sacrifices were offered at specified times and intervals. The followers of Jesus are now expected to make continual offerings unto God "through him": that is, through Jesus. We are to "offer up a sacrifice of praise...the fruit of lips which make confession to his name" (v.15). Our Lord expects us to continually confess our faith in Him by the things we say and by the life we live. We also offer a sacrifice of praise to God with our lips when we sing or pray unto Him. "But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God" (Acts 16:25). Paul said, "Therefore will I give praise unto thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name" (Rom.15:9). Our writer continues: "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (v.16). The Philippians communicated unto the needs of Paul and he considered them "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God" (Phil.4:18). Such sacrifices should be offered by all followers of Jesus (see Gal.6:10).

In Closing

Earlier in the chapter, verse 7, they were told to remember the righteous examples lived by those spiritual rulers over them, elders, who had already left this life through death. In verse 17 he tells them to "obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you." Elders are responsible before God for the spiritual condition of those within their particular "flock." Their work is a difficult one but it will be made much easier and joyful for them if we submit to and obey them. Many men are hesitant to take on the responsibilities associated with being an elder because they know it is a difficult work. In many places it is the failure of the congregation to submit to and obey the elders that makes the work so difficult in the first place.

The readers of this letter are asked to pray for the writer and those who are with him (v.18,19). By their

prayers he hopes to see them again with Timothy who had been set at liberty (v.23).

The writer himself prays for his readers that they would be made "*perfect in every good thing to do his will*" (v.20,21). Having given every possible reason why they should not return to Judaism but remain faithful to Christ, he prays for their spiritual maturity in Christ.

They are exhorted to "*bear with the word of exhortation: for I have written unto you in few words*" (v.22). In other words, "*listen to it and give it fair consideration.*" If they would give serious consideration to the things he has written, they would surely remain faithful to Jesus.

The writer has used some pretty strong language with his readers throughout the book. In essence he said they were immature (5:11-14), weak (12:12,13)

and perhaps at the point of completely falling away (2:1; 3:12). In closing the letter he salutes the elders of the congregation as well as all the saints. He also passes on the salute of the brethren in Italy. To close with such salutations would reinforce the love the writer had for his readers.

"*Grace be with you all. Amen*" (v.25). The subject of grace has appeared several times throughout the book (2:9; 4:16; 10:29; 12:15; 13:9). We might say he has been making a subtle comparison all through the book between the grace of God and the works of the law. By closing the book with this phrase he makes one final, though subtle, argument for remaining with Christ. To remain faithful to Christ means they would be able to continue receiving the benefits of the grace of God. To return to the old law is to give up God's grace. This is a most appropriate way for the writer to bring his letter to a close. ☺