

Hebrews 1

Jesus is Superior to the Prophets and Angels

- Key Verses: Hebrews 1:1-4 - *“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”*
- In similar fashion to Genesis 1 and John 1, the letter to the Hebrew Christians, and all of us by inspiration, begins with the clear proclamation of the eternal existence of God. Neither Moses nor John nor the Hebrew writer try to make a case for God’s existence – they just state it!
- Pay careful attention in this chapter to the significance of the way God has spoken to man throughout history and how that message has culminated with the message of *“His Son”* – who is far above the prophets and angels.

Questions for study and discussion: (The verses in parenthesis will help you with a starting point for your study)

1. How has God spoken to man in “time past”? (1-2)

- *“at sundry times”* – meaning in many portions; that is, revelation came at different times as needed.
- Not all revealed at once; 1600 years of time.
- *“in divers manners”* which is to say in many varied ways.
- God spoke by prophets to fathers in many different ways:

- Amos gave God's message by oracles and direct statements from God;
 - Hosea by "typical" experiences in his own life;
 - Habakkuk by arguments and discussion.
 - Malachi spoke God's word by questions and answers;
 - Ezekiel by strange and symbolic acts; Haggai by sermons
 - Zechariah by mystical signs.
- In speaking to the Fathers by the prophets God also spoke used:
 - Parables and illustrations.
 - Warnings and exhortations.
 - Encouragement and promises.
- In time past is literally "of old," and refers to previous ages of the world. The fathers were the Jewish forefathers of the Hebrew Christians.
- The prophets included both the writing prophets (such as those whose work Scripture preserves) and the non-writing prophets (such as Nathan, Elijah, Elisha and others).
- The prophets were "mouths" for God (Exodus 4:16; 7:1).
- They spoke His word, though at times even they did not understand it (I Peter 1:10-12; see Daniel 7:28; 12:8-10).

2. How has God spoken to man in "these last days"? (2)

- Through His Son Jesus Christ.
- "Last days" – messianic dispensation; Christian dispensation; began at Pentecost.
- The apostles doctrine of Acts 2:42 is the same as Christ's doctrine; Matthew 28:18-20.

3. How is Jesus described? (2-4)

- "His Son!"

- “Heir of all things”
- “Made the worlds”
- “brightness of the Father’s glory”
- “express image of the Father”
- “upholding all things”
- “himself purged our sins”
- “sat down” – Levitical priests stood daily in an imperfect and temporary service.
- “made better than the angels”
- “obtained a more excellent name”

4. *By what power is Jesus said to “uphold all things”? (3)*

- This reminds one of Paul's declaration in Colossians 1:16,17, *"He is before all things, and in him all things consist."*
- Christ is the One who is the sole support and source of every power within his creatures and creations has every right to rule over them and to expect true love and submission to his will.
- Perhaps a word is in order regarding the manner of Christ's upholding all things. It is "by the word of his power," hence spiritual by nature;

5. *What has Jesus done for man’s sin problem? (3)*

- *"When he had made purification of sins"* is the credential which makes Christ king by right of purchase.
- Christ paid the ransom for his human creation, buying them back when they had fallen into sin and were thereby forfeit to Satan.
- *"Ye were bought with a price"*! (1 Corinthians 6:20). And what was it?
- *"Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of God which he purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28).

- It is perhaps impossible fully to understand why such a redemption was necessary, but every verse of the Bible points to the fact that man's incredible conduct in the garden of Eden cut him off from fellowship with his Creator and left him to suffer in the kingdom of darkness until he should be redeemed.
- The penalty could never be lifted until Jesus paid it all upon the cross;

6. How is Jesus' name much better than the angels? (4-5)

- *"For unto which angel said he at any time, "You are art my Son??"*
- The more excellent name is "Son"!
- Father/Son relationship stressed.
- Higher in rank; sits at right hand of Father; 4:16 throne...

7. Explain what is meant by verses 8-9.

- **1:8** - Psalm 45:6-7 is applied to Christ, identifying Him as eternal God whose throne is for ever and ever, and as righteous King. His kingdom is one of righteousness (Hebrews 7:2-3; Isaiah 9:7; 11:4-5).
- **1:9** - In the flesh, Christ loved righteousness and hated iniquity (see 10:5-10; Isaiah 53:11-12).
- Because of His perfect obedience, Jesus was anointed ("Christ-ed") by God and exalted above every creature (see Philippians 2:8-11).
- The "Son" here is called God.
 - John 1:1: **The word was God.**
 - Acts 20:28: **Here Christ is called God**
 - John 20:28: **Here Christ is called God.**
- The oil of gladness probably represents an occasion of festivity as well as that of coronation.

8. Who is to “perish” according to verses 10-11?

- Psalm 102:25. Verse refers to Christ. John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:1-2.
- “They” will perish. The heaven and earth that were created in the beginning will perish.
- Matt. 24:35 – *Heaven and earth shall pass away.*
- 2 Peter 3:10 – *The heavens shall pass away with great noise and earth shall be burned up.*
- 2 Peter 3:13 – *There will be a new heaven and new earth at Christ’s coming.*

9. Who will always be the “same”? Explain in what ways? (12)

- Because Christ is creator, He is also eternal - though all His creation will change with age and finally pass away.
- His years will not fail (Hebrews 7:24 – *Jesus lives forever*). When they are all changed He will remain the same (13:8).

10. Who are the “ministering spirits” sent forth to minister? (14)

- Angels all, regardless of rank, are ministering spirits. But Christ is so much more. They are sent forth by a higher authority, perhaps even by the Son at God's right hand.
- Their work is to serve, to minister for Christians, who shall be heirs of salvation. Our writer says literally that they are "sent for service on behalf of those who are about to receive salvation as an inheritance."
- If angels serve the saints, how much more do they serve the Son! And how greatly superior is His position and name to theirs.

“Digging Deeper for Better Things”

RESEARCH QUESTION: What Old Testament passages are quoted here in the first chapter of Hebrews?

- Psalm 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14; Deut. 32:34; Psalm 97:7; Psalm 104:4; Psalm 44:6-7; Psalm 102:25-27; Psalm 110:1

THOUGHT QUESTION: What role do you THINK angels play in our lives today? Use Scripture to help with your answer.

A Message of “Better Things” from Hebrews 1

- It is an amazing thought to know that when we read about the nature and actions and reactions of Jesus, we see the “*express image*” of God, the Father. Notice Hebrews 1:3 “*who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person...*” In this one verse we know that all God is has been expressed in Christ.
- Notice also: John 14:8-9 - “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father.*” John 1:18 - “*No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son has declared him.*”
- Therefore when we see Christ, we see the Father. His attitude and behavior when He was on earth is the same as the Father's would have been if He had come to earth instead of Christ. The way Christ acted in time of trouble, temptation, etc. is the same identical way the Father would have acted. The way He treated others is exactly as the Father would/does treat others.
- When we observe the things said about Jesus in this first chapter we can clearly see that He is indeed *superior to the prophets and angels* in every way.

Lesson 2

Reading: Hebrews 2

Hebrews 2

Jesus Provides a Superior Salvation

- **Key Verse: Hebrews 2:1 - “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.”**

- **Hebrews 2 begins with a warning concerning the possibility of drifting away from the teachings of Christ and the great salvation He brings us. If it were not possible for us to drift - there would be no need for such a warning. Therefore, we must stay on guard as to not drift because at times, those who confess Christ as Lord, do not trust Him as their “anchor” and therefore are unstable in their walk and ways. Focusing on Jesus enables them to be “sure and steadfast” in the Word (Heb. 6:18-19).**

- **Another problem that causes us to drift away is our preoccupation with unimportant and “minor” things. These things, not necessarily wrong in and of themselves, tend to derail us from focusing on the “God-things” which will ultimately keep us anchored in Him.**

- **The word *propitiation* is used here in Hebrews 2:17. This word is not common in our everyday language. As it is used here in Hebrews and other passages in the New Testament (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10) it carries the basic idea of “*appeasement or satisfaction, specifically toward God*”. Propitiation is a two-part act that involves appeasing the wrath of an offended person and being reconciled to Him. It’s exactly what Jesus did for us at the cross in providing this *superior salvation* (Colossians 1:21-22). This truth is one we will see even more clearly as we continue our study in Hebrews.**

Questions for study and discussion: (The verses in parenthesis will help you with a starting point for your study)

1. What is the purpose of the exhortation given in verse 1?

- **“Therefore” – “on account of this” – “*because of the greatness of the Son...*”**

- “ought” in some translations, “must” in NKJV – imperative we do this!
- “Give more earnest heed” = “pay careful attention to”
- In essence he is saying, “Because of these things, it is absolutely necessary for us to be extremely careful to pay attention.”
- Things we have heard from Christ by way of the apostles.
- “lest we drift away” – “slip” in older translations – Greeks used this term for an arrow slipping out of the quiver; of foul language slipping out.
- The writer is warning them and us lest we slip from steadfast obedience and trust in the Son.
- Their danger, and that of many other New Testament readers then and now, was that of slipping from trust in the Son's finished work of salvation by His own perfect-life obedience and sacrifice to a reliance on their own performance based on a meritorious view of salvation. The same caution applies equally well to slipping from active obedience to careless disobedience or disregard.

2. What is not to be neglected? Why is it described as “so great”? (2-3)

- The pivotal words are "to give heed" and "to slip, to drift" Both terms are used in a nautical sense It is the picture of a ship "slipping" past its haven because the pilot has not paid "attention" to the course.^[2]
- It is possible to drift away from the teachings of Christ because:
 - (1) some, being in him, are still **not anchored in him**;
 - (2) subtle and powerful **tides and currents surge and tug against the soul's safety**;

(3) the believer fails to exercise due care and diligence in the defense and development of his faith;

(4) some allow preoccupation with unimportant and secondary things to preempt too much of their time and attention.

- The description of apostasy given in this verse is true to life for people seldom turn boldly and dramatically away from the Lord;
 - but their defection, imperceptible at first, is marked by such a gradual departure that the unaware soul is blind to it until they find themselves further away from God than they ever intended.
 - Church attendance (Hebrews 10:25). It's not everything but when you begin to slip it's one of the first things you'll see.
 - **Escape?** *None is possible where disobedience of the word of God is involved. Penalties of the most awful consequence await the soul which through unbelief, neglect, or disobedience fails to heed God's message through his Son. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Romans 1:18).*
 - *So great a salvation is an appropriate designation for the redemption in Christ; and the true greatness of it is apparent because of:*
 - (1) *the greatness of the Savior who achieved it;*
 - (2) *the greatness of the disaster from which it rescues the sinner;*
 - (3) *the greatness of the eternal reward in heaven provided by it;*
 - (4) *the greatness of the Savior's love that undergirds it;*
 - (5) *the greatness of the adversary who opposes it;*
 - (6) *the greatness of that multitude who shall receive it; and*
 - (7) *the greatness of those certainties upon which it is grounded.*
3. **To whom does the Scripture refer in verses 6-8? Where else can these statements be found?**
- Mankind – Psalm 8:5-7.

- David is quoted from Psalm 8:5-7 to establish this point. God is interested in and mindful of man. He visits him in blessing and judgment. The son of man in this psalm is simply a poetic expression for man.
- **2:7.** Man was made but a little lower than the angels. He was crowned by the Creator with glory and honor. He was set over the works of God's hands (see Genesis 1:26-28). This was man's intended exalted position as first created by God for paradise glory.
- **2:8.** God put all things in subjection under man's feet, according to the psalmist. **Our writer reasons as follows.** If God really put all things in subjection under him, nothing is excluded from man's dominion and oversight.
- Yet if we look about us we do not see all things under man's control -- yet. **Man is not master of his environment and world, though he is frequently its corrupter and polluter. Man does not enjoy paradise glory and dominion.** But does this mean that God's purpose has been thwarted? **Is there anywhere a man who is over all things -- in complete control?** Only Jesus when He came and did exactly what God was looking for.

**4. For what purpose was Christ "made a little lower than the angels"? (9)
What exactly does this phrase mean?**

- *We do not see ourselves in that position -- at least not at the present time. But we do see Jesus, and He is crowned with glory and honor!*
- *Is the Son of chapter one -- that Son so much better than the angels -- a man? Yes! For He was made a little lower than the angels, even to the suffering of death, that by the grace of God He could die for every man -- then give all who would follow Him their intended glory and dominion.*
- *Jesus became a representative man. In Him, God found a man who gave what He had always wanted from man but which no man had ever given - - a human life fully and always dedicated to pleasing God.*

- *In Christ, man's **glorified potential** was fully realized. This glory was not even planned for angels. It was not intended for other heavenly beings or other earthly creatures*
- *It was the Creator's original intention for man. And now one man is in that position. One man has a foothold in glory! And because He is a representative man, acting on behalf of all mankind, His people will one day enjoy the same position of glory.*
- *The expression a little lower than the angels is used in two senses in this passage. When it is said that man was put a little lower than the angels, the expression indicated his exalted position - it is but a little lower than the angels*
- *To say Jesus became lower than angels is to say that He was **humiliated, that He emptied Himself, that He condescended** (Philippians 2:5ff). It is also to say that He **became a man** -- like ourselves and for our benefit.*

5. Who is described as “the author of their salvation”? (10) To what does this refer?

- Jesus.
- In becoming a representative man, Jesus willingly became of the same as mankind in general.
- He became a brother to man, of the seed of David according to the flesh.
- In becoming a man, Jesus also took on suffering and death, both inevitable characteristics of mankind.
- Yet **because of His sinless life, His death was able to count as our death.** And by suffering death, Christ was able to bring many sons to glory - going ahead of them Himself as **Captain (author often translated as such),** experiencing **first the suffering of death but then the glory of resurrection and installment at God's right hand the same kind of glory they, too, will one day enjoy because of Him.**

6. Who had the power over death? In what sense was he destroyed? (14)

- The Devil
- Since God's other children are necessarily partakers of **flesh and blood**, with all that is implied in that statement, **Christ also took part of the same.**
- **He died, as they do**, but through His death **he destroyed or nullified the strength of the devil** who had the power of death over man because of sin.
- Since Jesus had no sin of His own, the devil had no power over Him. **When Christ entered the grave, therefore, He was not bound.** Rather He walked in free-handed, picked up the keys and came out again in triumph! (See Revelation 1:17-18.)

7. Who would be classified as “the seed of Abraham”? (16)

- It must refer to either the **physical or spiritual descendants of Abraham** that is, the ones who, like Abraham, have placed their faith in God (see **Gal. 3:7, 29**).
- Probably referred to here because of the **Jewish audience** that would **readily relate to Abraham’s seed.**

8. Who is referred to as a “faithful High Priest” in verse 17?

- God's design for man's salvation consisted of sending a representative man who could do for man what man had been unable to do for himself -- live an acceptable life before God.
- Because Jesus was this chosen and well-beloved Servant of the Father, and in order to carry out this divine mission, He became in every respect like His human brethren, though without sin.
- **He was divine, God in the flesh, and we must never forget that. But we should not forget either that He was fully human. Jesus was a man, with every human temptation, desire and sorrow.**

- If His deity had aided Him in any of these He could not have been a truly representative man and could have become neither Savior not even a fair example.
- Because He did fully identify with His human brethren, yet remained faithful to God in all His life, He became a perfect high priest, **both merciful to man and faithful or reliable in His relationship to God.**
- **As high priest He first made reconciliation for the sins of all His people, then became Mediator on their behalf before God.**

9. What does the phrase “make propitiation for the sins of the people” mean? (17)

- Refers to the SATISFACTION of the claims of a holy and righteous God against sinners who have broken his law.
- Christ appeased God’s righteous wrath by dying on the cross in our place (Romans 3:21-26).
- Though completely perfect and sinless, Christ voluntarily submitted to the penalty of sin...death.
- This voluntary sacrifice of Himself for our welfare satisfied (became the propitiation) the justice and holiness of God.
- **Holiness and justice demand payment** – can’t let one off “scott free” – examples..

10. What enabled the High Priest to aid those who are tempted? (18)

- Because he himself has suffered, being tempted through every possible allurements and enticement of Satan including an undeserved death, he has the power and is able to comfort and render aid to His people when they are tempted.

- **He became a son of man that we might become sons of God.** He took our place, died our death -- that we might enjoy His life and the blessings it made possible.
- But He not only died for us -- **He first lived for us.** While this point is frequently overlooked, it is this which made the first possible and meaningful.
- As for the alleged impossibility of Christ's committing a sin, such has never appeared reasonable to this writer; because, in the very nature of all things, no man can be tempted to do that which he is incapable of doing. The value of Christ's temptations is seen in the enhanced position it gave him as one able to comfort his human children.

“Digging Deeper for Better Things”

RESEARCH QUESTION: What is at least one of the purposes of our singing? (12) Find several Old Testament passages which confirm your answer.

Psalm 22 – PRAISE!!!

THOUGHT QUESTION: What do you **THINK** is the message we should ring out to others based on Hebrews 2:9?

JESUS DIED FOR YOU -TOOK YOUR PLACE!!

A Message of “Better Things” from Hebrews 2

- Here in Hebrews 2 we are told about *“so great a salvation”* in verse 3. Yet what is it that makes this salvation great? Why is it great for you and me? Starting in that same verse (Hebrews 2:3), the Bible tells us that this *“great salvation”* was spoken of *“first”* by the Lord Jesus! This salvation was not a message produced and preached first by men, but rather by God in the flesh.
- In Mark 16:20 and again in this text we are reminded that the *“great salvation”* was proven true because it was confirmed by miracles, signs and wonders – declaring it true with power.
- It is great because of the many great and *“better”* things that are involved in it. Notice the *“great”* and *“better”* things granted in John 3:16...

- ***“For God”*** - God is the greatest being.
- ***“So Loved”*** - Love is the greatest thing.
- ***“The world”*** - The world is the greatest number.
- ***“That He gave His only begotten Son”*** - The Son is the greatest gift.
- ***“That whosoever believes in Him”*** - Faith *“in Him”* is the greatest faith.
- ***“Should not perish”*** - Perishing in hell is the greatest tragedy.
- ***“But have everlasting life”*** - Everlasting life is the greatest blessing
- Truly God has blessed us with *superior salvation* to any offered to any believers in any previous age. Enjoy it, give thanks for it, serve from it, but most of all be sure to *receive it!!* (John 1:12)

Hebrews 3

Jesus is Superior to the Prophets and Angels

Key Verses: Hebrews 3:12

1. Who are the “partakers of the heavenly calling”? (1) How significant is this in the way one should live?

- Christians are holy brethren
- Christians are saints or holy ones, not because of their own achievements in attaining purity of life (see I Corinthians 1:2; 6:11), though that is a necessity, but because God has called them holy, in Jesus Christ. Christ is made unto us "sanctification" or holiness (I Corinthians 1:30). We are holy in Him.
- Yet we are commanded to become holy, just as God is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). We are to perfect holiness in the fear of God (II Corinthians 7:1). Without holiness no man can see God ([Hebrews 12:14](#)).
- The term "saints" is one of the most frequently used descriptions of God's people in the New Testament. The word is always in the plural; one does not read of "Saint So-and-so."
- All God's people are saints, as described above. It is possible that the tendency of modern Christians to neglect this term in their common vocabulary has contributed to the lack of sanctification in the church today. We will do no harm, and perhaps a great deal of good, to revive the usage of Scriptural terms and phrases.

2. To whom was Christ faithful? (2)

- Christ was faithful or reliable or trustworthy with reference to God the Father, who appointed him apostle and priest.

3. What comparisons are made in verses 2-4? What illustration is used to show the superiority of Christ?

- Moses also was faithful to God in all his house. The writer does not minimize the faithfulness or the function of Moses. He praises and commends Moses for faithful service. But he then shows, on the basis of the heavenly realities, that Christ is far superior to Moses by virtue of His greater person and function.
- Christ is counted worthy of more glory than Moses, not because Moses was unfaithful, for he was not, but because of the inherent function of both men in God's plan.
- The man who builds a house hath more honor than the house. We admire a beautiful building, but we regard more highly the architect who designed it and the superintendent who saw it rise.
- [3:4](#). So far as the work of salvation is concerned, the one who builds all things is God. He is the grand architect and superintendent of the entire scheme of redemption. He is its originator and its goal.
- The Word which became flesh was one with God the Father. Therefore Christ, who was that Word, is the builder of the house, while Moses -- though faithful -- was a part in the divine house.

4. How was Moses faithful in all "*His house*"? (5)

- Christ is superior to Moses in other points as well.
- Moses verily was faithful, but in God's household, as a servant and as a member of the household.
- But Christ is a son (not a servant) over (not in and part of) his own house (not that of someone else).

5. Of what was Moses a faithful testimony? (5) To what does this refer?

- His faithfulness to God served as a testimony to the reliability and trustworthiness of the message which he spoke from God. The point here is based on Numbers 12:6-8, which is quoted in part.

- There God testified to the faithfulness of Moses and rewarded that faithfulness by speaking directly with Moses in revealing His will. Moses' personal faithfulness as a worker in God's house served as a witness to the word which he revealed from God.

6. How is it possible to be in "*Christ's house*"? (6)

- Now we learn what is meant by the house so far as Christ is concerned.
- We, the church, God's people under Christ are the house of God (I Timothy 3:15). Christ promised to "build" it (Matthew 16:18), and He began that work on Pentecost.
- The church is composed of "living stones" (I Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:20) -- those individuals who by faith and baptism have come into union with Christ, have become members of His spiritual body and, collectively, are His church.
- Moses was a faithful servant in the Old Testament "house" of God (and of Christ), but Christ is the faithful Son over His own house. He is far superior to Moses, though Moses was a great and faithful man of God.
- We are His house, if we hold fast the confidence, the boldness based on inner assurance, and the rejoicing or boasting of the hope firm unto the end. This is the message of the entire Bible and is particularly the theme of the book of Hebrews.
- The reward is of grace, but it depends on faith And a saving faith is one which trusts and obeys until the very end. It is not enough to begin, only to fall along the way. Saving faith, true grounds of rejoicing, a genuine hope -- all these depend on steadfastness and continue trust throughout life.
- The Hebrew Christians urgently needed that lesson. We are no less in need of it today.

7. What Old Testament passage is quoted in verses 7-11? Why is it placed here?

- Psalm 95 is a call to worship God.

- The psalmist bases his call on **God's deity** (verse three), **His might as creator and sustainer** (verses four through six) and **His election of and covenant relationship with Israel** (verse seven).0
 - He then warns against a hard or disobedient heart, which he says will lead only to destruction.
- This happened to the fathers in the wilderness, the psalmist points out, and it can happen to God's people in his day.
 - Now the psalmist's point is made by the writer to the Hebrews, who applies it to the believers of his day.
 - **God's people have fallen before through unbelief and an evil heart. They can do the same again.**

8. What stern warning is given in verse 12? What is at least one way to avoid such?

- Rather than take heed, we would say (almost literally) "look out!"
- *An evil heart of unbelief* is a heart, or disposition, or spirit, which does not trust God..
 - It does not accept what He says with confidence and then walks with trust in Him and in His word.
- **Departing is from a word closely related to that which gives "apostasy."** The child of God can become so corrupted by a distrustful and unfaithful heart that he finally forsakes God completely.
- Such distrust of Christ can lead to apostasy in two directions.
 - Some who begin to doubt their acceptance on the basis of Christ's perfect life and **blood will despair of all hope and go back into sin and the world.**
 - Others will **seek to help or add to their spiritual stature by their own strict observance of rules and regulations** -- which they themselves will choose as important or receive as such from someone else.
- **When motivated by a lack of trust in the standing Christ makes possible,** this too is sinful.
- It was this error in part which led to the writing of **Galatians** (against Judaizing tendencies), **Colossians** (against an apparently gentile heresy

which had adopted rituals and philosophies from many sources), **1 John** (against a budding philosophical heresy later known as gnosticism) and even **Hebrews**.

- Christ is sufficient as Savior, and the man who truly has Him has enough. **Psalm 23:1**
- **Steadfast faithfulness to Christ is an evidence of this inward faith**, and is a necessity if one is to be saved in the end. That is the point of this chapter.

9. With whom was God angry for forty years? (16-17)

- **Verse 16: *For who, having heard rebelled*** - That is, some, when they were in the wilderness, heard God, but they didn't listen. They rebelled against Him by disobeying Him and thus they provoked Him.
- ***indeed was it not all that came out of Egypt led by Moses*** - Not all who came out of Egypt provoked God. Most of those numbered for war did rebel. There were exceptions, such as Joshua and Caleb and there may have been others. **Deuteronomy 1:35-38** states that both Joshua and Caleb were faithful. They believed God and were allowed to enter Canaan.
- **SPECIAL NOTE:** Not all of those who died in the wilderness were lost. Moses himself did not make it to Canaan, and there were probably some other Israelites who repented as in the case of Moses. **Moses** sinned in the wilderness (**Numbers 20**), yet, he repented; **and although he didn't make it to Canaan, he still did not die lost**. In this same way there were other Israelites who sinned, repented, and although they still were not allowed to go into Canaan, they didn't die lost.
- **Verse 17: *Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness*** – The writer here asked the Hebrews, "Who was God displeased with?" He answers, "It was with those who **sinned (by failing to believe God)**." These are the ones who died in the wilderness.
 - **Numbers 14-15** - God was displeased with those who didn't believe what He said about the Promised Land.

- **1 Cor. 10:5** - Paul says that with many of them (the Israelites) God was not well pleased.
- **Numbers 14:32** - God said they would die in the wilderness.

10. Why were these not able to enter into "His rest"? (18-19)

- Because of their lack of faith in God, who were not allowed to enter into the "rest" in Canaan.
 - **Numbers 14:22-30** - God swore that those who disobeyed and provoked Him (by not believing Him) would not enter Canaan.
- Canaan was a land of rest.
 - No more bondage or oppression, and no more wildernesses.
 - In Canaan, there were farms, vineyards, and cities which the Israelites were to have that they **did not build nor work for**.
 - **Heb. 3:12** - These "Hebrews" needed to see that, as those Israelites had failed to enter Canaan, because of their lack of faith in what God said, they would fail to enter heaven (chap. 3), if they failed to believe what God said to them.

Verse 19: *So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief* - They did not enter Canaan because they failed to believe what God said. **Here are some suggested reasons for their unbelief.**

1. Fear of hunger, thirst, and other physical dangers.
2. They exaggerated the dangers that confronted them. For example, they said the men of Canaan are "giants" and we are as "grasshoppers." They said the Canaanites have cities with "walls up to heaven" (**Deut. 1:28; Numbers 13:32-33**).
3. They thought they could not stand against their enemies.
4. They accepted what the ten spies said, rather than what God had said. God had said "**go up and take the land,**" *but the ten rebellious spies said "we can't do it."*
5. They did not trust God to the point of obeying God.
6. **Heb. 3:12** - These "Hebrews" needed to take heed lest they, too, fail to believe what God has said through His Son. To fail to remain faithful would

be to depart from the living God. (This is exactly what these Hebrew Christians were on the verge of doing. They were tempted to depart from God by returning to Judaism.)

“Digging Deeper for Better Things”

RESEARCH QUESTION: The Hebrew writer addresses his hearers as “*holy brethren*” in 3:1. To whom does this refer? How does one become such?

THOUGHT QUESTION: Why do you **THINK** Jesus is referred to as an Apostle in Hebrews 3:1?

Lesson 4

Reading: Hebrews 4

Hebrews 4

Jesus is Superior to Joshua

- **Key Verse:** Hebrews 4:9 - *"There remains therefore a rest for the people of God."*
- When Christians think of "Canaan" one may be filled with thoughts of a favorite song or we might think of Canaan as another word for Heaven. But for the Hebrew writer, here in Hebrews 4, he talks about Canaan as a "rest", and more importantly a "rest" that was missed out on by many, because of their unbelief (3:15-19).
- Today a person must trust in Jesus and "come unto" Him (Matthew 11:28-30) so He may grant them "rest" now and eternally (Mark 16:16; 2 Timothy 1:9; Matthew 10:22; Colossians 1:13; 2 Peter 1:11; Galatians 5:22; Matthew 25:21; John 5:24; Mark 10:29-30). Joshua led Israel into an earthly rest in Canaan but Jesus provides access to a *superior* "rest" for us. This greater rest is what this chapter is about.

Questions for study and discussion: (The verses in parenthesis will help you with a starting point for your study)

1. *Is there something the Christian should fear? (1)*

"Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it."

- This is not a fear that makes us "frightened," but one that fills us with concern and alertness.
 - Acts 10:35 - Those who fear God are accepted by Him.
 - Rom. 11:20; Heb. 12:28 - Christians are to fear--a fear that causes concern and alertness.
 - Heb. 11:7 - Noah moved with fear.
- Christians are to fear, however, lest any of them should seem to come short of it.

- Some of the Hebrew saints appear to have been disappointed in their immediate expectations as Christians.
- They had given up their ancient religion, they had suffered persecution for their faith, they had endured afflictions for Christ's sake. It seemed to some that all their sacrifices had been in vain.
- They had not entered into rest but into distress. It seemed to some that the promise of a rest surely did not apply in their case, for they had not found it.

2. Why did the preaching of the word of God not profit some who heard? (2)

For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, ^[a]not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

- The word "gospel" means "good news" or "glad tidings." The Israelites had the "good news" (gospel) of an earthly rest (in Canaan) preached to them, just as we have the "good news" of the heavenly rest preached to us.
- The believer is therefore to fear, for the mere fact that he has heard good news does not mean that he will enter into the promise. The Jews also heard good news, yet they died in the wilderness.
- The word preached by Moses did not profit them, because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it.
- The figure here is taken from the physical body and the digestive system. The Greek word translated *mixed* was used both of the digestion of food in the stomach and the assimilation of nutrients throughout the body.
- Regardless of the beauty, taste or value of food, it is of no use to the body unless it is properly digested and assimilated.
- The same is true spiritually. Israel heard the word of God but failed to "digest" it through faith and assimilate it to their profit.

- Food improperly digested will actually do harm. So also the word of God, which is given to save, will be a testimony and assurance of destruction unless it is mixed with faith (II Corinthians 2:15-16). It is not enough to hear God's word. It must be received in faith and held to in patience.

3. Who is promised the "rest" of God"? (3)

For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,' "although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

- Christians have "rest" in Christ now and they will have rest in heaven.
- Matt. 11:28-30 - We have rest now from:
 - Fear (Rom. 8:15).
 - Bondage of law (Gal. 5:1).
 - Condemnation (Rom. 8:1).
 - Bondage to sin (Rom. 8:2).
- Rest should be understood like salvation. We have it now and we will have it in heaven. See Mk. 16:16; 2 Tim. 1:9; Matt. 10:22; Col. 1:13; 2 Peter 1:11; Gal. 5:22; Matt. 25:21; John 5:24; Mk. 10:29-30.
- Rev. 14:13 - Not only do we have rest now, but we also expect rest in heaven.
- ***As He has said, so I swore in my wrath, they shall enter my rest*** - This is the same quotation as in chapter 3:11. God has sworn that those who do not believe shall not enter into the rest He has promised them. This statement is also a negative way of assuring those who remain faithful that they will enter into the rest that God has provided for them .
- ***although the works were finished from the foundation of the world*** - There was a rest planned in the mind of God from the beginning of the world.
 - Rev. 13:8; 1 Peter 1:20; Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9 - Christ was slain in the mind of God before the foundation of the world.

- Just as Jesus was slain in the mind of God, so the "rest" was planned in His mind from the foundation of the world.

SPECIAL NOTE: Beginning in verse 3 and going through verse 11, the writer proves that God has a "rest" promised to His people. It was not the Sabbath "rest" (the seventh day of the week rest) nor was it the "rest" in Canaan, but it is a "rest" that remains, a *heavenly rest*. Having warned them to be faithful, He now proves that there is a heavenly *rest* promised them. He does this in the following manner.

1. Verse 3 - There was a "rest" prepared in the mind of God from the foundation of the world.
2. Verses 4, 5 - It was not the seventh day rest, for, after they started resting on the Sabbath day, God was still talking about men who shall enter into His rest. It was a "rest" that He would provide for them that they had not received at that time.
3. Verse 6 - There is a rest remaining, and those who had the good tidings first preached to them did not enter, because of unbelief.
4. Verses 7, 8 - After they had already begun the seventh day "rest" and the "rest" in Canaan, God, through David in Psalms 95:7-8, was still talking about another "rest" (which was the rest in heaven). If the rest that God had planned was the "rest" in Canaan, then after Israel had entered that "rest," God would not later in Psalm 95:7-8 have talked about another "rest."
5. Verses 9-11 - The "rest" that remains is the "rest" in heaven that God had planned for His people from the foundation of the world. It is rest in the "new heaven and new earth" (2 Pet. 3:13ff; Rev. 21-22).

4. In the quote from Psalm 95:7-8, what is the key to hearing the "voice of God"? (7)

For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh *day* in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works";

- They were admonished like the Jews in the wilderness to hear his voice and harden not their hearts (Psalm 95:7-8).
- And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"

SPECIAL NOTE: Concerning the seventh day or Sabbath, the Bible teaches:

Gen. 2:2-3 - God set the day apart because He had rested on that day.

- **Note that Genesis 2:2-3 does not say *when* God sanctified the day. It was not set apart as far as man's observance was concerned until the Israelites came out of Egyptian bondage.**
- **Ex. 20:8-10 - The Sabbath is the seventh day of the week and not the first day.**
- **Ex. 16:22-23 - This shows that they had not been keeping the Sabbath as a "holy day" prior to this time. There is no example of Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph or any of the faithful observing the seventh day of the week as a Sabbath day before Israel left Egypt.**
- **Ex. 34:27-28 - The command to keep the Sabbath was given to *Israel*.**
- **Ps. 147:19-20 - The command was given *only* to Israel.**
- **Ex. 31:16-17 - It was a *sign* between God and Israel.**
- **NOTE - A wedding band is a "sign" between a man and his wife. If a man gave a wedding ring to all the women he met, then it would not be a sign to him and his wife. If all nations had been commanded to keep the Sabbath, then the Sabbath could not have been a "sign" between God and Israel.**
- **Deut. 5:15 - The Israelites were to keep the Sabbath because God had delivered them from Egyptian bondage.**
- **Neh. 9:13-14 - The Sabbath was made known to Israel on Mount Sinai.**
- **Ex. 31:16-17 - The Sabbath was to last "forever," which means "throughout their generation" or throughout the Jewish Age. "Forever" is limited to "their generations" or the Jewish Age.**
 - **Ex. 12:13-14 - The Passover was to be observed "forever."**
 - **Ex. 30:8 - Incense was to be offered "forever."**
 - **Eccl. 1:4 - Earth is going to abide "forever."**
- **"Forever" is sometimes limited to a certain period of time, as the above examples clearly show. The word "forever" is used to show that it will last "throughout" whatever time period is being considered but not necessarily eternal.**
- **Amos 8:5 - Israel asked, "when will the Sabbath be gone?"**
- **Amos 8:9 - God answered, "*In that day (that is, in the day the Sabbath would be gone) I will cause the sun to go down at noon and darken the earth in a clear day.*"**

- Matt. 27:45 - The earth was darkened at noon at the crucifixion.
- Col. 2:14-17 - The Sabbath Law was blotted out by Christ's death on cross.

5. From what have those who entered into God's rest ceased? (10)

- He has not been speaking concerning an ordinary human rest, which is brief and is followed by more labor.
 - The man who is entered into God's rest has ceased from his works forever, just as God did from his at the end of creation week.
- This is a rest of accomplished purpose, of fulfilled action, of completed labor.
 - It is another way of describing the salvation of [1:14](#) and [2:3](#), or the world to come of [2:5](#).
- Because this is the nature of the promised rest, it is also apparent that the Sabbath rest of the Jews is not meant, for that was followed by six days of more labor and had to be repeated every week.
 - In addition, the Sabbath rest was commanded but this rest of God was always promised (see also Matthew 11:28-30; Revelation 14:13).

NOTE:

Verse 9: *There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.* - There is still a "rest" that God's people are admonished to enter. This "rest" is superior to the rest that Israel received in Canaan, because this "rest that remains" is the rest that God had in mind for His people from the beginning. Thus, Christ is superior to Joshua, because He leads His people into a greater rest than the rest into which Joshua led Israel.

- Rev. 14:13 - We will rest from our labors.
- "Rest" does not mean inactivity or laziness, but "rest" from pain, sorrow, persecution, affliction, temptation, etc.
- Rev. 14:11; 20:10 - There is no rest for the wicked.
- Rev. 21-22:5 – These chapters described the ultimate rest God has for all the saved of all the ages.

6. How is the word of God described? (12)

God's word is alive.

- It is not a dead letter, but it is alive and active.
 - **John 6:63** - Words are life.
 - **1 Thess. 2:13** - The message is the word of God and it works in men.
 - **1 Cor. 2:13** - The words that the men used in writing the Bible were selected by the Holy Spirit.

and powerful -- The power of God's word is seen in the fact that: "Where there has been no 'word' there is no Christian."

- It takes the word to produce Christians.
 - **Rom. 1:16** - The gospel (word) is the power God uses to save men.
 - **1 Cor. 6:9-11** - This shows the power of God's word to change the lives of sinful men.
 - **Acts 2:37; 7:54** - The word cuts.
 - **Psalm 19:7** - The word converts.
 - **John 15:3** - The word cleans.

and sharper than any two-edged sword, - The word of God is penetrating and sharp.

- **Eph. 6:17** - The word is the sword of the Spirit.
- **Rev. 1:16** - In the vision that John saw of Christ "out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword."

7. What is not "hidden" before God? (13)

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, - No creature can escape God. He sees us all.

- **Gen. 3:8** - Adam and Eve tried to hide but couldn't.
- **Jonah 1-2** - Jonah tried to run, but couldn't get away from him.
- **Ps. 33:13-15** - The Lord looks from heaven and He sees all men.

but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. - God sees and knows all things. He knows all about us, nothing is hidden from him.

- **Prov. 15:3** - The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

- **Ps. 139:1-16** – None escape His presence or perception.
- **Rom. 14:12** - Everyone must give account to God.
- **2 Cor. 5:10** – It's either good works (those done in Christ) or bad works (those done by unbelievers), but not both.

8. Why should Christians “hold fast” to their confession? (14)

Verse 14: *Seeing then that we have a great high priest* – The writer had already identified Jesus as the Christian's High Priest.

- **Heb. 2:17** - He is identified as a faithful and merciful High Priest.
- **Heb. 3:1** - He is the “*High Priest of our confession.*”

who passed through the heavens - When the Jews said to these Hebrew Christians: "You have no temple, no sacrifices, no city, and no high priest." The Christians could now answer with: "*We have a great High Priest who is in heaven and appears in the very presence of God for us.*"

- **Acts 1:11** - Jesus went into heaven.
- **Heb. 8:1** - He is at the right hand of God in the heavens.
- **Heb. 9:24** - Christ has entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

Jesus, the Son of God - Not only is the Christian's High Priest in heaven, but more than that, He is the very Son of God.

- **Matt. 16:16** - He is the Son of the Living God.
- **John 3:16** – He is the only begotten Son.

let us hold fast our confession - The Hebrew Christians had confessed their faith in Jesus as God's Son. They had embraced His religion--the religion that centers in Him and focuses on Him. However, they were now being tempted to renounce the confession they had made and go back into Judaism.

- The writer reminds them that since we have this great High Priest, who is in heaven, the very Son of God, let us hold fast to that confession of our faith in Him.
- **Matt. 10:32-33** - If we continue to confess Him on earth, then He will confess us in heaven before the Father.

9. Who is the High Priest of verse 15 and how is He described?

Verse 15: *For we have not a High Priest that cannot sympathize with our weaknesses* - Christ knows what it is like to live in the flesh. He can understand our weaknesses and sympathize with us in times of need.

- **Heb. 2:17** - He was made like unto His brethren that He might be a faithful and merciful high priest.
- Although He is in heaven, He is not out of touch when we are in trouble.

but was in all points tempted as we are - Christ knows what it is like to be tempted, He was tempted just as we are and He understands.

- **1 John 2:15-17** - Man is tempted in three main avenues: *the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.*
 - **Gen. 3:1-6** - It was through these three avenues that Satan tempted Eve as follows:
 - She saw the tree was good for food - lust of the flesh.
 - And that it was pleasant to the eyes - lust of the eyes.
 - A tree desired to make one wise - pride of life.
 - **Matt. 3; Luke 4** - Jesus was also tempted in these three respects as follows:
 - He was tempted to turn stone into bread - lust of the flesh.
 - He was shown all the kingdoms of the world - lust of the eyes.
 - He was tempted to jump off the pinnacle of the temple - the pride of life ("you'll really show your power").
 - Jesus was also tempted throughout His earthly ministry.
 - The devil only left Him for a season (**Luke 4:13**).
 - After the temptation in the wilderness, then Satan used his representatives.
 - **Matt. 16:23** (Peter – get behind me...“
 - **Matt. 27:40, 42.** Leading Priests, Teachers of Religious Law, and elders, mocked him. On the cross, *tear the temple down and build it back in three days but he can't save himself.*“

yet without sin - Although He was tempted in all points like we are, He still did not sin - not even one time.

- **2 Cor. 5:21** - He knew no sin.
- **1 John 3:5** - In Him is no sin.

10. What is the “throne of grace”? How may we approach it? (16)
Let us therefore come boldly:

- Because we have a High Priest who is both omnipotent and compassionate, we can come boldly to His throne.
- Discouraging us from this access is a central strategy of Satan. The devil sometimes wants us to consider **Jesus as unapproachable**- perhaps encouraging us to **come by Mary or the saints** instead of Jesus. Sometimes the devil wants us to think of Jesus as being powerless to help, not as one who sits on a throne in heaven.

Verse 16: *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace* - The word "boldly" here **speaks of confidence**.

- Because He can be touched with our weaknesses (v. 15) we need to come to the throne of grace and favor with confidence and courage.
- 1 John 5:14-15 - We can have confidence and courage.

that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need –

- The throne of God is a throne of grace. When we come, we may obtain **mercy (this is not getting what we deserve)** and find **grace (this is getting what we don't deserve)** in our time of need.
- **Man needs help when he is:**
 - Troubled (John 14:1-3).
 - Tempted (1 Cor. 10:13; Heb. 2:18).
 - Dying (Ps. 23).
 - Lacking physical necessities (Matt. 6:25-34).
 - Rejected by others. (Isa. 53:3).

- **Heb. 13:5-6** - When a Christian needs help physically, financially, spiritually, or mentally he needs to come to God for help.
- **Psalm 46:1** - He is our refuge and strength and a very present help in trouble.

“Digging Deeper for Better Things”

RESEARCH QUESTION: Where is Hebrews 4:4 found in the Old Testament and what is its significance in this passage?

THOUGHT QUESTION: What do you **THINK** is the difference between the “rest” promised to the ancient Israelites and the “rest” promised to Christians today?

A Message of “Better Things” from Hebrews 4

- There is no example of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph or any of the faithful observing the seventh day of the week as a Sabbath day before Israel left Egypt.
- Keep in mind these verses:
 - Exodus 34:27-28 - The command to keep the Sabbath was given to *Israel*.
 - Psalm 147:19-20 - The command was given *only* to Israel.
 - Exodus 31:16-17 - It was a *sign* between God and Israel.
- Let’s think about it this way: A wedding band is a "sign" between a man and his wife. If a man gave a wedding ring to all the women he met, then it would not be a sign to him and his wife. If all nations had been commanded to keep the Sabbath, then the Sabbath could not have been a "sign" between God and Israel.
- Joshua was one of the greatest leaders of God’s people who ever lived. They never enjoyed greater success and better “rest” than when he was their leader. They were faithful all the days of Joshua because of his influence (Joshua 24:31). But *Jesus was far superior to Joshua* and the “rest” He provides is eternal/heavenly as opposed to temporary/earthly.

Lesson 5

Reading: Hebrews 5

Hebrews 5

Jesus is Superior to Aaron

- **Key Verses:** Hebrews 5:8-9 - *"...though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him..."*
- Having mentioned that Christ is our High Priest in the latter part of chapter four the writer continues showing how *Christ is superior to Aaron of the Levitical priesthood*. In the first ten verses of this chapter, he continues to discuss Christ as a superior High Priest. This discussion will be interrupted in verse 11, and then resumed again in chapter 7.
- The center and glory of Judaism was the divinely appointed priesthood. What then had Christianity to offer on this point? The Judaizers could say, "In this new religion you don't even have a high priest. How are you going to get your sins pardoned, when you have no high priest to offer sacrifices for your sins? How are your priestly wants and needs going to be supplied?" In chapters 5-10 the Hebrew writer will answer these and other questions.

Questions for study and discussion: (The verses in parenthesis will help you with a starting point for your study)

1. *What did the high priest offer? (1)*

- For indicates that what follows is based on the final remarks of chapter four.
- Every high priest in the Jewish order is taken from among men and is a man himself.
- The high priest's ministry involves both God and man.
- He is **ordained** or appointed or divinely named **for** the sake of **men**. That is, he works on their behalf and, we might even say, in their stead.
- He also serves **in things pertaining to God**. **The high priest's central function is making offerings to God for sins.**

2. On whom did the high priest have compassion? Why? (2)

- The high priest must be able to have compassion.
 - Literally he "measures his feelings" with the people. He is not *excessively swayed by harsh justice, nor moved overmuch by indulgent pity.*
 - He must measure his feelings in view of the *people's responsibilities on the one hand*, but in view of their *circumstances and weaknesses on the other*. Himself a man, he is aware of human weakness.
 - Appointed by God for *divine service, he is aware of God's just and holy demands.*
 - The Levitical high priest served in a very exalted and holy position.
 - His was a representative role: representing God among the people, and representing the people before God (Exodus 28:29-30, 36-43; see Leviticus 16).
- Priestly offerings were for the benefit of **the ignorant**, that is, those whose sin was unknown to them at the time they committed it, and for those who *were out of the way or wayward*, which is the literal meaning of erring.
 - The original construction of this verse suggests that both terms refer to the same people, *those who err through ignorance.*
 - The point is that priestly service and offerings were for sins of weakness or ignorance.
 - There was no sacrifice for **presumptuous sins** (Numbers 15:30-31 ³⁰ *"But anyone who sins defiantly, whether native-born or foreigner, blasphemes the LORD and must be cut off from the people of Israel. ³¹ Because they have despised the LORD's word and broken his commands, they must surely be cut off; their guilt remains on them."*; see verses 22ff in the same chapter).
 - The Hebrews author later gives a similar warning to those under the new covenant ([10:26-29](#)).
- It was **necessary for the priest to be compassionate**, for he also was compassed or surrounded with infirmity or weakness.
 - A play on the word may be intended here, for the same word which means "*surrounded*" at other times means "*clothed*."
 - The priest was separated from his fellow Jews and was distinguished from them by the holy robes of his office.

- *Yet he was one of them in weakness and sin.*
- Here was an imperfection of the Old Testament priesthood -the priest, like every other man, was clothed in weakness.
- The fact that he also wore priestly robes did not change that!
- *It remained for Christ to serve as perfect priest through His own sinlessness and to offer a perfect sacrifice which could remove sins forever.*

Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins - The high priest must offer for his own sins as well as for the sins of the people.

- *Lev. 4:3 – “If the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer to the LORD for his sin which he has sinned a young bull without blemish as a sin offering.”*
- *Heb. 7:27 – “He offered first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people.”*

3. By whom was the high priest called? (4) Who is used as an example of such?

- No man among the Jews took the priesthood to himself.
 - The priests were appointed of God, as signified in the divine appointment of Aaron their head (Exodus 28:1).

4. Christ is said to be a Priest after the order of whom? (6) Where is this prophecy located?

Verse 6: As He also says in another place - This is a quotation from **Ps. 110:4**.

You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek - God, who made the statement in Psalm 2:7, said something else about the Messiah in Psalm 110:4. This quotation reveals that the Messiah would be called of God as a High Priest, not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek.

- Paul will discuss Melchizedek in chapter seven. His point in this verse is to show that Christ is called of God to be High Priest.

5. *What is known about this particular priest?*

- There have been many varying opinions of just who this man really was. Some have thought that he was pre-incarnate Christ, the Holy Spirit, an angel, Shem, Enoch, and even others.
- I believe that he was a man named Melchizedek, but exactly who he was is a mystery.
- This could have been an OT appearance of the Son of God. He made other appearances in Genesis (Gen. 18), but this is by no means certain.
 - Heb. 7:4 - Melchizedek was a great man.
 - Heb. - 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17 –
 - He is mentioned eight times in Hebrews.
- Gen. 14:18; Ps. 110:4 - He is mentioned twice in the Old Testament.

king of Salem - Salem refers to Jerusalem. He seems to have been the actual King of Salem, since the King of Sodom is also mentioned in the same context.

- Gen. 14:17-18 – The king of Sodom and king of Salem are both named here.
- Ps. 76:2 - Jerusalem here is referred to as Salem. Note: **Jeru-salem**.

priest of the Most High God - This is very important because it shows that Melchizedek was both King and Priest at the same time.

6. *Whose prayers are discussed in verse 7? How did He pray and what was the request? Were the prayers heard? If so, how and why? (7)*

- *Jesus*
- Four terms express the intensity of Christ's suffering in the face of death.
 - **Prayers** signify pleadings with reference to a need.
 - **Supplications** stress the act of imploring or asking.
 - **Strong crying** shows the depth of these calls for help.
 - Tears are not mentioned in the Gospel accounts of Gethsemane, but were certainly visible on that occasion as an external indication of

the utter agony of soul within the Lord (Matthew 26:36-44; Mark 14:32-41; Luke 22:39-45).

- The statement that Christ was heard in these prayers is confusing to some, but need not be when thought is given to the actual prayer of the Lord.
 - Christ did not pray simply that the cup of suffering might pass Him by, though that was included in His request (see references above).
 - His primary prayer -- and this is the writer's chief point in this verse -- was for the will of God to be done!
 - That prayer was answered -- by the death, yes, and by the resurrection of the Son who willingly submitted to the Father's sovereign will! See the references given above, also John 12:23-33.
 - Again there may be an allusion to Psalm 22, where the speaker cries to God (verse two) and is heard (verse 24). See the [comments at 2:12](#) on that psalm.

7. How did Christ learn obedience? (8)

- *Yet being the Son* -- that more excellent Son of chapter one -- Christ learned obedience.
 - Christ learned obedience in experiencing absolute submission to God's will.
 - This does not mean that His life ever contained any element of rebellion or disobedience, for it did not. He came for the purpose of doing God's will (Hebrews 10:7) and He finished what He came to do (John 17:4).
- *Learned* here translates rather a word kin to that from which we have "disciple" and "discipline." Christ was the disciple, par excellence.
 - He experienced the full discipline of obedience -- even in suffering. By His suffering He learned, by experience, what full obedience means.
 - In this He learned and qualified to sanctify those who should put their trust in Him. He is now perfectly able to help them when they are tempted (see 2:17-18).

8. When, according to the Scripture, did Jesus become the "author of eternal salvation"? To what does this refer?

and having been perfected - By means of His suffering, He was made a perfect "Savior." He was thereby fully qualified in every respect to be our Redeemer.

- Heb. 2:10 - His suffering as a man perfectly qualified Him to be our High Priest.
- Heb. 2:17 - He knows what it is like to suffer and to obey. Therefore, He can be a faithful and merciful High Priest.
- By the same suffering and obedience He was perfected as Source of eternal salvation. "*Captain*" signifies "pioneer," and Christ has already gone ahead to enter the eternal glory which will be shared one day by the "many sons" ([2:10](#); see [6:20](#)).
- *Author here means "source,"* as it is only from Christ, and through Him, and by His work of obedience that those "sons" will share in the glory He now has as Son.
- Author may also be translated "cause," suggesting that Christ's perfect obedience is the cause of our salvation, not our own imperfect obedience, though this very verse affirms the fact of obedience on our part if we are recipients of the salvation He has made a reality.
- The English connection between "author" and "authority" is not in our word here, though Christ certainly has all authority as Son and Lord (Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:9-11).

9. To whom is Christ the "author of eternal salvation"? (9) What does this entail?

- Christ is author or cause or source of salvation to them that obey him.
 - It is always the case that blessing follows obedience..
 - though sometimes the obedience of one man secures blessing for another. Abraham's obedience was the basis on which God blessed his descendants (Genesis 22:15-18; Deuteronomy 4:37; 9:4-6).
 - How much more does Christ's obedience -- a perfect obedience -- result in the perfect salvation of all who share sonship with Him (see Romans 5:19).

- **And all those (us) must and will share also with Him in faithful obedience to God an obedience in which He led the way, set the example and obtained salvation for those who follow.**
- **SPECIAL NOTE:** The writer at this point interrupts his discussion of Christ's priesthood to discuss the failures of his Hebrew readers. This he will do in the remainder of chapter 5 and also in chapter 6. He will resume his discussion of "The Superiority of Christ's over Aaron and the Levitical priesthood" in chapter 7:1.

10. What seemed to be a troubling problem for many Hebrews? (12)

Verse 11: since you have become dull of hearing (spiritually dull and don't seem to listen NLT) – This is the reason it would be hard to explain. Not only were parts of it somewhat difficult, but they were slow to learn. They had evidently grown tired of listening and learning.

- **Difficulty in understanding a certain subject can usually be caused by one of three things:**
 - **The teacher's inability.**
 - **The subject matter being deep and difficult.**
 - **The hearers being uninterested and not eager to learn.**
- **In the case of the Hebrews, it was not the speaker or the subject, but the hearers.**
- **We need to consider the importance of hearing. We often emphasize the importance of preaching (1 Cor. 1:21; Mk. 16:15; Gal. 1:8, 9; 2 Tim. 4:1-2), but we seldom think about the importance of hearing.**
- **The Bible has a lot to say about "hearing." The Lord puts great emphasis on hearing the word.**
 - **Lk. 8:18 - Take heed how you hear.**
 - **Mk. 4:24 - Take heed what you hear.**
 - **Lk. 8:8 - He that has ears to hear, let him hear.**
 - **Rev. 2, 3 - Hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**
 - **Matt. 17:5 - Hear Him.**
 - **Rom. 10:17 - Faith comes by hearing.**
 - **Acts 3:22-23 - Those who refuse to hear will be "cut off."**
- **The Bible also talks about different kinds of "hearers."**

- 1 Tim. 4:1-4 - Those with itching ears who turn away their ears from the truth.
 - James 1:22 – The danger of those who hear only.
 - James 1:25 - Those who are forgetful hearers.
 - Matt. 13:15; Heb. 5:11 - Those who are dull hearers.
 - Lk. 8:15 - Those who hear the word and keep it.
- The preacher is not the only one involved in the sermon, so are the hearers.

Verse 12: For though by this time you ought to be teachers –

- They had had time enough to learn enough to teach others.
 - It had most likely been about thirty years or so since Pentecost and the establishment of the church.
 - They should have grown in knowledge.
 - They should have been able by now to teach others.
 - This shows that after a time most of us should be able to teach others at least to some degree. This also proves that God expects us to be able to teach.

you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God “The basic things about God’s word” NLT) - Instead of being able to teach others, they needed teaching again, the elementary teaching of the gospel.

- Acts 2 - The first principles can be learned in one sermon.

and you have come –

- This shows that they had not always been this way, but rather had become such.
- The same is often true today.
- Right after a Christian is converted he cannot get enough of the word; but later, many get to the point where they don't want to hear it, and forget what they once knew.

to need milk - They had become such as had need of milk or the elementary teaching of the gospel. They needed the basics of the Christian religion.

- 1 Peter 2:2 - Milk is for babes in Christ or the recently converted.

- 1 Cor. 3:2 - Paul also used "milk and meat" when writing to the Corinthians to refer to the elementary or simple truths as compared to the deeper things.

and not solid food - This refers to the deeper teaching of the word.

- 2 Peter 3:15-16 - Some of the "meat" of the word is hard to be understood.
- There is a lot of "meat" or deeper teaching in almost all of the books of the Bible.

11. To what does "solid food" refer and to whom does it "belong"? (14)

But solid food belongs to those who are ^[a]of full age, that is, those who by reason of ^[b]use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil NKJV.

- *Strong meat is for the one who is of full age*, the perfect or mature person. The mature Christian by reason of use or exercise has his senses exercised to discern both good and evil.
- *Senses* translates a word which give us our "aesthetics," though here it has a figurative meaning. Exercised is from a word family which gives "gymnasium," and suggest perhaps that maturity in spiritual discernment comes only through regular workouts.
- To discern good and evil represents the ability and/or the authority to make independent moral choices (see Genesis 3:5, 22; Deuteronomy 1:39; II Samuel 14:17; 19:35; I Kings 3:9; Isaiah 7:16). The Christian is to mature to the point of making his own moral judgements; he is to learn to discern the Lord's will in each circumstance of his own life (see Romans 12:2; Ephesians 5:10, 17; I Thessalonians 4:1-4).

"Digging Deeper for Better Things"

THOUGHT QUESTION: What do you **THINK** is the difference between "*gifts*" and "*sacrifices*" which were being offered by the high priest of the Old Testament? (5:1)

- Gen. 4:3-5 - "Gifts and sacrifices" may refer to the same offerings.
- Likely there is a difference. "Gifts" may refer to bloodless offerings such as incense, meal, drink etc. "Sacrifices" refer to blood offerings.

Hebrews 6

Jesus Offers Superior Hope

- Key Verse: Hebrews 6:1 - *“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.”*
- The "*perfection*" mentioned in Hebrews 6:1 is not a “life of perfection” but rather a higher level of maturity that each believer must strive to attain. It involves a deeper knowledge and reliance of the Word of God; which, in turn, demands the maturity of discipline to take the necessary time and effort to study and become more intimate with the principles found in Scripture. The emphasis in the latter part of this chapter is on the hope of heaven that Jesus gives which is an anchor for the soul - *a superior hope* that will always help us “go on to perfection” and learn as much as we can.
- Remarkably just five minutes a day involved in reading the word of God and meditating on one of its great principles equals thirty hours of study per year. Over the course of a lifetime that can help one grow and mature in Christ.

Questions for study and discussion: (The verses in parenthesis will help you with a starting point for your study)

1. How can one “go on to perfection”? (1) What does this include?

Verse 1: *Therefore leaving the discussion* - The first principles of the doctrine of Christ are not "left" in the sense that we forsake them. The Christian is to go forward, not backward, nor is he to remain in the same place. The meaning likely involves leaving the first principles and not to discuss them now. We "leave" the first principles like we do the alphabet, addition, subtraction, etc. We do not leave them in the sense of forsaking them because they are always needful to know, but not to always focus on them once they are really learned.

of the elementary principles of Christ - Some think that the "principles" refer to the things concerning Christ which were taught, typified, and predicted in the Old Testament. (See McKnight and Pink). However, it seems to me to be the "teaching of Christ" in the New Testament. The first principles are the first principles of the gospel of Christ.

Heb. 5:12 - The principles of Christ that he is talking about are the things that they would need to be "taught again" if they forgot them. A Christian would not necessarily need the Old Testament types, etc., before being taught the meat of the gospel.

Heb. 5:12 – The writer here refers to the *first* principles. The A.S.V. renders this "wherefore leaving the doctrine of the *first principles* of Christ..."

Heb. 5:12 - The "principles" here discussed are those that had already been taught to these Hebrews at one time, because the writer says they needed to be taught them "again." Christians are not necessarily taught the types and shadows in the Old Testament, but they are taught the first principles of the gospel. If they were to forget them, they would need to be taught them again.

Heb, 5:12 - The types and shadows of the Old Testament are not considered part of the "milk" of the word by most Christians, because many of them are hard to understand.

let us go on to perfection - Let us go on toward maturity and full growth.

Matt. 5:48 - We are to strive to be *perfect*. We will never be sinless or perfect in our conduct, but we can be mature Christians as we strive for perfection.

1 Jn. 1:8 - If we say we have (present tense) no sin we deceive ourselves.

2. What four things are listed in verse 2 and to what does each refer?
Baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment

Laying on of hands...

This likely has reference to the laying on of the apostles' hands to confer miraculous gifts to others.

Acts 8:18 – It was through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given. Here the reference is to the gifts given and not the Spirit Himself. All Christians receive the indwelling Spirit when they are baptized (Acts 2:38), but not the various gifts that were given by the laying on of the apostles hands.

- ***Acts 6:6-8; Acts 19:1-6; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6 - These verses show that the apostles had the power to lay hands on others and confer miraculous gifts.***
- ***Acts 8:14-19 - It may be the case that only the apostles could confer these specific gifts to others.***
- ***Hands were laid on by others at times to appoint them for special missions or offices.***
- ***Acts 13:3 - The disciples at Antioch laid hands on Barnabas and Paul, but it was not to confer miraculous gifts.***
- ***1 Tim. 4:14 - The miraculous gift was given to Timothy by the laying on of Paul's hands (2 Tim. 1:6). Paul's hands were evidently accompanied by that of the local elders. They were likely showing their approval and Paul was perhaps showing his respect for the office of the elders.***

Of resurrection of the dead

- ***Lk. 24:46-47 - Jesus rose from the dead.***
- ***1 Cor: 15:1-4 - The resurrection of Christ is one of the facts of the gospel.***
- ***John 5:28-29 - Someday all in the graves are going to be resurrected.***
- ***1 Cor. 15:35ff - Paul discussed the resurrection of the righteous at length in this part of the Corinthian letter.***

eternal judgment

- ***Acts 24:15 - Paul reasoned of judgment to come.***
- ***Acts 17:30-32 - God has appointed a day to judge the world.***
- ***Heb. 9:27 - After death will come the judgment.***
- ***Matt. 25:30-46 - Jesus pictures how the judgment will be.***
- ***2 Tim. 4:1 - Jesus will be the Judge.***
- ***John 12:48 - Those who reject the gospel will be judged by the words of Jesus***
- ***Matt. 25:46 - Eternal verdicts will be rendered.***

- Jn. 8:24 – Christians will not come into judgment for their sins because Christ has already suffered for them. They are there to be welcomed and rewarded.

SPECIAL NOTE: *In verses 4-8 the writer emphasizes the consequences of falling away.*

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age ⁶ and who have fallen^[c] away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. ⁷ Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. ⁸ But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

Verse 4: For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened –

- *Those who were really converted.*
- *These were those who had been enlightened by the gospel and had been truly converted.*
- *If "once enlightened" does not refer to those who are Christians, how many times must one become "enlightened" to be a Christian?*

3. How are the "they" of verse six described in verses 4-5?

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened

- *Heb. 10:32 - The Hebrews had been "illuminated" or enlightened.*
- *2 Cor. 4:4 – The light of the gospel had enlightened them.*
- *Col. 1:13 – Believers are conveyed out of the kingdom of darkness.*

and have tasted the heavenly gift –

- *Salvation in Christ is what he means.*
- *Heb. 3:1 - The heavenly call has a heavenly gift.*
- *Eph. 2:8-9 - Salvation in Christ is a "gift" of God.*
- *John 6:33 - Jesus came down from heaven and He is the "gift."*

- **2 Cor. 9:15 - Therefore, salvation in Christ is an inexpressible gift.**

and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit –

- **This refers to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that all Christians receive when they are baptized into Christ. The Spirit dwells in our hearts.**
- **Acts 2:38 - Those who receive remission of sins are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit.**
- **Acts 5:32 - The Holy Spirit is given to them that obey.**
- **Gal. 4:6 - The Spirit is given because we are sons.**
- **1 Cor. 6:19 – The Spirit dwells or lives in the body of the saints.**
- **Rom. 8:9-11 – If one does not have the indwelling Spirit he does not belong to Jesus.**

who have tasted the goodness of the word of God

- **The word is food for the soul.**
- **Ps. 119:103 - "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth."**
- **Matt. 4:4 - Man lives by the word of God.**
- **1 Peter 2:2; Heb. 5:12-14 - The word is milk and meat for the soul.**

and the powers of the age to come –

- **The powers would include the power of Holy Spirit in His various manifestations as well as other blessings we receive as believers.**
- **The phrase "world to come" indicates that there will be an age after this one and that believers even now experience the same kind of "power" that we will experience then but not to the same degree.**
- **Mk. 10:30 – There is a period called "now in this time" referring to the time when believers receive many blessings for being believers (physical blessings, spiritual family members, etc.) and there is "the age to come" where they will receive eternal life in the new heaven and new earth.**
- **Heb. 2:5 - The "world to come" is the age when "an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of Christ" which is in the new heaven and new earth (2 Pet. 1:11; 3:13).**
- **Rev. 21:1-22:3 – God and the Lamb will still be on the throne in the new heaven and new earth.**

4. Why is it said that it is “impossible” for them to come to repentance? (6)

Verse 6: if they shall fall away

- *Some see a difference between "falling" and falling "away." They believe that the extent of the fall of the Christian under consideration here is "away." In other words, the man who falls (2 Cor. 10:12) might repent, but the man who falls "away" - it is impossible to get him to repent. This may or may not be the case.*
- *If a Jewish Christian went back into Judaism and renounced Christ, then one could not get him to repent as long as he remained in that mind set, because he would have rejected the gospel. If one rejects the gospel then there is nothing else that could cause him to repent.*
- *Another interpretation of this difficult verse is, "If a Christian falls away (in this case goes back into Judaism) it is impossible to get them to repent with the first principles of the gospel. They would have already heard, believed, and then rejected them.*
- *Therefore, it would be impossible for one to get this kind of person to repent with the first principles that he continues to reject."*

to renew them again to repentance –

- *The thing that is impossible is to "renew them again to repentance."*
- *These verses say that in some cases a Christian can fall so far away that he will not repent.*
- *If they would repent, then, of course, God would forgive them (2 Pet. 3:9).*
- *It is impossible to get these who "fall away" by continually renouncing the sacrifice of Jesus to repent.*
- *If these Jewish Christians (who were "enlightened," had tasted the heavenly gift, had partaken of the Holy Spirit, had tasted the good word of God, and the power of the age to come) were to reject Christianity and go back to Judaism, what further evidence could there be to convince them to repent?*
- *Since they cannot be persuaded by the gospel (which they have rejected), then they can't be forgiven, because they won't repent and turning to Jesus is essential.*
- *The Bible clearly teaches that a Christian who falls can be forgiven when he acknowledges his need of forgiveness.*

- Acts 8:13-22 - Peter would not have told Simon to "repent and pray" if Simon could not have repented and been forgiven,
- Gal. 6:1 - A Christian overtaken by sin can be restored.
- James 5:19-20 - A brother who errs from the truth can be converted.
- James 5:16; 1 John 1:9 - Christians can be forgiven if they will admit that they have sinned.
- Gal. 2:14 - Peter sinned and was forgiven.
- While the Bible clearly teaches **that a Christian who falls can be forgiven if he repents**, it also teaches **in Hebrews 6:4-6 that a Christian can fall so far away by continually rejecting Jesus that he will never repent.**

5. Is it possible for one of us today to "crucify again" the Son of God? (6) How?

since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God

- That is, they crucify in their own minds the Son of God afresh.
- When a person (Christian) rejects Jesus as the sin offering it appears that he agrees that Christ deserved to be crucified as an imposter.
- These Jewish Christians, if they returned to Judaism, would have been saying, "Christ deserved to be crucified as a false teacher." They would crucify Him again in their minds and by their actions.
- Heb. 10:25-31 - Willful sinning on the part of a Christian is a dangerous thing which in this context is forsaking Jesus.
- 2 Peter 2:20-22 – A Christian going back into sin is like a dog going back and eating his own vomit.

and put Him to an open shame

- The Christian who goes back into the world or back into Judaism brings shame on Christ.
- He makes Christ appear powerless. He makes it appear that Christ doesn't have the power to keep those who are His.
- He shames Christ by renouncing Him.
- Heb. 12:1-2 – When Jesus was crucified He endured the cross despising the shame.
- Heb. 10:29 – Those who continue to forsake Christ count His blood a common or ordinary thing, thus putting Him to open shame.
- It also brings shame on the church. When a ball player drops the ball, he usually feels bad, because he hurts the team.

6. What significance do verses 7-8 have in this passage?

Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. ⁸ But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

For the earth, which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it –

- *The earth is used here to illustrate the Christian.*
- *Just as the earth drinks in the rain, so the Christian drinks in the blessings of God.*

and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; -

- *Herbs are symbolic of the fruit desired in the life of a Christian.*
- *Good seed and good soil with refreshment (rain) from God should produce good fruit.*
- *Likewise, Christians with refreshment (blessings) from God should bring forth good fruits.*
- *Those Christians who do bring forth good fruit will receive blessings from God.*

Verse 8: but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, -

- *Just as land that brings forth thorns and briers is rejected, so is the Christian who does not bear fruit or live faithfully.*
- *John 15:1-5 - Jesus requires that His disciples bear fruit for Him.*
- *Gal. 5:22ff – This is fruit that the Spirit produces in us.*

whose end is to be burned -

- *John 15:6 - Fruitless branches will be gathered and burned.*
- *Gal. 5:22ff – The fruit of the Spirit is listed here which illustrates faithfulness.*
- *Rom. 6:22 – Fruit is holiness which can only come from faithfulness.*

SPECIAL NOTE: *Beginning in verse 9 the writer declares his hope for them. He first rebukes them and points out those things wrong with them (5:11-6:8), then he encourages them by expressing his confidence in them, and by assuring them of salvation in Christ (vs. 9-20).*

7. What “better” things are Christians encouraged to do and be? (9-12)

Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case—the things that have to do with salvation. ¹⁰ God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. ¹¹ We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. ¹² We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

- *What is true in the physical realm is true also in the spiritual, and the author’s intention is to prevent this fate among his readers.*
- *Having given such a **stern warning**, he now quickly softens his tone to encouragement. He is persuaded or convinced that better things than this will come from his readers.*
- *He looks for the **fruitful lives and works which accompany salvation, things closely aligned with it and holding fast to it** (see **Ephesians 2:10**; other passages in notes on 13:21). His words are meant as a warning, not as a present judgment. His readers have shown fruits worthy of God in the past, and he urges them to remain steadfast in such a life in the future.*
- ***6:10. God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.***
 - ***God is not unrighteous and will not forget any work or labor growing out of love and done because of his name or because of the relationship sustained to Him.** The Hebrew Christians had ministered to or served the saints, their brethren -- both in the past and in the writer’s present (see 10:32-34). **Men often forget our good deeds, but God won't.***
- ***6:11. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized.***

*He wants every one of them to demonstrate the same diligence, not only now but to **the full assurance of hope unto the end**. Their danger was in stopping short of completion, of **falling back before the goal had been attained**. Against this he warns repeatedly (3:6, 14; 10:23).*

- **6:12.** *We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised. They are not to be slothful (the same word translated "dull" in 5:11; see notes there), but rather are to be (literally "become") followers or imitators of those godly men of old who did inherit the blessings contained in God's promises. Success always comes through faith (which in the Bible means trust, reliance and commitment as well as intellectual acceptance) and patience or longsuffering perseverance.*

8. What promise did God make to Abraham? (13-14)

When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants."

- *God would bless him.*
- *He would have numerous descendants. All nations would be blessed through his seed.*
- **Gal. 3:16** – *The seed or descendant who would be Christ would descend from Isaac.*

9. When did Abraham obtain the promise? (15)

And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

- *He obtained the promise so far as it pertained to his personal enjoyment. He received the promise, mentioned in verse 14 of this chapter, before he died. He received Isaac and through him the promise was obtained.*
- *Abraham lived long enough to see the promise, about being blessed and having many descendants, fulfilled (Milligan and Bales).*
- *After waiting patiently Abraham received the promise.*
- *Doesn't say "waiting perfectly patient" does it?*

10. What is true concerning the nature of God? (18)

Hebrews 6:16-18: *People swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. ¹⁷ Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. ¹⁸ God did this so that, by two*

unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged.

- *God's promise was made twice sure by two immutable things:*
- *His word (it is impossible for God to lie),*
- *and His oath (taken in His own name).*
- *As man views the situation, he may have full confidence in the promise of God.*
- *Titus 1:2 - God cannot lie.*
- *Num. 23:19 – God is not man that He should lie.*

11. What is the “hope we have as an anchor”? (19)

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,

- *The HOPE is That what God says is TRUE!!*
- *This hope is an anchor of the soul.*
- *The anchor was a symbol of hope in the ancient world as well as now.*
- *The aptness of the figure of an anchor appears in the fact that an anchor is not doing any good at all as long as it is visible.*
- *It is only when it disappears in the deep beneath that it stabilizes and protects the ship; how beautiful is the imagery of Christ's also being out of sight from Christians, having disappeared into the unseen world, but who is nevertheless connected with Christians by the strong and effective cable of his love, just as the anchor, though unseen, is connected to the ship by a mighty chain.*
- *The absolutely necessary disappearance of the anchor, if it is to do any good, also suggests the necessity of Christ's physical separation from his followers which was accomplished when he ascended into the unseen world.*
- *That this was truly necessary is plain in the light of Hebrews 8:4, where it is shown that Christ would have been no priest at all if he had remained upon the earth. therefore, in order for him to function as the great High Priest of Christians, he of necessity entered that higher, unseen sphere.*
- *Thus it is literally and gloriously true that the Christian's hope is in heaven where the Lord has already entered; and, with that hope, all else that really matters is also there.*

- For the Christian, **his treasure is there** (Matthew 6:19), **his citizenship is there** (Philippians 3:20), **his name is written there** (Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3), **his Lord is there** (as here, and in John 14:1-6), and **his affections should be there** (Colossians 3:2 KJV).

12. Who is the “forerunner”? Where has He entered and for whom? (20)

where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Christ – the inner sanctuary - Christians

- *Of great interest is the word "forerunner," the implications of which are so extensive.*
- ***It means that where Christ has gone his disciples shall at last follow, that where he is there they may be; and the priority of his entrance into the upper and better country suggests the services that Christ is there and performing for them that shall in due time arrive to be with him.***
- ***He is their intercessor, their advocate, their hope and redeemer.*** There is also the thought that Christ's entry into that sphere makes possible the entry of all who shall follow him.

Hebrews 7

Jesus is Superior to the Levitical Priesthood

1. Who was Melchizedek? (1) Where is he mentioned in the Old Testament?

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham divided a tenth part of all (being first by interpretation, King of righteousness, and then also King of Salem, which is King of peace, without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God) abides in a priest continually.

- *Melchizedek was not the same person as Jesus, contrary to a rather popular notion that stems from a misunderstanding of certain passages in Hebrews 7.*
- *Melchizedek is first mentioned in Genesis 14. Abram (later called Abraham), encountered this ancient dignitary who was king of Salem (early Jerusalem; cf. Psa. 76:2).*
 - *In addition to being king, he was described as “priest of God Most High” (Gen. 14:18).*
- *His stature is revealed in that he “blessed” Abraham (the greater always blesses the lesser), and Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, that is, i.e., gave to the king-priest a tenth of his spoils (the lesser tithes to the greater).*
- *The writer of Hebrews uses this incident (together with a prophecy from Psalm 110), to demonstrate the superiority of the priesthood of Christ to that of the Levitical system (Heb. 7:4-10).*
- *Christ was said to be a priest “after [kata] the order [taxis] of” Melchizedek*

- *That Melchizedek was not the same person as Jesus is evident in that he is said to be “like unto” the Son of God (Heb. 7:3c).*

2. What is said concerning the family and genealogy of Melchizedek? (3)

without father, without mother, without genealogy,

- **Melchizedek had no ancestor in the priesthood.**
 - *Unlike the Jewish priests who had to establish their genealogy to qualify for service (Nehemiah 7:63-64; Leviticus 21:17; Ezekiel 44:22), this man neither received his office by hereditary right nor passed it on to a physical descendant.*
 - *So far as we are told in Scripture, he was without father or mother; not that he was other than human, but that he did not belong to any line of priests*
- **Without descent is better translated "without genealogy." See the point just above.**
 - *Neither beginning of days nor end of life means that Melchizedek's priesthood is not recorded as to origin or end.*
 - *He is a lone figure who suddenly appears on the stage of history for a brief moment, then as suddenly and mysteriously removes from the scene.*
 - *No one can say of this strange man, "here is the beginning of his priestly service" or "here is the end of his priesthood."*

3. How was Melchizedek made like unto Jesus? (3)

having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God) abides in a priest continually.

- **Melchizedek's administration was without “beginning of days” and “end of life” (Heb. 7:3b).**
 - *Again, the meaning is that his priesthood was not for a fixed term (as in the case of the Levitical priests).*
 - *Under the Old Testament regime, priests began their service at the age of 30, and the Levites served from age 30 to 50 (cf. Num. 4:3ff; 8:24-25).*

- *Apparently, however, there was no chronological limitation with reference to this “priest of Most High God” who reigned in Salem. Again, in this regard he foreshadowed Christ, who serves continually as our priest throughout the Christian age.*

4. Explain Hebrews 7:7.

And without doubt the lesser is blessed by the greater.

- *It is indisputable that the less is blessed in this sense by the better. If Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek, it follows that Melchizedek was a "better" man in terms of rank and office than the patriarch. Both men acknowledged this relative position: Abraham, by paying tithes to Melchizedek; Melchizedek, by blessing Abraham.*

5. Was the Levitical priesthood perfect? Why or Why not? (11-12)

If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also.

- *If perfection (a key word in Hebrews, consult a concordance) were by the Levitical priesthood, there would have been no further need for another priest after another order -- that of Melchizedek and not of Aaron.*
 - *An institution is perfect when it accomplishes the purpose for which it was instituted. The priesthood of Aaron did not do that.*
- *The purpose of a priesthood is to bring men to God, to atone for their sins.*
 - *The author will show clearly in the following chapters that the Levitical sacrifices and priesthood could not do this -- either perfectly or permanently.*
 - *In the present passage, then, he refers to this imperfection in the Old Testament priestly order.*
 - *He also shows that it had to be replaced by a perfect order which could fulfill these purposes.*
- *We are accustomed to thinking of the priesthood as dependent on the law. Our author says the opposite.*

- *The law depended on the priesthood. This suggests that in God's ordering of affairs the priesthood was first in importance, then the law.*
- *Law pointed men to the reality of sin and to the fact that they were sinners.*
- *This recognition called for the priesthood as the divine ordinance and institution for the removal of sins.*
- *But the imperfection of the Old Testament priesthood pointed them even further to the future when the Son of God would come as great high priest and Lamb of God, completely removing all sins forever by one offering of Himself.*
- *The priesthood, then, was the basis and grounds of the law.*

6. Of what “change” does verse 12 speak?

For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also.

- *The priesthood and the Law of Moses stood or fell together. For the priesthood to be changed, it was absolutely necessary to change the law.*
- *Why? Because the law said that the priests had **to be of the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron**. Therefore, it would be impossible to change the priesthood without also changing the law.*
 - *Exodus 28:1 - Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron and Aaron's sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.*
 - *Heb. 10:9 - Christ took away the Old Law that He might establish His New Law.*

7. From what tribe did Jesus come? (13-14)

He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. ¹⁴ For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

- *He of whom these things are spoken is the Lord Jesus Christ, as the next verse will state, and He belongs to another or a different tribe from Levi. He is of a tribe from which no man ever served at the priestly altar.*

- **7:14.** *It is evident on the basis of His genealogies in Matthew chapter one and Luke chapter three that our Lord descended from Judah, a tribe from which the Law of Moses said absolutely nothing so far as priesthood is concerned. The priesthood has therefore been changed, and the next verse will adduce still another proof of this.*

8. What was annulled and why? (18-19)

The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

- *The familiar Greek construction "on the one hand/on the other hand" is used in verses 18 and 19. On the one hand there is a disannulling or placing aside or removing of the previous or former commandment regulating priests (verses [5](#), [15](#)).*
 - *This setting aside was necessary because of the inherent weakness and unprofitableness of that system which could not bring perfection ([verse 11](#)), which was based on a carnal requirement ([verse 16](#)) and which was manned by imperfect priests ([verses 27-28](#)).*
- **7:19.** *The law made nothing perfect (see Romans 8:3; Galatians 2:21; 3:21), for it rested on a priesthood which could not perfect ([verse 11](#)).*
 - *"The law made beginnings, taught rudiments, gave initial impulses, hinted, foreshadowed, but brought nothing to perfection, did not in itself provide for man's perfect entrance into God's fellowship" (Expositor's Greek Testament).*

9. Who made sure a "better covenant"? (22)

Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant.

- *Perfection did come, however, in Christ's work and in the **better** hope which He introduced and confirmed.*
 - *Better is a key word in Hebrews...*
- *The ultimate basis of comparison between all that belonged to the inadequate Old system and all that pertains to the perfect New, is that by it we draw nigh unto God.*

- **The verb translated draw nigh (7:19 “near”) is the same one used in the Greek Old Testament at Exodus 19:21, when, at the giving of the Law, God specifically commanded the people not to draw near to God.**
 - They could not draw near to God under that system because their lives were unholy and their sins were ever-present.
 - Under the covenant of the Son, **men in themselves are no better**, but they can draw near to God by virtue of Christ's life which is holy and His blood which atones for their sins.

10. Who is Jesus able to save and why? (25)

Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office;²⁴ but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

- **Because He continues forever as Priest, He is able to save completely those that come to God by Him. He will always be there to take up and intercede for them.**
 - *Isa. 53:6 - All have gone astray.*
 - *Matt. 11:28; John 14:6 - All must come to God by Jesus.*
 - *John 6:44-45 - Men come to Christ by hearing and learning of the Father.*

11. How is our High Priest described in 26-27?

Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.²⁷ Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

- **Such an high priest as Christ is just what man needs.**
 - He became us, that is, **He was fitted to our needs.**
 - **Man needs a priest who is holy, for he himself is not.**
 - The word **translated holy here also includes the idea of compassion and tender mercy.**
 - **Man's priest must be undefiled and separate from sinners, but every Aaronic priest was weak and sinful.**

- **Our priest needs to be higher than the heavens, living forever to intercede on our behalf.**

12. Priests offered up “daily sacrifices”. What sacrifice did Jesus make? (27-28)

Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

- **Christ does not have to offer sacrifices daily for His own sins and then for those of His people like those Levitical priests.**
 - **Why? Because He offered Himself as a sacrifice once for all time to provide forgiveness for the people.**
 - **Heb. 9:7 - The high priest under the Levitical system had to offer for his own sins and then for the sins of the people.**
 - **John 10:18 - Christ offered Himself.**
 - **Heb. 9:26 – He sacrificed Himself.**
 - **"Once" means once for all time, never to be offered again. The same word is used in Hebrews 9:28 and Jude 1:3.**

Lesson 8

Reading: Hebrews 7

Hebrews 8

Jesus is Superior to the Levitical Priesthood

1. What is the “main point” of chapter 7 according to the opening of chapter 8?

Verse 1: *Now this is the main point of the things we are saying* - Everything the writer has said, concerning the priesthood, builds up to this one great point.

We have such a High Priest - That is, we have such a High Priest as he has been discussing in the preceding chapters.

- *Heb. 2:17 - He is faithful and merciful.*
- *Heb. 2:18 - He is able to aid those who are tempted.*
- *Heb. 4:14 - is the Son of God.*
- *Heb. 4:15 - He is without sin.*
- *Heb. 5:9 - He obtained eternal salvation for all.*
- *Heb. 5:10 - He is called a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.*
- *Heb. 7:20-21 - He is made priest with an oath.*
- *Heb. 7:24 - He has an unchangeable priesthood.*
- *Heb. 7:25 - He lives forever to make intercession for us.*
- *Heb. 7:26 - He is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.*
- *Heb. 7:27 - He offered Himself as a sacrifice.*

2. Where does our High Priest sit in heaven? (1)

who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens –

Christ, the High Priest under the New Covenant, is seated at the right hand of God in heaven.

- *Heb. 10:11-12 - This proves that the right hand of the Majesty is the right hand of God.*
- *Heb. 10:11-12 - He sat down on the right hand of God after He had offered Himself as a sacrifice for sins.*

- *Heb. 9:24 - He has entered into heaven itself. He has entered into heaven itself to appear in the presence of God for us.*

3. What is a covenant?

The term "covenant" is of Latin origin, meaning a coming together. It presupposes two or more parties who come together to make a contract, agreeing on promises, stipulations, privileges, and responsibilities.

4. What is said concerning Christ in verse 6 and to what does it apply?

Verse 6: But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry - Christ has obtained a more excellent ministry than that under the Levitical system. He ministers under a New Covenant. He ministers in a higher place - in heaven and in the very presence of God Himself. Therefore, He has obtained a more excellent ministry.

inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant - Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant because He is the covenant that God has made with man.

- *Heb. 7:22 - A superior priest demands a better covenant and the writer has already stated this fact.*
- *Gal. 3:19; Deut. 5:5 - Moses was the mediator of the Old Testament. He stood between God and Israel. A mediator is a go-between. The Old Testament high priest was one who stood between God and man.*
- *Heb. 12:24 - Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant. He stands between God and man.*
- *1 Tim. 2:5 - Jesus is the only mediator between God and man.*

which was established on better promises - The New Covenant has superior promises to those in the Old Covenant. This shows that the "New" is superior to the "Old" because of the promises it contains. What are some of those better promises?

- *Heb. 8:12 - Absolute forgiveness of sin.*
- *Heb. 11:39-40 - The coming of Christ.*
- *Eph. 1:3 - All spiritual blessings.*
- *Acts 2:38, 39 - The gift of the Holy Spirit.*
- *John 14:1 - The promise of mansions in heaven.*
- *2 Pet. 3:18 - Life in the new heavens and new earth.*
- *John 2:25 - The promise of eternal life.*
- *Heb. 11:40 - God has provided something better for us who are in Christ.*

Why was a new or better covenant sought? (7)

- Verse 7: *For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second*
- *If the first covenant had been faultless, no place would have been sought by God or needed by man for a second arrangement.*
 - *Yet God did propose a new covenant, even in the former period of time, and spoke of it then to His people. Therefore, the writer argues, that first was not faultless (see [7:18-19](#)).*
- **8:8.** *The fault lay with the people to whom the first covenant was given, because they did not keep their part of the arrangement. Yet the first covenant was of such nature that all blessings depended on the ability of the people to do just that. This made the covenant itself faulty in effect, or from the point of view of the people. Because of the fault that lay with them.*

5. From what Old Testament prophet are the words of Hebrews 8:8-12 taken?

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make ^ba new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when ^aI took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, ^cthough I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³ ^dFor this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: ^eI will put my law within them, and I will write it ^fon their hearts. ^uAnd I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ ^vfor they shall all know me, ^wfrom the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For ^xI will forgive their iniquity, and ^yI will remember their sin no more.”

- *God promised a new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34, and the author of Hebrews quotes that passage in verses 8-12.*

6. According to verse 10, what are a few of the principles of the New Covenant?

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts -

Some in the Old Testament treasured the word and kept it in their hearts. There were devout Jews such as Moses, David and numerous others. The great majority, however, never really received God's law into their hearts. Therefore, to them it was always a letter inscribed on stone and not an indwelling power in the heart. However, under the New Covenant, a person must receive the word into his heart before he can enter into this covenant relationship with God (Jas. 1:21; Lk. 8:5-18). That is, they must receive Jesus into their hearts in order to enter the covenant with God (Col. 2:6-12). Once He is received as "Lord," He begins writing His will or laws in their hearts by His indwelling presence and Spirit.

- Rom. 8:14 – God leads those who are born again and thereby enter the new covenant by means of His Spirit.
- 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17 - Jesus also writes His laws in our hearts by means of the words He taught us in the Scriptures.

and I will be their God, and they shall be My people - God is, to those who enter the New Covenant by the new birth their God in an even higher sense than He was to those faithful Jews under the Old Covenant. They have Jesus, who is the covenant, dwelling in their hearts and that is why they are Christians.

1. Gal. 4:6 - Christians are sons and belong to Jesus who belongs to God. Hence, He is our God in a very special way.
2. 1 John 3:1 - Christians are sons of God in a very special sense.
3. Gal. 3:26-29 – We are in Christ and we have put on Christ and are at that point in the covenant.
4. Isaiah 42:6; 49:8 – Jesus is the new covenant God was going to make with His people.

7. What is the greatest of blessings found in this New Covenant? (12)

Verse 12: For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more - Under the New Covenant, there is absolute forgiveness of sins. The sins forgiven under the New Covenant are "remembered no more."

1. Heb. 10:3 - During the Levitical system there was a remembrance made of sins by the sacrifices offered.

2. John 1:29 - Under the New Testament, sins are remembered no more because the Lamb of God has taken them away completely and permanently. Therefore, the New Covenant is far superior to the Old.

8. What has to happen to the first covenant in order for the second to be established? (13)

In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

- *He has made the first obsolete: Now that the New Covenant has been inaugurated, the Old Covenant is thereby obsolete.*
- *What is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away: The message to these discouraged Jewish Christians, who thought of going back to a more Jewish faith, is clear. They simply can't go back to an inferior covenant, which is ready to completely vanish away.*

9. Explain the phrase "ready to vanish away" in verse 13.

- *Here the writer says that the Old Covenant system was ready to vanish away. But someone objects, saying, "I thought the Old Covenant Law ended at the cross. How can the writer now say that it is ready to vanish away?"*
- *The answer to this objection is, "As far as God was concerned, and as far as the Law of Moses being God's law for man, it did end at the cross. The law actually ended at that time, but God allowed them to continue with the sacrifices, temple, and priesthood until Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70. At that time, the Old Testament system vanished away completely in every sense of the word. The Levitical systems can never be restored as it was during Old Testament times because the records, genealogies, sacrifices, and Temple were all completely and permanently destroyed forever by the Romans when they destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A. D. 70.*

"Digging Deeper for Better Things"

RESEARCH QUESTION: *Jesus is the one referred to in verse 4. What does the passage mean when it says, “For if He (Jesus) were on earth, He would not be a priest...?”*

- Since Christ was not of the tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron, He could not be a priest while He was on earth.

- 1. Heb. 7:14 - Jesus was of the tribe of Judah.*
- 2. Heb. 7:13 - No man of the tribe of Judah ever served as priest.*

THOUGHT QUESTION: *What, do you THINK, is meant by the phrase “I will remember no more” in Hebrews 8:12?*

Not allow your past to affect our future together