

BIBLE STUDENT STUDY GUIDE

*Twenty-six Lessons
on Hebrews*

by
WALLACE WARTICK



**TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON
HEBREWS**

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Bible Student's Study Guide

TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON HEBREWS

A Student Book
For Twenty-six Weeks
Of Study

by

Wallace Wartick

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How To Use This Book

Welcome! So glad you have considered a study of Hebrews. The book is of inestimable value in many ways — may God help you to learn and live some of those ways.

For use on a quarterly basis, the book has been divided up into twenty-six (26) lessons. The lesson text, title and summary follow this introduction. Each lesson text will have discussion relevant to the lesson as well as general comments on the text itself. You may, of course, ignore the suggested lessons and study it at your leisure or in your own way. Whatever you do, study it to know better the lessons within the book itself — they are more important than anything man could say. Some questions are given at the end of each lesson for your use. Some are fact questions, some are thought questions. They are intended to help you to think and ask your own questions, thus causing further study and increased understanding.

Lessons From Hebrews

Lesson 1, 1:1-2 — God and Revelation. The Christian system has at least three basic tenets: 1) God is, 2) he has spoken in written revelation, and 3) that written revelation is of such nature that man can both know it and obey it. This lesson discusses these ideas, and especially the fact that God has spoken.	3
Lesson 2, 1:1-4 — God and His Son. The final and complete will of God which is now exclusively contained in the New Testament, is centered in Jesus Christ, God's unique "word" to man. This lesson focuses upon (a) son, and impressive characteristics.	10
Lesson 3, 1:4-14; 2:5-18 — Jesus and Angels. Part of this "apologetic" for the superiority of Christianity centers around angels, who mediated part of the revelation in the Old Testament (testament = will), and Jesus, God's mediator and revealer of His New Testament. As our text clearly shows, angels are but servers, Jesus is the son.	13
Lesson 4, 2:1-4 — The Great Salvation. Within the "apologetic" of 1:4 — 2:18 this important exhortation appears. Based upon the fact that God has no other word for man than that which is in Christ Jesus (of whom God said, "Hear	

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Him," Matt. 17:5), the Hebrew writer in this lesson text implores all Christians "to hold fast" that which they have in Christ.	21
Lesson 5, 2:17-18 — Our High Priest. Though Jesus is compared to, and shown to be better than prophets, angels, Moses and Joshua, the major thrust of the epistle is that Jesus is better than Aaron. The first direct mention of the high priesthood of Jesus is a good place to survey the teaching within the epistle, especially 3:1-3; 4:14 — 5:11; 7:1-28; 8:1-7; 9:1-28; 10:1-18. Remember that this epistle is unique within the N.T. in its teaching on the high priesthood of Jesus, the main point of this lesson.	25
Lesson 6, 3:1-6 — Jesus and Moses. None were greater than Moses in Jewish history, and rightly so. God spoke through Moses, giving the finest specimen of law ever possessed by man. Yet, Moses was but a servant, while Jesus was the son. This lesson to highlight this important relationship.	29
Lesson 7, 3:7 — 4:13 — Jesus and Joshua. Moses led Israel out of bondage, Joshua led them into the land of promise, but neither could give the Jews "rest" — only Jesus could (and can) do that. Our lesson text delineates the wilderness tragedy of Israel and the cause thereof, a most important point for all of us.	32
Lesson 8, 4:14 — 5:10 — God's high priest: sinless and chosen. In God's economy, all things are done as God wills. Especially is this true in the area of spiritual things. Our lesson brings out two aspects God specified for his "chief representative" on earth, the high priest — he must be able to help, and selected by God. Both were true of Jesus.	39
Lesson 9, 5:11 — 6:12 — The Maturing Disciple. W. D. Chamberlain in his book <i>The Meaning of Repentance</i> describes the Christian life as a "pilgrimage from the mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ." Our lesson text is concerned with some of the Christian readers who had not grown as they should have grown.	44
Lesson 10, 6:13-20 — God, The Soul's Anchor. Life without hope is empty; hope without an adequate basis is deceitful. Christians build their hope on God, his character and promises. With so great a foundation, the Christian life is satisfying beyond measure. Our lesson text underscores the reason for hope.	51

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<p>Lesson 11, 7:1-10 — Melchizedek. Part of the argument that Christianity is superior to Judism centers around the subject of our text, who is a type of Jesus, and represents a priesthood superior to that of Aaron. The "sacrificial system" of Christianity was foreshadowed in many ways, one of them being Melchizedek, the subject of our lesson.</p>	55
<p>Lesson 12, 7:11-28 — Christ's priesthood: our better hope. The Levitical priesthood represented a sacrificial system that was imperfect in that it offered no actual access to God, and our lesson tells us that the superior priesthood of Jesus brings (a better) hope in that through it we may draw near to God.</p>	58
<p>Lesson 13, 8:1-13 — The Faultless covenant. God's first covenant by written revelation was imperfect in many ways, yet was designed by God so that it was vastly better than any previous covenant. However, it was made temporary in nature, and from within itself the faultless covenant was foretold. The lesson for us in our text is that "the old has passed away, the new has come to be."</p>	63
<p>Lesson 14, 9:1-10 — The Tabernacle and its worship. God's first permanent place for worshippers to come was the "tent of meeting." Though "transportable" in nature, it served the Israelite nation some five hundred years until Solomon's reign. Because of its typical significance, our text has an important lesson for us.</p>	69
<p>Lesson 15, 9:11-28 — Jesus and the New Covenant. Our lesson is concerned with the sacrifice Jesus made, its eternal nature and efficacy. The text makes special emphasis upon Jesus' death, since it is the central point of contrast with the sacrifices of the Old Testament.</p>	73
<p>Lesson 16, 10:1-18 — The Forgiveness of Sins. The opening verses of ch. 10 introduced the major points of emphasis and contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant. The major thrust about Jesus was contained in the two statements "when he had made purification for sins" and "he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high," which are the major points of our lesson text. No religious system can present a better or more permanent "scheme of redemption" than Christianity.</p> <p>As we study this lesson, it should be noted that 1:1 — 10:18 is built around the idea of contrast between the old</p>	

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covenant and the new covenant, with the respective people involved. It might be called the section on "doctrine." The section of 10:19 — 13:25 is given somewhat more to the "faith life" (i.e., "duty") as it seeks to direct the readers concerning how they ought to live, both by citing examples and by exhortation.	79
Lesson 17, 10:19-25 — Access to God. On the basis of the person and work of Jesus, every Christian has reason to draw near to God, with all hope, without any (undue) fear. Our lesson begins the second major division in the epistle with several exhortations to encourage every Christian to take advantage of that which Jesus has provided.	83
Lesson 18, 10:26-39 — The God We Serve. With the great blessing of access to God, it is well to think about our God. The lesson text turns our eyes upon him, and brings into focus several important facets of his character, making application to our Christian living. The idea of faithfulness is introduced, which is enlarged upon in the succeeding chapters.	87
Lesson 19, 11:1-3 — Faith. This lesson will be a good time to consider the subject of faith. We need to get faith into its proper prospective (rather than the limited one of "faith, repentance," etc.) of our text and the Bible generally. Consideration needs to be given to the faith which the various ones mentioned in ch. 11 had, as well as the point made in Romans 1:17, that it is the essence of the gospel message.	93
Lesson 20, 11:4-22 — The Patriarchs and Faith. To show the eternal necessity of faith, the Hebrew writer begins at the beginning of the human race. Our lesson text presents selected people from the Patriarchal age as typical of believers who pleased God.	98
Lesson 21, 11:23-40 — Faith and Law. This lesson highlights the period from Moses to Christ, and the faith of many within that span of time. Noteworthy is the fact that faith made all of those mentioned in ch. 11 pleasing to God and examples for us.	105
Lesson 22, 12:1-2 — Jesus, the Example. In the midst of this section about living a life pleasing to God, Jesus is presented as the example of such a life. It is always good to meditate upon Jesus' earthly life, and our lesson is intended to provide that opportunity.	112

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- Lesson 23, 12:3-17 — The Disciplined Life.** Living a life of faith will necessitate implicit and continued obedience to God, who will discipline every child of his so that said child will be able to follow Jesus into the presence of God, and thus not lose sight of the goal and fail to receive what is promised, as Esau did. 116
- Lesson 24, 12:18-29 — The Unshakeable Kingdom.** God asks for faithfulness and gives adequate reason for such a life. The Christian is in an inestimable greater position for faithful living than those who went before, especially in respect to the fact that the kingdom of which he is a part is of permanent nature, not merely typical and shadowy. Such is the subject of our lesson. 123
- Lesson 25, 13:1-6 — Godly Living.** Many are the areas of life where the Christian should be conscious of the presence of God. Our lesson text highlights some of those areas which are often real tests for everyone who lives in the midst of a "crooked and perverse generation." 128
- Lesson 26, 13:7-25 — Leaders for Life.** This final lesson pinpoints attention upon those who lead others, especially in the various congregations, and then directs the gaze of everyone upon Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep. Surely a fitting lesson for all of us at the conclusion of this epistle! 132

Introduction To Hebrews

Hebrews has many things of importance in it. Many years ago, A. B. Bruce called it the "first apologetic for Christianity." Certainly it presents the Christian system as superior to Judaism, or any other religion. The writer of Hebrews often used the comparative "better" in describing Christianity, but as Bruce remarked, "best" is behind the "better." It is without equal among the new covenant scriptures in its treatment of the high priesthood of Jesus compared to angels, Moses and Joshua, adding information found in no other book. Hence, the doctrinal portion, 1:1 — 10:18, deals with Christianity as does no other book. Likewise, the "duty" section of 10:19 — 13:25 brings application to Christian living in a distinctly different way than any other book. It surely is a thrilling book to study, as well as unique in its helpfulness for understanding the relationship of the old covenant system of worship to that of the new covenant.

While we are thinking about the structure of the book, the following outline is presented, which is typical of many:

I. The Doctrine of the Old and New Covenants

- A. 1:1-3 God's revelation in a Son
- B. 1:4 — 2:18 Jesus and Angels
- C. 3:1 — 4:13 Jesus, Moses and Joshua
- D. 4:14 — 7:28 Jesus and Aaron
- E. 8:1 — 10:18 Old and New Covenant Worship and Sacrifice

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II. The Duty of the New Covenant Christian

- A. 10:19-39 God and the Faith Life
- B. 11:1-40 The Examples of O.T. Faithfulness
- C. 12:1-3 The Example of Jesus
- D. 12:4-29 A Disciplined Life
- E. 13:1-17 Obedient Discipleship

Conclusion, 13:18-25

Our introduction to Hebrews has centered around its purpose and content. We have not discussed some other matters of interest, specifically a. who is the author, b. when was it written, c. to whom was it written, d. where did the recipients live. We shall discuss each of these.

The person who wrote the book was known to the first recipients, as 13:18-25 shows. Where the author was is unknown. Various persons have been suggested over the centuries, but the fact is that no one certainly knows who wrote it. The early Christians accepted it as inspired, and deserving of a place in the canon of Scripture, but that is the best that one can do. (This writer assumes Paul to be the author.)

The time of writing is likewise uncertain. If anything is decisive at all, the comments in such text as 8:4-5; 10:11-12 and 13:10 seem to indicate that the old covenant worship was still going on. If so, then it was written prior to A.D. 70 when those things ceased to be.

The people who received it were rather clearly Christians who either had a Jewish background or were considering becoming Jews or both. They had some knowledge of Old Testament things, had been Christians for some time (5:11-14) and had undergone severe testing (10:32ff.). Other than these, we know neither who they were nor where they lived.

The uncertainty of the above matters does not detract from the usefulness of the book to every Christian. No one book so clearly shows the close relationship of the old covenant with all that pertained to it and the new covenant, its true, real and complete fulfillment.

Some of the readers of this study guide will not know Greek. Some Greek words are in the comments, and are discussed. There is no particular reason to be scared of Greek, anymore than any other foreign word. Learn to read the comments about the words, even if you don't know the Greek term. It is necessary to mention certain Greek terms because they are important to the meaning of the passage. Learn to be a better bible student than you are — make use of the Greek terms and the comments thereupon rather than ignoring them.

A word of thanks must be extended to Mrs. Debby Cripps Johnson who has given both time and thoughtfulness to this book, as well as the study guides on II Corinthians and Acts in this series.

Lessons From Hebrews

Lesson One

(1:1-2)

GOD AND REVELATION

1 In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

1:1 — many and various ways — The old covenant came in “parts and pieces” over many years, perhaps as many as two thousand years in respect to the written revelation, stretching from the time of the patriarch Job to the prophet Malachi. It is also true that God spoke to those who lived before the actual giving of the law in 1445 B.C., as is clear from the early chapters of Genesis.

God spoke — He first revealed himself in a written revelation in the book of Job, written sometime in the Patriarchal age. The great majority of the old covenant in a written form began at Moses’ time, progressing through some one thousand years to Malachi, about 400 B.C.

to our fathers — This may indicate that the writer and the first readers were Jewish in nature. However, the fact is that any Christian is a son of

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Abraham (Gal. 3:26-29) and thus has a spiritual heritage within "faith's hall of fame" whether he be Jew or Gentile. As pointed out many times and ways in the new covenant scriptures (Luke 3:8-9; John 8:39-44; Romans 2:25-29; 4:1-22; 9:6ff.; I Cor. 10:1-11; etc.) the children of Abraham were characterized by faith rather than flesh per se.

by the prophets — Generally speaking, we think of prophets such as Isaiah or Daniel. However, many were called prophets who are not so commonly considered such, like Moses and others. Note the study at the end of this lesson, which will provide additional information on this word, its usage and meaning.

V.2 — last days — The New Testament uses this term in reference to the period of time beginning at Pentecost until Jesus comes again. See 2:5; then Acts 2:17; II Tim. 3:1-5; II Pet. 3:3. A parallel expression is last time(s) as in these texts I Peter 1:20; Jude v. 18; but see I Peter 1:5. Note I John 2:18, "the last hour."

The expression is defined as the time when God spoke in (a) Son, Jesus. Through him God has revealed many things in either a much clearer manner than in the former days or new truth. As Hebrews will show, Jesus is God's last message, since there is none other capable of bringing us to God.

a Son — The common impulse is for Christians to say "not a Son but the Son." Some versions translate "his" Son. However the Greek text is clear: it is the quality of God's messenger that is in view, a messenger with the quality of "son" rather than "angel" or "prophet," etc. — that is the point. It is through (a) Son that God is declared and revealed, Matt. 11:25-27; John 1:18; 14:9. He is the messenger who exactly reflects and represents God whom God has chosen to be his messenger. However great the others may have been whom God used — angels, prophets, etc. — none equaled the character of "son." Therefore, as 2:1-4 says, we have a great salvation for the taking. God had spoken before, but the method he has chosen, the content of the message, and the recipients are different than before. Christianity is the message of a crucified and resurrected Lord who is himself the chief speaker, and involves the whole human race — these things are "new."

God spoke — There is hardly anything more significant than these two words. That there is a being, God by name, and that said being has in any way chosen to reveal himself, has few statements of equal value for mankind. It is the beginning axiom in Christianity, which posits a God who has revealed himself to mankind in a written revelation. The old covenant (covenant = will or testament) was God's first written revelation, as nearly as we know, and was the foundation for Judaism. That God should even bother with us is astounding, and that he would so clearly speak in an understandable way is but evidence of his love.

Lest the reader be unaware, there have been many in the world, both past and present, who have either denied that God has so revealed himself, or that God could have communicated any message or truth at all. It seems to this writer that the opposite is true: God has spoken, knew to whom he was speaking, fashioned his revelation (first the old and then the new) in exactly the best way to make it possible for man to know God's will well enough to "trust and obey." Any other position makes all our religious motions worse than useless.

God spoke in various ways before Jesus; and then in Jesus his son. The revelation of God in the time prior to Jesus was partial, though adequate for God's purpose. The revelation in Jesus is also partial (God has not told us everything we would like to know) but adequate for God's purpose. That is one of the blessed attributes of God: he is always just, and does whatever he does exactly right and for the good of all.

Though the revelation in the Old Covenant was partial, and is even but partial in the New Covenant, without these man could know but little of God. As I Cor. 2:11 says, "no one knows the things of God, save the spirit of God." Again, "The world by its wisdom did not know God," I Cor. 1:21. True, the handiwork of God is seen in his universe, Psalms 19; Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-29; but that was insufficient to bring man into a saving relationship with his creator — it only brought condemnation. Hence, man was but lost and undone. God deigned, then, to speak, in words, "whereby we . . . might be saved."

A prominent view of mankind in Jesus' day was that man by searching could find God. The biblical view is this: God must reveal himself. There is none of "I found God" in the Bible; rather "God found me" is the fact that is emphasized. As Paul pointed out in reference to the new covenant in I Cor. 1:18 — 2:16 and Gal. 1:11-12, man could not by his wisdom know God in any adequate way; God had to reveal what was necessary. Hence, the Christian religion rightly understood is built around a revelation directed at man's rationality, so formed that man can both understand and obey it, and adequate for all man's needs. As before stated, any other position makes man but a pawn in an unfriendly environment, without hope and without God in this world.

he appointed the heir — For Hebrew people and for us as well, the concept of "heir" is significant. The idea in this verse is that God's son, Jesus, has been "officially" declared to be the heir of all God's things. This idea is to be tied in with all the other points stated about Jesus. The purpose is to enhance our total understanding of the relationship of God and Jesus.

he created — as is brought out in other texts such as Colossians 1:16, Jesus was part of the "creation team" (note the "us" in Genesis 1:26) that

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brought the world into existence. This is a significant idea since the Scriptures make clear that God was/is responsible for all the created things in our universe. As John 1:1ff. shows, Jesus was not among the created things. Hence, Jesus is of the nature of deity (= God) and was not created, but creator.

world — In other texts, the Greek word is translated "ages." It carried both ideas of time and material depending upon context. The fact is that both time and material were brought into being by God, so either idea is good.

Special study on the word "prophet."

I. The Old Testament Prophet.

A. Those considered as prophets include:

Abraham, Gen. 20:7
Aaron, Ex. 7:1
Miriam, Ex. 15:20
70 elders, Num. 11:25
Eldad, Num. 11:26
Medad, Num. 11:26
Moses, Deut. 18:15
Miriam, Jud. 4:4
Samuel, I Sam. 3:20
Saul, I Sam. 10:10 (cf. 19:18ff.)
Gad, I Sam. 22:5
Nathan, II Sam. 7:2
Abijah, I Kings 11:29
Jehu, I Kings 16:12
Elijah, I Kings 22:8
Micaiah, I Kings 22:8
Elisha, II Kings 6:12
Isaiah, II Kings 19:2
Huldah, II Kings 22:14
Shemaiah, II Chr. 12:5
Iddo, II Chr. 13:22 (also called a seer)
Azariah, II Chr. 15:8
Eliezer, II Chr. 20:37
Jeremiah, II Chr. 36:12
Haggai, Ezra 5:1
Zechariah, Ezra 5:1
Noadiah, Neh. 6:14
Micah, Jer. 26:18
Habakkuk, Hab. 1:1

Jonah, Matt. 12:39
 Daniel, Matt. 24:15
 Joel, Acts 2:16
 David, Acts 2:30
 Balaam, II Pet. 2:16

B. How they spoke for God.

Many times, the man was commanded to prophesy, as in Ezekiel's case. Their prophecy is often introduced as "The Word of the Lord came to" Note Ezek. 11:4.

Moses recounts in Numbers 11 the fact that when the 70 were chosen to help him, some of his spirit fell upon them and they then prophesied, though not afterward. Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses in ch. 12:1ff., bringing God's rebuke and this statement: "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream."

Balaam well knew that as God spoke, he must speak, Num. 22:8, 18, 38; 23:12; etc.

In recounting the wilderness experience, Moses reminded them that they disobeyed the Lord's word, which came through him, Deut. 1:26; and that they were not to add nor subtract from his words, for they were God's words, 4:2. He outlined clearly the way they would know a true prophet, in contradistinction to many false ones, as revealed in 18:18-22: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not give heed to my words which he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die." And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word which the Lord has spoken?' — when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you need not be afraid of him."

This is the normal understanding of a prophet in Old Testament times: one whose message and authority came directly from God. The evident illumination of Daniel in 2:27ff., and 5:17ff., are good examples of such. Amos wrote, "The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy?" (3:8). The thrust of Hebrews 1:1 (God

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spoke . . . by the prophets) and that of II Peter 1:20-21 (. . . no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit from God) clearly outlines the nature of the Old Testament prophet. The prophets were God's spokesmen in many ways, doubtless, and not always in a revelational way, but we dare not divorce this facet from their work. They were spokesmen of Christ's (Rev. 19:10 "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"), and part of the foundation upon which the church was built (Eph. 2:20).

From this viewpoint, then, God punished people who disobeyed the word of the prophet, since it was God's Word through the prophet. No instances are clearer than those of Moses' prophecy in Deut. ch. 28:1ff.; Saul's sentence in I Sam. 15; or that of Hananiah in Jer. 28:17. The countless prophecies fulfilled in the New Testament point out the basic nature of the Old Testament prophet.

People then viewed the prophet (whether of God or otherwise) as one who, among other things, had a revelatory message. Note here I Kings 22:5-28. That they did have supernatural knowledge is seen in such passages as II Kings 6:8-17; though they did not always understand their message, I Pet. 1:10-12.

God often warned the people about the true nature of a prophet, as we have pointed out. Jeremiah 23:21-22 reveals that men claiming to be prophets had been speaking to Israel, but that God had not given them any message.

II. New Testament Prophets

A. People so designated:

John, Matt. 11:9; 14:5; Luke 1:76

Jesus, Matt. 21:11; Acts 3:22

Zechariah, Luke 1:67

Anna, Luke 2:36

Caiaphas, John 11:51

Agabus, Acts 11:27-28

Paul, I Tim. 1:18; 4:14; II Tim. 1:6

Enoch, Jude v. 14

John, Rev. 1:3; 21:9

Others were mentioned as prophets as in Acts 13:1, or prophesying, though some were not named. Cf. Matt. 7:22; Acts 19:6; 21:9; I Cor. chs. 11-14; etc.

B. The Work of the Prophet

If this is revealed by word anywhere in the New Testament, the

text in Ephesians 3:4-6 is it. Paul states, "When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." If the New Testament prophet is to be understood by those in the Old Testament, part of his work would be to reveal God's truth to people (as Eph. 3 shows). Additional documentation of this would be seen in Jesus, who spoke as God directed, John 12:44-50; Paul, I Tim. 1:18, etc.; and John in Revelation.

III. False Prophets

The Bible is full of references to these, some of which we have already mentioned. The god Baal had prophets; Zedekiah and company were opposers of Micaiah in I Kings 22; Shemaiah was such in Jer. 19:30-31; and Elymas in Acts 13:6. Others are alluded to, as in II Pet. 2:1; I John 4:1; Rev. 19:20; etc.

It seems clear that God expects Christians to use the New Testament scriptures, having been given through inspired men (such as apostles), as the standard for all of life. Any so-called prophet, whatever his message, is to be compared with the inspired scriptures. For this writer, God has spoken finally and completely in the New Testament in all things pertaining to life and godliness. Hence, I personally reject any and all prophets. If they say the same thing as is in the scriptures, I don't need it. If they speak contrary to the scriptures, I reject it. Ephesians 4:11-13 implies that God has finished his revelation to us, part of which was given through the prophets. We, then, should use what we possess to become as God expects.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 1:

1. Has God "spoken" to humanity before the time of our text?
2. How has he spoken?
3. What message from God, prior to the time of our text, do we have?
4. What age is meant by "last days"?
5. Why is it significant that God has spoken?
6. Were very many people designated as prophets in the Bible?
7. According to the notes, what is the idea implicit in the word "prophet"?

Lesson Two

(1:1-4)

GOD AND HIS SON

³He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.

This lesson is closely tied in with lesson 1 in that both lessons concentrate on the fact that God has spoken. Lesson 1 touched on those through whom God spoke while directing attention to the fact that he has spoken. This lesson will continue to discuss God's speaking, and those through whom he has spoken.

1:3 — He reflects the glory of God — The Greek text affirms even more clearly that Jesus is the exact representation of God, in such a way that we see God in Christ. Note the familiar John 14:8, then 17:5; Colossians 1:15-19. In the Old Covenant scriptures, the word "glory" sometimes was a substitution for God's person. For instance, when the "glory

of God" filled the Holy of Holies, God filled the Holy of Holies, etc. When we fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23, we fall short of God and his will for us.

bears the very stamp — The Greek text has it: "Jesus, being the reflection (*ἀπαύγασμα*) and character (*χαρακτήρ*) . . ."

upholding the universe — The idea in "upholding" (bearing) well expresses the Greek word (*φέρων*), in that it is a continual activity, and Jesus is active in the matter, accomplishing it by means of his powerful word (note the idea in Genesis 1 "God spoke, etc., . . ."). The same Greek word is in II Peter 1:21.

When he had made purification for sins — This expression picks up the major thrust of the whole epistle: the high-priestly work of Jesus. The essence of the new covenant is that it offers remission of sins, which the Old Covenant could not do. God planned through his son, Jesus, to make redemption possible, and when that was finished (John 19:30), God's son sat down at his father's right hand to await the consummation of all things (I Corinthians 15:24-28). Though the love of God is not mentioned in this book, the results of God's love are manifest, especially in this area.

V. 4 — **having become** — By virtue of who he is, and what he has done, Jesus far surpasses the heavenly beings we know as angels. In fact, as the following text (1:5 — 2:18) shows, he created them, and they are merely servants of his. Note Paul's assertion about the name of Jesus (which equals the person of Jesus) in Philippians 2:9-11.

Now in reviewing the whole text of 1:1-4, with special emphasis upon God and his son, the following are items of interest:

God has spoken in the past in various ways and through various people, but now he has spoken in his son. His son, Jesus, has been described in various ways 1. appointed heir of all things, 2. creator of the world, 3. reflector of God, both in image and substance, 4. sustainer of the universe, 5. made purification for sins, 6. sits now at God's right hand, 7. is superior to (even) heavenly messengers. Consideration of these attributes will lead us to meditate upon the nature of the message which came through Jesus. As the epistle bears out, it is a superior message to any before, and is also the last message from God, since no messenger can surpass Jesus. In effect, God spoke when Jesus spoke. We need expect no subsequent revelation from God — Jesus (through his apostles) gave us God's final and best message.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 2:

8. List all the descriptive phrases about Jesus in 1:1-4.
9. Attempt to give some explanation of each of those listed in #8.

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10. If you were trying to describe Jesus, what terms/phrases would you use?
11. Does the description of Jesus in our text differ from that in the gospel accounts (It is not as complete, of course, but does it differ/contradict)?
12. If the nature of the messenger (= Jesus) of God is as it is, what should we expect regarding the message from the messenger?
13. What revelation of God came through prophets (such as Moses) and angels?
14. Were the prophets and angels comparable to God's son in nature, etc.?
15. Is the revelation through (a) son superior to that through prophets, etc.?

Lesson Three

(1:4-14; 2:5-18)

JESUS AND ANGELS

⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.

⁵For to what angel did God ever say, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee"?

Or again,

"I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"?

⁶And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,

"Let all God's angels worship him."

⁷Of the angels he says,

"Who makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire."

⁸But of the Son he says,

"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,

the righteous scepter is the scepter of thy kingdom.

⁹Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;

therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of gladness beyond thy comrades."

¹⁰And,

"Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of thy hands;

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¹¹they will perish, but thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment,

¹²like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years will never end."

¹³But to what angel has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet"?

¹⁴Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?

2 ⁵For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. ⁶It has been testified somewhere,

"What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou carest for him?"

⁷Thou didst make him for a little while lower than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor,

⁸putting everything in subjection under his feet."

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. ⁹But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one.

¹⁰For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹²saying,

"I will proclaim thy name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee."

¹³And again,

"I will put my trust in him."

And again,

"Here am I, and the children God has given me."

¹⁴Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage. ¹⁶For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

We are now to study an extended argument designed to show that angels through whom God spoke were/are inferior to Jesus, God's "final spokesman." While the Old Covenant scriptures do not have lengthy discussions of angels, yet both Old and New Testaments contain a considerable amount of teaching about angels, their place and ministry. A short study is at the end of this lesson.

1:5 — for to what angel — Having partly described in 1:1-4 the nature of Jesus as son, concluding with the statement that Jesus is superior (= better, the first of many "betters" in this book) to the angels, a close study in contrasts is now made to enhance the previous point.

angel — a transliteration of the Greek term, ἄγγελος. A translation would be messenger.

Thou art my son — This quote from Psalms 2:7 is one proof advanced to show that Jesus is superior to any (or all) angel. They are of a created nature, Jesus is "son." God's son became flesh, but did not cease being of the nature of God. Neither is true of angels.

father . . . son — Added evidence for the character of Jesus, distinctly different than that of angels. The quote is from II Samuel 7:14, in the larger context of God's promise to David which prophetically promised a divine descendant through David's lineage, at once David's son and David's God (cf. Matthew 22:41-45).

While the scriptures use the word "son" in regard to many people in various ways, as it is applied to Jesus, there is only one son of his character.

V. 6 — firstborn — This term, found also in Colossians 1:1-5, has several ideas inherent in it. Biologically it designated the first child in a family. It came also to mean the most important, the one with dignity and honor. In reference to Jesus, while he was firstborn in relation to Joseph and Mary, it is here in reference to God and the position of honor accorded by him to Jesus.

worship — Only God is to be worshipped. Hence, this places Jesus in the category of God, and shows the distance between him and angels. Note in John 9:38 that Jesus accepted worship. The quote is somewhat like Psalms 97:7 as the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint) has it, or Deuteronomy 32:43 in the Septuagint (= LXX). It might be pertinent to note that our author habitually quotes from the LXX, or translates the Hebrew text himself.

V. 7, 8 — Angels winds . . . flames — The heavenly messengers are servants while Jesus, as son, sits on a throne of everlasting nature, ruling in righteousness. Of course, this is but what should be, since Jesus is of the nature of God.

V. 9 — righteousness . . . lawlessness — These ideas continue the point in v. 8, that Jesus as God reflects that nature naturally, whereas angels

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are left out of the picture. The scripture quotes are from Psalms 104:4, and Psalms 45:6-7, which was primarily about a king of God's people, then prophetically about Jesus.

You may have noticed in comparison of translations that there are several ways to translate 8a and 9b. There is no way to decide for sure — context must play a large part in the matter. The R.S.V. rendering seems to me to represent the basic meaning of the text.

V. 10-12 — **Thou . . . didst found the earth** — A quote of Psalms 102:25-26, vv. 10-12 gives additional information about the nature of Jesus. It is significant that this quote would have been read as if God were the subject. Our author applies the text to Jesus, since he is God.

It is a moving expression for meditation on the true nature of Jesus. One can visualize the years becoming centuries, and centuries going by, but Jesus remaining ever unchanged, eternal. The same sort of idea and feeling is in many psalms, especially 91:1ff. Note that angels have receded from the picture — only the son is in view.

V. 13 — **Sit at my right hand** — Quoting Psalms 110:1, our writer pictures God bringing Jesus to the position at his right hand (notice that nowhere does the author make God and Jesus one person, rather they are always depicted as two persons), a place of dignity and honor, while never doing that for any angel.

V. 14 — **Are they not . . .** — Yes, they are but servants, receiving orders to do this or that, created to serve others, never to be served.

2:1-4 will be treated in Lesson 4.

We continue the thread of thought in ch. 1 with 2:5-18, Jesus as God's final messenger compared to angels. The section 2:5-9 highlights the point that the world, lost through man to Satan, was redeemed through Jesus, quite aside from anything angels did. 2:10-18 helps us see that Jesus became man to help man, and not to help angels.

V. 5 — **it was not to angels** — The universe about us, of which we are part, has never been placed under the authority of angels. It was placed under man. Man "lost" it in the fall, but it was regained by the man, Jesus.

V. 6 — **What is man** — Psalms 8 has humanity in view, and ultimately Jesus as man. God did care for his creation, man; so much so that Jesus was sent to taste death for every man (but not even one angel).

V. 7 — In the matter of time and position, mankind has a relative place in respect to angels. They are heavenly beings while man is earthly; yet man has had the world placed under his authority (Genesis 1, 2, 3) while angels have not.

V. 8 — **We do not yet see** — Because of man's sin, some control was forfeited. Man, as man, failed to be what was possible.

V. 9 — **But we see Jesus** — Viewing man apart from Jesus, things look hopeless. If nothing else be true, sin can't be conquered. Man is doomed

to defeat. When Jesus comes into the picture, defeat is turned into victory, sin is overcome, righteousness prevails. Angels, however, did not bring said results about — Jesus did. It was specifically his death, a death for every man, that resulted in a restored state for man, and the coronation of Jesus because of his part in the matter. This was the idea in 1:3, here enlarged.

taste — The idea is that of entering into, participation in, experiencing. Note Matthew 16:28; Luke 14:24; John 8:52; Acts 10:10; Colossians 2:9, 21; I Peter 2:3 for uses of the word "taste." It will appear again in 6:4.

V. 10 — **it was fitting** — Enlarging upon the point in v. 9, the author brings out clearly that Jesus, not angels, came to take upon himself the form of man, so that he might help man in ways that man could not help himself. This text gives one view of the "word becoming flesh" and "dwelling among men."

of whom and by whom — Refers to God the father, but is true of his son, though here the emphasis is upon the humanity of Jesus.

pioneer — The one who takes the lead for others, the "trail-blazer." See 12:2.

perfect — complete, full, needing nothing. Jesus became everything necessary to provide a complete redemption for man. No angel could do this, nor was it done for angels.

V. 11 — Jesus spoke about "oneness" in John 17, a oneness with God, with the twelve, and with those who would believe on him through the message proclaimed. The gospel is intended to unify, to make one out of many. "Brethren" is an expression of that unity. Notice that Jesus uses the term for all those who are being sanctified. A good parallel text is II Corinthians 6:14 — 7:1 in this regard. The same Greek term is translated "holy" and "sanctify." Note 12:10.

V. 12 — Quoting Psalms 22:22, the verse follows the terrible picture of agony which the person had endured. The person, of course, is Jesus. Following his suffering, however, comes the time of praise and the salvation made available through the suffering, a picture which dovetails with our text in 2:9ff.

V. 13 — **I will put my trust** — A scripture from Isaiah 12:2, which conveys a trusting life, one devoted to God despite life's problems and in view of God's blessings, which is appropriate in our discussion about Jesus.

Here am I — From Isaiah 8:18, this text is primarily concerned with the prophet's choice to commit himself to God's keeping, relying upon God for all his life. It is a great thought that Jesus leads the way for all by his trust in God, and allows all who will to share in that life.

V. 14 — **the children share** — continuing the discussion of Jesus' relationship to man (and not to angels), a "sharing" idea is presented. If

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through man sin came, then by man righteousness came. If by man sin brought death, by man righteousness brings life (note Romans 5:12-21). Jesus became like his creation, man, and the main thrust of this was to bring to naught the result of sin. In doing so, the devil's power was destroyed, and every person who so desires can enjoy emancipation from sin, enjoying freedom as sons of God.

V. 15 — **fear of death** — Because of Jesus' sacrificial death, the fear that death holds for us as humans can be removed. While physical (the context is presumably about physical death) death as a fact yet remains, Christians can treat it as a door to God's presence where no death ever happens, Revelation 21:4.

As noted, it seems that physical death is in view here. However, we have mentioned sin, and a result of sin, physical death. The reader will know, however, that sin affects every person in a "spiritual" way as well as a "physical way." In fact, the "spiritual death" (as we call it) is by far the most vital "death" with which to be concerned. Jesus not only removed the fear associated with physical death, his sacrifice, if accepted, makes it possible for every Christian to have the fear of (and fact of) spiritual death removed. This may also be the thrust of the text. In fact, the devil would like for Christians to be more concerned with the physical than the spiritual, a tendency we must guard against at all times. Hence, it is important to think about sin, and spiritual relationships when we study this text. Jesus didn't remove the fact of our physical death. He did provide the escape from dying "spiritually" if we accept it. (Note: one of the reasons we have used quotation marks around "physical" and "spiritual" is that those adjectives are human additions — the Bible text doesn't use the expressions "physical death" and "spiritual death." The context must determine which is in mind. In fact, sin brings death, James 1:12-15, whether physical, spiritual or both.)

V. 16 — **it is not with angels** — The contrast is yet present: not only are angels not superior to Jesus, all that Jesus did was not for them. They may desire to participate (I Peter 1:10-12) but no provision was made for them in what Jesus did.

descendants of Abraham — Here the idea is those of faith who become sons of Abraham. See Romans 4:1ff.; Galatians 3:28-29; etc.

V. 17 — **Therefore** — As God so willed it, Jesus as savior had to become like those whom he was saving, at least in some respects. He must experience humanity in such a way that he could adequately provide for every need thereof, and not excluding the main need, that of forgiveness of sins. The service of God insofar as Jesus went involved both dying for sin and living to make intercession for those being sanctified.

V. 18 — Explanatory of Jesus' work as high priest, this completes the discussion of the difference between Jesus and angels. Not only are angels merely servants, they are not able to share in the redemption made possible through Jesus.

It will be good to sum up the points made in 2:5—18; Jesus is pioneer, sanctifier and high priest — angels are none of these. Add these ideas to those in ch. 1 and the immense difference between God's messengers for the Old Covenant and God's messenger for the New Covenant becomes evident. Hence, there is likewise a vast gulf between the two covenants as well. Indeed, Christians have the "better" of the two.

SPECIAL STUDY ON ANGELS

The word "angel" is a transliteration of the Greek term *ἄγγελος*, which basically meant a messenger, or representative. The root appears in the Greek term *εὐαγγέλιον*, which is normally translated "gospel." The messengers were normally non-human, and in some ways superior to man, as our text indicates. We might call them "spiritual beings" to differentiate them from human/non-spiritual (i.e., having no physical body). That they are actual beings, and not figments of the imagination is true (we ought, as Christians, not to be like the Sadducees, Acts 23:6-8. Note Jesus' teaching about them in Luke 20:27-40).

In the lesson, Jesus was depicted as greater than angels, some through whom God had spoken to Israel and others. Stephen made mention in Acts 7:53 to the part these heavenly messengers had in God's revelation to Israel. Paul does likewise in Galatians 3:19. There is much activity in the Revelation letter, where these non-human personalities serve God in a great variety of ways. Some angelic activity recorded in the Bible would include the following:

Appearances to Abraham, Genesis 18:1ff.; 22:11-18; Hagar, Genesis 16:7-13; 21:17-20; Jacob, Genesis 28:10-22; Moses, Exodus 3:2ff. (see Ex. 14:19); Joshua, Joshua 5:13-15; Gideon, Judges 6:11ff.; Manoah, Judges 13:1ff.; Ezekiel, Ch. 40 for example; Balaam, Numbers 22:21-35; Elijah, I Kings 19:5; Daniel 8:16ff.; Elisha, II Kings 6:11ff.; 19:35; Zechariah, Luke 1:11-20; Joseph, Matthew 2:13; Mary, Luke 1:26-38; to the shepherds, Luke 2:8-14; the apostles, Acts 5:17ff.; Cornelius, Acts 10:1ff.; Peter, Acts 12:6ff.; Paul, Acts 27:21ff.; John, Revelation 1:1; etc.

Other scriptures show that God has heavenly messengers for heirs of salvation, Psalms 91:11; Hebrews 1:14 (although we are not sure what particular function they have) and Matthew 18:10 (where the reference may be to little children, although the discussion shades into believers in Jesus). The text of Luke 16:19ff. has Lazarus being transported to Abraham's bosom by angels. The resurrection accounts in all four of the gospels have angels appearing to people and speaking various messages.

Earlier in Luke 23, angels had appeared to Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, and he mentions that he had at his command twelve legions

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of angels, Matthew 26:53. The text in Luke 15:10 brings to our attention that these heavenly beings know when even one person is redeemed, and rejoice because of it. Jesus tells two parables of judgment in Matthew 13 and angels are involved in both (note here Mark 8:38; 13:27; Luke 12:8ff.; II Thessalonians 1:7ff.).

Bible readers will know that other heavenly beings called angels exist, but who serve Satan (who evidently is also of the same nature) rather than God. Matthew 25:41 speaks about Satan and his messengers for whom the hell of fire was originally created. Whether these messengers are to be equated with demons (King James 'devils') is questioned, but it seems likely. These beings were evidently created sinless, but with ability to choose and to will, and chose to serve Satan rather than God. Jude v. 6 and II Peter 2:4 show that some of them sinned and are awaiting punishment. Revelation brings to our attention many thousands of angels, both good and bad.

From these references, we can draw some ideas about these heavenly beings we call angels (remembering that the Scripture applies the term "angel" to other beings than heavenly beings, such as in Revelation 2:1, etc.): God has created other beings than us humans, who have functions in his universe, they who are of God serve humanity in a variety of ways, they are in some ways "higher" than humans yet are not as privileged as humans, and the "good" angels manifest a personal interest in the salvation process. They are indeed a most notable part of God's creation, yet Jesus is superior to them, and thus the message through Jesus is superior to any message from them. Carefully consider Galatians 1:8-9 in this regard. Note also the tendency of some to place angels in a position that is unscriptural, Colossians 2:17.

QUESTIONS FROM LESSON 3:

16. From the whole discussion of the text, why was it necessary for Jesus to be contrasted to angels?
17. Point out as many contrasts as you can between Jesus and angels.
18. Did Jesus die for angels?
19. Though angels are "higher" than humans, can they also sin?
20. List some of the ways that a knowledge of angels helps us.
21. What would you say is the basic position that God's messengers fill?
22. Are there evil heavenly beings as well as good ones?

Lesson Four

(2:1-4)

THE GREAT SALVATION

2 Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ²For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, ⁴while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will.

You have noticed that this section comes in the midst of an argument concerning Jesus and God's heavenly messengers. This sort of "aside" from the main thread of discourse is repeated several times in the epistle. The nature and urgency of the subject matter and the author's sharp interest in those who would read the letter provide the reasons for such exhortations as this one. Christians always need to exhort each other and to be exhorted (consider the series of exhortations beginning at 10:19). The necessity of accepting Jesus as savior and maintaining that relationship for life, the manifold difficulties of living for Jesus, the many who have started but did not finish — all provide motivation for such occasions, and for our text.

2:1 — **we** — All Christians, whoever, whenever. No one was/is excluded

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from perseverance in the Christian life. If the author be the apostle Paul (as seems likely), he was not exempt from concern for himself, as is clear from I Corinthians 9:24-27. Judas, that one who was chosen by Jesus, remains forever as an example not to mimic.

closer attention — The message from Jesus has been amply demonstrated already as being superior to any others from God. If it is neglected, what other hope is there? One thing about Christianity: it claims exclusiveness, will brook no rivals, will save only those within its pale. Nowhere is there any room for being both Christian and Hindu, etc. Moreover, if Christianity be true and all else false, then no other religion can provide redemption, regardless of what it is.

lest we drift away — Sermons have often been preached, and rightly so, about the "perils of drifting." Few people who become Christians deliberately turn away — they gradually do so, almost inadvertently (note v. 3 'neglect'). The Greek word in our text was used to describe a ring slipping off one's finger, or the main point of an argument being missed, or of a ship carried by the tide from its mooring. The fact that the drifting is not intentional does not lessen the damage done, the fatal end result. Many years ago E. E. Hewitt and B. D. Ackley wrote the beautiful song "Drifting." The words bring to mind what we are talking about here:

Drifting carelessly with the tide,
Drifting over the waters wide,
With no captain your course to guide,
Drifting over life's sea.
Drifting, drifting, no port in sight,
Drifting far from the gospel light,
Lest you go down in the stormy night,
Drifting over life's sea.

V. 2 — **the message declared** — Basically the Old Covenant scriptures are in mind, though God spoke in other times by angels.

valid — Greek is *βέβαιος*, steadfast, unyielding, firm. The same word is translated in v. 3, 'was attested.' The reason the angel's message was valid is because it was God's word. If God be trustworthy, and he is, then his word is trustworthy. A major reason for trusting God is said to be this very fact, 6:13-20, upon which Christians build their hope. In 12:25-29, the idea is brought up again, this time contrasting the covenants, with emphasis upon the eternal nature of the new covenant, that Christians have received a kingdom that can't be shaken (i.e., destroyed, replaced, etc.).

transgression and disobedience — The Scripture uses eight or ten different terms to describe sin. Here the ideas used are those of willful violation and refusal to listen.

Just retribution — Sinners are punished different ways while here upon earth, though the punishment of hell for eternity is equal for all. Different sins bring different consequences in life, some of a physical/mental nature, etc. Even if one is forgiven of sin so that the eternal punishment is taken away, temporal consequences may still be experienced.

God's sentence upon sin is said to be just (i.e., right or what is correct). Sometimes it doesn't seem that way. Christians, however, have no choice but to believe that what God does in this regard, or in any regard, is just/right. Any other position makes one a judge of God, and makes God appear to be unjust. Such a "god" could not be worshipped or served. Hence, as with the Psalmist, "Let God be true even if it makes (me and) all men to be liars." (See Psalms 51:4; 116:11; Romans 3:1-8).

V. 3 — **how shall we escape** — Nothing is clearer in the Bible than this: no one can escape God's judgment. Furthermore, if Jesus is the (only) way, etc., then not to accept Jesus leaves no other way to be saved (Acts 4:11-12).

such a great salvation — The reasons for its greatness are many. As the Bible reveals, God spent centuries preparing for the coming of his only son in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4). As the Old Testament shows, and as Hebrews clearly reveals, there were many types and shadows in the times before Jesus came, all prophetically pointing to Jesus and the covenant he represented. The message about Jesus is "it" and there is no other.

by the Lord . . . those who heard — Jesus claimed to be the fulfillment of the Old Covenant (Matthew 5:17) and the foundation for the church (Matthew 16:13-19). He is said to be the chief cornerstone, Ephesians 2:20. He was the message in a true sense as well as preaching it. He gave power and authority to his apostles (John 16:7-15); Acts 1:8; etc.) so that the message they proclaimed would be the correct one. We expect no further message because the message about Jesus hasn't changed, and won't be changed.

V. 4 — **God bore witness** — Sometimes God did so by a voice (Matthew 3:17; John 12:28) or more commonly by what Jesus did (John 3:1ff.; 5:17ff.; 14:8-11), or by working through the apostles (Acts 2:14ff.).

signs — The Greek term *ισήμειον*, which carries the idea of an event pointing to something or someone beyond itself.

wonders — The Greek term is *τέρας*, which conveys the idea of something in an event that provokes consideration by those viewing it, especially bringing to mind wonder or amazement.

various miracles — The Greek term for miracle is *δύναμις*, which is sometimes translated power (as in Romans 1:16). There is some problem with this word, in that what is a "miracle" for one person is not so for another. In any age, the loose use of the term "miracle" will cause

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problems, and it does in our age. However, as the Acts record bears out, and the epistles as well, the things done through the apostles as they proclaimed the message about Jesus brought about many changes in the lives of people (note Acts 4:16; II Corinthians 12:12).

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 4:

23. On what basis is the "therefore" written (i.e., "therefore" indicates a conclusion of some sort, based upon a preceding discussion/argument).
24. Why is the idea of drifting and neglect so pertinent?
25. Why was the Old Covenant valid/firm?
26. Do you believe that God is always just?
27. Why is Christianity such a great salvation, according to Hebrews?
28. What message did Jesus preach, and then also the apostles?
29. What part did God play in the proclamation of said message?
30. Would God's participation in such ways indicate his approval?

Lesson Five

(2:17-18)

OUR HIGH PRIEST

¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

The Hebrew epistle is unique in its presentation of Jesus as high priest. Generally the emphasis is upon Jesus' divinity/humanity, or his being savior, or lordship. While all of these concepts are also in Hebrews, the major thrust of the book is on the fact of Jesus being our high priest. The concept is approached from various angles in the book, and will be discussed at the appropriate places. Suffice it to say here that the sacrifice Jesus made for sin, and his continued intercession at God's right hand on behalf of "saved sinners" is the crux of the New Covenant, that which makes it better than the Old Covenant, or any other religious system.

2:17 — **he had to be made like** — many times the New Testament writers present the idea that Jesus though being deity became also

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human. The opening verses of John's gospel provide endless food for thought, that Jesus was deity but became flesh, dwelling among men. I John 1:1-4 insists that Jesus was not a phantom, but was actual flesh. Jesus made the same point even after his resurrection, that he was flesh, Luke 24:39-41. The familiar accounts of the incarnation and the beautiful text in Philippians 2:1-11 sort of capsulize the tenor of the New Covenant scriptures. Note that Paul especially used the word likeness in Philippians 2:7 and Romans 8:3.

his brethren — As commented in lesson 3, Jesus did attempt in every way to relate to humanity. His earthly life surely was not lived in a vacuum, but rather he could readily understand life. His birth in humble surroundings was, in contrast to his heavenly home, awful. Yet many have been brought into the world in pitiful places, sometimes with no one to care, even the parents. It might have been true that the innkeeper was indifferent, but Jesus had parents who cared. The gifts that the wise men brought doubtless helped in the expenses of a hurried trip to Egypt, but the gospel accounts indicate that Jesus grew up in a home where "ends didn't always meet." God knows how it is down here — he grew up, lived and died here — that he might be like his (potential) brethren.

merciful . . . faithful — These two terms are most important to our understanding of Jesus. Each term is full of meaning as we contemplate Jesus and our own self.

Mercy is that quality, of God or of anyone, that can't be demanded. Wages can be demanded (the laborer is worthy of his hire) but mercy isn't a wage. It isn't owed though it may be given and received. God didn't have to love us, or do anything for us — but he did. Moreover, he, in his Son, became like us so that we might know that he does understand our problems, most especially those problems that occur over and over again.

Faithful is a different characteristic — it is often not associated with mercy, but both have a definite bearing on our need as sinners. The Greek term translated "faithful" is the same word translated as "belief." The context will generally help us to decide which of our English words best fits the idea at hand. However, we must remember that both concepts are inherent in the Greek term. From the position of the high priest, who must confront the same people over and over again, often with the same sins, who must also represent them to God and God to them, both these characteristics are needful. Mercy is needed, but so is faithfulness.

in the service of God — As noted above, the one who is high priest must mediate for people to God, but must also represent God to the worshippers. Neither facet must be overshadowed by the other. Eli's two sons were unduly like humans and were tragic examples of many other priests who forgot whose they were and whom they served.

expiation — Some versions used “propitiation” here while others, avoiding the theological problems with expiation/propitiation use “sin-offering.” The Greek term, *λασμος*, can be seen in Luke 18:13; Romans 3:25 and I John 2:2; 4:10. In the Old Testament, the LXX used it for the place of the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, as in Exodus 25:19. The idea is that of mercy, not deserved, but needed. All were under the wrath of God, Romans 1:18ff.; 5:9 — none could pay the ransom. Jesus came and accomplished “what the law . . . could not do,” making reconciliation for the sins of all people.

V. 18 — **suffered** — Jesus’ suffering is underscored many places in our Bible, beginning with types and shadows, prophetic utterances (Psalms 22; Isaiah 53), and elaborated upon by the New Testament writers (I Peter 2:21-24; Philippians 3:10). Suffering generally equals the events surrounding his death, since he seemingly didn’t suffer except at that time.

tempted — The Greek term, *πειρασμος*, carries the twin ideas of test/tempt. Context will determine which of the two English words best conveys what is in the context. As is born out elsewhere (Matthew 4:1ff.; Hebrews 5:7-9; etc.) he was subjected to “life.” Hence, he can identify with us, and we with him, all the while realizing that he did not succumb to any. He then knows the exact strength of temptation. We can not affirm that “he doesn’t know my/our problems” for he does know them. He experienced them all, withstood them all, then became guilty of them all, II Corinthians 5:21, even to suffering their penalty. Let us then rejoice in such a high priest!

he is able — “Tis the grandest theme . . . !” And so it is — we serve the God who is both able and willing, whose son not only loved us but gave himself up for us. What need we more?

those who are tempted — The Greek text has it “Jesus is able the ones being tempted to help.” Temptation/testing is constant, in various ways and manners, in all sizes and colors, in all times and places. How eternally valid it is to sing “I need Jesus, I need him every hour.”

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 5:

31. Did you take time to read the various texts in Hebrews suggested in the lesson outline on page vi?
32. Comparably, which other New Testament letter develops Jesus as our high priest?
33. Did Jesus ever intercede for anyone while here upon earth? (Notice Luke 22:31-32; 23:34; John 11:41-42; 17:9, 20.)

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34. Do you think that Jesus was "human" like you are?
35. Could a high priest be too merciful? not faithful?
36. What two relationships does a high priest sustain in the service of God?
37. What was the primary service of Jesus as high priest in the service of God, according to v. 17?
38. How much do you think Jesus is able to help you?

Lesson Six

(3:1-6)

Therefore, holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call, **3** consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession. ²He was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in God's house. ³Yet Jesus has been counted worthy of as much more glory than Moses as the builder of a house has more honor than the house. ⁴(For every house is built by some one, but the builder of all things is God.) ⁵Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶but Christ was faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope.

Moses — how great this man was in the Jewish mind. The words in John 9:28 exemplify their preoccupation with him — "We are disciples of Moses." Indeed, we who are Christians agree that God specially chose him, utilized him to bring about the greatest "escape" in history; and to write five major books in His first on-paper revelation to man. Yet — he is but a servant in the house. The Master of the house is Jesus. Who then is the greatest?

3:1 — **holy brethren** — Recall 2:11 where Jesus, the sanctifier, is one with those being sanctified. Now, those being sanctified are addressed.

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who share — The Greek term is *μέτοχος*, designating a partnership, or a close affiliation of some sort (like that of the fisherman in Luke 5:7; or that which is not to be, II Corinthians 6:14; see also I Corinthians 9:10, 13; Hebrews 1:9; 6:4; 12:8). God has spoken from heaven, and issued a call, an invitation to all, and is willing to help all who call upon him in response, Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13.

consider — "Put your mind on this!"

apostle — Jesus was sent by God to earth, John 17:4, 18. "He came, he saw, he conquered!"

high priest — These two terms sort of sum up the whole book, and to these our undivided attention is to be given.

confession — The Greek term, *δμολογία*, is also behind the word "profession." If we have accepted the messenger Jesus, the message that he brought must be obeyed. When we obey, we affirm openly that we have so listened and submitted, our "confession" of faith. As is clear in the Bible, confession while including what one speaks more broadly and accurately involves all one's life. This epistle will be of particular aid in bringing to our minds him whom we have accepted as savior in his role as high priest, and for its first readers, was to do so in such a way that they would not exchange Jesus for Moses, or Christianity for the religious system represented by Moses.

V. 2 — **He was faithful** — Same word as noted above on 2:17, but here with the idea of adhering to one's task, keeping at it, carrying it out as expected.

V. 3 — Moses had been said to be a "servant" "in" God's house, v. 2. Jesus, as son and "over" the house, v. 6, certainly is better. Note carefully that Moses is not put down, rather is commended for his life as is only proper. It is the comparative positions that are the focal point.

V. 4 — Some treat this verse as a parenthesis, a diverting from the thought. While it may be that, it echoes a theme that is throughout the whole Bible, that of "cause and effect." The Bible never for one moment allows anyone to think that anything happens without a cause, whether it be the universe or something in it. Neither does it teach that a cause will not produce an effect. Because both these ideas are so, we need to shape our thinking accordingly. For instance, we should not look at our world and suppose that nothing started it, and nothing keeps it going. (The Bible emphatically teaches that God made it and sustains it, see 1:2.) We should not so live as if no thought need be given to what we do, for "our sins will find us out," we will "reap (exactly) what we sow," Numbers 32:23; Galatians 6:7. Hence, the Christian is eternally vigilant to guard his thoughts, for out of them proceed the issues of life, Proverbs 4:23. Too, the Christian always lives in light of a coming judgment, knowing that it is sure, and God is not to be taken lightly, Romans 14:12; Hebrews 10:31.

V. 5 — **Moses** — As written above, Moses was a tremendous personality in the hands of God. Doubtless his appearance with Elijah at Jesus' transfiguration bespeaks his place in God's economy. Few men had the training or the character that Moses did, and fewer still were so willing to let God use it. While we sometimes use his reluctance in Exodus 4 against him, let us hasten to say that every one of his accusers would do likewise at such an assignment (sometimes we can't even speak to our neighbor!). Moreover, he did go, and we can but admire the man who could count the treasures of Egypt as refuse that he might gain God's "well done."

to testify to the things . . . spoken later — Moses, as the Greek text shows, was a martyr, a witness to coming events. Not only was he a prophet, his life was a type, a prophecy in and of itself, Deuteronomy 18:5; Acts 3:22. Note here how much and in so many ways this book ties together the two covenants. It is, in the particular points brought out, without peer in our New Testament. The parallel phrase in other books of the N.T. is "it is written," for they all help us to see the unity of the two testaments, and yet the immeasurably greater value of the system revealed in and through Jesus.

V. 6 — **we are his house** — This metaphor is representative of a concept found various places in the New Testament, such as John 15:1-5; Romans 12:4-5; Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:9-10. Our epistle has had it in the term "brethren" in ch. 2, and will bring it up again various times. Recall that 2:16 said that Jesus was concerned about his brethren (us): here is one reason why he is concerned, and in what way he is concerned.

if we hold fast — This idea of "holding fast" is prominent in our epistle, and in all the Bible. 3:7 — 4:13 amplifies the point immediately. The Greek term implies a tight hold on something, not ever relinquished. It is the idea expressed in "Keep on keeping on."

confidence — Some translate "boldness." I John has this word in some interesting ways, as in 2:28; 3:21; 4:17; 5:14. Note Paul's example in Acts 13:46; 1 Thessalonians 2:2; and his request in Ephesians 6:18-20.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 6:

39. What reasons have been given to cause one to consider Jesus?
40. What terms are used of Jesus?
41. What significance do you see in those terms?
42. In your own words, describe Moses.
43. Is the text complementary to Moses?
44. Of what was Moses a servant?
45. Do you believe that God is the builder of all things?
46. Who is over the house of which Moses was a servant?

Lesson Seven

(3:7 — 4:13)

⁷Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, when you hear his voice, ⁸do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. ¹⁰Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their hearts; they have not known my ways.' ¹¹As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall never enter my rest.' "

¹²Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end, ¹⁵while it is said,

"Today, when you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts
as in the rebellion."

¹⁶Who were they that heard and yet were rebellious? Was it not all those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses? ¹⁷And with whom was he provoked forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom did he swear that they should never enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

4 Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest remains, let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach it. ²For good news came to us just as to them; but the message which they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers. ³For we who have believed enter that rest as he has said,

“As I swore in my wrath,

“They shall never enter my rest,” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way, “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” ⁵And again in this place he said,

“They shall never enter my rest.” ⁶Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷again he sets a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,

“Today, when you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts.”

⁸For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later of another day. ⁹So then, there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God; ¹⁰for whoever enters God’s rest also ceases from his labors as God did from his.

¹¹Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience. ¹²For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

JESUS AND JOSHUA

If one would ask for stalwart men,
whose lives would do for ink and pen;
What greater names than these? Oh then,
what with God’s help, we might have been!

This little verse is to help all of us think about men, two men especially, Moses and Joshua, whose loyalty and willingness to yield to God, allowing him to work in them, have made them household words for every Bible reader. Not because they lived to become such, but rather because they so lived! The ringing declaration of Joshua to Israel, “You

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choose today whom you will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" has been a rallying cry for 3,000 years, encouraging the undecided, the faint-hearted, and the faithful as well. Who can read the account in Exodus 17:8-13 or the book of Joshua and not be thrilled with Joshua? Surely he, who did so faithfully, can but be honored! And honored he is — he is compared with Jesus (Greek students will know that the same Greek word is translated both Jesus and Joshua, both names meaning 'savior'). The comparison will show, however, that while Joshua could bring the people into the land of promise, he could not give them rest — only Jesus can do that — wherein we find the all-important difference. Christians have the better savior! It will be good to read I Cor. 10:1-13 as you study this lesson in Hebrews.

3:7 — **therefore** — The preceding section encouraged the first readers to think carefully about Jesus, shown to be better than angels and Moses, servants of God, those who brought the written word to Israel. Verse 6 put Christians into the picture as enjoying what God had done, and then turned the focus upon the need for constancy, an abiding faithfulness to God. This whole lesson will deal with the Israelites, by-and-large a nation that "started fast but didn't last." They stand as examples of what not to be: faithless to God, the one with whom we (all) have to do, for whom nothing is hidden but, as it were, is shouted from the housetop.

Holy Spirit — Notice carefully: these verses are a quote from Psalms 95:7-11, but while written by someone (likely David), are yet said to be through the direction of the Holy Spirit. This is typical of many texts in the Bible that help us understand not only that scripture is "God-breathed" but also the "how" of that fact. Read now II Peter 1:20-21 — note that the "holy men of old" were borne or carried along, passively, as it were. Now peruse Acts 4:25 for another clear example. Then read Matthew 16:18-19; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-14, for the promise that Jesus gave the apostles in regard to their future ministry. The apostles, familiar with "their" bible, were not strangers to the idea of God speaking through men. Hence, they would be much more understanding, especially in retrospect after a time, about the matter than some people suppose.

today — Anyday, whenever God is speaking. Be alert to this fact as you read the scripture text: not all the people suddenly left God so much as they either drifted away or were never committed. The text of 2:1-4 comes into view again as the text unfolds.

V. 8. — **rebellion (= Meribah = provocation) . . . day of testing (= Massah = strife or contention)** — These two expressions rather sum up the wilderness experience. The greater amount of the people were characterized by first belief, then doubt; first trust, then rejection. Moses described them as rebellious against God from day one, Deuteronomy 9:24. God said of them early in the wilderness experience that they had

tested him ten times, Numbers 14:22, and that in spite of all his blessings (such as food, water, maintenance, Nehemiah 9:21, guidance, etc.)

V. 9 — **test** — Same word as “tempt.”

V. 10 — **I was provoked** — It is instructive to meditate upon the nature of God, a God who loves all. As earlier remarked, while it is true that all are loved, yet all are under the wrath of God, for all have transgressed and gone astray. If it be insisted that God is love, let it also be asserted that God loves enough to send any or all to hell except they repent, Luke 13:3, 5.

my ways — Yet Exodus 19 and 24 show that the Israelites did agree to the covenant God proffered, and were willing to accept it as given. They then had no excuse.

V. 11 — **my wrath** — One of the compelling motivations to do justly, love kindness, and walk humbly with God, Micah 6:8.

my rest — This has in mind the rest we know as heaven, typified by Canaan for the Israelites.

V. 12 — **take care** — Be alert or watchful, as a rule in life. The reason follows.

evil, unbelieving — Unbelief is both wrong and bad. As seen in 3:19, unbelief issues in disobedience, but in fact in and of itself, unbelief is disobedience. The necessary effect (remember 3:4!) of it is a falling away from God. The idea of a falling away will be seen again in 6:4-6.

V. 13 — **exhort** — As is being done in our text. A daily care is to be exercised on the part of all for all.

hardened — The effect of sin, as seen next.

The eternal effect of sin may only be avoided by accepting Jesus' ransom, the temporal effect through repentance and Jesus' intercession.

deceitfulness of sin — As Paul stated in Romans 7:11, sin fooled him. He encouraged Timothy to help others recover themselves from the devil's snare, II Timothy 2:24-26. Judas thought first of the gain, but after the sin of betrayal, the guilt. Paul thought he was doing God a favor (John 16:1-2) by persecuting Christians, but later was dismayed to discover he was opposed to God, I Timothy 1:12-14.

V. 14 — Repeating the idea in v. 6, and emphasizing the necessity of staying with God. We have before commented on confidence (3:6) and firm (2:4).

V. 16 — The next verses are filled with a series of rhetorical questions, designed to heighten the lesson in the wilderness experience of Israel. Note the continual thrust that Israel heard, they knew, they accepted, they started — but they failed, and God rejected them. A real-life illustration!

V. 19 — **unbelief** — An act of the will, just as much as belief is. All could have entered Canaan had they kept on. The example of the many who failed is especially clear in Numbers to the few (Joshua, Caleb)

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who succeeded (read chs. 11-14). Consider also that there was adequate reason for faith — some who saw the same things and experienced the same events, missed, but some attained. In fact, the reasons for faith were so great that forty years later, the residents of Jericho yet remembered and trembled, Joshua 2:8-11.

V. 4:1 — **while the promise** — The rest of God was typified by Canaan, but was not equal to it. As 4:8-9 show, God's rest, the real rest obtained by faithfulness through life, has been and yet is available to all, whether Jew or Greek, whoever, wherever.

let us fear — It is good to recall the parable of the sower, as Jesus called it, in Matthew 13. Many seeds were started, few bore fruit. The character of the soil was the deciding factor.

V. 2 — **good news** — The seed of Matthew 13.

us . . . them — No people have been without enough evidence to believe. Some have had more than others, but all have sinned, which fact implies knowledge of choices and exercise of will. No one has to live as if there were no God. Fools do, but it is not necessary to be a fool.

it did not meet with faith — Israel especially is in view here, the Israel that walked out of Egypt, between water walls on dusty earth — the Israel that God redeemed from slavery but who willfully loved this present age. A message is of no avail except it be trusted. A sad fact is that the nation that came later still persisted in their father's sins, the most of them for fourteen centuries being privileged to have God's word and continual intreaties, yet being depicted as a "disobedient and contrary people," Romans 10:18-21.

V. 3 — The question is not, as Robert Shank so well said, "Is the believer secure?" but rather "Who is the believer?" As the verses say, God honors the faithful, whoever they be.

foundation of the world — God has prepared a place for those who love him; it is where he is, John 14:1ff., and it has been so from the beginning. The redemption in Jesus makes that possible, and that has been so from the same point in time, Ephesians 1:4-14.

V. 4 — **God rested** — The point about which "rest" remains is being clarified. It is not Canaan, nor is it the rest of the seventh day, the Sabbath. God has ceased from "labor" and is now "resting" in heaven, where he awaits the coming of the faithful to share his rest.

V. 6 — **it remains** — It was not God's fault some didn't enter what was made available — the rest was there.

Some have wondered if those who failed to enter Canaan also failed to enter the actual rest represented by Canaan. We are not told if any of those who were sentenced to die in the wilderness later repented, receiving forgiveness. Hence, we can not say certainly. What can be stated is that God dealt/deals justly with all, even extending his loving kindness to such as Rahab, David, Saul of Tarsus.

disobedience — The Greek term, *πειθω*, means to persuade. If one is not persuaded, then in reference to the gospel, one is disobedient. Note Paul's efforts in Acts 17:3, and the results in 17:4. Such is always the case with men and God, and those who serve God, II Corinthians 5:11.

V. 9 — **sabbath rest** — A rest, as given above, where God is, prepared for those who love him, II Timothy 4:7-8; Revelation 14:13.

people of God — Those who are being sanctified in this life, who unite indissolubly faith and the message of Christ, I Corinthians 15:1-4.

V. 10 — **God's rest** — not sleep, nor physical death necessarily. It might be that physical death would not bring rest, but torment, Luke 16:19ff.

V. 11 — **Let us . . . strive** — Note how many times we are exhorted on the basis of some fact, or group of facts. Here the Greek term is *σπουδάζω*, conveying the idea of earnestness, haste or eagerness. See it in Romans 12:8, 11; Galatians 2:10; Ephesians 4:3; II Peter 1:10, 15; 3:14; Jude v. 3. Of course, this frame of mind was not evident among those whose bodies fell in the wilderness, providing manna for the birds!

V. 12 — **Word of God** — If God be living, 3:12, then his word would also be, as well as energetic. Both terms are attempts to enforce the point about the necessity of continued obedience. If God could know each and every person's heart among the Israelites who left Egypt, and could protect them all while afflicting the Egyptians, etc., then he is also capable of doing the same for anyone else, anytime. Hence, if the first readers of this epistle who had started on the pilgrimage of faith did not finish, they need not suppose that God would fail to notice the fact, and act accordingly, anymore than God would fail to notice their good deeds and reward in kind, 6:10, if they led lives of obedience as did some of Israel, 6:11-12.

soul and spirit . . . joints and marrow — Descriptive terms indicating the more-than-human ability to rightly know and accurately judge,

thoughts and intentions — It may be, and often is, that we do not correctly perceive what is in our own mind, not to mention the minds of others. Hence, we can not always say what our motivation was for some deed. However, the assurance needs to be ours that God is not so limited — he knows all, as v. 13 says.

V. 13 — The Psalmist said it so well, that God knows our frame, for he has made us, 103:13. If this be so, then we are but open books to him — we can't deceive anyone but ourselves if we think otherwise. All is laid bare.

him with whom we have to do — God of course. The Greek text reads "to the eyes of him (God) with whom our account is." The Greek term behind "account" is the familiar *λόγος*, seen in Matthew 12:37; Luke 16:2; John 1:1; Romans 9:6; Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 3:17; I Peter 1:23; etc.

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QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 7:

47. What do you see as the thrust of this text in relationship to the whole book?
48. How many times does the writer draw a conclusion ("therefore" or a similar term)?
49. List the various ways the exhortations are stated.
50. Why were the Israelites such a sad but instructive case-in-point?
51. What text speaks about inspiration? (Did you read John 16:7-15; Acts 4:25; and I Peter 1:20-21?)
52. What brings about an evil, unbelieving heart/mind?
53. What is the effect of that type mind?
54. What causes sin (which produces the evil mind, etc.?)? Stated differently, suppose the message heard was united with faith — would sin or righteousness result?
55. How long were the first readers to exhort each other?
56. How long does one share in Christ?
57. How does the writer show that a rest of God remains for believers?
58. How would the first readers decide that no one could mimic the Israelites and not be punished in a like manner?
59. Do you believe that God knows you and that nothing can be hidden from him?

Lesson Eight

(4:14 — 5:10)

GOD'S HIGH PRIEST

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

5 For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³ Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. ⁴ And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵ So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

“Thou art my Son,
today I have begotten thee”;

⁶ as he says also in another place,

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"Thou art a priest for ever,
after the order of Melchizedek."

7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. ⁸Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

The work of the high priest (the service of God, 2:17) has been introduced, with emphasis upon mercy and faithfulness. 3:1-6 enlarged the idea of Jesus as a faithful son. Our immediate text 4:14-16 will help us to know about his gracious, sympathetic nature. 5:1-4 outlines the necessary requirements of the high priest who serves God on behalf of the people, and then 5:5-10 makes clear how Jesus satisfies those requirements. If you have considered the outline of the book, you will have noticed that the major portion of it is given over to this subject: Jesus as God's high priest, together with the religious system based upon that point.

4:14 — **great high priest** — The first readers of this book were, if not all Jews, then evidently cognizant of the Jewish religious system. Any Jew who knew his history could doubtless recount high priests who were anything but great. During the years of the Roman occupation of Palestine, beginning in 63 B.C., none were "great" in the good sense, some were great in the evil they did, such as Annas and Caiaphas. So then to present Jesus as a "great" high priest would bring two immediate questions: 1) how is he great and 2) how did he get to be high priest. The next several chapters, through 10:18, are given over to that end.

who has passed through the heavens — This could not be affirmed of any other high priest. 1:3 had placed Jesus at God's right hand. Here the idea is repeated, and again in 6:20. This access to God would naturally provide Jesus with a greatness not possible to any "ordinary" high priest. Now, worship of God could be conducted directly with God. As Jesus taught in John 4:23-24, things had changed in the area of worshipping God: it didn't have to be done at Jerusalem through the auspices of Judaism; it could be done anywhere by anyone.

let us hold fast — Continual action is needed on the part of the people of God. In consideration of the high priest who serves them (and us), it ought not to be difficult to do — in fact, it ought to be a pleasure.

V. 15 — Jesus' ability to heed a cry for help is again placed before their eyes. They needed to compare what they had in Jesus with what was available in Judaism. Not many years after this was written, the

Romans destroyed the center of Jewish worship in Jerusalem, and Judaism has never recovered. Hence, the first readers would have soon known the inadequacy of the Jewish system — we who live now ought to be able to see such clearly.

sympathize — Though not necessarily a new idea, this particular aspect in regard to Jesus would be interesting, insofar as he was God by nature. The Jews had some scriptural teaching on the subject, and had developed a concept of God that almost placed God in a category of “wholly other.” Many other religions of the day had deities who were said to be of such nature that mankind was the farthest thing from their concern. It is said that Plutarch thought it blasphemous to involve God in the affairs of men. How much of this type thinking was true of the recipients of this letter is unknown, but certain it is that some would have to restructure their ideas about God in the light of this epistle. When Jesus taught people to pray “our Father,” he was striking at this point.

weaknesses — It was because of this fact about people that Jesus died, Romans 5:6. The word has various applications, but is often used comparatively, as strong/weak, healthy/sick, etc. It indicates a deficiency in some way, or a position relative to another.

without sinning — This is the important factor about Jesus: he was not guilty of sin; therefore he could take care of that problem which mankind could not do. It has been well said that sin is man's only problem, and Jesus is God's only solution. It is so.

V. 16 — The encouragement is: keep coming to God, because you have an adequate high priest who intercedes for you. Note the idea of “draw near” in 11:6.

throne of grace — Special emphasis here upon grace, because in other places different aspects of God will be presented. Sinners don't need justice, they need grace. Later on in ch. 7, the point is made that the law system is replaced with a new system. The “basic ingredient” of this new system is grace.

5:1 — **for** — The two basic qualifications in the Mosaic law system which must be met by every high priest were: 1) selected from men, himself a man, 2) selected by God, not self-appointed. Aaron was the first individual so chosen, and thus typical of the rest who should follow. The system was designed to encourage the worshipper to have confidence in the system, since they could realize that the one serving as high priest was like them, and was also God's choice.

V. 2 — **deal gently** — The Greek term *μετροπαθειν* indicates a state of mind between indifference and complete identification. The high priest must be willing to hear, to sympathize, yet not be of such nature that sins are soft-pedaled and swept under the rug. In other terms, he must be like God, who is both just and merciful.

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V. 3 — **to offer sacrifice for his own sins** — This plain fact was too obvious in some priest's lives, but it was yet a definite point that had to be recognized by every high priest, that he too was sinful, and dare not act otherwise.

V. 4 — **one does not take** — To do so would be presumptuous, which would not do for a high priest. Saul was such, and displeased God, 1 Samuel 13:8ff.

V. 5 — **So also** — Christ, chosen of God, will be the burden of the epistle through 7:28. The human nature of Jesus has been noticed, especially in ch. 2, 4:14-16 and here in 5:7-8.

Thou art my son — The use again in Psalms 2:7, as in 1:5. God had made this statement to no high priest prior to Jesus, which makes this a significant fact.

V. 6 — **Thou art a priest** — Note the first reference to Jesus' priesthood as given in Psalms 110:4, which will be used as support again in 7:17, 21.

Melchizedek — This personality would be known by any Jew from his bible, Genesis 14. The prediction in Psalms 110 was added strength to the importance of Jesus, since it indicated that God had planned the selection of Jesus before it actually took place. Moreover, the use of Melchizedek sets up in a general way the type of high priest Jesus would be.

V. 7 — **his flesh** — Bringing again to mind the humanness of Jesus, with special stress upon the point because this was one of the requirements just mentioned. Jesus was man, for he was hungry, thirsty, tired, angry, compassionate, limited by flesh, bruised, broken — he did not play at being human!

prayers and supplications — These are mentioned to enforce the idea that Jesus could sympathize with those coming to him, who felt deeply the need of God in some way. He, too, had so felt!

him who was able — It is always helpful to remember Jesus in the garden and on the cross — so human, not unwilling to do the task God had laid upon him, yet not ignorant of the demands therein, not desiring the shame, the agony, the sin, the death. He yet trusted his heavenly Father, and in trusting, was not delivered from his trials but rather through his trials.

V. 8 — **Son . . . learned obedience** — It was not beneath the dignity of God's son to have to obey; neither was it contrary to his nature to have to learn. Indeed, the position he was to fill as high priest made these things a necessity. Now he can know, and we also, what it means to be tempted to disobey because of the demands of obedience, and yet in subjection be found faithful to God, the prime requisite for pleasing God.

V. 9 — **made perfect** — This point is important in that it signifies to

all that Jesus has nothing in his life that would keep him from being the perfect high priest. From the human point-of-view, Jesus satisfied every demand of God, and is able "to do abundantly above all that we ask or think."

eternal salvation — Eternal is the key. As before noticed, no other religions, including the Mosaic/Judaism could take away sin, and thus no one had the promise of salvation. Ch. 10 will enlarge this idea about Jesus' sacrifice and its sufficiency.

all who obey — The Greek text is clear: obedience must be a life-long trait, not just now and then. One must not put the hand to the plow and keep looking back, Luke 9:57-62, unless one wishes to die in the wilderness! If Jesus could learn and obey, ought his followers to be different? Note here the expression "obedience of faith" Romans 1:5 and 16:26, and the statement of Jesus in John 14:23-24.

V. 10 — Picking up the idea in v. 6, the special type of priest Jesus was to be is stated. After a rather lengthy "aside" in 5:11 — 6:20, the topic is treated in detail in ch. 7.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 8:

60. Where does this section fall in the total outline of the book?
61. Have you kept in mind the various arguments made about Jesus that display his greatness?
62. Have you ever tried to imagine the demands of being a high priest (the obnoxious ones, the pitiful, the ignorant, the disrespectful, the ugly — and you, beset with problems yourself, and God looking to you to represent him adequately)?
63. Would it make any difference if one were encouraged to draw near a throne of judgment rather than a throne of grace?
64. State the two basic requirements for being a high priest of God. (Was being a Levite among those two?)
65. Why was the high priest chosen from men?
66. Why wouldn't one appoint himself to be high priest?
67. How does the writer reinforce the point that Jesus was God's selection?
68. Did Jesus know humanness?
69. What was the condition upon which Jesus was heard?
70. Can sons learn obedience?
71. Would it be encouraging to know that Jesus had to learn obedience?
72. While learning to obey, did Jesus disobey?
73. How does one acquire eternal life?
74. What is your understanding of "made perfect"?
75. With what would "eternal" salvation be in contrast?

Lesson Nine

(5:11 — 6:10)

THE MATURING DISCIPLE

¹¹About this we have much to say which is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need some one to teach you again the first principles of God's word. You need milk, not solid food; ¹³for every one who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. ¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.

6 Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ²with instruction about ablutions, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³And this we will do if God permits. ⁴For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶if they then commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on

their own account and hold him up to contempt. ⁷For land which has drunk the rain that often falls upon it, and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed; its end is to be burned.

⁹Though we speak thus, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things that belong to salvation. ¹⁰For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love which you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do.

Christianity is always practical — it is not “pie in the sky” by any means. While it offers hope for the hereafter through the eternal salvation, 5:9, the here and now is never out of sight. In fact, oftentimes when the future life is discussed, immediate application is made for the life that now is. Note II Corinthians 4:16 — 5:10, then read 5:11.

So it is with our book — while we have been presented with the glories of a great high priest and all that he means, yet there is application for the present. Like Paul, every Christian needs to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ (with the promise of being with God forever), but at the same time buffet one's body so that the life now lived will be pleasing to him “with whom we have to do.”

The immediate text is not concerned with the basic theme of the book but rather with the first readers of the book. Their spiritual condition, as a group, was known to the author and left much to be desired. They needed to be farther along the pilgrimage of life than they were. As a lesson for us, while no one is perfect, all ought to be making progress in that direction. If not, a rebuke is in order, such as is in 5:11-14, and encouragement, as in 6:9-20.

5:11 — **hard to explain** — The importance of the subject, coupled with its difficulty, meant that the reader needed to be in “top form” to get all that was available. The deplorable condition of the first auditors was not going to be conducive to such a discussion; hence, the subject would be difficult to interpret to them.

V. 12 — **by this time** — They had become something God never meant them to become: dull (sluggish, slow) of hearing. Their pilgrimage from the mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ had ceased, and regression was taking place. The warning flag was up because of their drifting.

Every generation of Christians must learn the same lesson: grow up. Many times the admonition found in II Peter 3:18, “Grow in grace and knowledge” is found in scripture in one form or another.

teachers — If Christianity is to continue, every one must teach. Moreover, since Christianity is not an inherited religion or any such thing,

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but rather a system that must be heard and accepted personally, it is imperative that people hear if they are to be saved. So, all must be taught; all must teach.

first principles — Defined in 6:1ff.

milk — What this term means is not explained. See I Peter 2:2 for a similar expression. Paul has this idea in I Corinthians 3:1-3. Evidently he found the Corinthians like these people were.

V. 13 — **unskilled** — The better state for every Christian is that in II Timothy 2:15, the ability to rightly handle God's word. If those who were to receive this letter would have been "up to par," they would have been aware of the infinite betterness of the covenant based upon Jesus, and would not have needed such exhortation.

word of righteousness — This term probably means the whole of God's revelation that they had, and including the knowledge of the first principle.

V. 14 — **solid food** — Not the milk, but such as is found in this book. In fact, the writer just goes right on and develops the intended theme, even though his hearers are not all they could be.

mature — The same basic word (*τέλειος*) as in 5:9 ("perfect").

faculties — Refers to the "us" that thinks, the inner person that directs our body. It is found in Luke 9:45 in reference to the apostles who did not perceive what Jesus had said.

trained — Exercised (as in a gym) to be discerning students and good teachers of God's Word, not the inexperienced and untested (unskilled, v. 13). It takes time and effort to be the Bible student one ought to be. The task is great enough that most are unwilling — more's the pity!

6:1 — **let us leave . . . go on** — Growth is not optional for the disciple who is to be a learner. The disciple needs to be so interested in the things of God that he will be carried along from one stage of growth to another.

not laying again — The six things that comprised the foundation, the beginning point, are listed next. Each of them represent an important aspect of doctrine even for us today as well as for those long ago.

repentance . . . faith — These were preached by Jesus and by the apostles to everyone. They are always foundational, yet are also to characterize the maturing disciple who must maintain faith and repentance until death. Repentance is essentially a change of mind. As the pilgrim leaves the mind of the flesh and proceeds to the mind of Christ, he will be constantly changing his mind. Repentance, then, is implicit in all the N.T. books — "Read, believe, obey" = repentance. The fruit of repentance is the changing life.

V. 2 — **ablutions** — Some translate baptisms (immersion). The idea is always brought up because the Christian religion has the act of immersion

at the start. Many other religions have some form of washing. The Jewish religion had the washing of the priests, and other rites involving water. Hence, part of the foundation for any Christian beginning is this point.

laying on of hands — Some religions then, including Judaism, had this as one aspect of the cleansing of sin (like the confessing of sins in the Old Covenant, Leviticus 16:20-22; or of priest's dedication, Leviticus 8). The Christian religion doesn't have such usage in some respects, but laying on of hands did play an important part in some phases of the early church life, Acts 6:6; 13:1ff; also Matthew 19:13; Mark 7:32.

resurrection . . . judgment — Like faith and repentance, these form the major areas of concern for Christians. The idea of a resurrected Christ who passed through the heaven and took his place at God's right hand, after living among men and dying for men, is the cornerstone of the system. Christians are never allowed to live except in light of the judgment. Certainly the concept of a final judgment was part and parcel of all the early preaching (cf. Acts 17:30-31), and is to be seen throughout the New Testament.

In all of these principles we can see their application to the situation then present, and for any Christian at any time. Faith and repentance are all-inclusive, while the remaining four were/are definite areas which need instruction — and all at an early stage in Christian growth.

V. 3 — **This we will do** — That is, the author is going to take his first readers right on from where they are unless God intervenes. As a Christian, one ought always to make plans in the light of God's will (James 4:15ff.).

V. 4 — **It is impossible** — Several problems attend this section. One of them is of a theological nature, involving those who do not believe that a Christian can be lost. Since that position is not held by the author of the Hebrew epistle, it is superfluous to comment about it. A second problem relates to the linear arrangement of vv. 4-6. A more readily understood arrangement would be to place the "if" clause first, and then follow with the rest. So: "If they (as described in vv. 4, 5) commit apostasy, it is impossible to restore them to repentance."

With this done, however, additional problems remain, such as 1) what does it mean to commit apostasy, and 2) why is there an impossibility? Many different answers are given. We suggest the following in a brief statement: the text has in view people who are Christians (no other position makes much sense in the context of Hebrews). To commit apostasy (to fall away, as in 3:12) means to leave Christ, to cease being sanctified by him, united with him. The "impossibility idea" is present because such a state is a deliberate act of the will, whether it was reflected in drifting away or more sudden action. Unless said person can be persuaded to renew his commitment to Jesus, it is not possible to produce repentance, since repentance is a change of mind. As is clear by the continued action

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indicated by the "crucifying," etc. in v. 6, said person has had no change of mind. Thus it stands. (The same basic position is considered in 10:26-31.)

V. 4 — **enlightened** — To be made knowledgeable, acquainted with, in this case, Christ and Christianity.

tasted . . . heavenly gift — As in 2:9, to participate in, share or enjoy. The "heavenly gift" can be salvation, or Jesus, or the Holy Spirit — it makes no essential difference, though salvation is most likely, since the next phrase involves the Holy Spirit.

partakers — The same word as in 2:14 and 3:14, to have as a possession, such as is taught in Romans 8:9, II Corinthians 1:22.

V. 5 — **goodness . . . power** — Descriptive of the enjoyment that is through being the people of God. The scriptures teach that there are blessings here as well as salvation ready to be revealed at the last day, I Peter 1:5, the coming age.

V. 6 — **crucify . . . hold up** — Both the Greek terms are present participles, indicative of continued states. Hence, the person so doing has decided to leave Christianity, and is maintaining that state. As such, no change is possible.

Jesus died to make it possible for (all) men to be saved from sin, to be reconciled to God, to enjoy what God has prepared. To reject Christ is to be disobedient and, in effect, reject all that Jesus did. While we may not completely understand all the terms involved, the total picture is clear enough. The text in 10:26 picks up the identical point, and brings the sad fact to light that Jesus died in vain, insofar as the apostates are concerned. Furthermore, since no other sacrifice is planned or possible, unless the condition is changed, said person(s) is doomed to eternal hell. A good parallel text here is Romans 11:17-24. This text has in view Jewish people who were once "in the tree" (i.e., faithful) but who became unfaithful (it was not "once in the tree, always in the tree"). God declared that they could be placed back in the tree if they became believers again. There is no reason to suppose that the same sort of treatment would not be accorded to any person. In fact, there is no New Testament text that depicts people, in this life and prior to death/judgment, standing and pleading with God but receiving a "no" answer. Instead, the converse is true: God is not willing that any should perish, II Peter 3:9.

V. 7 — **land** — In some respects, land and people are alike: both can produce fruit in accordance with their own nature. Romans 6:20 — 7:5 teaches that every person produces fruit, whether the fruit be good or bad, and by said fruit judgment is to be meted out, Matthew 25:31ff.; II Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15. Unlike land, which is non-human, people can decide what they will produce in a general sense. Land, of course, can only bear what is planted there, and can not improve its character, etc. So there are similarities and differences.

a blessing — The end product determines the reward given, and is evident in v. 8, which is the point of the illustration. Applied to our text and those who were to first read it, the point is clear: if you go on and mature, then God will bless; if you fall away, like the Israelites did in the wilderness, God will curse.

V. 9 — **beloved** — The previous word used has been “brethren.” Now, it is “beloved”; probably because of the immediate text with its subdued but explicit criticism.

better things — While in need of improvement, yet the recipients are still among those saved and being sanctified. (Note 10:9.) Hence, there is hope and challenge.

V. 10 — **God is not . . . unjust** — This fact is one of the major factors upon which the Christian builds: God can always be counted on to be just, for he is that. He may also be merciful, but he is always just. (The Greek word is a form of *δικαιος*, which is also translated as righteous, depending upon the individual context.)

work . . . love — They, as those in Thessalonica (I Thess. 1:3) were characterized by faith, hope and love, and which things God, who sees all, 4:12-13, will reward with blessings.

you still do — They had done these things (as is manifest by their own lives and in the lives of others, 10:32ff.) and yet were. They were now doing as well as having done. They needed to keep on.

The Greek term translated “serving” and which also lies behind “still do” is the familiar word *διάκονος*, commonly transliterated as “deacon.” The New Testament concept is that of someone serving, whether that person be man or woman, or whatever the task. That is its general use. It is also used specifically as in I Timothy 3 in regard to certain people specially chosen for some designated task.

V. 11 — The plea is for all the readers to maintain and even to increase their fruit for God, and to press on until the stature of Jesus is attained. The end result is spelled out in v. 12.

V. 12 — **sluggish** — The word was in 5:10, indicating a non-desirable state that must be remedied or avoided.

imitators — not those of Israel mentioned in 3:7ff., but those of Israel mentioned in chapter 11.

patience — The Greek word *μακροθυμία* indicates a quality of character that does not return evil for evil, is the opposite of anger and despondency, and reflects in a continued hope. In this case, as vv. 13-20 will show, the hope that comes is based upon the promises of God, which are as certain as God himself.

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QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 9:

76. How does this section fit in with the discussion of Jesus and Melchizedek?
77. Does lack of progress in the Christian life make it hard to understand things, or to have things explained? (Have you ever thought that the teacher was a poor instructor, being unable to explain something for you? If so, who was to blame?)
78. Is lack of Christian growth a problem in every generation?
79. What happens if one generation of Christians does not teach?
80. Are faith and repentance good starting points for anyone anytime? (Note Acts 20:21.)
81. Have you had any problem with immersion in your life?
82. Do you live as if Jesus were a resurrected Lord, and the coming judge of all?
83. Name some problems in the exegesis of vv. 4-6.
84. What parallel text might help to understand how a person might believe, then cease to do so, and yet have the possibility of coming to faith again?
85. Does God "forget" what one has done, be it good or bad?
86. How is land like a person? Unlike?
87. The point of the illustration in vv. 7-8 is what?
88. What encouraging observations were made in vv. 9-10 about the first readers?
89. How long would they need to show that same earnestness to realize the full assurance of hope?
90. What would said earnestness prevent in their life?
91. Which group of Israelites were the readers to mimic?

Lesson Ten

(6:13-20)

GOD: THE SOUL'S ANCHOR

¹³For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." ¹⁵And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. ¹⁶Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, ¹⁸so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. ¹⁹We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, ²⁰where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Many years ago Priscilla J. Owens wrote the words and William J. Kirkpatrick added the music to a beautiful hymn, "Will Your Anchor Hold?"

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“Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife;
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift, or firm remain?
We have an anchor that keeps the soul,
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
Fastered to the Rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior’s love.”

God’s steadfastness is the ground of our trust in him. As was pictured in ch. 1 in the description of his son, ages may come and go, but God is the same, for he casts no shadow by turning, James 1:17.

Our immediate text presents two good reasons why the first readers (and us as well) should trust in God: 1) his promise, and 2) his oath, both of which receive their character from God himself. Upon these things we all cast our life, our hope, our faith, confident that though all else may fail, God is the same, “he changeth not.”

6:13 — **Abraham** — This Bible personality is probably as well known as any, whose life was such that he became the father of our faith. The basis for his life was a trustworthy God, who promised and because Abraham was faithful, honored his promise. Hence, Abraham was an ideal example to use.

V. 14 — **Surely I will bless you** — God actually repeated his promise to Abraham more than once (Genesis 12, 13, 15, 17, 22) and included a number of things in it, all of which he kept. Some of them were not kept in the earthly lifetime of Abraham, but all were kept.

V. 15 — **patiently endured** — A good parallel text to read here is Romans 4:1-25, because the whole chapter is directly related to the life of Abraham, with explicit application for all who believe. A major point for consideration is in the words of the text: Abraham patiently (*μακροθυμία*, as in 6:12) endured. Note that it is not said he “perfectly” endured, for he did not. At times in his pilgrimage he was distrustful of God, or tried to do things his own way, failing. However, he kept on believing his heavenly father, over a span of many years, and consequently was rewarded. Thereafter, the watchword was: “I am the God of Abraham, . . .”

V. 16 — **an oath** — This involves an assertion about something, and a call to witness to the truthfulness of the assertion by God.

In Jesus’ day, this practice had degenerated considerably until he felt the need to address himself to the problem more than once. In Matthew 5:33-37, reference was made to an Old Covenant teaching about oaths (some versions use the term “swear.” Both “oath” and “swear” have double meanings). Biblically, they were not profanity, but rather as explained above. Hence, Peter affirmed that he knew not Jesus, and

called God to bear witness to his assertion, Matthew 26:74. In the Matthew 5 text, the obvious thing is that the Jews had so degenerated in their integrity that everything was being used to back up their statements. More insight into the problem can be gained in Matthew 23:16-22, where it is clear that evasiveness was common, and even oaths were used to trick the unsuspecting. In both texts, Jesus taught that every oath and word were directly related to God, and ought to be so treated.

As far as taking an oath, Jesus did before Caiaphas, Paul placed himself under oath many times (as in II Cor. 1:23), and in our text God used an oath. It ought to be clear that it is not wrong for us to do so. We ought to be of such integrity, however, that nothing more is needed than our "yes" or "no." Because of the fact that men are liars and not true, however, (which is the point in Matthew 5:37 and hinted at in James 5:12), some places may require an oath of testimony. It is better though to avoid such, if possible, and be trustworthy.

V. 17 — The need for God to confirm his word was simply because of the weakness of man, and was a condescension on God's part.

the unchangeable character of his purpose — In the case in point, God had purposed before the world's foundation to redeem it by virtue of the Son, who was to come through Abraham's lineage. However, from the viewpoint of Abraham, he had to trust God, and in trusting, received the promise. Note carefully that God tested Abraham once and again before confirming his promise, Genesis 22:16-18.

V. 18 — **unchangeable** — Insofar as God was concerned. However, no covenant in the Old Testament was unconditional. All covenants made with man were conditional, hinging upon their faith. Even the covenant in the garden with Adam and Eve was conditional upon their obedience. Some things God said were of a limited duration (as in Genesis 8:22 concerning how things would be as long as the earth remains) or had nothing to do with man's activity (as the rainbow, 8:21). In regard to the Mosaic Covenant, it was presented to the people for their acceptance, and when given, was circumscribed with conditions (Read Deuteronomy chs. 27-30 for details.).

false — The Greek term is ψεύδος, 'to lie.' God is not characterized by such things. However, as mentioned above, because much of his dealing with man is of a conditional nature, when man fails to keep his part, God is not obligated to keep his part. In this sense, then, sometimes it is said that God repented. Stated differently, from man's viewpoint, God changed his mind. However, to change a course of action that is predicated upon another's action does not necessarily indicate bad thinking or an inherent falseness. As Christians, we must never place God on the witness stand, but rather trust that God is always just/right in what he does. Any other course of action makes us out as an accuser of God, and will, if continued, ruin our ability to trust God.

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Directly bearing upon the argument at hand would be the nature of the Mosaic Covenant. Many Jews (and some today who are not Jews) thought that it was of a permanent nature. Alas, they failed to see what even Moses himself saw: that it was but temporal, destined to pass away. The text in II Corinthians 3:7ff. plainly shows this to be true. Hebrews 8:8-13 will quote a prophetic utterance from Jeremiah confirming the idea that God never intended it to be anything but preparatory for the real thing: the New Covenant. All the types and shadows built into the Mosaic law should have been seen for that to which they pointed. God didn't primarily plan before the world's foundations to give the Mosaic law, but rather to send Jesus, that men might be saved. Hence, in the fullness of time, Jesus came, even as God purposed. We, as they who were first to read this letter, should be quick to discern the importance of all these things, and hold fast to that which is eternal, encompassed in "the hope set before us," which hope is founded upon Jesus.

V. 19 — **sure** — From *ἀσφαλῆς*, not liable to fall or fail; hence dependable.

steadfast — As in 2:4 (valid) and 3:14 (firm).

anchor of the soul — So that we might not be "tossed to and fro" with every doctrinal breeze that enters our sails.

inner shrine — The thrust is this: the Christian's hope is not based upon anything earthly, all of which will prove false. Instead, Jesus is our hope of glory, Colossians 1:27, and he has taken his place at God's right hand, there to abide.

V. 20 — **on our behalf** — Once more, the idea in 2:16 crops up: Jesus did all that he did for man. How privileged are we!

Notice that the discussion returns to the concept in 5:6, 10, that Jesus was a high priest after the type of Melchizedek, and not like Aaron. This will be further developed in ch. 7, but note that Jesus is at God's right hand where Aaron never was. Already the contrast is one-sided.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 10:

92. What is the intent of 6:13-20 for the reader?
93. Do you have any trouble trusting God? If so, why?
94. Name the two points given to provide confidence for trust.
95. Why do men require an oath?
96. Are oaths based upon something (or someone) higher?
97. Did God need to use an oath to the heirs of promise because of what they were or what he was?
98. Who is identified in our text as the heirs of promise (who has fled for refuge, v. 18)?
99. What certainty does Jesus provide for our hope being in the inner shrine, behind the curtain?
100. Do you have an anchor for your soul that is steadfast and sure?

Lesson Eleven

(7:1-10)

MELCHIZEDEK

7 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him; ²and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. ³He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest for ever.

⁴See how great he is! Abraham the patriarch gave him a tithe of the spoils. ⁵And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brethren, though these also are descended from Abraham. ⁶But this man who has not their genealogy received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. ⁸Here tithes are received by mortal men; there, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. ⁹One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, ¹⁰for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.

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Melchizedek, the subject of this lesson and a type of Jesus, only appears in the Bible record in the days of Abraham, long before the Mosaic Covenant and the institution of the Aaronic priesthood. Genesis 14:17-20 gives a brief glimpse of this man who served God as high priest. A millennium later, God spoke through the Psalmist in 110:4 about him, that he was the sort of high priest that would be used as a pattern for a new priesthood. It is pertinent to comment that this was predicted during the time of Aaronic priesthood.

Many people over the years have made Melchizedek into all sorts of things: angel, Jesus, etc., partly because of a certain view of types and partly because of the nature of the Bible record, which is brief. These points will be treated below.

The chapter, while divided into two lessons for easier study, can be viewed as follows:

- 7:1-3 Characteristics of Melchizedek
- 7:4-10 Comparison of Melchizedek and Levi/Aaron
- 7:11-28 Contrast of priesthood of Christ and Levi/Aaron

7:1 — **Melchizedek** — The Hebrew is מֶלֶכ־צֶדֶק. The word מֶלֶךְ in English is MLK (the Hebrew letters are consonants), which mean "king." You can see it in Abelmelek, or Abimeleck. The Hebrew word צֶדֶק comes into English as TSDQ, and stands for righteous or just. Hence his name meant righteous king, or king of righteousness.

king of Salem — The Hebrew word for Salem is שָׁלֵם, which means peace, and is heard in Shalom, the common greeting today in Israel. It is part of the word Jerusalem. (Note v. 2.)

priest of the Most High God — While we do not know how this came to be, we need not suppose that Abraham would accept service from just any high priest. He had left idolatry to serve God, and it seems consonant with his faithfulness to worship God through Melchizedek, and receive his blessing.

V. 2 — **a tenth** — Why he gave this particular amount is not stated or known. Some say that the tithe was always God's portion, but no scripture asserts that fact. (It seems very poor hermeneutics to read into a text what is desired out of it.) If this be an example for tithers, it is a poor one — who has "spoils of war"?

V. 3 — **without father or mother** — These two facts and succeeding ones are simply observations from the Genesis record, which gives none of these things. Since said record is as it is, then it could be fairly said that, record-wise, his priesthood abides.

resembling the Son of God — Resemblance does not mean identity. Any type will, in some respects, resemble that which it is to typify. In some ways, it will differ. Many different things typified Jesus, but none were identical to him, whether Melchizedek, or a lamb, or whatever.

V. 4 — **See how great he is** — This statement calls attention to the person and all his characteristics. Compared to Levi and Aaron, Melchizedek is far better. Note that he combines the offices of priest and king, which the Levitical priesthood never did. Hence, he prophesied by type a greater and different sort of priesthood than they. Note also that his priesthood was not by any stated inheritance, contrary to that of the Aaronic.

V. 5 — The Levites served their own countrymen, and were chosen from among them, to serve in a religious way. All were descendants of Abraham, which fact relates to vv. 6-7.

V. 6 — An important point: Melchizedek, the type of Christ, was not out of Abraham, though Abraham, recognizing his religious superior, paid tithes to Melchizedek.

V. 7 — This is an accepted point by everyone.

V. 8 — **here** — Refers to Levitical priests, who were mortal (with genealogy, father, death, etc.) and received tithes from inferiors in rank.

there — Refers to Melchizedek and the incident with Abraham.

V. 9 — **Levi . . . paid tithes** — The clinching fact is here stated: Levi (and all the Aaronic priesthood, representing the Mosaic system) paid tithes to Melchizedek, the lesser in rank to the greater in rank.

Now, let us summarize from the Genesis record and the above verses:

1. Melchizedek was both king and priest
2. Melchizedek was without genealogy, and that which it implies
3. Melchizedek had no cessation of his priesthood
4. Melchizedek was greater than Abraham (and Levi, and Aaron).

On this basis, then, we consider the priesthood of Jesus. He was/is both priest and king; he did not receive his priesthood by inheritance; he ever lives and thus will have no cessation of his priesthood; and was/is greater than Abraham, since he is like Melchizedek (in fact, is "Son," 1:1).

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 11:

101. This discussion about Melchizedek is for what purpose?
102. Make a list of those people out of Israel who have been shown to be lesser than Jesus.
103. Describe Melchizedek.
104. Compare Levi and the Aaronic priesthood to Melchizedek, both similarities and differences.
105. Jesus resembles Melchizedek in what respects?
106. Does a type correspond to the anti-type in all ways or just in some ways?
107. How was it shown that Levi was inferior to Melchizedek?
108. Was Abraham also inferior to Melchizedek?

Lesson Twelve

(7:11-28)

CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD

11 Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? ¹²For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. ¹³For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. ¹⁴For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

¹⁵This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶who has become a priest, not according to a legal requirement concerning bodily descent but by the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷For it is witnessed of him,

“Thou art a priest for ever,

after the order of Melchizedek.”

¹⁸On the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹(for the law made nothing perfect); on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw

near to God.

20 And it was not without an oath. ²¹ Those who formerly became priests took their office without an oath, but this one was addressed with an oath,

“The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind,
‘Thou art a priest for ever.’”

²² This makes Jesus the surety of a better covenant.

23 The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; ²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. ²⁵ Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

26 For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once for all when he offered up himself. ²⁸ Indeed, the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever.

Bearing down on the crucial issue of the priesthood, the author now presents the basic issues involved in the matter. One of those issues is about the Mosaic law; the other is about redemption. If Jesus is to be priest, what will that mean to the law system and the priesthood it represents? Part and parcel of any religious system is what it proposes to do for the sinner. What can be said about the two religious systems in our discussion?

7:11 — **perfection** — The Greek word has been used before in 5:9, 14. The ultimate test of any religious system is this point. Recall here that 5:9 spelled out the fact that Jesus was made perfect. Part of the solution to the sinner's imperfection was stated in 2:9, 14, where Jesus died for the sake of sinners. As 2:17 had it, he made an acceptable sacrifice for the people's sins. Another part of the solution was to be observed in 5:9, where Jesus, made perfect, was enabled to offer eternal salvation to any whose lives were characterized by obedience to him. Other bits and pieces have been given along, but our present text delineates the problem, and the solution.

what further need — God's promise in Psalms 110 of another priesthood, unlike that of Aaron's, to the discerning should have been a crystal-clear statement that something was amiss with the then present priesthood of Aaron. To answer the question in this verse, if perfection

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had to be achievable by means of the Levitical priesthood and the law system it represented, then no other priesthood/law system would have been planned/needed.

V. 12 — As God willed it, the law had to be followed. In the case of the priesthood, the law stipulated that any priest must be of the lineage of Levi and more specifically through Aaron. None else could serve. Jesus, even as God's son, could not serve, since he was not of Levi but of Judah, v. 14. Therefore, if the priesthood were to be changed from that of Aaron, of necessity there must also be a change in laws under which it was to operate. Implied here is the point made clear in 8:8-13, where this will be discussed.

V. 13 — Neither Melchizedek nor Jesus were Levites. Only Jesus was from Abraham's lineage, but not of Levi. Jesus belonged (the word μέτοχος, in 2:14 and 6:4) to Judah's line.

V. 16 — **legal requirement** — As mentioned above, Jesus would have been a usurper and presumptuous to take upon himself the office of priest under the Mosaic law.

indestructible — The Greek term is ἀκατάλυτος, meaning not able to be destroyed or ended. (The Greek word is used of divorce, or to tear up, apart.) In reference to Jesus, since he is of the same quality as God is, naturally death can not affect him as it did all Aaronic priests. All of them died, in contrast to Jesus. As is evident, Melchizedek's abiding priesthood was a type that foreshadowed that of Jesus, not that of Aaron. The repeat of Psalms 110:4 in v. 17 reenforces the thought that God planned for a perfect replacement for the imperfect priesthood of Aaron.

If it be asked why God should have begun with a law system and all the trappings thereof, many good answers could be given. One of the reasons is in Romans 5:20, where the law helped men see how sinful they really were (7:12-25 enforces the point that the law was good but man was not). Galatians 3:1-29 is another text that helps us see the purpose of the law: it was to prepare all of us for the Christ, who was/is the consummation of God's plan for man.

V. 18 — **set aside** — The law had to be changed, v. 12, to make way for the new system. The Greek word ἀθετέω has the idea of nullifying, or invalidating, as in Mark 6:26; 7:9; Luke 10:16; I Corinthians 1:19; Galatians 2:21. The reason here given for this action, is that the law was weak (ἀσθενής, as in 4:15) and useless (ἀνωφελής, unprofitable or bad. See Titus 3:9). Both of these factors in the law system kept it from the primary purpose of any religious system: making the worshipper acceptable (perfect, v. 19) to God.

V. 19 — **perfect** — Mature, complete, as in 5:9, 7:11.

better hope — Some of the reasons for the better hope have already

been listed. The following verses will amplify those and state others.

It is again worth saying that the institution of a new way to deal with man does not mean that the old way was bad or that God made a mistake. The old way was given for a specific purpose and, having fulfilled that purpose, was replaced by that which was the perfect way to deal with man (i.e., Jesus and Christianity). Sin had caused man to be separated from God, Isaiah 59:1-2. The law, weak through the flesh, Romans 8:3, could not provide a remedy. God in Christ provided the means of reconciliation, II Corinthians 5:14-21.

V. 20 — **oath** — The point made in ch. 6:13ff. Notice that no such action was taken with the Aaronic priesthood, since it was designed to be temporal, and to pass away when the perfect came.

V. 21 — **for ever** — As long as the New Covenant remains in force (until Jesus returns, etc.) the New Covenant priesthood of Jesus will remain. Naturally, when Jesus returns for the saints and the new life in heaven begins, there will be no further need for an intercessory priest. Note 9:28 in this regard.

V. 22 — **surety** — If God can be trusted, Christians have the best God can offer in Jesus.

V. 23 — **by death** — Enlarging the idea in the typology of the continuing priesthood of Melchizedek (no death, etc.) and that of a life indestructible, v. 16, the better covenant is that covenant which does not need a new high priest every so often. The Aaronic priests all died — Jesus never shall die. Consequently, Christians have the better of the two covenants.

V. 24 — **holds** — He, like his type Melchizedek, is able to abide in the office.

V. 25 — The Greek text really presents a sharp, clear picture: Jesus, always living, able to keep on saving, even forever, all those who keep coming to him. The special emphasis is upon the constant ability of Jesus, never diminishing, always there. Hence, drawing together the ideas in 2:17-18 and 4:14-16, we as Christians need never hesitate to have Jesus intercede for us, or be afraid to approach God's throne of grace, for Jesus, merciful and faithful, who has made an (acceptable) offering for our sin, will always be there, saving us who confidently ask his understanding help.

V. 26 — This verse depicts several vital characteristics of Jesus that make him the high priest that he is.

fitting — The Greek verb *πρέπω* can be seen in such texts as Matthew 3:15; I Corinthians 11:13; Ephesians 5:3; I Timothy 2:10; Titus 2:1; and Hebrews 2:10. It has the idea of what is correct, proper, needed, what is exactly right.

holy — Of course, the Aaronic priests were to be holy in many ways,

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but they were weak and sinful, 5:2-3; 7:27. Jesus was not.

blameless — No fault was found in Jesus, I Peter 2:22-23, for he was a lamb, without blemish or spot, I Peter 1:19. No Aaronic priest was so in the sense Jesus was.

unstained — As Jesus said, The devil had nothing in him, John 14:30. Pilate knew that he was innocent, and the centurion saw it also, John 19:38; Luke 23:47.

separated from sinners — Since Jesus was not guilty of sin, 4:15, and is now at God's right hand, 1:3, this statement is true of him in a way never true of Aaronic priests, who were permitted only once a year to go into the presence of God, and then only with an offering of blood for their sin.

exalted — He who made the heavens, and sustains them by his word of power, and to whom every knee shall bow — this is Jesus. Mortal high priests have no standing here!

V. 27 — **he has no need** — They always had need, day by day. Jesus always has sufficient help, v. 25, even forever.

V. 28 — Contrastively, as a summation, the law was clearly inadequate, for it had no means of perfecting people. It was imperfect, its priesthood likewise. How could it, starting with imperfections, ever get better?

Contrariwise, Jesus and the New Covenant are God's remedy for just such hopelessness as pictured above — The system known as the New Covenant is without flaw, because that upon which it is founded (Jesus) is without flaw. Moreover, those who accept the redemption in Jesus can always be saved, since he ever lives to save them. What need we more?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 12:

109. Summarize the points made about Jesus and the Aaronic priesthood in 7:11-28.
110. What indications in this text and the preceding ones have you found that show God planned to bring about a change in law/priesthood?
111. What essentially could the law not do?
112. What problems did the Aaronic priests have?
113. List the attributes of Jesus as high priest.
114. What part did God's oath play in these matters?
115. Do you believe that Jesus is always able to save you if you allow him to do so?

Lesson Thirteen

(8:1-13)

8 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ²a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord. ³For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ⁴Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. ⁵They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary; for when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." ⁶But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. ⁷For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second.

8 For he finds fault with them when he says:

"The days will come, says the Lord,
when I will establish a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah;

⁹not like the covenant that I made
with their fathers

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on the day when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of the land of Egypt;
for they did not continue in my covenant,
and so I paid no heed to them, says the Lord.

¹⁰This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

¹¹And they shall not teach every one his fellow or every one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'
for all shall know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.

¹²For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more."

¹³In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

The epistle began with the idea that God had spoken in various ways but now is speaking in his son, and this with the idea of "better." All through the text up to this point, that idea has been carried. In our present section of text, Paul summarizes the whole discussion, and includes the information that God had carefully planned it all.

8:1 — **Now the point** — To sum it up, the thrust of what we have said, etc. Note these ideas:

Jesus serves in a better sanctuary than Aaron
Jesus offered a better sacrifice than Aaron
Jesus brings a better promise than Aaron
Jesus is a better mediator than Aaron

The last two ideas will subsequently be developed in chapters 9 and 10. Chapter 6 had made the point about a better promise, and ch. 7 the better mediator.

throne — This particular idea is part and parcel of the greatness of the new high priest: he is where God is, the God who knows all, and who must extend forgiveness if any are to be forgiven. No priest under the Mosaic dispensation was ever accorded such a place to serve.

V. 2 — **minister** — The Greek word *λειτουργός* was used earlier in 1:14 to describe the work of the heavenly messengers among Christians. It is a general word for service, but mostly used in the New Testament of religious service to God, as in Luke 1:23; Acts 13:2; Romans 13:6; 15:16, 27; II Corinthians 9:12, 13; Philippians 2:17, 25, 30. It is used in our epistle in 1:7, 14; 8:2, 6; 9:21; 10:11.

sanctuary . . . true tent — These two words describe the "place" of

service for Jesus, as high priest. They are equal to the tabernacle in the Mosaic economy, where the priests served. For the Greek expression translated "sanctuary," see on 10:19.

set up . . . by the Lord — The sanctuary/true tent are in heaven where Jesus is, and Jesus is at God's right hand. Hence, the "place" of service for the Christian's high priest is where God is, in heaven. Earthly things as in the tabernacle have been replaced by heavenly, that which is temporal and shadow by that which is permanent and real. Moreover, the distinction between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies is gone, as is seen in ch. 9. Jesus serves in the new and true tent.

V. 3 — **priest . . . to offer** — A priest might do many things, but the primary area of service is in respect to God/man relationships. Since man is sinful, separated from God, and needs to be brought back to God, gifts and sacrifices are the means to the end. Hence, the appointment is to that purpose.

this priest — Jesus. The gospel records help all to see clearly that he came for the express purpose of saving man (as was seen in our epistle, 2:10ff.). The familiar texts in Mark 10:45 and Luke 19:10 show his own thinking about the matter.

V. 4 — This verse recapitulates chapter 7 and the lessons there. We note that the point (10:11 probably adds evidence to this) is reasonably clear that Jewish priests were then serving, etc., which makes the writing of this epistle prior to A.D. 70, when the Jewish temple was destroyed, and the ability to do according to the Mosaic law ceased. It has not yet been restored, as the law spells it out.

V. 5 — **copy and shadow** — The Greek words are *ὑπόδειγμα* (as in 4:11; 9:23; then John 13:15; James 5:10; II Peter 2:6) and *σκιά* (as in 10:1; then Matthew 4:16; Mark 4:32; Luke 1:79; Acts 5:15; Colossians 2:17). In the terms of v. 2, the Aaronic priests served in that which was not real nor true. It is doubtful if very many of them understood this fact though, or if many Jews today do.

according to the pattern — Some have taken this to mean there was a real tabernacle with two compartments, so big, having certain pieces of furniture, etc. in heaven. Hardly. The point is that Moses was to make the tabernacle as God told him through that which was shown him. It was not the real or the true, merely a type. Any Bible student ought to know that types have both likenesses and non-likenesses. There is no Holy Place and Holy of Holies in heaven. There are no lampstands and courses of priests, no ark of the covenant or veil, etc. What is there is a real, live person named Jesus, sitting at God's right hand, who once and for all sacrificed himself for all, then ascended to heaven, there to intercede for those who call upon him. He is not continually sacrificing anything (himself or lambs, etc.)—that is done with. He is able to do

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abundantly above what we ask or think — and that in the real, true dwelling, the dwelling of God himself.

The text at hand was not written for Christians, not directed to us at all. While it is true that we should do as Moses did, obey the Lord in all that he says, it was said to Moses, not to us.

V. 6 — **Christ has obtained** — That is, God has built the true tent, and all that is “there” is Jesus. Christians are not told to build any “tent” — God has done that in Christ. Jesus said “I (not man) will build my church,” Matthew 16:18. All we mortals are to do is to accept what God has done in Christ insofar as “building” the “true tent” goes.

much more excellent — Because God did it, not man, v. 2. As men, we corrupt all we touch. God has to do all that is done right.

ministry . . . better . . . covenant . . . better . . . better promises — The refrain is continually repeated, not only for the sake of emphasis but also because it is true, and that in every way.

V. 7 — If the first . . . faultless — But it wasn't. It was merely transient, only for a time. Paul phrases the question in Galatians 3:19, “Why then the law? It was added till the offspring should come . . .” The law was “holy and just and good . . . (and) spiritual,” Romans 7:12, 14; and “if a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law,” Galatians 3:21. “But the scripture consigned all things to sin . . . we are confined under the law, kept under restraint till faith should be revealed,” Galatians 3:22, 23.

first . . . second — The reference is to the two written revelations of God to man, the Old Covenant (basically given through Moses) and the New Covenant (through Jesus and the apostles).

V. 8 — **he finds fault** — The author, viewing the prophetic utterance through Jeremiah, correctly expresses the reason for the proposed new covenant: God was planning a new way to relate to man because the way then in effect, the Old Covenant, was faulty. Reread 7:11-19.

new — The proposed covenant was to be in a new time, to be to both Jews and Gentiles, different than the Old Covenant; to be written on mind not stone, to be a covenant of mercy not law, to last until Jesus comes; in effect, the real thing.

V. 9 — **not like** — Hence, we look for “new wine” in “new bottles,” not merely a new law system, or an addition tacked on to the Old Covenant.

on the day — As does II Corinthians 3, the specific law and covenant in view was that which came through Moses, expressed in principle by the ten commandments, first written upon stone tablets. We ought to make no mistake about which covenant was meant. We, as Christians, ought not to be guilty of inculcating anything upon ourselves that can't be found between Matthew and Revelation. We especially ought to teach

what is in the Acts account and the letters from Romans to Jude. These books were accounts of and/or letters to Christians about the Christian way of life. If we can't quote a teaching in the New Covenant for the practice we do, we ought to shut up and keep quiet (and that includes quoting Malachi 3:10). If we are going to make the claim to be New Covenant people, we ought to put up or shut up. (See comments on 11:33ff.)

V. 10 — **This is the covenant** — The Roman and Galatian letters actually develop in detail the thesis about the nature and ground of the two respective covenants. The Jewish system was similar in some respects to that of the Christian system. One major difference, among several of importance, is spelled out in this verse, and v. 10. The New Covenant is of such character that it is to be taught (preached, etc.), for it is of such nature. People are not born physically into Christainity—as one is born an American (or a Jew). One must “hear” in some manner, consider the matter, then will to obey. Because this is so, the message of Christ must then be taken to people (cf. the commissions to go!). This is the point behind the expressions in this verse and v. 10 about “minds” and “hearts” vs. teaching one’s brother to “know the Lord.” As a Jewish person, one was born a Jew, and then taught what that fact meant. As a person, one is taught Christianity, and if the system is accepted, one is born into it.

V. 11 — **least to greatest** — Meaning anyone and everyone. Obviously, one can't become a Christian until the system is known about. Hence, anyone who is Christian, whoever it may be, knows God, Christ, etc.

V. 12 — **I will be merciful** — One of the reasons for the New Covenant is expressed here: it is of such nature that God can be merciful and yet just. Under the Old Covenant, law was supreme. Law provided no room for error, no place for mercy. Since no one could keep the yoke (Acts 15:9) of the law, God's decision was to bring into force a way for a new relationship with him. By means of the New Covenant in Christ, God can be both just and justifier, Romans 3:21-26.

V. 13 — **he treats the first as obsolete** — The expressed plan of God in respect to a new will by which to deal with man had the effect of delineating the end of the Mosaic system.

obsolete and growing old — As God views time, the expression uttered in Jeremiah essentially meant that the Old Covenant was done, the New Covenant was present. Though it was some 600 years away, yet it was so. Hence, to so speak about the New made the Old void, from God's perspective. It was but a matter of time.

TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON HEBREWS

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 13:

116. Express the author's stated purpose for this section.
117. Sum up the qualities of the new high priest.
118. Where does the new high priest serve?
119. What did the Aaronic priests serve?
120. List the "better" things in this text. (It might be profitable to review all the places where "better" or its synonyms have occurred: 1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6. It is also in 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40 and 12:24.)
121. Why was the second covenant proposed?
122. State the fault(s) of the first covenant.
123. How is the second covenant to differ from the first?
124. Does the New Covenant put all on equal standing with God (in the terms of our text, and in regard to salvation)?
125. In v. 12, what will God be able to do through the New Covenant?
126. How did God make the first covenant old/obsolete?

Lesson Fourteen

(9:1-10)

THE TABERNACLE

9 Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. ²For a tent was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the Holy Place. ³Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies, ⁴having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, which contained a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; ⁵above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

⁶These preparations having thus been made, the priests go continually into the outer tent, performing their ritual duties; ⁷but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people. ⁸By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary is not yet opened as long as the outer tent is still standing ⁹(which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot perfect the

TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON HEBREWS

conscience of the worshiper, ¹⁰but deal only with food and drink and various ablutions, regulations for the body imposed until the time of redemption.

The tabernacle was built by Moses and the Israelites according to God's revealed plan. It, though, was but a shadow and copy, a type of what was to be revealed later. The very fact that it was a tent, and could be carried about, should have "said" something to all who knew about it. This lesson dwells upon the tabernacle, the sanctuary wherein the priests served. The importance of it, together with its deficiency, is specified, so that the first readers might see again how much they had in Christianity, and what loss would be sustained should they accept Judaism in its stead.

9:1 — The place of religious worship under the Old Covenant was highly visible, with its various items of furniture, the different personnel, etc.

V. 2 — **a tent** — This tent, approximately 15' x 45' x 15' in dimension, was within a courtyard, approximately 150' x 75' in size. Within the courtyard was an altar for the various sacrifices and a laver, containing water, for use by the priests. Various sacrifices were offered as required by law.

Within the Holy Place, the priests served daily, offering incense and trimming the lampstand. Once a week, on Saturday, the loaves on the table were replaced with new ones, and the old unleavened loaves being consumed by the priests.

The Holy Place in which the daily service was done was separated from the Holy of Holies by a heavy curtain made of fine cloth. Within the Holy of Holies, originally, was the ark of the covenant, in which were placed a pot of manna, the two tablets of stone containing the ten "words" God gave to Moses, and Aaron's rod (Numbers 17). The top of the ark was called the "mercy seat," the place where the high priest, on the Day of Atonement, would sprinkle sacrificial blood on behalf of himself and the people of Israel.

The mercy seat, called the place of propitiation/expiation (see on 2:17), represented the place where sins were recognized, atoned for, and forgiven. It was the place, in effect, where God allowed man to submit an acceptable offering and be reconciled to God.

As we study these various things, let us not neglect to observe that they are but types, shadows, predictive in nature. We are not told here what each of them specifically represents, if anything, in the Christian religion. What is made plain is that all of it has been replaced by Jesus and the system he represents. He is the sacrifice, offered once for all, for sins. The Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, once divided by a curtain, have been united, the veil having been torn in two pieces at Jesus' death,

Matthew 27:51, signifying that the two are one. They both are equal to the true tent, 8:2, which is in heaven, made by God. Some over the years have said that each item represents something in Christianity, but our text does not so speak. We may find similarities in the different items, but our text doesn't so affirm. We need to practice teaching what is plainly taught, but also recognize what is unclear, or a matter of inference.

V. 6 — **ritual duties** — The Greek term is *λατρεία*, generally denoting religious service, especially to God. See Matthew 4:10; Luke 1:74; John 16:2; Acts 7:7; Romans 9:4; 12:1; II Timothy 1:3; Revelation 7:15. In our book, only here in ch. 9, v. 1, 6, 14.

V. 7 — **the second** — The outer/first part, known as the Holy Place, had things occur in it every day. The inner/second part, the Holy of Holies, was only entered on the Day of Atonement (about our October 1) and only as the text indicates.

V. 8 — The significant point of this is expressed: there was no way for man to approach God. His sin had separated him, and the law, in a manner of speaking, kept him separate. The particular arrangement, the author says was the work of God through the Holy Spirit.

V. 9 — **symbolic** — That is, it was a parable with a meaning. As the book has already shown in several places, Jesus as our high priest has passed through the veil, and opened the way to God. Therefore we, as Christians, may boldly go right to the throne of grace.

conscience — The Greek term is *συνείδησις*. It means either the idea of "conscience," or the broader and more significant term "consciousness." The last is the preferred translation, both here, v. 14, and in 10:2, 23. It could mean either idea in 13:18. The fact is that men realized that they were still conscious of sin, having perceived that it really was impossible for the blood of goats and bulls, etc., to cleanse them from sin. Whenever they worshipped, they went away as empty in regard to forgiveness as when they came. As a result, the Hebrew epistle is a great letter of emancipation, assuring all who read that Jesus can ransom us from sin, cleansing us completely, and continually. It is a great reason to rejoice!

V. 10 — **food and drink . . . ablutions** — If the above verse states the truth, then in fact all that was done was actually done only in regard to things other than sin. Sin, as such, the Mosaic law could not touch.

reformation — The Greek term is *διόρθωσις*. It meant the general idea of straightening something up, as a crooked wall, a broken bone, etc. The implication is that the system built on Jesus was God's means of putting things right, of bringing order out of chaos. How foolish, then, to even contemplate leaving such a glorious new order for that which is broken, weak, incapable. Clearly implied, too, is the fact that the old system was but a temporary thing at best.

TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON HEBREWS

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 14:

127. Compare the old sanctuary with the new sanctuary, as described in our text (you may need to use 8:1-6).
128. Where does the text affirm that the things mentioned in 9:1-10 equal some specific item(s) in the Christian system (so that no assumptions or inferences are required)?
129. The basic problem with the old system is pointed out in what verse?
130. Does the Christian system claim to provide forgiveness of sins (thereby giving a clean, new life)?
131. What in actuality was the old system able to do, as stated in our text?
132. What is the time of reformation?

Lesson Fifteen

(9:11-28)

JESUS AND THE NEW COVENANT

11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)¹² he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant. ¹⁶For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. ¹⁷For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. ¹⁸Hence even the first covenant was not ratified without blood. ¹⁹For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and

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goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." ²¹And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. ²²Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

²³Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with the blood not his own; ²⁶for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Contrasts have been "the name of the game" since 1:1. Our attention has been drawn to several different personalities and the points of similarities and differences. Beginning in ch. 7 with Melchizedek, and running through 10:18, there is a basic dichotomy presented that involves Jesus and the new covenant system on the one hand; Moses, Aaron, the Aaronic priesthood and the old covenant system on the other hand. Our text is the "heart and soul" of that discussion. No more important "but" is to be found in this book than the one in 9:11. It is akin to the "but" in Ephesians 2:4 where Paul there has presented the sad state of affairs concerning sinful people, and then writes, "But God." Our text is similar in that 9:1-10 has outlined the central problem with the Mosaic law: it could not save sinners. So our text is explicitly to that exact point: Jesus, by his sacrifice, provides redemption for all who accept it.

9:11 — **that have come** — The Old Covenant was until the time of reformation, v. 10. The time of reformation came into being with the change of law priesthood, 7:11-19.

not of this creation — Ref. 8:2, where the true tent was set up by God himself.

V. 12 — Few verses in the Bible are as significant as this one, and none are of more eternal importance.

once for all — That is, Jesus needed to “enter” only once, not daily, yearly, etc.

Holy Place — Equals the Holy of Holies. Note that in the “true” tent, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies are one undivided unit, as noted above on 9:1-5. See 9:24 “heaven.”

his own blood — The new system has several intricate involvements of great significance. One of those is the one mentioned in this verse, that Jesus is both high priest and the sacrifice offered by the high priest.

The death (= his own blood) of Jesus for the sins of mankind is the only foundation upon which we may have any relationship with God. Many books have been written upon the subject, rightly so. As far as the Christian is concerned, we find it difficult to speak of the death of Jesus without speaking about the resurrection. However, from any survey of the Old Testament, the major thrust of the things there spoken or typified is in relationship to the death of Jesus. The slain lambs, the suffering servant, etc., all focus on Jesus’ sacrifice. The sentence of the law upon the sinner, that the sinner shall die, was the reason for the death of Jesus, to be a substitute for the sinner. Hence, if one accepts the death of Jesus for one’s own death brought about by sin, then one can live unto God. Otherwise, the sentence of the law of God will be carried out. Stated differently, unless a person takes the substitute sacrifice offered by the high priest, one is guilty before God, and being unable to redeem himself, will die for his sin, just as God has said. It is only in Jesus and a relationship with him that permits anyone to escape the sentence of death and enjoy the life of Christ.

eternal redemption — As noted in v. 10, no redemption was possible under the old system. It had merely a temporal “salvation.” The importance of the new system is in the fact that it offers hope both for the life that now is and also that which is to come.

V. 13 — The old system, symbolized here by the Aaronic priesthood and the sacrifices thereby offered, could not touch man’s problem: the sin of his soul.

V. 14 — **blood** — This word means his death, not just a matter of some blood given.

eternal Spirit — A problem exists here in how this phrase should be translated. Some take the author to have the Holy Spirit in mind (so R.S.V.). Others argue that Jesus’ own person is meant. There are some arguments on both sides on the issue, and no way to settle it for sure.

without blemish — no uncleanness of any sort was in Jesus. The requirements for those sacrifices which foreshadowed Jesus were likewise: they were to be without blemish. See Exodus 29:1; Leviticus 1:3, 10; 2:1, 6; 5:15; Malachi 1:6-14.

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conscience — As remarked on v. 9, the better view is to consider that the whole person is meant. Hence, while "conscience" may well stand for the person, the idea of "consciousness" is preferable, since through the efficacy of Jesus' sacrifice, sin can be removed, new life can be enjoyed.

dead works — Can mean anything done without faith in Christ (i.e., anything done apart from being Christian), since only what is done as a Christian is considered helpful in regard to possessing eternal life. In the context of the Old Covenant, it would be anything done which is prescribed within it, and done in that light. Note here 5:1, and think first about the Aaronic priesthood, and then Jesus.

to serve — The same word as in 8:5; 9:1, 6; etc., *λατρεύω*. In comparison to the Israelites as a nation, Christians have been called priests, 1 Peter 2:5. Paul's apostolic ministry was in the nature of priestly service, Romans 15:16. Certain it is that the Christian is to serve God however God may desire, but willingly, lovingly, constantly.

V. 15 — **a new covenant** — This verse spells out in a different way the message of v. 12, adding the point of 7:11-19 about the change of covenant and priesthood (which mediates between God and man).

eternal inheritance — This idea was implicit in the 8:8-13 text, that promised a relationship with God of such nature that sins could be remitted. On this basis, an inheritance beyond this life, a rest with God (ch. 4) could be offered and obtained.

the first covenant — In the context of this epistle, this refers to the Mosaic law. As 10:1ff. will emphasize, and as 7:19; 9:9 and 13 show, the first covenant was unable to redeem men from sin. Therefore, when Jesus died, the sacrifice was efficacious for all men's sins, if they otherwise trusted God and served him in that trust. So then only one sacrifice has ever been offered that was acceptable to God for the redemption of sin, and that was the sacrifice of Jesus.

V. 16 — **will** — The same Greek word, *διαθήκη*, means will and testament/covenant. A covenant can be made without a death occurring. The will, however, needs the testator's death to make it effective. The new covenant God made with mankind was of this nature, that a death had to take place in order for it to be in effect. When Jesus died as the testator, the Mosaic covenant of God with men was voided, and a new form of covenant relationship became valid. Through this new covenant men are to approach God. No other covenant relationship is acceptable.

V. 18 — **first covenant** — Though the first covenant did not involve the testator's death, it was brought into effect by ceremonial sacrifice, as seen in Exodus 24:1ff. The new covenant now in effect was of somewhat different nature, as seen in vv. 15-17.

VV. 19-21 — Though some of these points are not mentioned in Exodus,

there is no valid reason to suppose they did not take place.

under the law — While most sacrifices for sin involved bloodshed, some exceptions were true, as in Exodus 19:10; 32:30ff.; Leviticus 5:11ff.; 15:5; Numbers 16:46ff.,; 31:32ff.; etc.

Some take 22b to refer to Jesus' sacrifice. While it is true that Jesus had to shed his blood (= his death) to provide a ransom for sin, the verse is not speaking about Jesus, but about the state of affairs under the Mosaic law, and the general facts concerning sin, etc.

For the Christian, the truth expressed here is true. Note Jesus' remark in Matthew 26:28, and that immediate context. When we observe the command of Jesus in the time of communion, we are particularly to remember this point.

V. 23 — **it was necessary** — That is, God had so decreed it, and that made it necessary.

copies — Refers to the Mosaic institution, and implies again that the "real" thing had not yet come.

better sacrifices — The point of 9:1 — 10:18, referring to Jesus, who is better in every way than any other sacrifice ever offered by anyone.

V. 24 — **heaven itself** — In the new covenant, heaven is the place of the true tent, 8:1-2; 9:8 (sanctuary) and Holy Place, 9:12. There is not now a division between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies as in the Old Testament tabernacle.

V. 25 — Still contrastively, Jesus' sacrifice and priesthood are of such nature that only one offering was needed. The Old Testament high priest, because of his inferior position and with a sacrifice of no eternal value, could not do what was needed, even if he offered sacrifices to God yearly.

V. 26 — **foundation of the world** — The reason this expression is used is not that the Mosaic covenant was dated from that point in time (for it was not) but rather because of the point made in vv. 11-14, that Jesus' sacrifice was for sin's forgiveness for all time and everyone. This is part of the backdrop for the theme of 11:1ff., where faith was the means of salvation for everyone, beginning with Abel. If one believed in God, and served God as best he could, in whatever age, Jesus' sacrifice provided the substitute for that person's sin and the sentence upon it.

once for all — What a tremendously important event took place outside Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified between two sinners!

V. 27 — **it is appointed** — In this context, the sureness of physical death (which is obvious in this life) is like unto the sureness of another fact: Jesus is coming again, etc., as v. 2 states. This sort of argument is like that in Acts 17:30, 31, where Paul argues that the sureness of judgment is as sure as the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

V. 28 — **a second time** — While the time of the second coming of

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Jesus is unknown, the fact of it is as sure as that the first coming has already happened. When Jesus comes again, however, the purpose will be different from his first coming. In the sense of the salvation mentioned in I Peter 1:5, the saving of all whose lives are characterized by an eager expectation for Jesus will be consummated. Christians are now being saved by being in Christ. When he returns, however, the eternal destiny of all will be sealed. All who are in Christ (whether then alive or not) will be taken with him to be with him forever. No further possibility of "falling away" from Jesus will exist from that point in time. So, eternal salvation will then be true in a sense not now true, in that it will become a fact in respect to time, in the way mentioned above.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 15:

133. How do you see this text in relationship to the whole book?
134. Which verse(s) do you think would summarize the extent and nature of the New Covenant?
135. What verse(s) gives the potential of the Old Covenant?
136. Were both covenants from God ratified with blood?
137. Did the second covenant differ from the first in respect to how they were made valid?
138. Does a will differ from a covenant?
139. What was the general requirement for remission of sins under the Old Testament law?
140. Were the "heavenly things" purified with better sacrifices than the earthly copies?
141. Beginning in 8:1, how many different ways has the place where Jesus serves as high priest been described?
142. Whose sins did the sacrifice of Jesus (potentially) cover?
143. What analogy is used to point up the surety of Jesus' second coming?
144. For what purpose is Jesus returning?

Lesson Sixteen

(10:1-18)

THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN

10 For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices which are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who draw near. ²Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? If the worshipers had once been cleansed, they would no longer have any consciousness of sin. ³But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year. ⁴For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.

⁵Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired,

but a body hast thou prepared for me;

⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings thou hast taken no pleasure.

⁷Then I said, ‘Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God,’

as it is written of me in the roll of the book.”

⁸When he said above, “Thou hast neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, “Lo, I have come to do thy will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the

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second. ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

¹¹And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifice, which can never take away sins. ¹²But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet. ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. ¹⁵And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

¹⁶“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord:

I will put my laws on their hearts,
and write them on their minds,”

¹⁷then he adds,

“I will remember their sins and their misdeeds no more.”

¹⁸Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

As your lesson synopsis on page viii indicates, this lesson concludes the section of the epistle that specially dealt with the two religious systems, that through Moses and that through Jesus. Contrasted both in explicit ways and through implicit facts, of these two systems, Christianity has been openly proposed as being the better (best!) of the two systems, and for a variety of reasons. Our immediate text continues that theme, with focus upon the superior sacrifice Jesus made, as well as the fact that it is also the only sacrifice that will be needed. Harold Lindsell in Harper's Study Bible headlines this text as the new covenant's "superiority and finality," which is a good way to view it.

The text itself readily divides into two sections, 10:1-10; 10:11-18. The first section deals with the nature of Jesus' sacrifice, "once for all," v. 10. The last section helps us see that fact through the use of Old Testament scriptures and the statement of facts.

10:1 — **shadow** — This metaphor has been repeated several times, not only because it was so, but because it was/is difficult for some to believe it.

good things to come — Now realized in the Christian system, especially in respect to forgiveness of sins.

it can never — The Greek text is emphatic about the point. In the current idiom, "There's no way . . ." The reason for its inability is stated in v. 2. Note v. 11, where the identical Greek construction is used.

V. 2 — **Otherwise** — Indeed, if the Mosaic law system had been at all able, then no other system would have been brought into being, 7:11-19; 8:8-13. However, God knew (what some people seem to dispute)

what he intended to do with the Old Testament system. Having done that, he introduced the new order called Christianity.

consciousness — The same term as in 9:9, 14, and better translated here.

V. 3 — **a reminder** — That is, the constant need to bring sacrifices simply but lucidly kept the fact of sin before the eyes of the worshipper. There was no effective sacrifice to be offered, and the discerning Israelite knew it. In fact, there was enough plainly taught, both by word and prophecy, for anyone to figure out that the "perfect" had not yet come. As ch. 11 makes evident, those discerning worshippers lived by faith in a redeeming system that God had promised, but was not the Mosaic system or any before it. See then the thought of 7:23-25.

V. 4 — Echoing the thoughts of 7:11, 19; 9:9, the idea of ability is again introduced. "It can never" in v. 1 translates the basic Greek term here translated "It is impossible." "Get the point!" the author says.

V. 5 — **Consequently** — Again the thought is made clear that God planned to bring Jesus into the world, together with the system built upon him, and thus every thing prior to his coming in point of time was but preparatory and also ineffective. As vv. 5, 6 and 7 tell us, quoting Psalms 40:6-8, never had it been God's plan for all man's sins to be removed by anything except the death of Jesus.

a body — This is Jesus talking, of course. Is it not astounding that he knew even before he came to earth what his purpose was, and yet he came?

V. 7 — **thy will** — Jesus brought this to light many times in his life, such as John 5:19; Matthew 26:39. Actually, to see Jesus in life was to see God in life, not only because Jesus was himself deity, but also because he determined to "learn" obedience even though a son, Hebrews 5:8-9.

V. 9 — **he abolished** — As chs. 7 and 8 detail for us, and 9:15-17 adds, God replaced a law system of Moses with the system that "is able" in Jesus. Now would be a good time to read Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:25-47; John 5:39; Romans 10:1-4.

V. 10 — **sanctified** — Cleansed from sin, which the law system could not do. Read John 17:19.

once for all — Because God chose to forgive sins only upon the basis of Jesus' death, that choice ruled out all other possibilities.

V. 11 — Placing the continued but ineffectual work of the Aaronic priests over against Jesus and his work, the conclusion is inevitable and sure: you who would be saved by law, you are fallen from grace, as we paraphrase Galatians 5:4.

V. 12 — **he sat down** — Signaling the end of his sacrificial work. The intercessory work then began, based upon his adequate sacrifice.

V. 13 — Paul has this thought also in I Corinthians 15:26. As Revelation

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brings out, the ultimate vanquishing of evil and all the forces thereof is sure. He who is triumphant is Jesus, the lamb slain, as it were, from the world's foundation, Revelation 5:7; I Peter 1:19; Ephesians 1:4.

V. 14 — **forever . . . those who are sanctified** — While the law system required constant offerings but with no sanctification, Christianity needs only one sacrifice, one time in history. Those whose lives were/are placed in Jesus' hands for a life-long process of sanctification, live forever.

V. 15 — As discussed on 3:7ff., the Holy Spirit's work through the writing of the apostles and holy men in the Old Testament gave said writing the quality of inspiration. Inspiration makes truthful documents, whether they are recounting events, thoughts or planning/prophecy.

V. 16 — A quote of Jeremiah 31:33. No longer would men need to worship and go away feeling still unclean, but rather could draw near to God.

V. 17 — The necessary part of any religion is stated here. Note here Titus 3:3-6.

V. 18 — **forgiveness** — The fundamental imperative that everyone must experience.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 16:

145. Express the thought(s) that is basic to this text.
146. Have you reviewed on paper the basic structure and argument in 1:1 — 10:18?
147. Give the reason(s) why Jesus' death was better than the death of bulls and goats.
148. When Jesus came into the world, what was his primary task?
149. How does the idea in 7:25 tie in with 10:1-10?
150. It seems that some ideas have been presented more than once. Why is this so, do you think?
151. Did you catch the point about the Old Testament priests "standing daily" but Jesus "sitting" at God's right hand?
152. If your past sins have been forgiven, did they need any more attention (as far as a sacrifice is involved)?

Lesson Seventeen

(10:19-25)

ACCESS TO GOD

19Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful;²⁴ and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

The sacrifice has been provided, the ransom for sin paid — the way to God is open. Good news, this!

Our text, built on the above fact(s), is the opening section of the second general division of the epistle. With the doctrine of a better covenant built on better promises, providing a better hope (8:6) firmly established, our author begins to make practical and sustained application to his first auditors about keeping that which they then had:

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Christianity. As the general outline on page viii reveals, the remaining text in Hebrews relates directly to the Christian way of life, though flashes of the previous discussion (as in 12:18-29) appears. Our immediate text is given over to exhortation, then to a rather solemn warning (10:26-31) and a solid bit of encouragement (10:32-39).

10:19 — Therefore — This word indicates a conclusion drawn from a preceding argument. It is an important word in exegesis, and should be carefully considered. Here, it is based upon the careful argumentation about Jesus and all he has done, beginning actually at 1:1 and running through 10:18.

we have — A present possession, the author says, which may be continued, and should be acted upon. We have 1) confidence, v. 19, and 2) a great priest, v. 21. In our text, three basic exhortations are set forth, each with direct application to the Christian life, and based upon what Christians possess. They are 1) let us draw near, v. 22, 2) let us hold fast, v. 23, 3) let us consider . . . one another, v. 24.

sanctuary — This word has been used to translate the Greek expression *τῶν ἁγίων*, sometimes translated as "the Holy Place," though it is in the plural form. The word *ἁγίων* is the plural of *ἅγιος*, and was applied to Jesus in 2:11 (note I Cor. 1:30) and also Christians, the sanctifier and the ones being sanctified. Sometimes it is back of the word "saint" as in Romans 1:7, or the idea of consecration/sanctification, as in Romans 6:19, 22. It is used in 8:2; 9:1, 2, 3, 8, 12, 24, 25 to mean a holy place, (as the tabernacle, 9:1), or in plural form to the sanctuary in which the high priest went yearly, 9:3, 24; 25; or where Christ serves as mediator and high priest, 8:2; 9:8, 12.

confidence — See this word in 3:6; 4:16; and 10:35.

V. 20 — new and living way — In effect, Jesus himself, whether one considers the specific reference is to his flesh, his death, blood, etc. Because he sacrificed himself and became an acceptable substitute, he is the "way" to God, and in comparison to the Old Covenant, author and perfecter of a "new way."

V. 21 — house of God — Note 3:1-6; then Ephesians 2:19-20; I Peter 2:5. This expression is somewhat equivalent to "people of God" in 4:9.

V. 22 — Let us draw near — On the basis of all that Jesus has done, no reason exists not to do so.

true heart — One fully committed to God, and to Jesus Christ, his son. Christians were/are to be fully persuaded that Jesus is able, doubting nothing, seeking no other foundation (see II Timothy 1:8-14; Acts 4:11-12).

our hearts sprinkled — The imagery of the high priest's actions in the Holy of Holies is here used. When he entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of a sacrifice, he was to sprinkle blood upon the mercy seat for the removal of sins from the people of Israel. Likewise, the

offering Jesus made in our behalf, upon our acceptance of it, cleanses us from all sin, and we stand "clean" before God. In such a condition, we no longer need to have a consciousness of sin.

bodies washed — Both the "inside" man and the "outside" man (note Romans 2:25-29) must be conformed to God's will. Our mind must be in a constant state of renewal (repentance) and trust, bringing every thought captive to Christ, II Corinthians 10:5; while our "outward" man is continually expressive of an obedient servant to God. Initially, our faith is placed in Jesus through a decision based upon information received and an act of the will. This is "inside." We then in an outward act of obedience are immersed into Jesus, completing the initial requirement to become Christian. This is "outside." At this point in time, the "old has passed away, the new has come into being," II Corinthians 5:17. Note here Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:4-5; I Peter 3:21. There is no direct relationship between Jewish priestly practice and immersion in the Christian sense.

V. 23 — **Let us hold fast** — Assuming the point in v. 22, the first auditors were exhorted to establish a close relationship. On the basis of God's eternal trustworthiness, 6:13-20, the readers were to keep their status as Christians, as was also enjoined in 3:6 and 4:14.

V. 24 — **Let us consider** — Christians are to give continual thought to considering each other, not primarily to criticize or tear down, but to build up. Here the consideration is to be of such a nature that action is produced, specially the action of love and good works. Love for God and one's fellow man forms the basis of all other commands, Matthew 22:34-40; John 13:34-35; 14:15; Romans 13:8-10. Good works are just such things as God expects of us, and for which he created us, Galatians 6:7-10; Ephesians 2:9-10; Philippians 2:12-13; etc. Note Dorcas in Acts 9:36; Jesus in 10:38; and then read Matthew 25:31-46 and Revelation 14:13. Note upon what judgment is based, Romans 14:12; II Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15. Reread Hebrews 6:9-12.

V. 25 — **not neglecting** — Positively, Christians were, in their consideration of each other, v. 25, to keep meeting together as a group, which would enable them to respond correctly to the preceding exhortations. While there were many early Christians who, because of status in life (such as being a slave) might have found it difficult or impossible to meet as much as they would like to have done, yet Christianity is of such nature that some arrangement to meet could be arranged, at least normally, and should be made. From information in New Testament books, some Christians met upon Sunday for corporate worship (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:2). This seems to have been the general practice of the church in the early centuries, if writers like Justin Martyr are correct. They may not have had the two Sunday meetings and one on Wednesday night as some now practice, but evidently they assembled at least once on Sunday.

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Meditation upon the injunction expressed in the text will be good for all of us, as we think about the general assemblies we provide. Do the assemblies promote love and good works, etc.? If not, why? A good reason for assemblies can be seen in 12:15.

the habit of some — While some because of various states in life might not have been able to attend, others who could do so were to do so. There was to be no habitual absenteeism by Christians from the assembly.

encouraging — From *παρακαλέω*, to beseech or exhort, admonish and plead, even bordering on 'to command' in some texts.

the Day — The meaning of this term is not given. Context alone can determine. It can mean "Day of worship" or "day of Jesus' coming," though some other less likely ideas have been suggested. The idea of Jesus' second coming, mentioned in 9:27-28, coupled with the urgent points made in such texts as 3:7ff., and 10:26-31, combine to make the second suggestion most likely.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 17:

153. Outline the whole book, at least as detailed as the outline given in the Introduction.
154. Take this section from 10:19-25 and analyze it as it fits into the whole.
155. Discuss the word "therefore."
156. What do Christians "have" as listed in our text?
157. List the three exhortations.
158. What is your explanation of "hearts sprinkled clean" and "bodies washed . . ." in v. 22?
159. If Jesus was immersed according to God's will (Matt. 3:15; Luke 7:29-30) and commanded his apostles to do so (Matt. 28:18-19) does the book of Acts reveal that they obeyed?
160. When Jesus spoke of a new birth (John 3), and Acts records the apostles immersing, and no other explanation is found about a "new birth," in the light of the scriptures mentioned above in v. 22, and that text in Romans 6:3-6, why should it not be a valid conclusion that the act of immersion was/is the consummation of the new birth?
161. Why should Christians not waver?
162. Have you ever caught yourself merely "sizing" up another Christian with no thought of stirring him up to love and good works?
163. In what area of thought and exhortation is the general meeting together by Christians placed?

Lesson Eighteen

(10:26-39)

THE GOD WE SERVE

26 For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries. ²⁸A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

32 But recall the former days when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴For you had compassion on the prisoners, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised.

³⁷"For yet a little while,

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and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry;
³⁸but my righteous one shall live by faith,
and if he shrinks back,
my soul has no pleasure in him."

³⁹But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls.

The term "god" can and does mean most anything to peoples of the world, including us in America. Some may have in mind a "higher being," perhaps on the order of a superman; others conceive god to be a non-entity, merely a mythical figure; others suppose that the name includes several entities, some good, some bad. When Hebrews was written, all the above views were extant, plus the Jewish view of God, and that of the Christian.

In our day, God is accused of being everything, from capricious to a tree. Even Christians have varying and sometimes conflicting views of God. J. B. Phillips' book *Your God Is Too Small* brings out many of the prevailing concepts of God. As we study our lesson text then, let us specially focus on our concept of God. Some points about God have been previously mentioned, which need to be remembered as we study our present text.

10:26 — **if we sin** — Nowhere does the Bible teach that Christians never sin. Many passages assume the contrary, that Christians do sin. In fact, such texts as I John 1:8-10 teach explicitly what is to be done by Christians in that event. Obviously, Hebrews 7:25 is pertinent to this point also, and actually provides a backdrop for our present text as well.

deliberately — The Greek text reads *ἐκουσίως . . . ἀμαρτανόντων*. Both words are to be considered carefully. Generally, *ἐκουσίως* has the idea of intentionally, deliberately, willfully, voluntarily, etc. I Peter 5:2 has it, as does Philemon, v. 14. In each case, the opposite of *ἐκουσίως* is the idea of constraint, compulsion, against one's will. The word *ἀμαρτανόντων* is a present participle, which in Greek carries the idea of habitual, a manner of life, constantly, etc. The same idea was attached to the present participles in 6:6, which indicated a "set of the mind," a life-style.

In context of the Hebrew epistle, the efficacy of the Christian religion has been contrasted with that of the Mosaic system (and implicitly, any other system) of redemption. It has been established that anyone who becomes and remains a part of the Christian system can be cleansed from any sin, and the consciousness connected with it, because Jesus is able to save to the uttermost those who came to God through him.

Within this background, the present text appears. As was intimated in the discussion of 6:4-6, the point is this: believing in Jesus vs. believing in something/someone else for salvation. If one decided to leave Jesus,

according to our epistle (and the whole New Testament), no other sacrifice and system is available to remove sin, or is acceptable to God. As a consequence, said person is lost, doomed to die for his sinfulness. The same point is in our text. If one decides to lead a sinful life (as opposed to serving Jesus as an obedient person, 5:9), then said person has no means of redemption. The only thing that is left is judgment at God's hands, the subject of vv. 27-31.

Generally, any discussion of this verse gets into the area of some specific sin that is repeated in one's life. While that ought to be a cause for concern, that is not the issue here. The fact is that most, if not all, sins are repeated. Few if any sins are unique or new. Covetousness, for instance, can take many forms; idolatry likewise. The whole moral system hangs upon two basic laws, love for God and man. Any sin is a transgression of one or both of these basic laws. For this reason, every Christian breaks the same basic law many times in the course of life. Hence, it is superfluous to talk about one sin that is repeated. The total commitment to Jesus vs. someone/something else is the issue.

V. 27 — For the one who rejects the salvation to be found in Christ, he must stand before God with no means of redemption. While it is true that God is both loving and merciful, it is also true that these attributes are expressed in light of his justness. (Note the comments on 3:10; 6:9-12.)

V. 28-29 — Still contrasting the covenants, the first readers were reminded that the Mosaic law, even though displaced by the Christian dispensation, yet was from God. As such, whoever broke it was punished accordingly. The New Covenant also has its punishment for those who break it (in this context, the thought is of rejecting the covenant, in toto, rather than transgressing some particular command). While the New Covenant is characterized by grace, yet it has its limits. The text asserts that the person who rejects the New Covenant does so regardless of all that has been done for him (much more than was true in the Mosaic times), and will be punished accordingly. Robert Shank observed correctly that the Scripture never pictures people who have been abandoned by God to the fires of hell, living out the remnant of this life with no prospect of God's acceptance. Rather the picture is of a God, gracious and long-suffering, who is rejected by people. For such as these, our text is to be applied. The person who would have been in mind under the Mosaic dispensation would not have been the person who sinned, per se. All of the Jews, including Moses and Joshua sinned. God had provided sacrifice to be offered to remove the sin and guilt. The person in mind is the one who, knowing the law and its requirements, would reject the whole system, and leave Judaism for some other religion. This person is probably the one such as is mentioned in Num. 15:30-31.

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The Mosaic law made provision for forgiveness of all kinds of sins (cf. David & Bathsheba) as long as one remained under the law and acted as the law prescribed in reference to sin. The law was good only for those who remained under it, however.

V. 29 — **spurned . . . profaned . . . outraged** — These terms are meant to apply to the person who has become Christian and then volitionally went back to a life of sinning, rejecting Jesus' lordship and the salvation in him.

V. 30 — The text is a quote from the general sentiment expressed in Deuteronomy 32:35-36, where God promises to judge the enemies of Israel, and by implication, to judge all who are against him. God will also judge his own, I Peter 4:17-18, but not from the same perspective as those not his own.

V. 31 — **It is a fearful thing** — As mentioned before, all are sinners and, as such, under the wrath of God. If by faith people live for God, they are able to escape his wrath. If not, then God has promised a sure punishment for everyone not faithful. It is not scriptural to paint a picture of (a) God who does not punish sinners. On the contrary, the total Bible picture is of a just God, who rewards those of faith, punishes those unbelieving, both in this life and in the life to come.

After having exhorted his readers in vv. 19-25, and warned them in vv. 26-31, the author turns to encouragement, recalling their past life of faith, which was another reason to remain a Christian, confident in God.

V. 32 — **recall** — Sometimes memories are painful, but necessary. In the case of the first readers of this book, though their Christian past had not always been pleasant, it had been marked by continued adherence to Christ. This same life-style needed to be maintained. Especially in view of the habits of some (v. 25) or the tendency of others (5:11-14), they needed to press on, 6:1.

V. 33 — **publicly exposed** — Just what this means is open to question, but evidently it was not to be desired. Paul remarked in I Corinthians 4:9ff. that the apostles had been treated thusly. Jesus was so displayed, John 19:1-5. Others had been abused and reviled, ill-treated and afflicted, and they had not deserted those so treated, but rather had acted as partners (the Greek term *κοινωνία*, the common word for fellowship, to share together, etc.) with all such, as v. 33 states.

V. 34 — **the plundering of your property** — As was/is common in times of persecution, not only were Christians physically and personally persecuted, but they also had their property confiscated and/or destroyed, etc. Plainly the recipients of this letter had received such treatment, cheerfully accepting it because they knew that one's life "does not consist in the abundance of things possessed," Luke 12:15, but rather consists of having Jesus, in whom are hidden all of God's riches, Colossians 2:3. Recall I John 2:17.

V. 35 — **therefore** — On the basis of these great facts out of their past life, they have no reason to give up. As 12:4 shows, none had been killed yet, and as ch. 11 details, all must keep on believing. Moreover, God had not changed. All of which provided plenty of reasons for them to “hang in there.”

great reward — Sometimes, like those in ch. 11, the reward was not received in this life but in the next life. Abraham received many promises from God, even including a promised land; yet he died without possessing much of what was promised, for God had other and better things in mind.

V. 36 — **endurance** — The Greek term is *ὑπομονή*, which is a word of great importance. The word occurs about 45 times in the New Testament scriptures. It would describe the veteran not the recruit; the bristle cone pine not the mimosa; the attitude of a joyful expectancy rather than a grim waiting. Faith produces this, James 1:3 and it makes us mature (perfect/complete), v. 4, and produces hope, Romans 5:4. It was an attribute for which Paul commended those in Thessalonica, II Thessalonians 1:4, and characterized those in the book of martyrs, Revelation 1:9; 3:10; 13:10. It produces a quality in Christian people that prepares them for judgment, Romans 2:7; James 1:12. As Chrysostom is quoted as saying, “It keeps one on his feet with his face to the wind.” Hence, they had need of it, for it would bring obedience to God, and receiving what God had promised (such as a rest, 4:9. Ref. Acts 13:32-33; 26:6). See this term in 12:1.

V. 37 — Perhaps the greatest promise ever given was that of a deliverer from sins. All through the Old Testament, the people of trust looked for the fulfillment of God’s promise. Jesus did come, as promised, and those who so trusted God were vindicated. Jesus ascended to heaven with a promise of return, Acts 1:11. All through the New Testament scriptures, his second coming is kept before the believers, such as in Hebrews 9:27-28. Since the first promise was kept, and faith rewarded, just so will this promise be kept and faith rewarded. On this solid foundation, then, the author urges continued trust.

V. 38 — **my righteous one** — The text is a quote of Habakkuk 2:3, which is also quoted by Paul in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11. (Further comment upon this in the next lesson.)

if he shrinks back — Only those whose theology is such that they do not believe that a Christian can be lost have trouble with this verse (or 6:1-6; 10:26). It is clear that one can put a hand to the plow but decide to look back. The word translated “shrink back” is *ὑποστέλλω*, found in Acts 10:20, 27; and Galatians 2:12.

no pleasure — See again 3:7ff. As in the days of Habakkuk, those who trusted God were rewarded, but all who refused to continue trusting fell into the hands of destroyers.

V. 39 — **we are not of those** — See again on 5:11 — 6:10. The author

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is somewhat apprehensive at times, yet encouraging and complimentary at others. (Sometimes in considering the character of the first readers and then considering the general run of congregations today, it seems that times and people have not changed, doesn't it?) It is evident, though, that the original readers were yet Christian, but needed as a group to do better. Fit this verse into v. 26.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 18:

164. Why not try to write down the concept of God that you have?
165. List the explicit statements about God in our text.
166. What is your understanding of v. 26 in its context?
167. Is there any possibility of escaping God's judgment if one rejects Christ?
168. Detail the past life of the first readers as our text describes them.
169. Of what did they have need?
170. What were they to keep and not throw away?
171. Endurance produces what?
172. How shall the righteous live?
173. In what way does the writer describe those to whom he addressed this letter?

Lesson Nineteen

(11:1-3)

FAITH

11 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²For by it the men of old received divine approval. ³By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear.

Faith = trust. Trust issues in obedience. Paul speaks about the "obedience of faith," Romans 1:5; 16:26. This Hebrew epistle offers a roll call of faith's "hall-of-famers" for the consideration and challenge of all until Jesus comes again.

With these ideas in mind, then, it was thought appropriate to devote a lesson to the subject, not only because it is the proper place in the book to do so, but it also provides a means of encouragement to us as we study it.

In our epistle, this chapter is devoted to those whose lives reflected a life-style God designates as faith. The concept means more, therefore, than just a one time belief, although it includes that. The people mentioned throughout the chapter were among those who committed themselves into God's will, come what may, and kept that fact true until God honored

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them with his presence after their departure from this world. No other type of life is acceptable to God, or commended by the scriptures.

The idea of faith in ch. 11, especially as it relates to the various people mentioned by name, seems to involve a life dedicated to God in such a way that said life was based upon some knowledge of God's will for them, and yet went beyond that to expression in ways they thought "appropriate" to faith. As a rule, you will notice the people "by faith obeyed" or an equivalent expression. Yet in many cases the things endured would have seemed foolish to others not so minded. In fact, one of the problems that any discussion of faith must consider is this very point: when does faith cease to be such in God's eyes or in our eyes. It has been the experience of us all that some have been observed to believe in something for which there appears no reason to do so. And this is part of the problem: a reason to believe. What constitutes reason to believe for one is not so for another. A related problem is that of presuppositions (i.e., what is believed/accepted as true before consideration is given to any position of faith). These are like axioms, something given but not provable. In Mathematics, we would say that it is axiomatic that there is one and only one straight line passing through two given points. Let it be observed that many "facts" are taken for granted that are in and of themselves not provable, or have some evidence for and some against. In the realm of knowledge, one can not prove the basic starting point, our thinking, and yet we must trust our thinking in order to doubt it. That is, in order to assert that we are not in existence, we must assume our existence and that we are thinking "correctly" in order to so state.

The above discussion was not intended to do more than quicken our awareness of problems that exist with the discussion of faith. Even the term itself can be variously used and understood. The definition given at the beginning of this lesson was "trust." If we trust, we obey (or act). All religious systems, then or now, are based upon faith/trust. No one is religious without some basis for being so, even if, to others, said reasons do not justify the person for so being. Every religion presents some reason for being, some foundation for existence. Hence, every person who is of that religion is so because there is some reason that justifies such. Because these things are so, all religious people have faith of some sort. Conversion from one religion to another really involves transferal of faith, which is done because of some compelling reason(s). You will notice that Christianity, with its own set of reasons (i.e., evidences for it), is a religion that proposes that people should believe in it rather than some other religion (with its set of reasons). Consideration of the Acts accounts will disclose that the apostles, for instance, preached in argumentative fashion through presentation of facts or alternative

(i.e., "better") conclusions from a given body of facts (like the Old Testament, for instance) for the purpose of persuasion. Some believed (i.e., switched) while others did not. It is always so. None of us who are Christian can, beyond a shadow of a doubt, prove that our religious system is the correct one. However, neither can any other person do so for their religious system. It is then a matter of evidence, what kind, how much, etc. It is a matter of careful thinking about what is assumed as true, and about the conclusion(s) drawn. In this writer's judgment, Christianity has far and away the best evidence (reasons) for its claims, and its demands upon those who adhere to it. At the same time, I recognize that many think me unjustified for my position. In fact, I am definitely in the minority in this world. Regardless, I believe and obey. It is so with every person.

As we consider this chapter, contemplate carefully the persons mentioned, what they did, why they did so, and what others who did not so live thought, etc. Attempt to see how trust in God came out in life, and how trust was measured. Remember that the account we are studying is considered by us as being inspired (i.e., from God) and thus the truth. How it would be read by someone not of our persuasion should be held in mind as we study.

11:1 — **faith** — As suggested above, a good synonym would be trust. Our English words "faith" and "belief" translate the same Greek word *πίστις*. In various contexts different states of mind or life are to be seen. For instance, read John 2:24, then 3:16. Read I Timothy 5:12, then Jude v. 3. Read Acts 17:31, then Romans 14:22. The word occurs hundreds of times in the New Testament (some 60 times in Romans, and about 40 times in Hebrews). In our text and throughout the chapter, it is applied to people whose lives were marked by allegiance to God, not regardless of the evidence but rather regardless of the earthly consequences.

Our consideration of "faith" should take in Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:39, as mentioned in the preceding lesson. In the time of Habakkuk, the call of God was for the Israelite to trust God for deliverance, in a physical sense, from the challenge of invaders such as Nebuchadnezzar, etc. Those who trusted God received the promise of God. The text, though, enunciates a general principle that has always been true in any realm of life at any time in history: if one trusts God, God proves faithful. Our chapter 11 is a classic proof of this. Moreover, it is a general faith in God that issues in obedience that is in view, whatever obedience is called for. In Abel's time, it was obedience of one sort; in Moses', another; in ours', still different (specifically, we must accept the position that Jesus has come in the flesh, died for our sin, etc.). The principle of trust in God, though expressed in somewhat different "acts," is yet the same in all cases. Hence, the essence of the "gospel" is faith, as is plain when Romans 1:16 and 1:17 are read together, as they are meant to be. In the "gospel" is to be found the revealed

righteousness of God, expressed in Jesus Christ, accepted and experienced by our faith. Read Romans 3:21-26 now, and "see" the essence of the gospel expressed, in which we must place our trust and to which we then render the obedience required.

assurance — The Greek term is *ὑπόστασις*. See it in 1:3; 3:14; then II Corinthians 9:4 and 11:17. Whatever evidence was/is available, that causes a person to choose a certain position in opposition to another, gives foundation for faith. Faith will then be the foundation upon which confidence/assurance is based. Hope is a consequence of adequate evidence, and comes only because of sufficient reason for belief.

conviction — From the Greek *ἐλεγχος*. This is an interesting word in several respects. Note its uses in Matthew 18:15; Luke 3:19; John 3:20; 8:46; 16:8; Ephesians 5:11, 13; I Timothy 5:20; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:15; Hebrews 12:5; James 2:19; Jude v. 15, 22; Revelation 3:19. It has the idea of to expose or uncover, then convict, convince. Here, faith adequately based upon evidence brings a conviction, even if the matter of conviction is not "seen" (i.e., of a tangible, or empiric nature). For the Christian, many things are of this nature. Much of our doctrinal position is based upon our acceptance of God and his authority (upon evidence, of course). For instance, the familiar verse in Acts 2:38 has two commands (repent, be immersed) and two promises (forgiveness of sins, gift of Holy Spirit). Close and careful examination will disclose that the two promises are accepted as being true upon God's word, not upon any evidence that would be 100% proof of reception of the promises. We believe that the promises are ours because God said so.

V. 2 — **For by it** — Faith in God and consequent commitment to him produced God's acceptance in turn. If God did so for others, he will do so for us. Faith does not necessarily make things unseen anymore real, but simply gives "title" to them. In the lives of those in ch. 11, faith took the form of an active and abiding conviction, acting upon faith in unseen but actual realities. Only persuasion that an unseen but real world exists would have caused people to act as they did.

men of old — The Greek term is *πρεσβυτερός*, which is sometimes translated "elder" as in I Timothy 3, or simply "older." It means either or both.

V. 3 — **by faith** — We were not present at the creation of our world. What we believe/accept about it comes through our faith in the God we have accepted, and his written revelation.

word of God — As Genesis 1 clearly reveals.

which do not appear — Such texts as John 1:3; Acts 17:24-26; and Colossians 1:15-16 help us see that all that exists, save persons whose nature is deity (God, Christ, Holy Spirit) have been made, and from

nothing. Such a position necessitates faith, but so does any other position (i.e., that matter has always been, is able to create itself, etc.). The question is; which position has the best evidence for it?

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 19:

174. Define faith (Don't describe it, 11:1 is a description of what faith produces, not what faith is. All of ch. 11 describes the results of faith, though implicit therein is the definition of faith.). As an example, water is defined as H_2O . It is described as cool, good, etc.
175. How does our lesson relate to the whole book?
176. What presuppositions do you have in regard to your religion? your Bible? your personality?
177. Would it be possible to have false suppositions lead one to false conclusions?
178. Contrast the evidence for God's creation of this universe vs. the faith position that it came from nothing.
179. Did you look up several verses with the word "faith" in them to see various aspects of the word?
180. What characteristic in the men of old (i.e., such as are mentioned in ch. 11) brought them God's approval?
181. Is it by faith, not sight, that we maintain our position that God made the world/universe? (Do we really walk by faith, not sight? Cf. II Corinthians 4:7.)
182. Can we see atoms? protons? anti-matter? How do we "know" they exist?
183. Could these "unseen" things in #182 have always been in existence, and it was out of such "unseen" things that God made the world/universe?

Lesson Twenty

(11:4-22)

THE PATRIARCHS AND FAITH

4 By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts; he died, but through his faith he is still speaking. 5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was attested as having pleased God. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. 7 By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith.

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 By

faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹²Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

¹³These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

¹⁷By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, ¹⁸of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named." ¹⁹He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. ²⁰By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. ²¹By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. ²²By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his burial.

He who would come to God must 1) believe that God is, and 2) believe also that God rewards those who seek him, for without such faith, it is not possible to please God. Such are the sentiments expressed in the familiar text in v. 6, and which have been and will be eternally true. As was expressed in the comments on 10:39, the principle of justification by faith has always been true, including all who obey in believing, but excluding any and all who trust in another system of justifying, even if combined with Christianity (cf. Acts 15:1ff.). The particular response required by faith in God may vary, as from the time before the Mosaic law, to those who lived under the law of Moses, to us who live in the Christian age, but the demand of God for everyone to believe is the same always. Moreover, the principle has been the same for all, being the common meeting ground for Jew and Gentile, as Romans 3:27-31 shows. Jesus clearly taught that people who believed were honored by God, though not Jewish, Luke 4:16ff. All those who are mentioned in our lesson text were justified by faith, though not Jewish. Peter's statement in Acts 15:7-11 reflects his considered understanding of this exact point.

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As we study our text, the writer has chosen representative people in the ages prior to 1445 B.C., when God gave the law to Moses in written form. Each of those presented was characterized by a life of faith in God, though specific events are given that were highlights in each life. Note that 3:7 — 4:13 is relevant here, in that it is not just a matter of believing for awhile in God, but rather continual trust that is pleasing and thus rewarded. As Hebrews 11:13 shows, faith must continue until death. As Jesus said, "Let him who has ears to hear, be hearing."

11:4 — **by faith** — Repeated some 24 times in this chapter, "faith" as an act of obedience and issuing in obedience is held up for the consideration and imitation of those who were first to read this epistle. With their several problems, some of which we have noticed before, and the apparent inclination of some to seriously consider accepting Judaism over Christianity, the repeated teaching about faithfulness in spite of temptations to quit or switch is to the point.

more acceptable — The reason why is stated: by faith, in the way/manner God directed. What Cain offered was not what God had stipulated while Abel's was. By faith implies not only "doing" but "doing as." God had directed that incense be burnt to him, but the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, did not offer "as" God had directed. It is somewhat disputable just how finely God draws this line of which we are speaking, but that he draws a line between that which is acceptable and not acceptable is very clear. Cain and Abel are cases in point. We do well to adhere to what God has said as closely as possible rather than as little as possible.

God being witness — The Bible record discloses that God let Cain know in some manner that his offering was not acceptable, while his brother's, at least by implication, was acceptable. In the case of Christians, the offering of Jesus was/is acceptable to God, which is somewhat akin to that of Abel. We are, in addition, to offer our whole self to God, Romans 12:1-2, as our own sacrifice to God. This is clear enough. What is not so clear is the precise form that offering is to take in many instances. Stated differently, how to live the Christian life at all times is what we have in mind. Anyone who has tried to do so for awhile knows quite well that there are times and occasions when it is difficult, if not impossible, to know exactly what should be done. In these times, as at other times, we live by faith.

V. 5 — **Enoch . . . death** — The faith of this man was honored in such a way that physical death was not his lot in life. Naturally, we also understand that his faith also kept him from experiencing what we call spiritual death.

V. 6 — **without faith** — As discussed in the lesson introduction, the express form that faith may take can differ from time to time. God may require a particular life-style at one point in history, and another some

other time. The common denominator for all time and everyone is faith. No other "frame of mind" is acceptable to him. We have noted earlier that Christianity is a religion of evidence for faith, and persuasion based upon evidence. Those who are persuaded are described as obedient by faith, those not persuaded as disobedient unbelievers.

believe . . . seek — These two words encompass the whole of life: One must maintain a believing state of mind in reference to God, and be characterized by seeking God rather than the alternative: self-seeking.

he rewards — The preceding persons mentioned, Abel and Enoch were rewarded, one during his earthly life (as well as after it), the other after his earthly life, according to the record. Some of those who will be mentioned were rewarded here, some not, at least in the ordinary sense of reward. All were rewarded hereafter. The earthly rewards took several different forms, as is mentioned. A deeper look will help all to see that by faith, even that which is termed "loss" or "misfortune" was a means to blessing from God, even as Romans 8:28 promises. The first readers needed to see that though they had been mistreated in several different ways, their faith had done and would do the same for them as for these people being listed. It is also true for us today.

V. 7 — **Noah** — Sometimes the obedience God required took explicit forms, as in the building of an ark. Where faith came in was believing that an ark would be necessary (for events yet "unseen" but certain to come). As I Peter 3:20, II Peter 2:5, and Gen. 6:1ff. state, Noah preached and worked for some 120 years about the matter. When the word of the Lord did come true, the flood came upon people who were faithless, not persuaded that God was to be trusted, and, being disobedient, all perished.

for the saving — The Greek term translated "saving" is *σωτηρια*, the same term as applied to salvation of one's soul, etc. In fact, Noah's faith worked salvation for him both physically and spiritually. Such was not always true of others, some of whom (as the apostle James, Stephen, etc.) were not "saved" physically though they were spiritually. God does not promise that one's faith will always or at all bring blessings in a physical/material sense. We err when we so think. It may happen — it may not. We must keep our faith in God, whatever. In so doing, like Noah, the world's disbelief is condemned while the faithful inherit righteousness.

V. 8 — **by faith . . . not knowing** — Abraham obeyed God's call because he believed God, not because he could empirically prove the promises. As Bible students know, Abraham did not receive personally any of the land which is in question, nor see fulfillment of the promised multitude of "seed." As Stephen said in Acts 7:5, he received not a "foot's length (though he bought burial ground, Gen. 23). Though the

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text states that he obeyed and went, and that he sojourned, etc., it is also a fact that he twice lied about Sarah, and attempted to have the promised son through Hagar but failed. His life was not perfect; rather it was faithful. This is why he is an example for all believers, even those to whom the epistle was first written. No one leads a perfect life — but all can lead a faithful life. In this instance, faith does not equal perfectness but loyalty. In fact, those who are mentioned in this chapter were just such people: loyally faithful to God.

V. 9 — **Isaac . . . Jacob** — Both these men were as their father and grandfather: faithful to God. In spite of occasional wrong choices, they lived a life of allegiance to God.

V. 10 — Abraham's faith in God caused him to see beyond this life so temporal and deceptive, to that life that is described as a city which God built, and therefore free from all the things that make "this city" (in this life) a thing to be avoided at all costs. (Remember Lot's wife!) One must be "in the world" but not "of the world."

V. 11 — **Sarah** — She laughed when first receiving the promise (Genesis 18:12) as did her husband (Genesis 17:17). However, both trusted God enough that God kept the promise, though the promised son's name was Isaac (= laughter).

V. 12 — **descendants . . . stars . . . sand** — While most take this to mean physical descendants, the apostle Paul specifically states that the "seed" promised to Abraham was singular, not plural, and was specifically Jesus, Galatians 3:16. Later in the same chapter, and still by inspiration, he reveals that birth into Abraham's family is counted by faith, not flesh, 3:28-29. Therefore, while it is true that many are physical descendants of Abraham, those are not what was promised. Instead, the heirs of the promise are Christians, by virtue of being in Christ. Who then can number the faithful — are they not as numberless as the stars or the sand?

V. 13 — As one reads this verse, recall v. 1 and what faith is described as being. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob — all held "title deed" to an inheritance none could empirically prove. Heaven is like that — it must be accepted as being so, on the veracity of God. If one so believes and lives, one's citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20-21) and one is truly but a foreigner and an exile here on earth.

V. 15 — Burning their bridges behind them, unlike the majority of the Israelites (ch. 3 and 4) who "burned their bridges" but later regretted it, these patriarchs struck out for a city built by God, secure in his faithfulness. For the first readers, this could have been an important point, since Judaism offered so much in a temporal way, at least on the surface. For them, Christianity was largely in promise while their present material status was not something to boast about.

V. 16 — **a better country** — Jesus said that Abraham looking ahead

“saw” by faith his coming, John 8:56; believing the gospel that was preached to him, Galatians 3:8. (Yes, the “gospel” was preached to Abraham, because the gospel is about a faith righteousness, built upon Jesus. The gospel is not the familiar “faith, repentance, etc.” These things are God’s terms to provide a way to share in the gospel.)

God is not ashamed — Read Matthew 10:32-33; II Corinthians 6:14 — 7:1; Philippians 2:9-11. Each of these texts highlights that which pleases God, or what displeases him. Recall Hebrews 10:31.

a city — This text is of the same sentiment and promises the same things as John 14:1ff. Peter and John wrote about a new city, a new heavens and earth in which God dwells, and righteousness is to be found. God keeps his promises!

V. 17 — **Abraham . . . tested** — This verse must be harmonized with James 1:12-14. As noted on 2:18, “test” and “tempt” translate the same Greek term, *πειράζω*. In the sense of James, God does not attempt to get people to sin — the devil does that. God does, however, put every man to the test of obedience to him. Indeed, as moral creatures, it is impossible not to be tested. God made us with the ability to discern differences, and the will to choose. Hence, in the ultimate sense, God places everyone in a position of testing, life-long. He so presents the choices, though, that all can choose the right, refuse the wrong. God even encourages the choice of right.

his only son — The R.S.V. translators have rightly rendered the Greek term *μονογενής*. It means the “only one of its kind.” Isaac was the only son of his kind, though he was not Abraham’s only son. In fact, Abraham had seven sons, one by Hagar, six by Keturah (Genesis 16:15; 25:1-2). Note the same Greek word in John 3:16 and Luke 7:12.

V. 19 — **God was able** — One can not be in God’s favor and have anyone or anything between himself and God. Abraham needed to make the choice between Isaac and God. He did, and rightly chose. In so doing, he “received” Isaac back again, and God’s personal promise as well. For him, even a resurrection was possible with his God.

V. 20 — **Isaac** — He too could not “see” the things God had promised, first to his father and then to him; Genesis 26:1-5. He may not have understood all, yet believed until his death, and so acted in the blessing of his two sons.

V. 21 — **Jacob** — As the Genesis account shows, Abraham and Jacob occupy the major portion of the whole book, overshadowing Isaac. Yet it is true that the identification of God was this: “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

bowing in worship — Genesis 48 and 49 have the incident in detail, but 47:29-31 also show an insight into the future, as Jacob made Joseph promise to take him out of Egypt after his death, to be buried with his fathers.

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V. 22 — Joseph, certainly one of God's faithful, likewise considered himself looking for a city, simply sojourning in a strange land. Greatness in the eyes of men did not hinder his greatness in the eyes of God. Hundreds of years after his death, the sons of Abraham carried his bones out of Egypt, symbolizing his choice to cast his lot with God's people. Moses, Exodus 13, and Joshua, Joshua 24, respected his faith and buried him in the land of promise.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 20:

184. List those in our lesson text who lived by faith.
185. List those who did not so live.
186. How many of them were said to act by faith upon a direct revelation from God?
187. Have you ever considered that what another Christian was planning by faith was, in your judgment, foolish?
188. What is the nature of God as described in v. 6?
189. Why did God reveal to us the life of Abraham? (Read Romans 4:23-24.)
190. Would you harmonize Hebrews 11:17 and James 1:12-14, throwing in Matthew 6:13?
191. Cite an example in Joseph's life that indicates he perceived the hand of God in his circumstances.
192. How would you handle the actions of Jacob and Rebecca in regard to the blessing of Isaac — was that deception the plan of God?
193. If the death of Abraham was about 2,000 B.C., and the exodus from Egypt 1,445 B.C., how many years did the Israelites remember Joseph's request for burial in Palestine?

Lesson Twenty-one

(11:23-40)

FAITH AND LAW

²³By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. ²⁴By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶He considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward. ²⁷By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the first-born might not touch them.

²⁹By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land; but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. ³⁰By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. ³¹By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given friendly welcome to the spies.

³²And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of

TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON HEBREWS

Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets —³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions,²⁴ quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.³⁵ Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life.³⁶ Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment.³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated —³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy — wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

39 And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised,⁴⁰ since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Faith's obedience took a new and more sharply defined turn when God gave the law to Moses in 1445 B.C. One always had to believe and obey, beginning with Adam. When the law came, however, explicit directions were given for everyone subject to it. There were some specific things for men, some for women, some for children; while some were for all. Prior to the law, faith evidently took several different turns, but the law brought much more conformity than was true before.

God gave the law for several reasons, among them the more revealing types and shadows of that which was to come, and the more polished mirror in which men could perceive their sinfulness. As before remarked in the comments on chapter 7 and 8, God designed the law and all that was involved in it as a temporal measure, to be the final preparation for that which was the real and the true, the kingdom of God, the church. Jesus came as the fulfillment of all that went before, God summing up all things in his son.

Our lesson text continues the thread of thought relative to the faithful of God, tracing for us those who lived by faith while under the law. It is important to note once again that those who lived under the law (basically we are speaking about Jews) were required as part of the expression of their obedience to God to keep the law. However, keeping the law, as such, however well it was kept, did not procure them redemption. The reason is simple: the law only condemned, and could not take away sins (as noted on 10:1-18, for instance). Their salvation actually came through Jesus Christ, 9:15-17, not through law-keeping. It is the same for us today. We are required to obey God's commands, whatever they are, but the keeping of them does not bring salvation.

Jesus saves. Our acceptance of him and his sacrifice for us and our sin is the means of salvation. Let us keep these things forever straight in our minds, that if Jesus had not died for sin, we could not be saved even if we lived perfectly. God ordained that redemption be in Jesus only. That's the way it is.

11:23 — **by faith** — The faith of Moses' parents, Amram and Jochébed, whose names are not mentioned, but who believed in God and looked into the future. How they knew what to do with Moses is not told us. Evidently they did not consider that disobedience to a ruler was improper, even though the Bible, and especially the New Covenant, teaches believers to obey rulers. It is a bit difficult to imagine that God expressly told them to disobey, but disobey they did. They were like the midwives who also disobeyed.

Obedience to one's rulers because God has so ordered it is a general rule for all. Sometimes, as in the case in point, believers have come to the conclusion that God's will for them is such that they cannot do what the ruler requires (as was the case with Shadrack and co., John and Peter, etc.). In such instances, whether one has correctly perceived the issue or not, one must do as he believes God has ordered. No other position will do, for one must do as is believed to be right, regardless (Martin Luther is a classic example of this point.)

In all ages, including the last two centuries in these United States, believers have been on all sides of this issue, and still are. It is not an easy matter to settle, for the issue is complex and hard to see clearly. We have Christians on all sides of such issues as abortion, taxes, speed limits, divorce, armed services, etc., all of which relate in some way to laws of government. While each of us needs to study carefully and continually, doing the best we know how, we also need to practice restraint and forbearance towards other Christians especially, and people in general who do not see the issue as we do. (The relevant New Testament texts would include Matthew 22:15-22; John 19:8-11; Acts 4:18-30; 5:19-20; Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1-2; I Peter 2:13-17.)

V. 24 — **By faith Moses** — With his mother for his nurse, Moses was doubtless well taught concerning his heritage and the particular way he came to be a part of Pharaoh's household.

V. 25 — **choosing** — By faith, reasoned out and decided upon, Moses chose to live his life for God, regardless of the consequences, not regardless of the evidence. Any life of faith will be one of choice, though sometimes the enormity and eternal significance of some choices will not be comparable to others. Yet it remains true that every decision in life must be made in the light of faith's commitment to God.

ill-treatment — Such as this will bring out one's character and dedication. Often such circumstances are brought about by misunderstanding

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or ignorance, but sometimes ill-treatment is from prejudice and is deliberate.

people of God — In this case, the Israelites. It is worthy of note that most of the ill-treatment Moses received in his life was from his own people. His choice, however, was still right in view of reality.

fleeting pleasures — No pleasure this life offers can be but fleeting. Only that which comes from God endures. This is why Paul teaches that godliness is profitable both for this life and the life to come, I Timothy 4:7-10; 6-10.

V. 26 — **he looked** — The recurring refrain in all these examples is that the people selected were living expressions of 11:1, 6. Whatever the cost was, it was not too high to pay to live for God. In all cases, these ones brought to our attention had less evidence, both in quality and quantity, than those to whom the epistle was first addressed, and us today.

V. 27 — While Moses left Egypt at the age of forty years because of Pharaoh's anger over the Egyptian's murder at the hands of Moses, when Moses came back at the age of eighty, he faced the ruler with no fear, and in spite of his studied opposition. The reason was that he feared God rather than men (see Luke 12:4-7). For Moses, his faith made that which was not seen "seen" and that which could not be proved "real."

V. 28 — **the Passover** — This event, with few peers for greatness, had to be kept solely by faith. There had been no such occasion before; there was no way to prove that it would happen — it was observed because God was believed. In many ways it foreshadowed Jesus' death and its commemoration, the communion service.

V. 29 — **dry land** — Exodus 14:22 states that the land was dry for the Israelites, but later in v. 25 states that the chariot wheels were clogged. Anyone who has ever cleaned out a pond or walked in a lake or river having a mud bottom can appreciate what a tremendous miracle God worked in making that sea bottom dry for Israel. Paul teaches in I Corinthians 10:1ff. that this event was an immersion into Moses for the Israelites, and that in some unexplained way, Christ was their food and drink, their sustenance. How like it is for all Christians that our whole life is from Christ! Those who first received this epistle were like the Israelites in having passed out of sin's bondage into freedom by the grace of God. They needed to be cautious lest God not be pleased with them as was true with most of Israel, I Corinthians 10:5.

V. 30 — **the walls of Jericho** — As it was with the Passover and the Red Sea, no human could show that what God had promised would happen. Yet forty years after those great events, Joshua led Israel around that fortified city, and the walls came tumbling down. Obedient faith carried the day!

V. 31 — **Rahab** — This lady's faith was of such outstanding quality that she was also mentioned by James as one who believed. The fact of her previous (?) life only puts her faith in sharper prospective. The part that is sticky is that she lied while ostensibly believing, a somewhat incongruous state. However, God honored her faith, imperfect though it was, just as he did for Abraham who also lied while believing. Her faith was evident in that she so acted as seeing the unseen (i.e., the city falling to Israel), even some forty years after the exodus from Egypt.

friendly welcome — The Greek text reads that she received the spies in "peace" (note Matthew 10:13). The Greek word is *εἰρήνη*, (the Hebrew term was commented upon in 7:1-2), our English word "Irene."

V. 32 — **what more shall I say** — If the facts of the case from Abel to Rahab were not sufficient for faith, the author of Hebrews was in despair. Yet it is as true today as 2,000 years ago, that people become Christians and then fall by the wayside, and with even more reasons for faith. Each of the people that will be briefly mentioned were as those before: persons who lived by faith, not perfectly but loyally.

V. 33 — **who through faith** — Recall here the teaching in 6:7-8, 9-20. God did not overlook or forget the lives of these various ones, because he was faithful and they were rewarded because they were faithful.

V. 33-38 — The worth of studying the Old Covenant is impossible to measure, but this text gives plenty of evidence for doing so. While it is true that Christians are obligated only to keep that which is to be found within the New Testament (see 8:9), yet it is but folly to ignore God's revelation in the Old Testament. Within its confines we can see so many valuable things for us, such as is here given in Hebrews. We can know much about the character of God, much about the general things he approves and disapproves. It may not be a part of our life to be concerned with moving a pile of rocks that mark a boundary, yet we can see it is wrong to do so, Proverbs 22:28; 23:10. One can meditate at some length upon God's dealings with the Jews, and learn many things profitably (see Exodus 19:1ff.; 24:1ff.; Deuteronomy 27:1 — 30:20; Jeremiah 22:1ff.). The New Testament says little about the reasons God is opposed to drunkenness, but Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35 offer help. No book more clearly enunciates the vainness of living apart from God than does Ecclesiastes. May we all be Christians by obedience to the New Covenant scriptures, but may it also be true that we are students of God's Old Covenant as well.

V. 35 — **by resurrection** — The best known examples are of Elijah and the widow's son in I Kings 17, and Elisha and the Shunammite's son in II Kings 4. Mary and Martha both understood and believed in a final resurrection, John 11, though not much is explicitly taught in the Old Testament about it.

a **better life** — Clear evidence of faith seeing the invisible. Some were by faith delivered from trials (as the men in II Kings 4:38-41) while others were delivered through trials (as the three men in Daniel 3).

V. 37 — **they were killed** — No place has God promised to deliver the faithful from problems, adversity or even physical death. While it may be true that God watches over his own (Psalms 91:11-12; Matthew 6:25-33), yet it is also true that each day has its share of trouble, Matthew 6:34, and God did not spare his only son from physical death, Romans 8:31-34. Romans 8:35-36 are on this point — God may treat his own like a lamb for sacrifice; but if faith is continued, God will deliver, Romans 8:37-39; John 10:27-30; Hebrews 10:35-39.

V. 38 — The New English Bible's rendering of this verse in a positive way, that these mentioned were "too good for the world" is really good. That they were! They remained true to God despite the odds against them, through their faith in light of the rewards, even as did Jesus, 12:2.

V. 39 — **did not receive** — Some were greatly blessed, and some will be blessed, as Matthew 8:11 and Luke 13:28-29 tell us, but the realization of the Messiah's coming and the resultant kingdom were not theirs to enjoy. Christians are those upon whom the "ends of the ages are come," I Corinthians 10:11.

V. 40 — **something better** — The "better" is in Christ, and the church, the kingdom of God on earth. It isn't that the faith of these mentioned was any less commendable than that of Christians, for it wasn't. It is simply that God chose to make Christianity the "better." Note the comment of Simeon in Luke 2:29-32; Jesus' prayer in John 17:23 and Paul's statement in Galatians 4:4.

perfect — The same word as in 5:9; 7:19; etc. As is often done in this epistle, the intimate connection between the events prior to Jesus' coming and those that surround and follow him are shown. Such is but another piece in the total picture that reveals how involved God has been in the affairs of men.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSONS 21:

194. With what particular time slot is our text concerned?
195. Have you listed all those faithful expressly mentioned in our text?
196. How do you reconcile the disobedience of Moses' parents to the general will of God toward rulers?
197. Do you disobey rulers? If so, what sort of example do you set?
198. Would it be possible to disobey a ruler and be wrong in the sight of God even though the disobedience was believed to be "in faith"?

199. Give examples of Jesus' breaking the laws of the land.
200. Do the points made in 11:1, 6 about faith and the faithful characterize those mentioned in our text?
201. Why do you think the point about "dry land" was made?
202. How do you reconcile faith in God and lying to men, as was true of Rahab?
203. Who, of all those mentioned in ch. 11, was without sin?
204. While we didn't comment in detail about verses 33-38, can you give some Old Testament examples of some of those things?
205. What is expressly said about the faithful in v. 39?
206. Who is the "us" in v. 40?
207. Who is said to be not perfect in v. 40? (Does our lesson introduction help us see why some were not perfect?)

Lesson Twenty-two

(12:1-2)

JESUS, THE EXAMPLE

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Though we don't have much text to consider, this lesson is certainly most important. The whole epistle has centered upon Jesus, who he is in respect to God, who he is in respect to man. He has been presented as God's unique son and final spokesman, as the high priest of Christianity who sacrificed himself for the sins of all mankind and ever lies in God's presence to save those who draw near to God through him. He has been placed in contrast to angels, to Moses and Joshua, to Aaron and the Mosaic law system. In each instance, Jesus has been shown to be "better." Therefore, all that is real and true is of Christ, all else being shadow, Colossians 2:8-19, especially v. 17.

Our immediate text comes at the end of a long section relating to the life of faith which one must lead in order to be pleasing to God. Many great people have been cited to provide a solid basis for trusting God. Jesus is now presented as the primary example of what it means to trust God and do his will. He is the one to whom all are to look for the kind of life that pleases God, for he submitted to God's will even unto death. In so doing, he set us the example to follow, being both pioneer (the one who leads the way) and perfecter (the one who completes what is lacking) for every believer. Hence, the author quite rightly places Jesus before the readers of yesteryear and us today. Certain it is that with all the others who have been mentioned and with Jesus included, a grand crowd of believers is present to cheer us on, both by their own examples and by the encouragement therefrom. It is with all as it is with Abel: he though dead yet speaks.

12:1 — **Therefore** — This is the grand conclusion of the foregoing discussion concerning how a believer ought to live.

we — The author includes himself in these matters of Christian living. Paul had done somewhat the same thing in the I Corinthians 9:24-27 text.

cloud of witnesses — Most likely the ones just mentioned in the previous verses, though others could have been mentioned who were faithful. The particular metaphor being used has been variously explained over the years. The most likely thought that comes to mind is of a stadium filled with people who are watching a race in progress, cheering for their favorite. The basic point is this: Christians need not think that they are running the race alone, no one caring what happens, etc. The converse is true — God and those who have been faithful in the past ages are watching and cheering, and Jesus is both leading and a very present help in time of trouble.

laid aside — The things that would hinder the runner must be laid aside just like one lays aside old clothes. Colossians 3:8 has the same Greek term and the same sort of context; Romans 13:12 uses the same basic term and in the same vein of thought.

every weight — Probably means the sin that is next mentioned.

the sin — Whether this is some particular sin or just sin in general is disputed. It seems that in view of looking unto Jesus, and running the race as he ran it, whatever would hinder the runner must be thrown aside. Therefore, it seems better to take the word as referring to any sin, any time.

One does not become separated from God by any one sin, but rather by a life of sinning, continued disobedience, constant neglect of the Christian's high priest and that which he offers. This is the general context of 10:19ff. For this reason, then, the above interpretation is given.

with perseverance — The Greek term is *ὑπομονής*, used in 10:36. Some

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other texts are Luke 8:15; 21:19; Romans 2:7; 5:3, 4; 8:25; 15:4, 5; II Corinthians 1:6; 6:4; 12:12; Colossians 1:11; I Thessalonians 1:3; II Thessalonians 1:4; 3:5; I Timothy 6:11; II Timothy 3:10; Titus 2:2; James 1:3, 4; 5:11 and II Peter 1:6. Note that Jesus is described by this term in v. 3.

the race — The Greek term used to describe that which lies before the runner is *ἀγώνα*, which is often transliterated into English as "agony." See the term in Luke 13:24; 22:44; John 18:36; I Corinthians 9:25; Philipians 1:30; Colossians 1:29; 2:1; 4:12; I Thessalonians 2:2; I Timothy 4:10; 6:12; II Timothy 4:7. One is to go "all out" to win in the contest knowing that the cost for losing is far greater than the cost of winning.

V. 2 — **looking** — As 3:1 puts it, consider Jesus. The Christian "runner" is to see Jesus only, not looking to anyone or anything else. Peter was walking on water until he took his eyes off of Jesus and began to notice things about him, Matthew 14:28ff. Moses looked to the reward, 11:26; Abraham looked for a city, 11:10, etc. Christians are to do likewise.

pioneer — See on 2:10.

perfector — The term was used in 5:9; 7:19; etc. Without Jesus, no one is as God desires. When one puts on Christ, Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27; and becomes "hid with Christ in God," Colossians 3:3, then God "sees" the Christian as if he were seeing Jesus. In such a state, one is considered "perfect" as Jesus is perfect.

joy set before — The joy was laid out before Jesus in the same way as the race is laid out before the runner, v. 1.

endured — The same basic Greek word as in v. 1. Jesus persevered as the Christian must. The "joy" laying at the end of the race was sufficient to keep Jesus running the race God had set before him. The Christian has a like motivation and Jesus as the example. It was not that Jesus did not feel the shame of all that was involved in his death, it was that such did not deter him from serving God in a pleasing way.

seated — Picking up the idea in 1:3, and common in the New Testament. The thrust is this: Jesus came to earth prepared to obey God, even unto death. Having done so, God highly exalted him. If the Christian will run the race until death, God will be faithful to him also, 6:9ff.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 22:

208. How about summarizing as much as you can what has been taught in Hebrews about Jesus?
209. How does our text fit into the epistle?
210. List some of the witnesses.
211. Why would the author say "us" rather than "you"?

212. What things are we to do to run as we ought?
213. Who of the cloud of witnesses is to be our example?
214. Discuss the possibilities for the word "sin."
215. Could one concentrate on one sin and conveniently "forget" some others?
216. When will sin not be a factor to consider?
217. How is Jesus both pioneer and perfecter?
218. Did Jesus have a race to run?
219. Which Christian has a more difficult race to run than Jesus had?
220. How is Jesus the example of perseverance?

Lesson Twenty-three

(12:3-17)

THE DISCIPLINED LIFE

³Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵And have you forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons? —

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor lose courage when you are punished by him.

⁶For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

⁷It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

⁸If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?

¹⁰For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it

yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. ¹⁴ Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" spring up and cause trouble, and by it the many become defiled; ¹⁶ that no one be immoral or irreligious like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

Faith is both obedience and results in obedience. Faith and obedience are results that come through the consideration of evidence and an act of the will, based upon that evidence. Hence, the Christian life begins with discipline of self through God's direction and our decision to accept Jesus as lord, subjugating ourselves to him and his will. Any such act indicates discipline.

Jesus' great commission to the apostles in Matthew 28 had the charge to "Go and make disciples . . ." He commanded such action because only those who are willing to become disciples, disciplined and therefore obedient, were fit subjects for his kingdom, the church. Disciple and discipline are inseparable, not only because they are from the same root, but also because they are imperatives for being Christian.

Everyone of those who have been mentioned in the previous two chapters was characterized by discipline, Jesus being the supreme example. Each of them brought their wills into submission to God's will, living a life of faith in God. No one can be acceptable to God without faith, but faith in God only comes through discipline of self. Keeping that faith is only possible by continued discipline of self. In our lesson text, Esau failed to obtain what was rightfully his because he did not discipline himself. The majority of those who came out of Egypt did not receive that which was promised because of the same failure.

The reader can see that the idea of discipline has been enlarged from the narrow sense which some people give it in discussion of this text. While discipline includes punishment, that by no means is the sum total of its import. As we have shown, a disciple is one who has disciplined himself to live life God's way rather than his own way. Every obedient act in life is from a disciplined disciple. Discipline, then, has to do with

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all of our life, not just what is termed punishment. The Greek term in question is *παιδεύω*, which has to do with training and development of the person in every way. Note its uses in these texts, and consider the import in each case: Luke 23:16, 22; Acts 7:22; 22:3; Romans 2:20; I Corinthians 4:15; 11:32; II Corinthians 6:9; Galatians 3:24, 25; Ephesians 6:4; I Timothy 1:20; II Timothy 3:16; Revelation 3:19. In Hebrews, we have it in 12:5-11. Study of all these will show that the word encompassed the total education of a person, all was involved in rearing a child to adulthood. That is the exact intent of God's dealing with every child of his; to bring him to adulthood, even unto the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," Ephesians 4:13. The people in Corinth had not grown as they should, and thus were still babes, I Corinthians 3:1ff. Among those to whom the Hebrew epistle was sent were some who were yet on milk rather than meat, 5:11ff. Discipline was the answer in each case, a discipline that would bring the life into line with God's will, that would cast aside any encumbrance that was a hindrance, so that the race could be run successfully. As we study our lesson text, then, keep this larger concept of discipline in view.

12:3 — **consider** — The Greek term *ἀναλογίζομαι*, to reckon or study by comparison. In this text, Jesus is to be the subject of study. Adequate understanding of him will cause self to be considered. In the case of those first readers, such a study would highlight the fact that Jesus had been called upon to give his life to God in a cruel death, which was something none of the readers had been forced to do. Any honest evaluation, then, would put their present status in much better light than they were evidently seeing it.

sinners — The evidence from the gospel records, from Acts and I Corinthians 2 indicates that those who put Jesus to death were exactly such: sinners. Pilate was bad, but even he could see that the Jewish rulers were after Jesus because of envy. Both Herod and Pilate could have done other than they did.

such hostility — These terms indicate an active opposition, intentionally and adamantly opposed. The Greek word for hostility (*ἀντιλογία*) can be seen in 6:16 and 7:7, then in Luke 2:34; 20:27; John 19:12; Acts 13:45; 28:19; Romans 10:21; Titus 1:9; 2:9; Jude v. 11.

you — The Greek term is *ψυχή*, 'soul' in most other texts. Here it stands for the person, as in Acts 1:15, 'persons.'

weary or fainthearted — Any one who loses sight of Jesus and begins to think unduly about self will sooner or later grow weary and lose heart. That is the compelling reason to consider Jesus, and set one's mind on "things above, where Christ is." The remaining verses of our text give reasons why Christians should not take their attention off of Jesus.

V. 4 — In essence, though the present struggles of the first readers

were great, their life had not been taken (or required), and others before them had endured like circumstances. Hence, they just needed to stay faithful.

V. 5 — The quote brought to their attention is from Proverbs 3:11-12. The whole context of Proverbs is that of a father who loves his son, and in loving, does all that is possible to aid his growth, both mentally and physically. So it is with the Christian and his heavenly Father. God does all that he does, whatever it is, for the good of his children. Therefore, the proper frame of mind will accept with gratitude whatever God does, giving careful thought and obedient service to God.

V. 6 — **the Lord disciplines** — Surely there could be no greater honor than to be a child of God. If so, then one ought to receive with gladness that which comes from God. With this attitude, much of what the world calls "ills" will be seen rather as a means to glorify God, as did Joseph so many years ago Paul learned to utilize whatever came to him to God's glory (as in the prison at Philippi or the jail in Rome), remaining content in all cases, Philippians 4:11.

V. 7 — **It is for discipline** — That is, abiding in faith, one learns discipline in a better way and in more areas of life.

God . . . sons — As John expressed it, "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God." i John 3:1. So many have refused the privilege of sonship and thus are not children of God by their own choice. If one has chosen God, and been received by God, why should one then refuse what is entailed in that relationship?

V. 8 — A child grows through obedience to the parent's care. If the parents fail, so does the child. If God does not concern himself with people, they will fail. He will, however, become involved in the life of anyone who will allow him to do so. That involvement is called discipline, and takes whatever form is needed. God suits the circumstance to the person, I Corinthians 10:13. To use Jesus' words, a yoke is fitted to each person that is just right for that person, Matthew 11:28-30.

V. 9 — Arguing from lesser to greater, those who were to first receive the letter knew that they had been willing to accept that which came from their earthly parents, imperfect though they were. Why then should they resist or resent their heavenly parent, who always does good, not evil? Jesus taught that God was better than earthly parents, Matthew 7:7-11. James wrote that "every good and perfect gift" comes from God above, 1:17.

father of spirits — This is an interesting expression. Man is viewed many different ways in the scriptures. In the Old Testament, man is commonly referred to as a living being, one having some things different from animals, but sharing a life principle. In the New Covenant, several different terms are likewise applied to man, such as flesh, body, soul,

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spirit. Soul, *ψυχή*, and spirit, *πνεῦμα*, are distinct terms, but overlap somewhat. The part of man like God is spirit, for God is spirit, John 4:23-24, and so is man. The spirit is that which has life, and animates the physical body, producing soul. Note here Luke 23:46; I Thessalonians 5:23; James 2:26 and Hebrews 12:23. At death, the "real" person, the spirit that has inhabited a physical body, goes back to God who gave it, Ecclesiastes 12:7, and the body is consequently lifeless (soul-less). The spirit is the real "us" with all the distinct things that make us what we are. While in the physical body, "we" utilize the brain, eyes, etc. to function. Yet "we" know intuitively that "we" are not equal to that body. God's Word validates that intuitive conclusion.

Shall we not . . . live? — Note how clear the point is: only submission to God will bring the life found in Jesus, John 10:10, and remove the fear of death, Hebrews 2:14ff.

V. 10 — **they disciplined** — The Greek term indicates the discipline continued. Normally, parents discipline their children from infancy until the end of the teen years.

holiness — Notice v. 14. The root term is the same as the terms used in 2:11. We have no holiness of our own, having sinned it away. What holiness we may attain is solely from God. Ref. II Corinthians 6:14 — 7:1.

V. 11 — Any sort of interference in what "I" want is resented by the undisciplined. Every Christian knows how difficult it is to bring every area of life under Jesus' lordship. Self wants satisfaction, egos demand pampering, desires insist on being fulfilled. None of us achieve any measure of Christlikeness without determined effort. The "old man" dies hard in us all. Jesus did not die on the cross without "setting his face" toward Jerusalem and drinking the cup set before him. Neither shall we accomplish what God wants without a like death to self. It is only in the way of the cross that we find the way to God's home.

peaceful fruit — As in Romans 5:1, peace symbolizes a right relationship with God, a state where "all is well with our soul."

who have been trained — The Greek term, *γεγυμνασμένοις*, indicates a state of life begun and maintained. We must start by faith in God and finish with faith in God. The Greek term would be represented in a word such as our gymnasium, a place of discipline through exercise. Moses' life is a good example of someone who left Egypt by faith, and eighty years later, yet trusted God. His faith produced a righteousness which comes from God, and holiness resulted from that relationship.

V. 12 — **Therefore** — Having given all these reasons for abiding in faith, the author leads into an exhortation.

drooping hands . . . weak knees — Anyone who has ever tried to run a race, or watched others attempt to do so can readily remember these things, depicting a runner falling behind, etc. The Christian life is like a race, one that must be run until life is over.

V. 13 — **make straight paths** — Notice that Christians are to make the straight paths. One of the Greek words for sin is that of stepping out of line, wandering from the right path. Recall the idea in Psalms 23 that speaks of our shepherd leading us in paths of righteousness. Solomon knew only too well that some ways seem right to man, but end in death, 16:25. Isaiah described us as sheep having gone astray, and Peter picked up that idea, reminding Christians that they have returned unto the shepherd and overseer of their souls, Isaiah 53:5; I Peter 2:25.

V. 14 — **Strive** — The Greek term *διώκω* has the idea of avid pursuit, and is often translated as persecute, such as in I Timothy 1:13.

holiness — Good texts to consider here would be such as Matthew 5:8; Ephesians 4:17 — 5:20; Colossians 3:5-17; I John 3:1-3.

V. 15 — **See to it** — The Greek word translated “see” is *ἐπισκοπέω*; our English word “episcopal” being from it. It is sometimes translated as bishop or overseer, the last word especially conveying the idea within it. Notice it in such texts as Acts 1:20; 20:28; Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:1, 2; Titus 1:7; I Peter 2:25 and 5:2.

no one fail — This indicates a mutual concern for each other, everyone being interested in the other. Galatians 6:1-2 and Hebrews 10:19-25 would give some pointers along these lines of how to consider each other, who is to do it, what purpose is to be accomplished, etc. The same word for “fail” is to be seen in 4:1.

root — Whether this is a person or something else is not specified, but Esau is given as an example of such a one. It is surely relevant to consider that what affects one may very well affect others, like leaven in a lump. Defiled would be the opposite of holy.

V. 16 — **immoral or irreligious** — These could be the same in some cases, different in others. In Esau’s case, some think he was both, others think only irreligious in respect to his birthright.

V. 17 — The time and circumstances in Esau’s case were such that he failed to obtain what was planned for him. The same thing can be true of any Christian: God has some wonderful things planned for those who love him, but only if one remains stable and steadfast, Colossians 1:23, and persevere, Hebrews 12:1, to the finishing of the race, II Timothy 4:8.

While Esau’s case may not be exactly parallel to that of the Christian and salvation, yet it is true that death closes the door to any possibility of repentance. Some suggest that even while people are yet alive, they reach such a state of mind that in actuality no chance exists for repentance. In such a case, it would also be true to say that God had closed the door to salvation, since he has made salvation hinge upon human response,

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and none (in this instance) is possible. Whether the scriptures actually teach the possibility of the above supposed case is doubtful. It is certainly a terrible potential state to contemplate.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 23:

221. Have you reviewed the total outline for the book and reflected upon how this section fits into it?
222. Define discipline and disciple.
223. What was the Mosaic law to do for people?
224. How was Paul disciplined?
225. How was Jesus disciplined?
226. Are Christians to begin as babes in Christ and end as adults in Christ?
227. What effects is discipline to produce?
228. What part do Christians play in respect to discipline?
229. How does 12:14-17 relate to the discussion?
230. To whom are the commands in vv. 12, 13, 14 and 15 directed?

Lesson Twenty-four

(12:18-28)

THE UNSHAKEABLE KINGDOM

18For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, ¹⁹and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further messages be spoken to them. ²⁰For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." ²¹Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." ²²But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel.

25See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. ²⁶His voice then shook the earth; but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven." ²⁷This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of what is shaken,

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as of what has been made, in order that what cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe;

Down deep inside, everyone desires to build life and hope upon something solid. No one in their best moment wants a life without adequate reason for being, a firm basis for thought and action. There is no person who in earnestness desires a life at loose ends rather than one having a sure center and circumference.

God has provided just such as is needed in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the church. It is founded upon Jesus himself, which makes a foundation that even the gates of death cannot move. It is of this kingdom that our text speaks. God has spared nothing in respect to security for the Christian. No plausible reason can be advanced by anyone against God, in regard to the adequacy of the church, built with Christians in mind.

It is true that God has always been a sufficient reason for faith, beginning with Adam. He is not of such nature that he would demand faith without reason. Hence, all who have lived as if there were no God have been held guilty, Romans 1:18-32. He even gave more evidences for faith in the time of the Mosaic law, with the great miracles performed in Egypt and related places. But the greatest God reserved until his son came. He kept back nothing that would be profitable to Christians, giving all adequate reason for hope. To this point our author addresses himself, putting the finishing touches on a long section of exhortation directed to his readers. Beginning in 10:19, he has worked about every possible angle to help those early Christians to remain steadfast, not giving up before the prize is gained. He continues with a picture of the life to come, freely given to all who build their life upon an unshakable kingdom.

12:18 Contrasting the real to the temporary, the author shows that the institution in which the Jews gloried was but a shadow while the substance was Christ, Colossians 2:16ff.

V. 19 — **no further messages** — God was doing the Israelites an incalculable favor, but at the same time attempting to teach enduring lessons. He did not have to give Israel his law, or even care about them, but he did. What they were to realize, however, was that the law and all involved in it was but a teacher to lead them to Christ. As Jesus pointed out in John 5:38-39, they searched the scriptures because they rightly thought that eternal life was to be found there. It was to be found there for the scriptures pointed to Christ. The problem with too many of the

Jews was that they failed to see Jesus, and lived as if law-keeping per se was what God desired. Tragically, they were mistaken.

V. 20 — **they could not endure** — As Paul wrote in II Corinthians 3, the law came with glory, even if it was weak and temporary. The point our author is making is that even with the greatness present in it, the law did not evoke happiness but fear.

V. 21 — Moses, of whom few were even peers, was like those whom he was leading: afraid. He evidently saw what others did not, however, the fact that the law was doomed to be replaced. See II Corinthians 3:13.

V. 22 — **But you** — Christians have been ushered into the heavenly places, Ephesians 2:6, and enjoy in some senses the actual indwelling of God, John 14:23. Paul used a similar comparison in Galatians 4:21-31, pointing out there that Christians are sons of promise, free, whereas those who clung to the Mosaic institution were like Ishmael, slaves and in bondage.

angels in festal gathering — Consider the contrastive picture drawn: Judaism was gloom and fear, Christianity is happiness and festivity, etc.

V. 23 — **assembly of the first-born** — Reference is to Christians whose names are written down in the book of life, Philippians 4:3; Revelation 20:15. It is somewhat debatable if the reference is to all Christians in a future time, or to those who have died and gone to be with the Lord, Philippians 1:21-23; Revelation 14:13. In either case, the picture is one of good things happening, which ought to provide incentive for us.

judge . . . God — It is God with whom all have to do, 4:13, who is to judge those who pass through this life. As John says in Revelation 22:14, how happy will be the state of those who wash their robes in the blood of the lamb, for they alone will have access to the tree of life, and be allowed to enter the gates to the city, New Jerusalem, where God is waiting for them, Revelation 21:1-4.

spirits of just men made perfect — Descriptive of Christians (and all the faithful) who led obedient lives through discipline, and reaped the reward of sowing to the spirit rather than the flesh, Galatians 6:7-8, who endured and received the promise, 6:17; 11:33.

V. 24 — Most importantly, Christians are those who have placed their faith in Jesus and the covenant he represents, which is "new," one characterized by grace and peace and truth, John 1:17, and that replaced the "old" which came through Moses.

Abel — While Abel's faith in God spoke of God's willingness to reveal himself to man, and make it possible for men to trust in him, such hardly compares with all God has done for Christians, so much of which has been done in time and space. Christians in some ways live less by faith and more by sight than any who sojourned before Jesus came.

V. 25. — **See** — Another imperative among many in this chapter. The

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argument here is like that in 10:26-31 — if the Israelites were held responsible for the revelation they had, however poor it might be compared to the new revelation, how much more will it be so for Christians!

the one speaking — Harkening back to 1:1-2, God is speaking through Jesus, his son. If life is to be had, Christians must listen to Jesus, Matthew 17:5, not Moses or Elijah (who represented the Old Covenant).

V. 26 — God has made some promises to mankind that are conditional in nature, while others he has made are not so. This is one of those not conditional. The present world and all that is in it will pass away; I John 2:17, and be replaced by a new world, eternal in nature, righteous in character, II Peter 3:1-13. Since these things be so, it ill behooves any Christian to do aught but hold fast to that which Jesus has built.

V. 28 — **Therefore** — The church Jesus has built is the unshakeable kingdom, designed to last beyond this world and all its glory (including Judaism and that associated with it). Knowing these things, as Peter says, will cause Christians in all ages to live lives of holiness and godliness. Paul made comment in II Corinthians 4:16ff. that any slight momentary affliction, such as was then being endured by the readers of Hebrews, would simply be something to work for them an eternal reward, a home by God himself, II Cor. 5:1ff.

Always the scriptures are like this: first the cross (the life we are to lead and the demands of it), then the crown (the reward God has for those who obey faithfully). It is so in our total context — first the life to be lived, in the fear of a living God yet lived with confidence, always looking unto Jesus who represents the last and best that this world has to offer (all of these are “acceptable worship”), then the eternal home where God is, sharing in that which he has prepared for his own.

acceptable worship — Simply means a faithful life, such as those mentioned in ch. 11, or Jesus in 12:1-2. The scriptures use the word “worship” in a much broader sense than is generally true today, since the word is normally used to mean what is done in some building on Sunday. It rather means what is done throughout life, and intends a totally dedicated person who continually serves God. Let us so learn and so live!

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 24:

231. How does this lesson fit in with the previous lessons?
232. Have you listed in columns the phrases describing the Mosaic dispensation?
233. Why were the Israelites scared when the law was given?

234. Does Paul indicate that Moses could see the true nature of the law he was receiving?
235. In the text of II Corinthians 3, how does Paul describe the effect of the law upon the Jew — it is as a what?
236. Where is liberty, according to II Corinthians 3?
237. What were the comparisons Paul made in Galatians 4:21-31?
238. Who escaped God under the law?
239. What is to be removed, according to v. 27?
240. Who is the "us" in v. 28?
241. What should the privilege of receiving an unshakeable kingdom cause "us" to do, according to v. 28?
242. What added motivation to give acceptable worship is mentioned in v. 29?

Lesson Twenty-five

(13:1-6)

GODLY LIVING

13 Let brotherly love continue.² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.³ Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them; and those who are ill-treated, since you also are in the body.⁴ Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for God will judge the immoral and adulterous.⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never fail you nor forsake you."

⁶Hence we can confidently say,

"The Lord is my helper,
I will not be afraid;
what can man do to me?"

While some treat this section as sort of an "add-on" to the epistle, as the outline on page ix shows, it seems better to treat it as an integral part of the "duty" section of the book. Our lesson treatment divides up ch. 13 into two sections for convenience of study, not because the chapter is considered less related to the whole discussion than what

immediately precedes it. In fact, if the Christian is to be holy and godly in thought and deed, as the preceding lesson suggested, the various injunctions in this chapter are just as needful as any others that have been given. If we worship God acceptably, 12:28, it will have to be done in the context of things such as are in this text, and the rest of ch. 13. The permanence of the kingdom hinges upon who Jesus is, and 13:8 has something important to say on that point. So we begin this lesson with the thought in mind that God has spoken, 12:25, in his son, and part of that "speech" is here in 13:1-6.

13:1 — **Let . . . continue** — The Greek term is *μενέτω*, a present imperative, indicating both the importance and continuance of the action in mind, in this case, brotherly love.

brotherly love — The Greek term is *φιλαδελφία*, and is seen in our Philadelphia, an exact transliteration. Most people have heard preachers and teachers expound upon the merits of "agape" love, its "god-like" qualities, etc., the highest type of love, etc. While such statements may be good, no New Testament text can be quoted as so stating. What is true is that at least three Greek words for love are found in the New Testament pages, "agape" being one of them. Another is found in Romans 12:10, commonly translated as "love one another." Our particular term also is in 12:10, "brotherly affection." The Greek word in point is *φιλία* in its noun form, and occurs a great number of places in the New Testament scriptures, often in a compound form, as in Philemon, Philippians, etc. (It is in v. 5 of Hebrews 13, which see.) It is used of about every relationship that is to be had in one's Christian living, as well as God's love for people and Jesus, Jesus' love of people (like Lazarus and John). It is not of the frequency of occurrence of agape, but it is used many times in important ways, as in our text. No more important attitude can be maintained than love for one another.

V. 2 — **Do not neglect** — The same root word, *ἐπιλανθάνομαι*, was seen in 6:10 in regard to God, and will be seen in v. 16. It has the idea of forgetting, treating as unimportant. Ref. Mark 8:14; Luke 12:6; Philippians 3; 13; James 1:24; also Hebrews 13:16 for some other uses of it. Lack of hospitality is not to be true of the Christian, but rather the opposite is to be practiced. Consider some parallel texts in Romans 12:13 and Galatians 6:9-10. Abraham hastened to be hospitable and discovered that he had angels for visitors. Others in Bible history were treated in somewhat similar fashion.

V. 3 — **Remember** — The third imperative in a row, and all to be done throughout life. In that day as well as ours, the threat to be imprisoned was always present for Christians somewhere in the world. Hence, one is to remember like he would wish to be remembered (the golden rule, Matthew 7:12). Jesus taught that remembrance for brethren upon such

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occasions was the same as if done to him, Matthew 25:39-40. Recall Hebrews 10:34.

ill-treated — In 11:25, Moses chose such a set of circumstances when he chose by faith. Some of the others in faith's hall-of-fame had been treated thus, 11:37. We in America have been very blessed in this respect, but many others have not been so. Let us not grow either unappreciative or unconcerned!

V. 4 — Marriage is God's basic institution in this life. All through the Bible it has been held up for all to honor and esteem. While it is true that all did not honor it as God wished, it is nevertheless true that God hates divorce, Malachi 2:16. Moreover, the implication of Genesis 2:21-24 as brought out by Jesus in Matthew 19 is that man is to have only one wife, not many. Hence, the polygamy among people of the world, as among those of the Bible, was and is wrong. Those who treat marriage lightly, whoever, whenever, will incur God's wrath. It may be that the church will have to address itself to the problem of the divorced, the homosexual and others of like nature, all of which strikes at the marriage institution, but the church ought never to countenance such things as being anything but deviations from God's plans, and bad ones at that.

V. 5 — **Keep your life free** — The word here translated is *ἀφιλάργυρος*, composed of a negative prefix, the word for love, *φιλία*, and the word for money or silver. The disciplined person is not one who loves money, or the things it will buy. Rather, he depends wholly and solely upon God for what is needed, Matthew 6:19-33, and uses wisely what is placed within his hands. Many scriptures bear on this point, such as Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 12:41-44; Acts 4:32 — 5:11; II Corinthians 8 and 9; Philipians 4:11; I Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19; etc.

be content — Notice the same command in Luke 3:14; then II Corinthians 9:8; and Philipians 4:11 again. This really implies being satisfied with God though having nothing else. Anything more than God is extra, to be used and appreciated, but not to be cherished or coveted. The reason Christians can be so minded is in God's promise to always be with us, and never to leave us in the lurch. Reread the comments on 10:34 and 11:37, and read I Timothy 6:6-8.

V. 6 — Because God is dependable, the Christian's watchword is expressed in this verse. Confidence in God is the basis of great reward, 10:35. So often in other letters, Paul expressed the same sentiment, as in II Corinthians 4:16; 5:6-8; 6:3-10; Philipians 1:6, 19. The Christian may have to trust God to deliver even when all others fall away or make fun of what is considered "foolish" faith. It will be well to recall Daniel 3 and Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego, or the taunts thrown in Jesus' face as recorded in Matthew 27:41-43. However, if we be found faithful, it may well be with us even in this life as it was with those in Daniel 3,

who trusted a God who was able and had a great king admit that no other god could deliver in such a way, Daniel 3:28-29. Whether or not this takes place, Christians know that faithfulness until death is God's will, leaving it to God to make things right. Jesus set us the example in this area, too, I Peter 2:21-23. For some scriptures on this general topic, see Genesis 28:13-15; Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua 1:1-5; I Chronicles 28:20; Psalms 118:6.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 25:

243. Show the relevance of our lesson text to the Christian life.
244. Have you checked the outline of the whole book to see how this fits in?
245. List the commands contained in these verses (some are in the third person form, "Let . . .," or are passive in form, "be . . .").
246. Would brotherly love perhaps include hospitality and remembrance of prisoners?
247. Besides the church, what is God's basic unit within any society?
248. Have you considered what Paul teaches about marriage in Ephesians 5:21 — 6:4 and Colossians 3:18-21; or the instruction of Peter in I Peter 3:1-7?
249. Why do people flaunt God's instructions regarding marriage? Would it be because of the same reason the Jews did, as pointed out by Jesus in Matthew 19:8?
250. Whom did Jesus call a fool?
251. Does our text tell us how to keep from being a fool?
252. Is being God's child sufficient for you?

Lesson Twenty-six

(13:7-25)

LEADERS FOR LIFE.

7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever. ⁹Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings; for it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited their adherents. ¹⁰We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. ¹¹For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. ¹²So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. ¹³Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp, and bear the abuse he endured. ¹⁴For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come. ¹⁵Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. ¹⁶Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

17 Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let

them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you.

18 Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. 19 I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.

20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, 21 equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

22 I appeal to you, brethren, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. 23 You should understand that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. 24 Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. 25 Grace be with all of you. Amen.

The scriptures have much to say directly or by implication about the importance of leadership, or of following the right leader. God in various ways made himself known to his human creation, beginning with Adam. He spoke directly at times, as to Abel, Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Joshua. Beginning with the Mosaic law, he gave to the Jews a number of leaders besides himself to help them walk in the paths of righteousness. Late in the Mosaic period, he condemned some of Israel's leaders, called shepherds, because they had been entrusted with an important task and had miserably failed, Ezekiel 34. During the ministry of Jesus, he too warned the people against the Jewish leaders because they were not good examples to follow, Matthew 23:1ff. In the establishment of the Church, Jesus was to be the example all are to follow, but he also gave the church men as shepherds and overseers, 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. As the man is to lead in the home, the elders are to lead in the church. The apostles, divinely directed, served as the first human leaders, but God had to establish a permanent pattern, and thus gave the eldership to shepherd and instruct.

In our lesson text, leaders receive a special mention in v. 7 and 17, and Jesus is presented as the chief shepherd, vv. 20-21. It is doubtful if the leaders then present were apostles, but earlier leaders might have included an apostle. If Paul be the author of the letter, in some way this epistle would represent his leadership. However, the aim and intent of the instruction is about those who made up the congregation(s) at the time of writing, and those who were leading them.

We today are much like the first readers in that we too need good leadership, and we too need to follow good leadership. We are more

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fortunate than those early Christians in that we have access to much of God's revealed will in our Bible, at least that portion of his will which he thought necessary to write down and preserve. So we have both a greater privilege and a greater responsibility than they, in that we can more carefully study God's will to ascertain that which he would have us to do, in choosing good leaders and in keeping his will. May we do so!

13:7 — **Remember** — Another command to be continuously observed. The leaders in question probably were the ones who first spoke to them about Christianity, and led them into fellowship with Jesus. Their message was of salvation in Jesus, and their lives were lived in such a way that they were examples for the flock.

leaders — Note here I Thessalonians 5:12-13, as well as the more familiar texts in Timothy and Titus, and that in I Peter 5.

Much could be said about leadership in the church and its responsibility. These few observations will have to suffice: Jesus is the head and the authority, human leaders are neither. They are to lead by example and through teaching, but the authority is in Christ.

Even as Paul said, people were to imitate him only as he imitated Jesus, I Corinthians 11:1. Those who follow must consider carefully those whom they choose to lead them, and be willing to listen and follow in light of the above. As far as the congregation goes, where God's word has spoken, there is no room for question, no need for a decision. In this area, the church is not a democracy with power to legislate, etc. It is simply to obey. Some areas in which God has given no direction may be considered and acted upon as decided, either by the whole church, its chosen leaders, or whoever. One area where God has spoken little, if at all, is in the area of method. Hence, much of the church's methodology is a matter of indifference insofar as God's revealed will is concerned. In matters not doctrine, then, the local leadership may be vested by the group they serve to lead in such areas. And it may well be added that the New Covenant scriptures do not present any picture of some elder or elders ruling (There is no Greek word for "rule" in I Timothy 5:17. The idea is of "leading" or "guiding.") over any congregation or over areas, etc. While the apostles had authority for such things, no elders are pictured as having such. Notice too that we have presented elders, plural, not elder singular. It may be that some congregation has only one man who can serve in such a position, but the ideal is a plurality. No one man can be a model for all, and a group of men is more likely to lead well, Proverbs 11:14; 15:22.

V. 8 — **Jesus Christ** — In direct contrast to elders who come and go, and whose lives are often less than ideal, Jesus Christ abides forever, both as the example to follow and the authority to obey.

V. 9 — **Do not be led away** — The new is not always wrong, nor the

old always right, even in religion. However, God has spoken in his son, both finally and completely. Since this be so, no new revelation is to be expected other than what came in apostolic times. In the case of those early Christians, this verse implies that they had knowledge of Christianity and could compare any new or different doctrine presented to them against what they already possessed. Here they are encouraged to stay with what they have received from their former leaders who gave them the word of life.

foods — Those in Colosse had somewhat the same problem, Colossians 2:16ff. This may have had reference to Jewish customs with the foods that could/could not be eaten, or some other religious food of the day. Read the apostle's word on this in I Timothy 4:1-5. Local customs or taboos may enter in to what a Christian can do, but food in itself is clean, Romans 14:14. However, on some occasions it is still wrong to eat certain foods, either because of the people present, or that which the food represents. The whole section of Romans 14:1 — 15:13 and I Corinthians 8:1 — 11:1 relates to this point.

V. 10 — **We have an altar** — That is, we have Jesus and all that he represents. This is in special contrast to Judaism with its altar and what it represented.

V. 11 — Some sacrifices offered by Jews could be eaten by priests or people or both. It may have been that some of those early Christians had been Jews, and were being tempted by such things, or were being encouraged to become Jewish so that they could participate.

V. 12 — In distinction to the Jewish altar located in the temple area within the city of Jerusalem, Jesus was sacrificed outside the city, and represented a different system, not to be mixed with Judaism.

V. 13 — **bearing abuse** — The implication is here that pressure was either being exerted or would be exerted upon those first readers. In some communities, Jews were in positions of power, and could cause considerable trouble. Ref. Saul's mission to Damascus, and Acts 13, 14, 17, 21-24.

outside the camp — The expression in v. 12, "outside the gate," and here, "outside the camp," are clear statements that tell us Jesus was crucified outside the city of Jerusalem as it was then. The gospel accounts are not too clear in this regard.

V. 14 — **we seek the city** — Remembrance of 11:10; 14-16, and that in 12:18-29 is good here.

V. 15 — **Through him** — Jesus is to be the focal point of the Christian life. He is both our sacrifice and our high priest. Notice how carefully and continuously the author keeps the Christian way before the eyes of his readers.

sacrifice of praise — Here the sacrifice is to be the result of speaking

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(fruit of lips). While we use the word sacrifice almost exclusively to mean something above and beyond what is normally done, the Bible commonly uses it in both covenants to mean that which is commanded. The sacrifices in the Old Testament age were mostly what was expected. The sacrifice of one's whole life with all that is implied is what is expected of the Christian, Romans 12:1-2. We just need to keep working at using Bible terms in Bible ways.

acknowledge — From the Greek term *ὁμολογέω*, normally translated "confess." This acknowledgement is to be done throughout life rather than just "between repentance and immersion" as is commonly practiced. In fact, one's life until death is to be a public confession of the fact that he is Christian, for it ought to be with every Christian that for him to live is for Christ to live.

V. 16 — **Do not neglect** — Same form and meaning as in v. 2, with the same general import.

to share — Our familiar word *κοινωνία*, as in Acts 2:42 and Galatians 6:6. These are sacrifices that are to be a part of life, as long as one is Christian.

V. 17 — **Obey** — In the same sense that they speak God's word, and in contrast to any false teachers. See comments on v. 7. The "outcome" of their lives would be one reason for submission. A second reason would be that stated in this verse, that leadership involves responsibility, James 3:1, and it ill-behooves any Christian to fail to follow a godly leader in respect to things God has spoken. In other matters not doctrinal in nature, the issue is different. However, those chosen to lead the congregation as well as those being led should recognize the difference between doctrine and non-doctrine and act accordingly. Again, for leaders, it is not a matter of authority in matters of doctrine — they have none; but it is a matter of leadership, and the example of godly living that they can offer. (Note I Pet. 5:1-4 about elders and authority.)

The New Covenant scriptures represent rather clearly that elders are the overseers (bishops, presbyters, shepherds, etc.) of the congregation. This statement needs to be made in light of this truth and in conjunction with the above remarks. We do not find the unscriptural practice of some churches today, that of having a "pastor" who rules the elders (if any are allowed) and the congregation. The converse, as stated above, is true: the elders are to lead in every matter, the "pastor" and all else are to follow, with everyone recognizing that Jesus is the head and the only authority. He has placed elders as the leaders of each local congregation. If there is any "obedience" to be rendered, it is to Jesus. To those who have been selected to be elders, all must consider their teaching and examples. They do have positions of responsibility, if not positions of authority. They should be as shepherds who lead the sheep in the

right paths. (Even Jesus, as the "great shepherd" does not force the sheep, but leads them, Jn. 10:1ff.) As sheep, the example and teaching of the elders should be carefully and constantly considered.

In reference to our text, it needs to be said that the congregation evidently had good leaders, and they were to be followed as such. We should remember, too, that this epistle had authority from its inspiration, and as such had to be heeded. If any of the leaders had some special gift from God, such as prophecy, etc., in that respect, they were to be obeyed. The situation in the early years of the church, during the apostolic age, was considerably different than today. We have no apostles, but we do have the written word. We have leaders, but none with any authority, as indicated above. Thus, the understanding of our text and the application thereof is changed insofar as the situations are not parallel.

joyfully . . . sadly — The expressions would vary depending upon what each individual did. The leaders, however, would know the "outcome" of a faithful life or one not so, and the reaction would be accordingly.

V. 18 — These last verses, while a part of the concluding section according to the outline on page ix, are placed with this lesson because of their bearing on the lesson topic of leadership.

Pray for us — The author was apparently well-known to the readers, and seemingly in circumstances that were questionable in the eyes of some. If the author were Paul, many people would have found reason to question his sincerity or wisdom in the various things that he did or that happened to him. However, the author asserts that whatever was in question was such that he had no misgivings about it, but was in good conscience. It is worthy of note that Paul, prior to his conversion, in good conscience even killed Christians. Hence, it is entirely possible to be in good conscience and be condemned to hell. All of us must continually check our thinking and actions against the revealed will of God.

V. 19 — **May be restored** — Some sort of detainment was true for the author, whether it be prison or something else. We know only what is stated.

V. 20 — This verse has the only direct reference to the resurrection. Some suggest it is implied in 1:3; 6:19 and 12:2, where Jesus has died and has gone to be seated at the right hand of God. Of course, we read the implication in there — it is possible for one to die and go to heaven without having a bodily resurrection.

God of peace — God is the one who makes it possible to have a right relationship with him. He made the first move, not because we were worthy, but because he loved us.

the great shepherd — Jesus is presented as the shepherd above all others. The elders are to shepherd the flock, Acts 20:28, but only as God's Word directs. Jesus has been God's spokesman to the church, giving the

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directives for the flock, including the elders who shepherd.

eternal covenant — Much of this book of Hebrews has been on this point. We may be somewhat weary of the matter, but the author felt the need to emphasize once again how vast the distance between the Mosaic covenant, temporary and shadow, and the covenant in Christ, permanent and real.

V. 21 — **equip** — The sentence reads: “May God . . . equip you.” The idea of equip is to supply what is lacking, to prepare as fit. The Greek term *καρτίζω* is to be seen in 10:5 and 11:3, then in such texts as Matthew 4:21; 21:16; Mark 1:19; Luke 6:40; Romans 9:22; I Corinthians 1:10; II Corinthians 13:9, 11; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:12; I Thessalonians 3:10. A good text to read here is Philippians 2:13, then Ephesians 2:10.

through Jesus Christ — Again, the imperative point about being in Christ, and of allowing him to use us as he pleases. Let none be afraid to allow God in Christ to use their life — what better hands could one be in than God’s? As with Mary in Luke 1:38, whatever God desires to do with us, let us do, willingly, joyfully, thankfully. Now read Romans 16:25-27; Ephesians 3:20-21 and conclude with Jude, vv. 24-25.

V. 22 — **bear with** — Hold up and receive it, he means. It has been a masterful presentation of the best God has to offer: Christianity.

word of exhortation — The Greek is *λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως*. The first word is seen in John 1:1, etc. The last one is variously used to mean persuade, or exhort, as in Romans 12:1, 8; or in reference to the Holy Spirit, John 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:7.

briefly — It is not actually long, for it can be read in a short time. Much more could have been said, but the epistle is still clear and covers the subject adequately, yea, as God directed.

V. 23 — **Timothy** — Probably the one Bible readers know.

with whom — The author evidently believed that whatever was then a hindrance would be resolved, and he could accompany Timothy to the brethren.

V. 24 — **Greet** — Very much like Paul’s letters elsewhere, though it was common in letters of the day.

those . . . from Italy — It is not clear whether the people in question are in Italy, or are natives of Italy though in another place.

V. 25 — **Grace** — One of the great words of Christianity! It is God’s grace that makes Christianity what it is, for it came through Jesus Christ, John 1:17, and teaches us how to live, Titus 2:11-14, for in it we are to grow, II Peter 3:18. So, may grace be with all of you who read this!

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 26:

253. It would be good, one more time, to write out, by memory if possible, the outline of this whole book.

254. In thinking about leaders and followers, who primarily is the Christian's leader and who is to be followed?
255. How has God made it possible for Christians to know his will in Christ, and hence to follow it?
256. What would be one essential difference between the leaders in the Apostolic age and those in later years?
257. In what areas is the congregation not a democracy with the power to legislate?
258. How does the Bible use the word sacrifice? Give examples.
259. Why has repeated emphasis been given to Jesus as the great shepherd, to his own shed blood, and the eternal nature of the covenant through him?
260. Who equips Christians to do good works?

ἡ χάρις μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν



WALLACE WARTICK

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