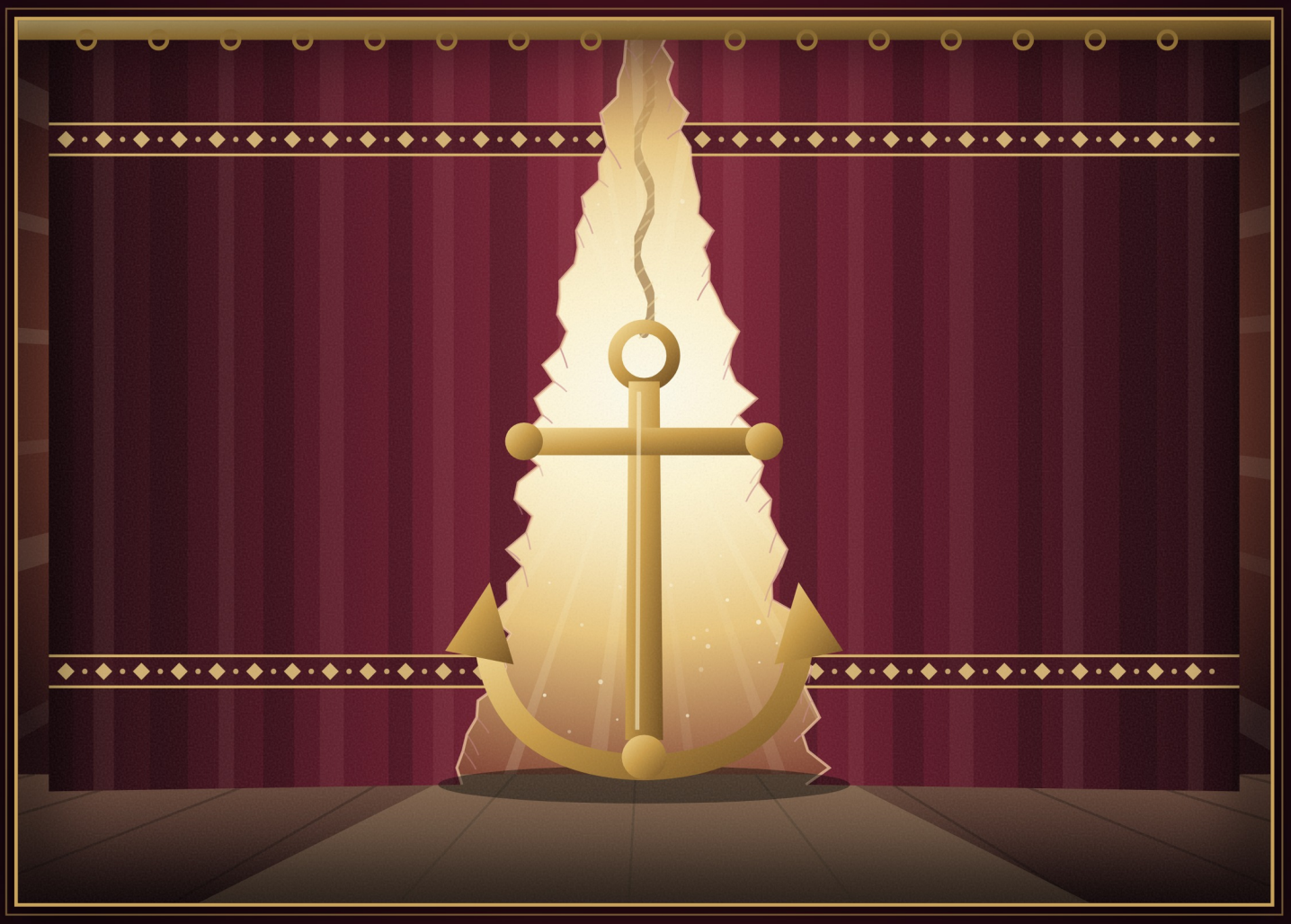
HEBREWS

BIBLE STUDY

A Verse-by-Verse Study



A better hope, a better covenant,
and a High Priest who lives forever

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Hebrews Bible Study

A Verse-by-Verse Study

Andrew Dominguez

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Hebrews Bible Study: A Verse-by-Verse Study

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A note before you begin. This book is written to teach the Bible and encourage faith. It shares my understanding of Scripture and is offered for study and spiritual growth. It is not counseling, medical, legal, or financial advice. If you are facing a crisis, a health problem, or a legal or money problem, please reach out to a qualified professional as well as your pastor and church family. To the fullest extent the law allows, Andrew Dominguez, Trinfinity Enterprises, and Andrew Dominguez's heirs, estate, successors, and assigns accept no liability for how this material is used.

A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Study

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this study direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

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Introduction

Welcome, and thank you for taking the time to work through this verse-by-verse study of the book of Hebrews. My purpose in writing this study guide is the same as it was for my study of Revelation: to bring you closer to our Creator and to give you a way to grow in your Christian walk.

Hebrews is a letter to believers who were tired and under pressure, and some of them were thinking about going back. In thirteen chapters the writer shows them, one step at a time, that Jesus is better than everything they would be going back to. He is better than the angels, better than Moses, and a better High Priest than Aaron, with a better covenant and a better sacrifice. I do not claim to be an authority on the Bible or on Hebrews. I am simply someone like you who wants to grow closer to God and understand what He has given us in His Son. Before you read any part of this book, or any part of Scripture, I ask that you pray, asking God:

- For the Holy Spirit to be present, to help open your eyes and your heart (Psalm 119:18, 119:105)
- For discernment and knowledge (Psalm 119:66, James 1:5)

2 Timothy 2:15 (SLB)

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker not needing to be ashamed, cutting straight the word of truth."

The Bible is God's Word to us (2 Timothy 3:16), given for training in righteousness. If we cannot understand what it says, we cannot apply it to our lives or help build God's kingdom.

So how do we go about understanding God's Word?

The first rule is context. You may have heard the saying "Context is King," but what does that mean? Every word, sentence, and passage helps explain the ones around it. Before we read any passage, we should ask a few simple questions: Who wrote it? Who was it written to? What came right before it? Knowing the answers gives us a clearer picture of what God is saying, both in general and to each of us personally.

Context matters a great deal in Hebrews. The writer calls his letter "the word of exhortation" (13:22), and it reads like a sermon written down. He teaches, and then he stops to warn and encourage, and then he teaches again. Those warnings (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:26-39; 12:14-29) only make sense when we read them in their place, as part of the writer's argument, written to people who knew the Old Testament well. The letter is also full of the tabernacle (the tent where Israel worshiped God in the wilderness), the priests, and the sacrifices of the Law of Moses. If we skip over those things because they seem old and strange, we will miss the point. The writer uses them to show us what Jesus did and why it was enough.

Exegesis, Eisegesis, and Hermeneutics

People typically interpret the Bible using one of two methods, Exegesis or Eisegesis. Both are explained below, along with a third word, Hermeneutics. Sometimes people use both methods to "make their case" for the interpretation they want. These definitions are based on www.merriam-webster.com, with my own notes added.

Exegesis means explaining a text, especially a passage of Scripture. Exegesis is reading and interpreting the full text of a passage, and drawing out what it is actually saying.

Eisegesis means reading your own ideas into a text. This happens when we try to find something in the text that really isn't there. It can lead to many errors, especially when we bring assumptions to a passage that aren't actually in it. This method can be used to justify a behavior, position, or belief that goes against what the text originally meant.

Hermeneutics is the study of the principles used to interpret a text, such as the Bible. "Hermeneutics" and "Exegesis" are sometimes used to mean the same thing. The difference is that Exegesis is the work of explaining a passage, while Hermeneutics is the set of principles that guides that work. In Biblical Hermeneutics, the Bible should be read literally unless the text itself gives us a different meaning.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (SLB)

"16 Every Scripture ***is*** God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training which ***is*** in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work."

This passage tells us plainly that the writers of Scripture were inspired by God. Every passage in the Bible came from God and was written down by man. These are not fairy tales or made-up stories. They are God's own breath, given to us so we can be equipped and ready to do good work.

Because every word was inspired and breathed by God, I believe we must let God's Word interpret itself. We must study the Bible using Exegesis, drawing out what the text says, guided by sound Biblical Hermeneutics.

We should study God's Word using the Golden Rule of Interpretation, as Dr. David L. Cooper stated it:

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

(http://www.biblicalresearch.info/page55.html)

I read the Bible as it is written. Hebrews quotes the Old Testament again and again, and it treats every word of it as the voice of God and the Holy Spirit (1:5-13; 3:7; 10:15). This study takes the

writer at his word: Jesus really is God the Son who became a real man, He really did offer Himself once for all, He really is in heaven now praying for His people, and He really will appear a second time.

This study uses the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB) unless I note otherwise. To better understand the original Greek, I also used The Interlinear Bible (Jay P. Green Sr., ISBN 1-56563-977-4).

Hebrews usually quotes the Old Testament from the Greek translation the readers knew, so its words can differ from the Old Testament in the SLB, which is translated from the Hebrew. The meaning is the same.

How This Study Is Laid Out

Each chapter of this study follows the same pattern as my study of Revelation:

- Scripture: the full text of the chapter, broken into sections, so you can read it straight through first.
- Preview: a short look at what the chapter covers.
- Study: the chapter again, verse by verse, with my notes on what each verse says and what it means for us.
- Summary: the main points of the chapter in a few lines.
- Study Questions: questions for personal study or a small group, from simple fact questions to questions about how we live. Some of them are personal. In a group, no one should ever have to answer one aloud, and what is shared in the group stays there.
- Old and New Testament links: after many verses you will find a short line in small type that lists the places where the other Testament quotes, fulfills, pictures, or echoes that passage. "Quoted" means the New Testament quotes the Old Testament words. "Fulfilled" means the New Testament tells us a prophecy or promise came true. "Pictured" means the New Testament itself points to an Old Testament person, event, or object as a picture of Christ. "Alluded to" means a clear echo in shared words or pictures. Every link is listed again in a table at the back of the book.

Using This Study With a Group

This study works for one person or for a group. Here are two ways a group can pace it:

- One chapter a week: thirteen weeks, about one quarter of a year. If you like, add a first meeting to read the Introduction and the Background together.
- One Scripture part a week: most chapters are printed in two or three Scripture parts, and the start of each part is a natural place to stop. This pace takes about six months and gives the heavy chapters, such as 7, 9, 10 and 11, the time they need. Short chapters such as 5 and 8 can be taken in one meeting.

For each meeting, I suggest reading the Scripture out loud together first, straight through, before anyone comments. Then walk through the Study section, stopping where the group has questions, and finish with the Study Questions and prayer. The first questions in each list can be

answered from the text. The later ones are more personal, and no one should feel pressed to answer them aloud.

Some parts of Hebrews are hard. The warning passages (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:26-39; 12:14-29) have been read in different ways by good Bible teachers, and some people in your group may be afraid that they have gone too far from God to come back. The study gives the main views fairly and also points to the promises the writer puts right beside the warnings (6:9-20; 7:25; 10:14). Chapter 11 speaks of believers who were tortured and killed for their faith, and chapter 12 speaks of God's discipline of His children, which can stir up painful memories for anyone who was treated harshly by a parent. If you lead a group, read those sections ahead of time and be ready to listen. If someone shares something that puts them or another person in danger, help them get help right away.

I look forward to walking with you through the book of Hebrews. If you'd like to share feedback, please email me at andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.

May God bless you and your time studying and getting to know Him better.

Overview of Hebrews

Hebrews is the nineteenth book of the New Testament. It sits between Philemon and James. It comes right after Paul's thirteen letters and right before the letters of James, Peter, John, and Jude. Unlike most of the letters, it does not open with the writer's name or a greeting. It begins with God Himself, speaking.

The theme of Hebrews is that God's last and greatest word to us is His Son, and that the Son is better than everything that came before Him. The word better shows up again and again: a better hope (7:19), a better covenant (7:22; 8:6), better promises (8:6), better sacrifices (9:23), a better possession (10:34), a better country (11:16), and a better resurrection (11:35). The old things were not bad. God gave them. But they were shadows, and Jesus is the real thing they pointed to. The letter opens with its theme:

Hebrews 1:1-2 (SLB)

"In many portions and in many ways God, having spoken long ago to the fathers in the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us in a Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the ages;"

Because the Son is so much greater, the writer keeps calling his readers to hold on. Do not drift away. Do not harden your hearts. Go on to maturity. Draw near and hold fast. Run the race, looking to Jesus. The teaching and the warnings go together all the way through.

Hebrews has 13 chapters and 303 verses. Here is its structure:

Part One: The Son Is Better Than the Prophets and the Angels (chapters 1 and 2)

- Chapter 1: God Has Spoken in His Son
- Chapter 2: Do Not Drift Away

Part Two: The Son Is Better Than Moses and Joshua (chapters 3 and 4)

- Chapter 3: Greater Than Moses
- Chapter 4: A Rest for the People of God

Part Three: The Son Is Our Better High Priest (chapters 5 to 7)

- Chapter 5: Our Great High Priest
- Chapter 6: Go On to Maturity
- Chapter 7: A Priest Like Melchizedek

Part Four: A Better Covenant and a Better Sacrifice (chapters 8 to 10)

- Chapter 8: A Better Covenant
- Chapter 9: Once for All by His Own Blood
- Chapter 10: Draw Near and Hold Fast

Part Five: The Life of Faith (chapters 11 to 13)

- Chapter 11: The Hall of Faith
- Chapter 12: Run the Race, Looking to Jesus
- Chapter 13: Love, Worship, and the Great Shepherd

Background of the Book

Author: Hebrews does not name its writer. We know he was a man (the word for telling in 11:32 is masculine in Greek), that he knew Timothy (13:23), and that he heard the gospel from those who had heard the Lord Himself (2:3). Over the centuries many names have been suggested. Paul is the oldest suggestion, and some early churches in the east placed Hebrews among Paul's letters. Others have suggested Barnabas, a Levite who was called "son of encouragement" (Acts 4:36), Luke, Paul's companion and a careful writer of Greek, and Apollos, a Jewish believer from Alexandria who was "mighty in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24). Some have named Silas, Priscilla, or others. Those who doubt that Paul wrote it point out that the Greek is different from his letters, that Paul always gives his name, and that Paul said he received the gospel straight from Jesus (Galatians 1:11-12), while this writer says it was confirmed to him by others (2:3). An early church teacher named Origen (about A.D. 185-254) is remembered, through the church historian Eusebius, for saying that only God knows who wrote it. That is still the honest answer. The letter's place in Scripture has never depended on knowing his name. The church received it because it teaches the same Christ the apostles preached.

Who it was written to: The title To the Hebrews was added early, and the letter itself fits that title well. The readers were Jewish believers who knew the Law of Moses, the priests, and the sacrifices, and the writer argues from the Old Testament on almost every page. They had been believers for some time (5:12). In their early days they had suffered for Christ, lost property, and stood by those in prison (10:32-34). But they had not yet faced death for their faith (12:4). Now they were growing tired, some had stopped meeting with the other believers (10:25), and some were tempted to turn back to the old system of the temple and its sacrifices to escape pressure and shame. Scripture does not tell us where they lived. Some think of Jerusalem or Judea, close to the temple. Others think of Rome, because the writer sends greetings from "Those from Italy" (13:24), and an early letter from the church in Rome, known as 1 Clement and usually dated about A.D. 95, uses words from Hebrews.

When it was written: Hebrews was most likely written before A.D. 70, and the letter itself points that way. The writer speaks of the priests and their sacrifices as still going on (8:4; 10:1-2, 11). If the temple had already been destroyed, as it was by the Romans in A.D. 70, it is hard to believe he would not have mentioned it, since it would have proved his point. Timothy had just been released from some kind of arrest (13:23). Most who hold this view date the letter in the 60s A.D. Some scholars date it later, in the 80s or 90s, and point out that the writer speaks of the tabernacle in the wilderness, not of the temple in Jerusalem. Scripture does not give the date.

The better theme: The writer compares Jesus to the great persons and things of the old covenant and shows that He is better in every case. He is better than the prophets (1:1-3), better than the angels (1:4-2:18), better than Moses (3:1-6), and better than Joshua, who could not give Israel the true rest (4:8). He is a better High Priest than Aaron (5:1-10; 7:1-28), with a better covenant (8:6-13), a better tabernacle in heaven (9:11, 24), and a better sacrifice, His own blood, offered once for all (9:12-14; 10:10-14). Going back to the shadows would mean leaving the real thing.

The warning passages: Five times the writer stops his teaching to warn his readers (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:26-39; 12:14-29). These are some of the most debated passages in the New Testament. Bible teachers who love the Lord read them in four main ways. Some believe they speak to true believers who are in danger of losing reward and facing God's discipline, not of losing salvation. Some believe they speak to people in the church who professed faith but never truly believed, and who were in danger of turning away for good. Some believe they teach that a true believer can turn away and lose salvation. And some believe the writer describes something that would happen only if a believer could fall away, to show how serious it is, while he is confident it will not happen to his readers (6:9). I give these views fairly at each warning and do not press one of them. What all of them agree on is that the writer means the warnings to be taken seriously, and that he puts strong promises right beside them (6:9-20; 7:25; 10:14, 39).

Purpose: The writer wants his readers to see how great Jesus is, so that they will hold fast to Him and not turn back. He calls his letter "the word of exhortation" (13:22). He wants them to draw near to God through Jesus (4:16; 10:22), to keep meeting and encouraging each other (10:24-25), to endure hard times as God's children (12:1-11), and to live lives of love, purity, and worship (13:1-16).

Chapter 1: God Has Spoken in His Son

Scripture

1:1-14 In many portions and in many ways God, having spoken long ago to the fathers in the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us in a Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the ages; who, being ***the*** radiance of the glory and ***the*** exact representation of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, having made purification of our sins through Himself, sat down at ***the*** right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say, "You are My Son; today I have begotten You"? And again, "I will be to Him a Father, and He will be to Me a Son"? And when He again brings the Firstborn into the world, He says, "And let all ***the*** angels of God worship Him." And regarding the angels He says, "He who makes His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire." But to the Son: "Your throne, O God, ***is*** to the age of the age; a scepter of uprightness ***is*** the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; because of this God, Your God, has anointed You with ***the*** oil of exultation above Your companions." And: "You, Lord, in ***the*** beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are ***the*** works of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they all will grow old like a garment, and like a robe You will roll them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail." But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet"? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth for service for the sake of those who are about to inherit salvation?

Chapter 1 Preview

Hebrews does not open with a greeting or the writer's name. It opens with God. God spoke in the past through the prophets, in many pieces and many ways. Now He has spoken His final word in His Son. In four verses the writer tells us who the Son is: the heir of all things, the One through whom God made the ages, the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, the One who holds all things together, who made purification for our sins, and who then sat down at God's right hand.

Then the writer shows that the Son is far greater than the angels. His readers knew that angels had a part in giving the Law at Sinai, and they held them in high honor. The writer strings together seven Old Testament quotations to prove his point. God never called an angel His Son. The angels worship the Son. The Son is called God, and His throne lasts forever. He made the earth and the heavens, and He never changes. He sits at God's right hand, while the angels are servants sent out to help those who will inherit salvation.

Chapter 1 Study

1:1 *In many portions and in many ways God, having spoken long ago to the fathers in the prophets,*

"In many portions and in many ways God, having spoken long ago to the fathers in the prophets." The first word of the letter in English is about the past, but the first subject is God. God is a God who speaks. He did not leave people to guess about Him.

He spoke "in many portions." He gave His truth a piece at a time, over more than a thousand years, to Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many others. He spoke "in many ways": through visions, dreams, laws, songs, history, and even the acted-out sermons of the prophets. "The fathers" are the ancestors of Israel.

Notice that the writer does not run down the Old Testament. It was God speaking. But it was not the whole story yet. Every piece was pointing forward to Someone.

1:2 *has in these last days spoken to us in a Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the ages;*

"Has in these last days spoken to us in a Son." Here is the contrast. Then, through the prophets. Now, in a Son. The words "these last days" mean the age that began when Jesus came. The Old Testament looked ahead to "the latter part of the days" as the time of the Messiah (Isaiah 2:2), and Peter said on the day of Pentecost that the last days had come (Acts 2:16-17). The writer says that time has come.

The Greek has no word the before Son. The writer is stressing what kind of messenger this is. God has spoken in One who is a Son, not a servant. A prophet carried God's word. The Son is God's Word (John 1:1, 14).

He is the "heir of all things." Everything belongs to Him by right. And He is the One "through whom also He made the ages." The Son was not made. He was there at the beginning, and the Father made everything through Him (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). The word ages covers the whole universe and all its history.

1:3 *who, being **the** radiance of the glory and **the** exact representation of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, having made purification of our sins through Himself, sat down at **the** right hand of the Majesty on high,*

This is one of the strongest verses in the Bible about who Jesus is. "Being the radiance of the glory." Radiance is the brightness that shines out from a light. You cannot have the sun without its light. The Son is the shining out of God's own glory. He did not borrow it. It is His by nature.

"The exact representation of His substance." The Greek word is charakter, the mark a stamp leaves pressed into wax or metal. The image matches the stamp exactly. "Substance" means God's very being, what He really is. If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus (John 14:9). The Son is not a lesser god or a created being. He is fully God.

"Upholding all things by the word of His power." He did not make the world and walk away. He holds it together right now (Colossians 1:17).

"Having made purification of our sins through Himself." The Creator became the sacrifice. That is the heart of the whole letter. And then He "sat down." The priests in the temple never sat down, because their work was never done (10:11). Jesus sat down because His work was finished, at "the right hand of the Majesty on high," the place of highest honor.

Old Testament links: Psalm 110:1 (alluded to)

1:4 *having become so much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.*

"Having become so much better than the angels." This is the first use of the word better, and it runs all through the letter. Why does the writer say the Son became better, when He is God? He is speaking of the Son as the One who came down, became a man, died, rose, and was exalted (Philippians 2:8-11). As the risen Man, He has been raised above all the angels.

"As He has inherited a more excellent name than they." The name is the next verse's name: Son. Angels are sometimes called sons of God as a group in the Old Testament, but God never said to any one of them what He said to the Messiah. Why talk about angels at all? Jewish teachers held that angels had a part in giving the Law at Sinai (2:2; Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19). If the Son is above the angels, then the message He brought is above the Law they helped deliver.

1:5 *For to which of the angels did He ever say, "You are My Son; today I have begotten You"? And again, "I will be to Him a Father, and He will be to Me a Son"?*

The writer proves his point from Scripture, and he starts with two quotes. The first quotes Psalm 2:7: "You are My Son; today I have begotten You." In Psalm 2 the nations rage against the LORD and His Anointed, and God answers by setting His King on Zion. Paul applied the today of this psalm to the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 13:33). The words do not mean the Son had a beginning. They speak of God openly declaring and setting His Son on the throne.

The second quotes 2 Samuel 7:14, God's promise to David about his royal son: "I will be to Him a Father, and He will be to Me a Son." Solomon was the first fulfillment, but the promise of a throne forever (2 Samuel 7:16) finds its full meaning only in Jesus, the Son of David. The question is simple. "For to which of the angels did He ever say" this? The answer is none.

Old Testament links: Psalm 2:7 (quoted); 2 Samuel 7:14 (quoted); 1 Chronicles 17:13 (quoted)

1:6 *And when He again brings the Firstborn into the world, He says, "And let all **the** angels of God worship Him."*

"And when He again brings the Firstborn into the world." "Firstborn" here does not mean the first one created. In the Bible the firstborn son held the place of honor and the right to inherit. God said He would make David's son His "firstborn," the highest of the kings of the earth (Psalm 89:27). Jesus is Firstborn in rank.

The word again can be read with brings, pointing to Christ's return to the earth in glory, or it can simply begin another quote. Both readings are held by good teachers. If it points to His return, the picture is the day He comes back to reign, when every angel will worship Him.

The quote, "And let all the angels of God worship Him," is found in the Greek Old Testament of Deuteronomy 32:43, and the same idea is in Psalm 97:7. Angels refuse worship for themselves (Revelation 22:8-9). They worship the Son, because He is God.

Old Testament links: Psalm 97:7 (alluded to)

1:7 *And regarding the angels He says, "He who makes His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire."*

"He who makes His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire." The writer is quoting Psalm 104:4. The psalm praises God for His works in creation, the wind, the fire, the light. God uses His angels the way He uses the wind and fire. They are mighty, and they are fast, but they are servants. God makes them. They are created beings, and He sends them where He wills.

Set this verse next to the next one. To the angels He says, You are My servants. To the Son He says, Your throne, O God. The contrast could hardly be sharper. An angel is a messenger and a minister. The Son is the King.

Old Testament links: Psalm 104:4 (quoted)

1:8-9 *But to the Son: "Your throne, O God, **is** to the age of the age; a scepter of uprightness **is** the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; because of this God, Your God, has anointed You with **the** oil of exultation above Your companions."*

"Your throne, O God, is to the age of the age." The writer is quoting Psalm 45:6-7, a royal wedding song. The writer says God the Father speaks these words to the Son, and in them He calls the Son God. This is one of the clearest places in the New Testament where Jesus is called God. His throne is "to the age of the age," a Greek way of saying forever.

His rule is good: "a scepter of uprightness." A scepter is the rod a king held as a sign of his authority. His kingdom is run by what is right. "You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness." Jesus did that perfectly in His life on earth.

Then the psalm says, "God, Your God, has anointed You." So the Son is called God, and yet He has a God, the Father. That is not a contradiction. It is the Trinity: one God in three Persons, and the Son, as the Messiah and as a man, honors His Father. "The oil of exultation above Your companions" speaks of the joy God pours on His anointed King, above every other king.

Old Testament links: Psalm 45:6-7 (quoted)

1:10-12 *And: "You, Lord, in **the** beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are **the** works of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they all will grow old like a garment, and like a robe You will roll them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail."*

"You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth." The writer is quoting Psalm 102:25-27. In the psalm these words are spoken to the LORD, the God of Israel. The writer says they are spoken of the Son. So the Son is the Lord who made the earth and the heavens.

Then comes a contrast between the creation and its Creator. "They will perish, but You remain." The world we see looks solid, but it is getting old, like clothes that wear out. One day He will roll it up like a robe and change it (2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1). "But You are the same, and Your years will not fail." The Son does not age and does not change. The writer will say it again near the end: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (13:8).

Why does that matter to us? Everything around us changes. Jobs, health, and friends come and go. The One we trust does not.

Old Testament links: Psalm 102:25-27 (quoted)

1:13 *But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet"?*

"But to which of the angels has He ever said" these words: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet"? This is Psalm 110:1, the Old Testament verse quoted most often in the New. Jesus used it Himself to show that the Messiah is more than David's son. He is David's Lord (Matthew 22:41-46).

To sit at the right hand is to share the throne. In the ancient world a conquered king was sometimes made to lie down so the victor could put his foot on his neck. A footstool means total victory. Jesus is seated now, and He is waiting for the day when every enemy is put down (10:12-13; 1 Corinthians 15:25). No angel was ever told to sit on God's throne.

Old Testament links: Psalm 110:1 (quoted)

1:14 *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth for service for the sake of those who are about to inherit salvation?*

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth for service." The answer to the question is yes. Every angel, even the mighty ones, is a servant. They do not sit. They are "sent forth." God sends them out to serve.

And look at who they serve: "those who are about to inherit salvation." That is God's people. The angels serve the Son, and they serve us for His sake. Scripture shows angels protecting, guiding, and delivering God's people (Psalm 91:11; Acts 12:7-11). We are not told to pray to them or worship them. We are told that the God who sends them cares for us.

"About to inherit salvation" looks ahead. We have been saved, and one day we will receive the whole of what salvation means, when Jesus comes for His own.

Chapter 1 Summary

God spoke to Israel in the past through the prophets, in many pieces and many ways, but now He has spoken in His Son. The Son is the heir of all things and the One through whom God made the ages. He is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, and He holds all things together. He made purification for sins and sat down at God's right hand, becoming far better than the angels. Seven Old Testament quotes prove it. God called Him Son. The angels worship Him. The angels are servants made like wind and fire, but the Son is called God, with a throne that lasts forever. He laid the foundation of the earth, and He stays the same while creation wears out. He sits at God's right hand until His enemies are made His footstool, while the angels are sent out to serve those who will inherit salvation.

Chapter 1 Study Questions

1. How did God speak in the past, and how has He spoken now? (1:1-2)

2. List the things 1:2-3 tells us about the Son. Which one stands out to you most?

3. What does it mean that the Son is the "exact representation" of God's substance? (1:3)

4. Why is it important that Jesus "sat down" after He made purification for sins? (1:3; compare 10:11-12)

5. Why do you think the writer spends so much time showing that the Son is greater than the angels? (1:4-14)

6. What does 1:8 tell us about who Jesus is?

7. How are the angels described in 1:7 and 1:14, and what does that tell us about their role?

8. Psalm 102 is quoted in 1:10-12. What does it say about the Son compared to the world He made?

9. Where are you tempted to put your trust in something that will wear out? How does 1:12 help you?

10. If God's final word to us is His Son, how much time do you spend listening to Him in His Word?

Chapter 2: Do Not Drift Away

Scripture

2:1-9 Because of this we must give heed more abundantly to the things which have been heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels was firm, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how will we escape, having neglected so great a salvation, which, having received a beginning by being spoken through the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard, God bearing witness with ***them***, both by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by distributions of ***the*** Holy Spirit according to His will? For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we speak. But someone has solemnly testified somewhere, saying, "What is man, that You are mindful of him, or a son of man, that You care for him? You made him a little lower than ***the*** angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and appointed him over the works of Your hands; You put all things in subjection under his feet." For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing unsubjected to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we see Him who was made a little lower than ***the*** angels, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by ***the*** grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

2:10-18 For it was fitting for Him, because of whom ***are*** all things and through whom ***are*** all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make perfect the founder of their salvation through sufferings. For both the One who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified ***are*** all of one; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, "I will declare Your name to My brothers; in ***the*** midst of ***the*** assembly I will sing praise to You." And again, "I will be trusting in Him." And again, "Look, I and the children whom God has given Me." Since therefore the children have shared in flesh and blood, He Himself also likewise partook of the same, so that through death He might render powerless the one who holds the power of death, that is, the devil, and might set free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery throughout all ***their*** life. For surely He does not take hold of angels, but He takes hold of ***the*** seed of Abraham. Therefore He was obligated to be made like the brothers in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, having been tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.

Chapter 2 Preview

Chapter 2 opens with the first of the five warnings in Hebrews. If the Son is greater than the angels, then His message is greater than the Law the angels helped deliver. Israel was punished when it broke the Law. How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? The danger the writer names here is not a sudden rebellion. It is a slow drift, like a boat slipping away from the dock when no one is paying attention.

Then the writer turns to Psalm 8. God made man to rule over His creation, but we do not see that yet. What we do see is Jesus, made for a little while lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because He suffered death for everyone. The rest of the chapter explains why He had to

become a real man. He shares our flesh and blood so that through His death He could break the devil's power and set free those who lived in fear of death. He was made like His brothers in every way, so that He could be a merciful and faithful High Priest, and because He suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help us when we are tempted.

Chapter 2 Study

2:1 *Because of this we must give heed more abundantly to the things which have been heard, lest we drift away.*

"Because of this." Because the Son is so much greater than the angels, as chapter 1 showed, "we must give heed more abundantly to the things which have been heard." The writer includes himself. He says we, not you.

"Lest we drift away." The Greek word was used of a ship drifting past the harbor, or of something slipping away, like a ring off a finger. Drifting does not take any effort. You simply stop paying attention. No one wakes up one morning and decides to walk away from Christ. More often a believer stops reading God's Word, stops praying, stops meeting with other believers, and slowly floats away. The answer is to pay close attention to what we have heard.

2:2 *For if the word spoken through angels was firm, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense,*

"For if the word spoken through angels was firm." This is the Law given at Mount Sinai. The Old Testament does not give us all the details, but Stephen and Paul both say angels had a part in delivering it (Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19), and Deuteronomy 33:2 speaks of the LORD coming from Sinai with His holy ones.

That Law was firm. It stood, and it was enforced. "Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense." A transgression is stepping over a line. Disobedience here is refusing to listen. Israel learned that God meant what He said. The punishment always fit the sin. That is what "just recompense" means.

2:3 *how will we escape, having neglected so great a salvation, which, having received a beginning by being spoken through the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard,*

"How will we escape, having neglected so great a salvation?" This is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If the message brought by angels carried such weight, how much more the message brought by the Son?

Notice the word "neglected." The writer does not say rejected or attacked. Many people will be lost not because they fought against the gospel but because they simply never took it seriously. That is a sobering word for anyone who has grown up around the gospel.

This salvation "received a beginning by being spoken through the Lord." Jesus Himself first preached it. Then it "was confirmed to us by those who heard," the apostles and others who heard

Jesus. The writer counts himself among those who received it from them, which is one reason many think he was not Paul.

2:4 *God bearing witness with **them**, both by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by distributions of **the** Holy Spirit according to His will?*

"God bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and various miracles." God backed up the preaching of the apostles. Signs point to something beyond themselves. Wonders make people stop and stare. Miracles are works of power. Acts is full of them (Acts 2:43; 5:12; 14:3).

And God gave "distributions of the Holy Spirit according to His will." The Spirit gives gifts as He chooses (1 Corinthians 12:11). Whether all these sign gifts continue in the same way today is a question Bible teachers answer differently, but the point here is plain. The gospel did not rest on the word of men alone. God Himself confirmed it.

Here is the first warning in Hebrews. Who is in danger, and what is the danger? Bible teachers read the warnings in four main ways. Some say they speak to true believers who could drift and face God's discipline and loss of reward. Some say they speak to people in the church who heard the gospel but never truly received it. Some say a true believer could drift so far as to lose salvation. And some say the writer describes what would happen if such a thing were possible, to stir his readers up. What every view agrees on is that the gospel is too great to neglect.

2:5 *For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we speak.*

"For He did not subject to angels the world to come." The writer comes back to the angels. God has not put the coming world under their rule. "The world to come" is the age when Christ reigns, when the kingdom promised in the prophets fills the earth.

"Concerning which we speak." The writer has been speaking of it all along, in the Son who is heir of all things (1:2) and who waits until His enemies become His footstool (1:13). The future does not belong to the angels. It belongs to the Son, and, as the next verses show, to the people He brings with Him.

2:6-8 *But someone has solemnly testified somewhere, saying, "What is man, that You are mindful of him, or a son of man, that You care for him? You made him a little lower than **the** angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and appointed him over the works of Your hands; You put all things in subjection under his feet." For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing unsubjected to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.*

"But someone has solemnly testified somewhere." The writer is not unsure where the quote comes from. He is simply stressing what was said rather than who said it. He is quoting Psalm 8:4-6, a psalm of David.

"What is man, that You are mindful of him?" David looked at the night sky and felt small. Why would the God who made the stars think about us? And yet God made man "a little lower than the angels" and crowned him "with glory and honor," and put "all things in subjection under his

feet." In Genesis 1:26-28 God gave man rule over the earth. That was the plan. A "son of man" here means a human being.

"For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing unsubjected to him." God's plan for man was complete. Nothing was to be left out. "But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him."

That is honest. Look around. Man does not rule the world the way God first intended. Sin broke it (Genesis 3:17-19). Thorns grow, storms destroy, diseases kill, and we cannot even rule ourselves. Is the psalm wrong, then? No. Notice the word yet. God's plan has not failed. It is waiting for the One who will fulfill it, as the next verse shows.

Old Testament links: Psalm 8:4-6 (quoted)

2:9 *But we see Him who was made a little lower than **the** angels, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by **the** grace of God He might taste death for everyone.*

"But we see Him." We do not yet see man ruling all things. But we do see Jesus. This is the first time the name Jesus appears in the letter, and the writer puts it right at the end of the phrase in Greek for weight.

He "was made a little lower than the angels." When the Son became a man, He took the lower place that Psalm 8 gives to man. He was "crowned with glory and honor" because He suffered death. He is the Man who fulfills Psalm 8. What Adam lost, Jesus won back, and one day He will share His rule with His people (Revelation 20:4-6).

Why did He do it? "So that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone." To taste death means to really die, to experience it fully. He did it by grace, not because we deserved it, and He did it for everyone.

Old Testament links: Psalm 8:4-5 (alluded to)

2:10 *For it was fitting for Him, because of whom **are** all things and through whom **are** all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make perfect the founder of their salvation through sufferings.*

"For it was fitting for Him." The One "because of whom are all things and through whom are all things" is God the Father, the Creator and goal of everything. It was right and fitting, in keeping with who God is, for Him to save us this way.

His goal is "bringing many sons to glory." God is not saving a handful. He is bringing many sons home.

To do it, He would "make perfect the founder of their salvation through sufferings." The word founder means a leader who goes first and opens the way, a pioneer. "Make perfect" does not mean Jesus had any sin to fix. It means He was made complete for His work as our Savior. He could not be the Leader who brings us through suffering if He had never suffered.

2:11 *For both the One who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified **are** all of one; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brothers,*

"For both the One who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one." To sanctify means to set apart as holy for God. Jesus does the sanctifying. We are the ones being sanctified. And we "are all of one." We share the same Father, and, as verse 14 will show, the same human nature.

"For which reason He is not ashamed to call them brothers." Think about that. The Son of God, the One the angels worship, is not ashamed to call us His brothers. We often give Him reasons to be ashamed of us. But He does not disown His family. Jesus called His disciples His brothers after His resurrection (Matthew 28:10; John 20:17).

2:12 *saying, "I will declare Your name to My brothers; in **the** midst of **the** assembly I will sing praise to You."*

"I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." The writer is quoting Psalm 22:22. Psalm 22 begins with the cry Jesus prayed on the cross, asking His God why He had forsaken Him (Matthew 27:46). The first part of the psalm is suffering, and the second part is victory.

Verse 22 is where the psalm turns. After the suffering, the Sufferer stands among His brothers and praises God. The writer puts these words in the mouth of the risen Jesus. The word for assembly is the Greek word ekklesia, the word the New Testament uses for the church. Jesus stands in the middle of His people and leads their praise to the Father.

Old Testament links: Psalm 22:22 (quoted)

2:13 *And again, "I will be trusting in Him." And again, "Look, I and the children whom God has given Me."*

"I will be trusting in Him." This and the next quote are from Isaiah 8:17-18. Isaiah lived in a dark time, when the nation would not listen, and he chose to wait for the LORD and trust Him. The writer puts these words in the mouth of Jesus too. In His life on earth, Jesus lived by trust in His Father. That shows He was truly human.

"Look, I and the children whom God has given Me." Isaiah and his children were signs to Israel. Jesus and His people are a family. Jesus spoke of those the Father had given Him (John 6:37; 17:6). We are not only His brothers. We are the children God has given into His care.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 8:17 (quoted); Isaiah 8:18 (quoted)

2:14 *Since therefore the children have shared in flesh and blood, He Himself also likewise partook of the same, so that through death He might render powerless the one who holds the power of death, that is, the devil,*

"Since therefore the children have shared in flesh and blood, He Himself also likewise partook of the same," Jesus became fully human. He did not just look like a man. He had real blood and real flesh. He got hungry, tired, and thirsty. He wept. He died.

Why? "So that through death He might render powerless the one who holds the power of death, that is, the devil." The devil used death as his weapon, holding sin and judgment over people's heads. Jesus took that weapon away by dying Himself and paying for sin. "Render powerless" means to make ineffective, to put out of action. The devil is still active (1 Peter 5:8), but his power over death is broken for every believer.

2:15 *and might set free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery throughout all* ***their*** *life.*

"And might set free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery throughout all their life." People are afraid of death, and that fear rules them. It shapes what they do, what they chase, and what they run from. The fear of death is a kind of slavery.

Jesus came to set us free from it. For the believer, death is no longer the end, and it is no longer a doorway to judgment. It is the doorway home (2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:21). That does not mean we will never feel sad or afraid when we face death. It means that fear no longer has the last word. Do you live in fear of death? Jesus died to set you free from that.

2:16 *For surely He does not take hold of angels, but He takes hold of* ***the*** *seed of Abraham.*

"For surely He does not take hold of angels, but He takes hold of the seed of Abraham." The phrase "take hold of" means to reach out and grab hold in order to help, like rescuing someone who is drowning. Jesus did not come to rescue fallen angels. He came to rescue people.

"The seed of Abraham" are the descendants of Abraham. The readers of this letter were Jewish, and the writer reminds them that the Messiah came for them, just as God had promised Abraham. Paul also teaches that all who believe in Christ, Jew and Gentile, are counted as Abraham's seed by faith (Galatians 3:7, 29), without erasing God's promises to Israel.

2:17 *Therefore He was obligated to be made like the brothers in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*

"Therefore He was obligated to be made like the brothers in all things." To save us, He had to be one of us. A high priest stood between God and the people, and he had to be one of the people he represented.

"So that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest." This is the first time the letter calls Jesus a high priest, and it is the big theme of chapters 4 to 10. He is merciful toward us, because He knows what we face. He is faithful toward God, doing exactly what God asked.

"To make propitiation for the sins of the people." Propitiation means a sacrifice that satisfies God's just anger against sin and turns it away. On the Day of Atonement, the one day each year when the high priest went into the Most Holy Place, he sprinkled blood on the mercy seat, the gold lid of the ark of the covenant, for the sins of the people (Leviticus 16). Jesus did that once for all by His own blood (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2).

2:18 *For in that He Himself has suffered, having been tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.*

"For in that He Himself has suffered, having been tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted." Jesus was really tempted (Matthew 4:1-11). He felt the pull of it. He never gave in, so in a way He felt the full weight of temptation longer than anyone who gives in.

And because He went through it, "He is able to help." The word help means to run to the aid of someone who cries out. When you are tempted, you are not alone. The One who faced it and won is ready to help you right now. Take it to Him (4:15-16).

Chapter 2 Summary

Because the Son is greater than the angels, we must pay close attention to the gospel so that we do not drift away. The Law given through angels was enforced, and every sin received its just penalty, so how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, first spoken by the Lord, confirmed by those who heard Him, and backed by God with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Spirit? God did not put the world to come under angels. Psalm 8 says God made man to rule all things, but we do not yet see that. We do see Jesus, made a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor because He tasted death for everyone. God brings many sons to glory through Him, the founder of their salvation, made perfect through suffering. He is not ashamed to call us brothers. He shared our flesh and blood so that through His death He could break the devil's power and free those enslaved by the fear of death. He was made like His brothers in all things, to be a merciful and faithful High Priest who makes propitiation for sins, and because He suffered when tempted, He is able to help us when we are tempted.

Paying close attention, for me, means growing closer to Him every day. Hebrews 2:1 warns that we drift when we stop paying attention. I have drifted before. I do not want to drift again.

Chapter 2 Study Questions

1. What picture does the word drift give you, and how does drifting happen in a believer's life? (2:1)

2. What argument does the writer make in 2:2-3?

3. How was the gospel first spoken, and how was it confirmed? (2:3-4)

4. What did God plan for man according to Psalm 8, and why do we not see it yet? (2:6-8)

5. What do we see instead, according to 2:9?

6. What does it mean to you that Jesus "is not ashamed to call them brothers"? (2:11)

7. Why did Jesus have to share in flesh and blood? (2:14-15)

8. What is propitiation, and why did Jesus need to become like us to make it? (2:17)

9. Is there any area of your walk with God where you have started to drift? What would paying close attention look like this week?

10. What temptation are you facing right now? How does 2:18 change the way you can pray about it?

Chapter 3: Greater Than Moses

Scripture

3:1-11 Therefore, holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider carefully the apostle and high priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to the One who appointed Him, as also Moses ***was*** in all His house. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by as much as he who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but the One who built all things ***is*** God. And Moses indeed ***was*** faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of the things which would be spoken, but Christ as a Son over His house, whose house we are, if indeed we hold fast the boldness and the boast of the hope firm until ***the*** end. Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of the testing in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in the heart, and they have not known My ways'; so I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter into My rest.'"

3:12-19 Take heed, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from ***the*** living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "Today," so that no one of you may be hardened by ***the*** deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if indeed we hold fast the beginning of the assurance firm until ***the*** end, while it is said, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." For who, having heard, rebelled? But ***was it*** not all who came out of Egypt through Moses? And with whom was He angry forty years? ***Was it*** not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter into His rest, except to those who disobeyed? And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief.

Chapter 3 Preview

To a Jewish reader, no man stood higher than Moses. God spoke with him face to face. He led Israel out of Egypt and gave them the Law. In chapter 3 the writer does not run Moses down. He says Moses was faithful in all God's house. But Moses was a servant in the house, and Jesus is the Son over the house. Moses was part of what God was building, and Jesus is the Builder. And we are His house, if we hold fast to the end.

That if leads to the second warning in Hebrews, which runs into chapter 4. The writer quotes Psalm 95, which looks back at Israel in the wilderness. The people who came out of Egypt with Moses saw God's works for forty years, and still they hardened their hearts. Because of unbelief, that whole generation died in the desert and never entered the land God promised. The writer begs his readers not to repeat their sin. Encourage one another every day while it is still called Today, so that no one is hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Chapter 3 Study

3:1 *Therefore, holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider carefully the apostle and high priest of our confession, Christ Jesus,*

"Therefore, holy brothers." The writer has just shown that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers (2:11). Now he calls his readers holy brothers. They are holy because Jesus has set them apart for God, not because they are better than others.

They are "partakers of a heavenly calling." God called them, and the call comes from heaven and leads to heaven.

"Consider carefully the apostle and high priest of our confession, Christ Jesus." To consider carefully means to fix your mind on Him and think it through. Jesus is called an apostle only here in the New Testament. An apostle is one who is sent. Jesus was sent from God to us. A high priest goes to God for us. Moses was God's messenger to Israel, and Aaron was the high priest. Jesus is both, and He is better than both. "Our confession" means what we say we believe.

3:2 *who was faithful to the One who appointed Him, as also Moses **was** in all His house.*

"Who was faithful to the One who appointed Him, as also Moses was in all His house." The writer starts with what Moses and Jesus have in common. Both were faithful. Both did the job God gave them.

The words come from Numbers 12:7. Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses, and God defended him. God said Moses was faithful in all His house. "His house" means God's house, God's people Israel, the household God was building. The writer is careful here. He is about to say Jesus is greater, but he will not say a bad word about Moses. Moses was a great and faithful servant of God.

Old Testament links: Numbers 12:7 (alluded to)

3:3 *For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by as much as he who built the house has more honor than the house.*

"For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses." Now comes the difference. Jesus deserves more honor than Moses.

Why? "By as much as he who built the house has more honor than the house." Think of a fine house. People admire it, but they give more credit to the builder who planned and made it. Moses was part of the house God was building. He was a member of God's people. Jesus is the Builder of the house. That puts Him on a whole different level. Moses belongs to the creation. Jesus is the Creator (1:2, 10).

3:4 *For every house is built by someone, but the One who built all things **is** God.*

"For every house is built by someone, but the One who built all things is God." Every house has a builder. Houses do not build themselves. And the One who built everything is God.

Put verses 3 and 4 side by side. In verse 3 Jesus is the builder of the house. In verse 4 the builder of all things is God. The writer does not stop to explain it, because he already showed in chapter 1 that the Son made the ages and laid the foundation of the earth. Jesus is God. That is why He has more glory than Moses.

This verse also has a simple truth for anyone who doubts there is a God. A house points to a builder. A world this ordered points to a Maker (Romans 1:20).

3:5 *And Moses indeed **was** faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of the things which would be spoken,*

"And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant." The word used here for servant is not the word for a slave. It is a word for a trusted attendant, a servant with honor. Moses held a high place.

But he was a servant "for a testimony of the things which would be spoken." Moses' work pointed ahead. The tabernacle, the priests, the sacrifices, and the feasts were all pictures of what God would show later in Christ. Jesus said Moses wrote about Him (John 5:46). Moses was a witness. He was not the final word.

Here the writer comes back to Numbers 12:7, which I looked at in verse 2. There God called him "My servant Moses," and the writer picks up that same title when he says Moses was faithful "as a servant."

Old Testament links: Numbers 12:7 (quoted)

3:6 *but Christ as a Son over His house, whose house we are, if indeed we hold fast the boldness and the boast of the hope firm until **the** end.*

"But Christ as a Son over His house." Moses was a servant in the house. Christ is the Son over the house. A servant works in the house, but the son owns it and runs it.

"Whose house we are." God's house is not a building. It is His people. Everyone who belongs to Christ is part of it (1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:19-22).

"If indeed we hold fast the boldness and the boast of the hope firm until the end." This if is important, and it comes back in verse 14. Holding fast to the end is the mark of those who are His house. Bible teachers read this condition in different ways. Some say holding fast is the evidence that a person's faith is real. Others say it is the condition for keeping a place in His house, or for keeping a reward. I will give the main views at verse 14.

3:7-9 *Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of the testing in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years.*

"Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says." The writer quotes Psalm 95:7-11, and he says the Holy Spirit is the One speaking. That is how Hebrews views all of Scripture. And notice the tense: the Spirit says, not said. God's Word still speaks today.

"Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of the testing in the wilderness." The psalm looks back at Israel after the Exodus. At Massah and Meribah the people complained that there was no water and tested God, asking whether He was with them or not (Exodus 17:1-7). Over and over in the wilderness they grumbled and refused to trust Him.

"Where your fathers tested Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years." That is what makes it so sad. They saw the plagues, the Red Sea, the manna every morning, and the water from the rock. Still they did not trust. Seeing miracles does not make a person believe.

Old Testament links: Psalm 95:7-9 (quoted); Exodus 17:7 (alluded to); Numbers 14:22 (alluded to)

3:10-11 *Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in the heart, and they have not known My ways'; so I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter into My rest.'"*

"Therefore I was angry with that generation." God was not unreasonably angry. He had shown them His power and His care for forty years. Their problem was in the heart: "They always go astray in the heart, and they have not known My ways." They knew His works, but they did not know His ways. They saw what He did, but they never came to trust who He is.

"So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter into My rest.'" This happened at Kadesh, when the people refused to go into the land after the spies came back (Numbers 14:20-35). The rest in the psalm was the land of Canaan, the place where God would give them rest from wandering and from their enemies. That whole generation, except Joshua and Caleb, died in the wilderness. In chapter 4 the writer will show that God's rest means more than the land.

Old Testament links: Psalm 95:10-11 (quoted); Numbers 14:21-23 (alluded to)

3:12 *Take heed, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from* ***the*** *living God.*

"Take heed, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the living God." Now the writer applies the psalm. He calls them brothers. He is speaking to the church, and he speaks to "any of you." Each one must look to his own heart.

Look at what he calls unbelief: "an evil heart." We sometimes treat unbelief as if it were only a lack of information. Scripture calls it evil, because it calls God a liar (1 John 5:10).

Unbelief leads to "falling away from the living God." The Greek word gives us our word apostasy, which means turning away from what one once professed. For these readers, turning back to the old ways of the temple after hearing the gospel would be turning away from the living God Himself.

3:13 *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "Today," so that no one of you may be hardened by **the** deceitfulness of sin.*

"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called" Today. Here is God's answer to drifting and hardening: other believers. To exhort means to come alongside and urge someone on. And it is to happen "every day." Once a week is not enough to fight a battle that goes on every day.

"So that no one of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Sin lies. It promises freedom and brings slavery. It says it will not hurt and then it does. And it hardens. Each time we say no to God, it gets easier to say no again. The heart grows hard a little at a time. We need people in our lives who love us enough to speak up. Who are those people for you, and whose life are you speaking into?

Old Testament links: Psalm 95:7 (alluded to)

3:14 *For we have become partakers of Christ, if indeed we hold fast the beginning of the assurance firm until **the** end,*

"For we have become partakers of Christ, if indeed we hold fast the beginning of the assurance firm until the end." The word partakers means sharers, companions. We share in Christ. And then the writer gives the second if. This is where good Bible teachers differ, and the whole warning (3:7-4:13) is read in the same four ways as the warning in chapter 2.

Some read the verse this way: holding fast to the end shows that we have become partakers of Christ. Notice the tense. It says we have become partakers, if we hold fast. On this reading the warning speaks to true believers, and what is at stake is God's discipline and reward, like the generation that was saved out of Egypt but lost the land. Others read it as speaking to people who professed faith but never truly believed. Their falling away would show they were never really partakers. Others believe a true believer can stop holding fast and so lose his share in Christ. Still others see the warning as a real call to hold fast that describes what unbelief would bring, while the writer expects his readers to endure (6:9).

What every reading agrees on is this: real faith keeps going. The writer wants his readers to keep holding fast, and he gives them help to do it.

3:15 *while it is said, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."*

"While it is said," the writer repeats: "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." The writer repeats the opening words of the psalm. He wants this word, Today, to ring in their ears.

God's call always comes in the present. We cannot answer yesterday, and we are not promised tomorrow (James 4:13-14). If you hear God's voice today, through His Word, through His Spirit, through a brother or sister, answer it today. Putting off obedience is the first step toward a hard heart.

Old Testament links: Psalm 95:7-8 (quoted)

3:16 *For who, having heard, rebelled? But **was it** not all who came out of Egypt through Moses?*

"For who, having heard, rebelled? But was it not all who came out of Egypt through Moses?" The writer asks three questions in verses 16 to 18, and each answer is drawn from the story in Numbers.

Who rebelled? Not a few outsiders. It was the very people God had brought out of Egypt. They had put the blood on their doors at Passover. They had walked through the Red Sea on dry land. They had every advantage, and still they rebelled. That is the warning. Being part of God's people and having seen His works does not mean a person cannot harden his heart.

3:17 *And with whom was He angry forty years? **Was it** not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?*

"And with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?" God's anger was not without cause. It was against those who sinned. The word corpses is blunt. Their bodies fell in the desert, just as God said they would (Numbers 14:29, 32).

Forty years is a long time. God was patient with them all through those years. He fed them, led them, and kept their clothes from wearing out (Deuteronomy 8:4). Even in His judgment He cared for them. But the judgment was real. Those who refused to go into the land never saw it.

Old Testament links: Numbers 14:29 (alluded to); Psalm 95:10 (alluded to)

3:18 *And to whom did He swear that they would not enter into His rest, except to those who disobeyed?*

"And to whom did He swear that they would not enter into His rest, except to those who disobeyed?" The third answer is "those who disobeyed." The words for unbelief and disobedience in Greek are closely related. In the Bible they go together. Unbelief shows itself in disobedience, and disobedience grows out of unbelief.

Israel did not miss the land because God's promise failed. They missed it because they did not trust the God who made the promise, and so they would not obey Him and go in.

Old Testament links: Psalm 95:11 (alluded to)

3:19 *And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief.*

"And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief." Here is the summary. The problem was not the giants in the land, the walls of the cities, or the size of the enemy armies. The problem was unbelief.

That is still the problem today. The thing that keeps people out of God's rest is not their past, their sins, or their circumstances. It is unbelief. And for believers, unbelief in God's promises keeps us from the peace and joy He wants us to have. The answer is to trust Him, take Him at His word, and go forward.

Chapter 3 Summary

The writer calls his readers to consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. Jesus was faithful to God, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house, but Jesus deserves more glory, as the builder of a house has more honor than the house. Moses was a faithful servant in the house, pointing ahead to what would come. Christ is the Son over God's house, and we are that house if we hold fast to the end. Quoting Psalm 95, the Holy Spirit warns us not to harden our hearts as Israel did in the wilderness, where they tested God for forty years and so never entered His rest. Believers must watch out for an evil heart of unbelief that falls away from the living God, and must encourage one another every day, so that no one is hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We are partakers of Christ if we hold fast. The generation that came out of Egypt sinned, disobeyed, and fell in the wilderness, and they could not enter because of unbelief.

Chapter 3 Study Questions

1. What two titles does the writer give Jesus in 3:1, and what does each one mean?

2. How were Moses and Jesus alike, and how are they different? (3:2-6)

3. Who is God's house today, according to 3:6?

4. What did Israel see in the wilderness, and why did it not lead them to trust God? (3:9-10)

5. What does Scripture call unbelief in 3:12, and why?

6. According to 3:13, how often should believers encourage one another, and why?

7. How does sin deceive and harden a person? Give an example.

8. Why could Israel not enter God's rest? (3:19)

9. Is there anything God has been telling you to do that you have been putting off? What would it look like to answer Him Today?

10. Who are the people who encourage you in your faith? Who could you encourage this week?

Chapter 4: A Rest for the People of God

Scripture

4:1-16 Let us fear therefore, lest, while a promise of entering into His rest is left remaining, any of you should seem to have fallen short. For indeed we have had the gospel preached ***to us***, just as they also ***did***; but the word of hearing did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter into the rest, just as He has said, "As I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter into My rest,'" although the works were finished from ***the*** foundation of ***the*** world. For He has spoken somewhere concerning the seventh ***day*** in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; and in this ***place*** again, "They shall not enter into My rest." Since therefore it remains ***for*** some to enter into it, and those who formerly had the gospel preached ***to them*** did not enter because of disobedience, again He appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time, just as it has been said, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have been speaking about another day after these ***things***. So then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered into His rest has also himself rested from his works, just as God ***did*** from His own. Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest, so that no one may fall by the same example of disobedience. For the word of God ***is*** living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and penetrating as far as ***the*** division of both soul and spirit, of both joints and marrows, and able to judge ***the*** thoughts and intentions of ***the*** heart. And there is no creature hidden before Him, but all things ***are*** naked and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom our account ***is to be given***. Having therefore a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the confession. For we do not have a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses, but ***one*** who has been tempted in all things according to likeness, without sin. Let us therefore come with boldness to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.

Chapter 4 Preview

Chapter 4 finishes the warning that began in 3:7. Israel in the wilderness never entered God's rest because of unbelief. But the promise of rest is still open. The writer shows from Scripture that God's rest is bigger than the land of Canaan. God rested on the seventh day of creation, and He invites His people into His own rest. Joshua led Israel into the land, but if that had been the full rest, David would not have spoken of another Today hundreds of years later. So a Sabbath rest still remains for the people of God, and we enter it by faith, ceasing from our own works as God ceased from His.

Then the writer reminds his readers that God's Word is living and active. It cuts deeper than any sword and lays the heart open, and no creature is hidden from God's sight. That is a sobering thought, but the chapter does not end in fear. It ends with Jesus. We have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, who was tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. So we can come boldly to the throne of grace to find mercy and help when we need it.

Chapter 4 Study

4:1 *Let us fear therefore, lest, while a promise of entering into His rest is left remaining, any of you should seem to have fallen short.*

"Let us fear therefore, lest, while a promise of entering into His rest is left remaining, any of you should seem to have fallen short." The writer moves from Israel's story to his readers. The promise of rest is still "left remaining." God did not take it back when the wilderness generation failed.

So the writer says, "Let us fear." This is not the fear of a slave who expects to be beaten. It is a healthy fear of missing what God offers. The words "fallen short" picture a runner who drops out before the finish line, or a traveler who arrives too late. The writer does not want even one of them to come up short.

4:2 *For indeed we have had the gospel preached **to us**, just as they also **did**; but the word of hearing did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard.*

"For indeed we have had the gospel preached to us, just as they also did." Israel heard good news too. God promised them a land and rest. We have heard the good news of Jesus.

"But the word of hearing did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard." Hearing alone did not help them. The word has to be mixed with faith, like the parts of a medicine that only works when they are combined. Many people sit under the preaching of the gospel for years, and it does them no good, because they never trust it for themselves. The Bible on the shelf, or even the sermon in the ear, does not save. The word received by faith does.

4:3 *For we who have believed enter into the rest, just as He has said, "As I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter into My rest,'" although the works were finished from **the** foundation of **the** world.*

"For we who have believed enter into the rest." This is the key. The rest is entered by faith. Notice that it is present tense: we enter. Those who trust Christ begin to enter God's rest now.

"Just as He has said," the writer quotes Psalm 95 again, "As I swore in My wrath," where God swore that the unbelievers would not enter His rest. He does it to show that the rest is entered by faith, because the ones who did not believe were shut out.

"Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." God's rest is not something new. God finished His work of creation, and His rest has been there ever since, waiting for His people to share it.

Old Testament links: Psalm 95:11 (quoted)

4:4-5 *For He has spoken somewhere concerning the seventh **day** in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; and in this **place** again, "They shall not enter into My rest."*

"For He has spoken somewhere concerning the seventh day in this way," and he quotes: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works." This is Genesis 2:2. God did not rest because He was

tired. He rested because His work was complete. The seventh day in Genesis has no evening and morning mentioned at the end, which many have taken as a picture of a rest that has no end.

"And in this place again," God says His people shall not enter His rest. The writer puts the two verses side by side, Genesis 2:2 and Psalm 95:11. The rest God offered Israel was His own rest, the rest He entered when He finished creation. It was a share in God's own peace.

Old Testament links: Genesis 2:2 (quoted); Psalm 95:11 (quoted)

4:6 *Since therefore it remains **for** some to enter into it, and those who formerly had the gospel preached **to them** did not enter because of disobedience,*

"Since therefore it remains for some to enter into it." God made the rest for His people to enter. His plan did not fail when one generation refused it. Someone will enter.

"And those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not enter because of disobedience." The wilderness generation missed it. But God's purpose stands. When people refuse God's offer, He does not cancel the offer. He extends it to others (Matthew 22:1-10). The door is still open. The question is whether we will go in.

4:7 *again He appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time, just as it has been said, "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."*

"Again He appoints a certain day," the day called Today, "saying through David after so long a time." Psalm 95 was written by David, hundreds of years after Joshua led Israel into the land. If the land had been all God meant by rest, why would God still be calling people to enter His rest in David's day?

"Just as it has been said," and here it is again: "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." God set a new Today. The invitation was still open in David's time, and the writer says it is still open now. Every generation hears God's call in its own Today.

Old Testament links: Psalm 95:7-8 (quoted)

4:8 *For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have been speaking about another day after these **things**.*

"For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have been speaking about another day after these things." Joshua did lead the next generation into Canaan, and the land had rest from war for a time (Joshua 21:44; 23:1). But it was not the final rest. Israel still faced enemies, still sinned, and later went into exile.

The names are worth noticing. Joshua and Jesus are the same name. Joshua is from the Hebrew, and Jesus is from the Greek form of it. It means the LORD saves. The first Joshua brought Israel into the land. The greater Joshua, Jesus, brings His people into God's true rest.

Old Testament links: Joshua 11:23 (alluded to); Joshua 23:1 (alluded to)

4:9 *So then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.*

"So then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God." Here is the conclusion. The word for Sabbath rest is a special word, sabbatismos, a keeping of the Sabbath. It is used only here in the New Testament.

The Sabbath was the seventh day, the day Israel was to stop working and rest, in honor of God's rest at creation (Exodus 20:8-11). The writer says there is a Sabbath rest that "remains." It is still waiting for the people of God.

What is this rest? Bible teachers give a few answers. Some say it is the rest of salvation now, the peace of trusting Christ instead of our own works (4:3, 10; Matthew 11:28-30). Some say it is the future rest of heaven or of Christ's kingdom (Revelation 14:13). Many say it is both: we begin to enter now by faith, and we will enter it fully when we are with Him. The writer's words support the idea that it is entered by faith now and still lies ahead in its fullness. This verse does not settle whether Christians must keep the seventh day as a day of rest. Believers disagree on that (Romans 14:5-6; Colossians 2:16-17), and the writer's point here is the greater rest the Sabbath pictured.

4:10 *For the one who has entered into His rest has also himself rested from his works, just as God **did** from His own.*

"For the one who has entered into His rest has also himself rested from his works, just as God did from His own." God rested when His work was finished. When we enter His rest, we stop working to earn what God has already done.

That is the gospel. We do not work our way into God's favor. Jesus finished the work on the cross (John 19:30), and we rest in what He has done (Romans 4:5). Faith is the end of trying to save ourselves. That does not mean believers stop doing good. It means we stop trusting our works to make us right with God. Are you still trying to earn what God offers as a gift? Stop, and rest in Christ.

Old Testament links: Genesis 2:3 (alluded to)

4:11 *Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest, so that no one may fall by the same example of disobedience.*

"Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest." It sounds strange at first. Be diligent to rest? But it makes sense. Resting in Christ takes effort, the effort of trusting Him day by day when everything in us wants to take control or turn back.

"So that no one may fall by the same example of disobedience." The writer points back again to the wilderness. Their bodies fell in the desert. They are an example, a warning sign put up for us (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11). Like the earlier verses in this warning, Bible teachers read it in the four ways given at 3:14.

4:12 *For the word of God **is** living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and penetrating as far as **the** division of both soul and spirit, of both joints and marrows, and able to judge **the** thoughts and intentions of **the** heart.*

"For the word of God is living and active." Why should we be diligent? Because God's Word is not a dead letter. The same Word that called Israel in the wilderness speaks to us today, and it is alive. It does things.

"And sharper than any two-edged sword." A two-edged sword cuts both ways. God's Word cuts through our excuses.

"Penetrating as far as the division of both soul and spirit, of both joints and marrows." The writer piles up pictures of the deepest parts of a person. Joints and marrow are deep in the body. Soul and spirit are deep in the inner man. Bible teachers discuss how soul and spirit differ, but the point here is that the Word reaches places no one else can.

"And able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." The word judge here gives us our word critic. God's Word sorts out our thoughts and motives. We read it, and it reads us.

4:13 *And there is no creature hidden before Him, but all things **are** naked and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom our account **is to be given**.*

"And there is no creature hidden before Him." Nothing can hide from God. Adam and Eve tried to hide among the trees (Genesis 3:8). People still try to hide from God behind busy lives, religion, or excuses. It does not work.

"But all things are naked and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom our account is to be given." The words laid bare picture a neck bent back and exposed. Everything about us is open to His eyes. "To whom our account is to be given." Every person will give an account to God (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). That should make us take His Word seriously. But for the believer, the next verse shows what to do with that fear. We run to our High Priest.

4:14 *Having therefore a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the confession.*

"Having therefore a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." Here the writer picks up the theme he began in 2:17 and 3:1, and he will stay with it until chapter 10. The high priest in Israel passed through the curtain into the Most Holy Place once a year. Jesus has passed through the heavens into the very presence of God.

He is a great High Priest. He is human, Jesus, and He is divine, the Son of God.

"Let us hold firmly to the confession." Because we have such a High Priest, we should not let go of what we believe. The readers were tempted to turn back. The writer says, Why would you leave the One who is already in heaven for you?

4:15 *For we do not have a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses, but **one** who has been tempted in all things according to likeness, without sin.*

"For we do not have a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses." Some people think of God as far away and unable to understand what we feel. The writer says the opposite. Jesus can sympathize. He can feel with us. He knows what weakness is from the inside.

"But one who has been tempted in all things according to likeness, without sin." He was tempted in every way we are, through hunger, loneliness, pain, rejection, and the pull to take an easier path than the cross. "According to likeness" means as one who is like us. But He did it "without sin." He never gave in. He is fully man and yet sinless. That is why He can both understand us and help us.

4:16 *Let us therefore come with boldness to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.*

"Let us therefore come with boldness to the throne of grace." In the ancient world, people did not walk up to a king's throne uninvited. Even Queen Esther feared for her life when she went in to the king (Esther 4:11). But because of Jesus, God's throne is a throne of grace, and we can come boldly.

Boldness does not mean being careless or proud. It means coming with confidence, without fear of being turned away, because our High Priest is there for us.

"So that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help." Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve. Grace is God giving us what we do not deserve. "Timely help" is help at just the right moment. Whatever you are facing today, there is grace for it. Do not run from God when you fail or when you are weak. Run to Him.

Chapter 4 Summary

The promise of entering God's rest is still open, so we should fear falling short of it. Israel heard good news, but it did not help them because they did not mix it with faith. Those who believe enter God's rest, the rest God entered when He finished creation. Because the wilderness generation did not enter, and because David still spoke of a Today long after Joshua brought Israel into the land, a Sabbath rest remains for the people of God. Those who enter it rest from their own works as God rested from His, so we should be diligent to enter and not fall by Israel's example of disobedience. God's Word is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, judging the thoughts and intentions of the heart, and nothing is hidden from God, to whom we must give account. But we have a great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, who has passed through the heavens. He sympathizes with our weaknesses, since He was tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. So we hold fast our confession and come boldly to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Chapter 4 Study Questions

1. Why did the good news not help Israel in the wilderness? (4:2)

2. How do we enter God's rest, according to 4:3?

3. How does the writer show that God's rest was more than the land of Canaan? (4:7-8)

4. What does it mean to rest from our own works? (4:10)

5. What does 4:12 say God's Word is like, and what does it do?

6. How does 4:13 make you feel, and how does 4:14-16 answer that feeling?

7. What two things does 4:14 tell us about our High Priest?

8. Why can Jesus sympathize with our weaknesses? (4:15)

9. Is there anything you are still trying to earn from God? What would it look like to rest in Christ?

10. What do you need mercy or grace for today? Will you bring it boldly to the throne of grace?

Chapter 5: Our Great High Priest

Scripture

5:1-14 For every high priest being taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men ***in*** the ***things*** relating to God, so that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins, being able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself also is encompassed by weakness; and because of this he is obligated, just as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. And no one takes the honor for himself, but the one being called by God, just as also Aaron ***was***. So also the Christ did not glorify Himself to become a high priest, but the One who said to Him, "You are My Son; today I have begotten You"; just as also in another ***place*** He says, "You ***are*** a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." ***He***, in the days of His flesh, having offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One being able to save Him from death, and having been heard because of ***His*** reverence, although being a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered; and having been perfected, He became to all those who obey Him ***the*** source of eternal salvation, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, concerning whom our word ***is*** much and hard to interpret in speaking, since you have become sluggish in ***your*** hearing. For indeed, though you ought to be teachers by this time, you again have need ***for someone*** to teach you which ***are*** the principles of the beginning of the oracles of God, and you have become ***those*** having need of milk and not of solid food. For everyone who partakes of milk ***is*** inexperienced in ***the*** word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for ***the*** mature, for those who through practice have the senses trained for discernment of both good and evil.

Chapter 5 Preview

At the end of chapter 4 the writer told us we have a great High Priest. In chapter 5 he explains what a high priest is and shows that Jesus fits. Every high priest in Israel was taken from among men to stand for men before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He could deal gently with people who went astray, because he was weak himself, and he had to offer sacrifices for his own sins too. No one could take the honor for himself. God had to call him, as He called Aaron.

Jesus did not appoint Himself either. God the Father called Him, saying, You are My Son, and You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. In the days of His flesh, Jesus prayed with loud cries and tears, and He learned obedience through what He suffered. Having been made perfect for His work, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. The writer wants to say much more about Melchizedek, but he stops to begin the third warning. His readers have become slow to hear. They should be teachers by now, but they still need milk. Solid food is for the mature, whose senses are trained by practice to know good from evil.

Chapter 5 Study

5:1 *For every high priest being taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men **in** the **things** relating to God, so that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins,*

"For every high priest being taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in the things relating to God." The writer lays out what a high priest is. First, he is "taken from among men." He is human. Second, he is appointed "on behalf of men." He stands for the people. Third, his work is "in the things relating to God." He deals with God for them.

"So that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." Gifts were offerings of thanks and worship. Sacrifices for sins dealt with guilt. The greatest work of Israel's high priest was on the Day of Atonement, when he went into the Most Holy Place with blood for the sins of the nation (Leviticus 16). Sin separates us from God. We need someone to stand between, and that is what a high priest does.

5:2 *being able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself also is encompassed by weakness;*

"Being able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and going astray." A good high priest was not harsh with people who stumbled. The words deal gently describe a balance, neither too hard nor too soft. He did not excuse sin, but he did not crush the sinner.

"Those who are ignorant and going astray" are people who sin out of weakness or without knowing it. The Law made a difference between those sins and sins done with a high hand, in open defiance of God (Numbers 15:27-31).

"Since he himself also is encompassed by weakness." The high priest was patient because he was weak too. He was wrapped in it, like someone wearing a heavy coat. He knew what it was like to fail.

5:3 *and because of this he is obligated, just as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.*

"And because of this he is obligated, just as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins." On the Day of Atonement, before Aaron could offer the goat for the sins of the people, he first had to offer a bull for his own sins and for his family (Leviticus 16:6, 11).

That showed his weakness plainly. He was a sinner standing for sinners. Here is one place where Jesus is unlike every other high priest. He had no sins of His own to offer for (4:15; 7:26-27). Like them, He can deal gently with us. Unlike them, He never needed a sacrifice for Himself.

Old Testament links: Leviticus 16:6 (alluded to); Leviticus 9:7 (alluded to)

5:4 *And no one takes the honor for himself, but the one being called by God, just as also Aaron **was**.*

"And no one takes the honor for himself, but the one being called by God, just as also Aaron was." A man could not decide to make himself high priest. God chose Aaron and his sons (Exodus 28:1). When Korah and his followers tried to take the priesthood for themselves, God judged them

(Numbers 16). When King Uzziah went into the temple to burn incense, God struck him with leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:16-21).

The priesthood was God's to give. It was an honor, and it was a calling. That matters for Jesus. The writer is about to show that Jesus did not grab the priesthood. God gave it to Him.

Old Testament links: Exodus 28:1 (alluded to)

5:5 *So also the Christ did not glorify Himself to become a high priest, but the One who said to Him, "You are My Son; today I have begotten You";*

"So also the Christ did not glorify Himself to become a high priest." Jesus did not promote Himself. Even the Son of God waited on His Father's call. Jesus said the same thing during His ministry, that if He glorified Himself it would mean nothing, but His Father glorifies Him (John 8:54).

"But the One who said to Him" glorified Him, with the words "You are My Son; today I have begotten You." The writer quotes Psalm 2:7 again, as he did in 1:5. The same God who declared Jesus to be His Son also appointed Him to be High Priest. His priesthood flows from His Sonship. He is not a priest who happens to be the Son. He is the Son, and that is why He is the perfect Priest.

Old Testament links: Psalm 2:7 (quoted)

5:6 *just as also in another **place** He says, "You **are** a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."*

"Just as also in another place He says," and these are the words: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." This is Psalm 110:4. The same psalm that says, Sit at My right hand (1:13), also says the King will be a priest forever.

In Israel the kings came from the tribe of Judah and the priests came from the tribe of Levi. No one could be both. But Psalm 110 speaks of a King who is also a Priest, and not by the order of Aaron. His priesthood is "according to the order of Melchizedek," the king-priest who met Abraham (Genesis 14:18-20). The writer will explain this in chapter 7. For now, notice the word "forever." Aaron's priests died and were replaced. This Priest lives forever.

Old Testament links: Psalm 110:4 (quoted)

5:7 ***He**, in the days of His flesh, having offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One being able to save Him from death, and having been heard because of **His** reverence,*

"He, in the days of His flesh." This means His life on earth as a man. "Having offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One being able to save Him from death." This sounds most like Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed in deep sorrow that the cup might pass from Him, yet not His will but the Father's (Matthew 26:36-44; Luke 22:41-44). It may also include His cries on the cross.

"And having been heard because of His reverence." How was He heard, when He still died? God did not save Him from dying. God saved Him out of death by raising Him from the dead. The Father heard Him, and the answer was the resurrection. His prayer was heard because of His reverence, His godly fear and full surrender to the Father's will.

This verse shows us how human Jesus was. He felt fear and grief. He cried and prayed. And He trusted His Father all the way to the cross.

5:8 *although being a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered;*

"Although being a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered." This is a deep verse. Jesus was never disobedient. So what does it mean that He learned obedience?

It means He learned by experience what obedience costs. As God, He knew everything. But as a man, He walked the road of obedience step by step, and each step was harder than the last, until it led Him to the cross (Philippians 2:8). You can know what pain is, and you can learn it by feeling it. Jesus learned obedience by doing it in suffering.

"Although being a Son." You might think the Son of God would be spared suffering. He was not. If the Son learned obedience through suffering, we should not be surprised when God uses suffering in our lives too (12:7-11).

5:9 *and having been perfected, He became to all those who obey Him* ***the*** *source of eternal salvation,*

"And having been perfected." As in 2:10, this does not mean Jesus was ever imperfect in character. It means He was made complete and fully fit for His work as Savior and High Priest. He finished the course of suffering and obedience.

"He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." The word source means the cause, the One salvation comes from. And this salvation is "eternal." The salvation the old priests could give was temporary. They had to repeat it every year. Jesus gives salvation that lasts forever.

"To all those who obey Him." This does not mean we earn salvation by our obedience. In the New Testament, obeying the gospel means believing it (Romans 1:5; 10:16; Acts 6:7). Trusting Christ is the first act of obedience, and a life of obedience follows from real faith.

5:10 *having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek,*

"Having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek." The word designated means named or called by a title. God Himself gave Jesus this title, in Psalm 110:4. He did not take it on Himself.

This verse brings the writer back to Melchizedek. He has now named him twice (5:6, 10), and he wants to explain what that means. But he stops. Before he can feed his readers solid food, he has

to deal with a problem. They are not ready for it. That leads to the third warning in the letter, which runs from 5:11 to 6:12.

5:11 *concerning whom our word **is** much and hard to interpret in speaking, since you have become sluggish in **your** hearing.*

"Concerning whom our word is much and hard to interpret in speaking." The writer has a lot to say about Melchizedek and Christ's priesthood, and it is not easy to explain.

Why? Not mainly because the subject is hard. "Since you have become sluggish in your hearing." The word sluggish means slow, dull, lazy. It is used again in 6:12. Notice they "have become" this way. They were not always like this. They had grown dull over time.

This is the start of the third warning (5:11-6:12). It begins with a rebuke. Spiritual growth does not happen on its own. If we stop listening, we get dull, and then even good teaching bounces off us.

5:12 *For indeed, though you ought to be teachers by this time, you again have need **for someone** to teach you which **are** the principles of the beginning of the oracles of God, and you have become **those** having need of milk and not of solid food.*

"For indeed, though you ought to be teachers by this time." They had been believers long enough to be teaching others. That does not mean everyone should be a Bible teacher in church (James 3:1), but every mature believer should be able to explain the faith to someone else (1 Peter 3:15).

"You again have need for someone to teach you which are the principles of the beginning of the oracles of God." The principles of the beginning are the ABCs, the first lessons. The oracles of God means God's Word. They needed to go back to the basics.

"And you have become those having need of milk and not of solid food." Milk is for babies. There is nothing wrong with milk for a newborn. But a grown man who can only drink milk has a problem. These believers were stuck.

5:13 *For everyone who partakes of milk **is** inexperienced in **the** word of righteousness, for he is an infant.*

"For everyone who partakes of milk is inexperienced in the word of righteousness, for he is an infant." An infant has no experience. He cannot tell what is good to eat and what is not.

"The word of righteousness" may mean the teaching about righteousness, how God makes us right and how we live right. Or it may mean the kind of speech that is right and mature. Either way, the spiritual infant is unskilled in it. He has heard it, but he has not put it into practice.

Being a new believer is not a sin. Everyone starts as an infant. The problem is staying there when we should have grown.

5:14 *But solid food is for **the** mature, for those who through practice have the senses trained for discernment of both good and evil.*

"But solid food is for the mature." The word for mature means full-grown. The mature believer can handle the deeper truths of God's Word, like the priesthood of Christ that the writer is about to explain.

How do we become mature? "For those who through practice have the senses trained for discernment of both good and evil." Notice the word practice. The word trained gives us our word gymnasium. Maturity does not come from just hearing more. It comes from using what we hear, again and again, until it becomes part of us. Like exercise, it takes time and effort.

And the result is discernment, the ability to tell good from evil. The mature believer can see through false teaching and smart-sounding temptation. Are you growing in that? Are you using what you already know?

Chapter 5 Summary

Every high priest was taken from among men and appointed to stand for them before God, offering gifts and sacrifices for sins. He could deal gently with the ignorant and those going astray, because he was weak too and had to offer for his own sins as well. No one took that honor for himself. God called him, as He called Aaron. In the same way, Christ did not glorify Himself. God said to Him, You are My Son, and, You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered prayers with loud cries and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence. Though He was a Son, He learned obedience through suffering, and being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. The writer has much more to say about Melchizedek, but his readers have become dull of hearing. They should be teachers by now, but they still need milk. Solid food is for the mature, whose senses are trained by practice to tell good from evil.

Chapter 5 Study Questions

1. What does a high priest do, according to 5:1?

2. Why could a human high priest deal gently with those who went astray? (5:2-3)

3. Who chose the high priests, and who chose Jesus to be High Priest? (5:4-6)

4. What do you learn about Jesus from His prayers in 5:7?

5. What does it mean that Jesus "learned obedience from the things which He suffered"? (5:8)

6. What kind of salvation does Jesus give, and to whom? (5:9)

7. What was wrong with the readers, according to 5:11-12?

8. What is the difference between milk and solid food, and how does a believer grow from one to the other? (5:12-14)

9. Has your faith grown over the past year, or have you become sluggish in your hearing? What would help you grow?

10. How is God using hard things in your life to teach you obedience?

Chapter 6: Go On to Maturity

Scripture

6:1-12 Therefore, having left the word of the beginning of the Christ, let us be carried on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of ***the*** teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of ***the*** dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do, if indeed God permits. For ***it is*** impossible ***for*** those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of ***the*** Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and ***the*** powers of ***the*** coming age, and have fallen away, to renew ***them*** again to repentance, since they are crucifying again for themselves the Son of God and putting ***Him*** to open shame. For land that has drunk the rain often coming upon it, and produces vegetation useful for those for whose sake it is also tilled, partakes of blessing from God; but ***if it is*** bringing forth thorns and thistles, ***it is*** worthless and near to a curse, whose end ***is*** for burning. But concerning you, beloved, we have been persuaded of the better ***things*** and ***things*** accompanying salvation, even if we speak in this way. For God ***is*** not unjust, to forget your work and the labor of love which you have shown toward His name, having ministered to the saints and ***still*** ministering. And we desire each of you to show the same earnestness toward the full assurance of the hope until ***the*** end, so that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

6:13-20 For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He had no one greater by whom to swear, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And thus, having waited patiently, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater ***one***, and in all their dispute the oath ***is*** an end for confirmation. In which God, desiring more abundantly to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, guaranteed ***it*** by an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which ***it is*** impossible ***for*** God to lie, we who have fled for refuge may have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope being set before ***us***, which we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and firm, and entering into that within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Chapter 6 Preview

The writer has just told his readers they are still drinking milk. Now he calls them to go on to maturity. They should not keep laying the same foundation over and over: repentance, faith, the teaching about washings and the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. Then comes one of the hardest passages in the Bible. It is impossible, he says, to renew to repentance those who were once enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, became partakers of the Holy Spirit, tasted the good word of God and the powers of the coming age, and then fell away. Land that drinks the rain and bears useful crops is blessed. Land that bears only thorns is near to a curse.

Good Bible teachers have read this warning in very different ways, and this study gives the main views fairly. But the writer does not leave his readers in fear. He says he is sure of better things for

them, things that go with salvation. God has not forgotten their love. Then he points to the strongest ground of hope there is. God made a promise to Abraham and swore by Himself. By two unchangeable things, His promise and His oath, God gives us strong encouragement. Our hope is an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, and it reaches into the very presence of God, where Jesus has gone ahead of us as our High Priest forever.

Chapter 6 Study

6:1 *Therefore, having left the word of the beginning of the Christ, let us be carried on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,*

"Therefore, having left the word of the beginning of the Christ, let us be carried on to maturity." Leaving does not mean throwing away. A builder does not tear up the foundation once it is laid. He builds on it. The writer wants his readers to stop going over the first lessons about Christ and to move on.

"Let us be carried on." The words are passive. We do our part, but it is God who carries us forward. Growth is His work in us.

"Not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God." The foundation has six parts, in three pairs. The first pair is repentance and faith. Repentance means a change of mind that turns from sin. Dead works are works that cannot give life, whether sinful acts or religious rituals done to earn God's favor (9:14). Faith toward God is trusting Him. Every Christian life starts here.

6:2 *of **the** teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of **the** dead, and of eternal judgment.*

"Of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands." The second pair is about outward acts. The word is plural, baptisms or washings. These Jewish readers knew many washings from the Law (9:10), and they had heard of John's baptism and Christian baptism. They needed to understand how these differed. The laying on of hands was used to bless, to set apart for service, and in some cases when the Holy Spirit was given (Acts 6:6; 8:17; 13:3).

"And of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." The third pair is about the future. The dead will rise, and everyone will face God's judgment, which is eternal in its result (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15). Many of these truths were already taught in the Old Testament. They are the first steps. They are true, but they are only the beginning.

6:3 *And this we will do, if indeed God permits.*

"And this we will do, if indeed God permits." The writer means he will go on to maturity with them. He is going to teach them the deeper things of Christ's priesthood in chapter 7.

"If indeed God permits." This is not a pious phrase tacked on. All growth depends on God. We cannot make ourselves grow any more than a farmer can make a seed sprout (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). James tells us to say, If the Lord wills, we will do this or that (James 4:15).

That is a good habit for all our plans. It also prepares for what follows, where the writer speaks of those who cannot be renewed to repentance.

6:4-6 *For **it is** impossible **for** those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of **the** Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and **the** powers of **the** coming age, and have fallen away, to renew **them** again to repentance, since they are crucifying again for themselves the Son of God and putting **Him** to open shame.*

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the coming age, and have fallen away, to renew them again to repentance."

Look at what these people experienced. They were "once enlightened." The light of the gospel shone on them; they understood it. They "tasted of the heavenly gift," which may mean salvation or Christ Himself. They became "partakers of the Holy Spirit," sharing in His work. They "tasted the good word of God," and they saw "the powers of the coming age," the miracles that gave a foretaste of the kingdom (2:4). And then they "have fallen away."

What happens then? It is "impossible" to bring them back to repentance, "since they are crucifying again for themselves the Son of God and putting Him to open shame." For these Jewish readers, turning back to the temple sacrifices meant joining those who said Jesus deserved the cross. It was siding with the crowd that cried out to crucify Him. Some teachers point out that the Greek can be read as while they keep on doing this, meaning there is no way back as long as they go on turning from Christ. Others read the word impossible as final. Either way, they were turning away from the only sacrifice that saves.

Who is the writer talking about? This is one of the most debated passages in the Bible, and good Bible teachers who love the Lord read it in four main ways.

The first view says these are true believers, and the danger is not loss of salvation but loss of reward and God's severe discipline. The burning in verse 8 is like the testing of a believer's works by fire, where the works burn but the person is saved (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). On this reading, the words "to renew them again to repentance" may mean they cannot be brought back to the starting point, and the wilderness generation is the picture: redeemed out of Egypt, yet they died in the desert and lost the land.

The second view says these people were in the church and came very close to salvation, but never truly believed. They saw the light, tasted the good things, and shared in what the Spirit was doing among the believers, much as Judas walked with Jesus. Their falling away shows they were never truly His (1 John 2:19). The words tasted and "partakers" are read as real contact but not saving faith, and the thorny ground of verse 8 shows what was really there all along.

The third view says these are true believers who can, by turning away from Christ, lose their salvation, and that for such people there is no coming back. Those who hold it point to how strongly the experiences in verses 4 and 5 describe a real Christian.

The fourth view says the writer describes something that cannot really happen to a true believer, but says it to show how serious it would be. If a believer could fall away, there could be no second start, because Christ cannot be crucified again. On this reading the warning is one of the means God uses to keep His people, and verse 9 shows the writer did not think it would happen to them.

I do not settle this question here. Each view has thoughtful supporters, and each has hard words to explain. What all of them agree on is plain. The writer meant this warning to be taken seriously. Turning away from Christ is not a small thing. And the very next verses give strong assurance to those who keep trusting Him.

One more word, because this passage has frightened many tender believers. If you are worried that you have fallen away beyond hope, your worry itself is a sign that God is still at work in you. The people described here are not troubled about it. They have turned against Christ and treat Him with contempt. If you want to come to Christ, come. He will not cast out anyone who comes to Him (John 6:37).

6:7-8 *For land that has drunk the rain often coming upon it, and produces vegetation useful for those for whose sake it is also tilled, partakes of blessing from God; but **if it is** bringing forth thorns and thistles, **it is** worthless and near to a curse, whose end **is** for burning.*

"For land that has drunk the rain often coming upon it, and produces vegetation useful for those for whose sake it is also tilled, partakes of blessing from God." The writer gives a picture from farming. The rain falls on the land again and again. That is like the gospel and the work of the Spirit falling on those who hear it.

Good land drinks in the rain and bears a useful crop. It "partakes of blessing from God." Bad land gets the same rain, "but if it is bringing forth thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to a curse, whose end is for burning." Farmers in that day sometimes burned off a field full of weeds.

The point is that the same rain brings different results. What we produce shows what we are. Jesus told a similar parable about seed on different kinds of soil (Matthew 13:3-23). The four views above read the burning in different ways: as the burning of worthless works, as final judgment on those who never truly believed, or as the loss of one who fell away. Notice too the words "near to a curse." The writer stops short of saying it is cursed, and in the next verse he turns to hope.

Old Testament links: Genesis 3:18 (alluded to)

6:9 *But concerning you, beloved, we have been persuaded of the better **things** and **things** accompanying salvation, even if we speak in this way.*

"But concerning you, beloved, we have been persuaded of the better things and things accompanying salvation, even if we speak in this way." Here the tone changes. He calls them "beloved." He has spoken strongly, but he does not believe this describes them. He is persuaded of better things.

"Things accompanying salvation" are the things that come with real salvation, the fruit that shows the root is alive. The writer saw those things in them, as the next verse shows.

This is how a pastor warns. He does not want to leave his people in terror. He warns because he loves them, and he speaks hope because he sees God's work in them. When we warn others, we should do it the same way.

6:10 *For God **is** not unjust, to forget your work and the labor of love which you have shown toward His name, having ministered to the saints and **still** ministering.*

"For God is not unjust, to forget your work and the labor of love which you have shown toward His name." God sees. He keeps a record of every kindness His people show. Nothing done for Him is wasted (Matthew 10:42; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

"Having ministered to the saints and still ministering." Their love was not only in the past. They were still serving other believers, and that service was shown "toward His name." When they cared for God's people, they were really doing it for God (Matthew 25:40).

This is the kind of evidence the writer has in mind when he speaks of things that go with salvation. Real faith works through love (Galatians 5:6). Their love showed that God was at work in them.

6:11 *And we desire each of you to show the same earnestness toward the full assurance of the hope until **the** end,*

"And we desire each of you to show the same earnestness toward the full assurance of the hope until the end." The writer wants them to keep going with the same zeal they had shown in serving others. He wants "each of you." No one should be left behind.

"The full assurance of the hope" means being fully sure of what God has promised. God wants His people to be sure. Assurance grows as we keep on in faith and love. The writer wants that earnestness to last "until the end," just as he said in 3:6 and 3:14. Assurance is not meant for a few super-Christians. It is God's will for every believer who trusts Him (1 John 5:13).

6:12 *so that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

"So that you may not become sluggish." The same word appears in 5:11. They had become dull of hearing. The writer does not want that dullness to spread to the rest of their lives.

"But imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Who are those? The writer is about to name Abraham, and in chapter 11 he will name many more. Faith trusts God's promises. Patience waits for them, even when it takes a long time. Faith and patience go together. Faith without patience gives up too soon. We all need examples to follow. Look for people in Scripture and in your church who have trusted God for the long haul, and follow them.

6:13 *For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He had no one greater by whom to swear, He swore by Himself,*

"For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He had no one greater by whom to swear, He swore by Himself." The writer now turns from warning to assurance, and he gives his readers solid ground to stand on. He goes back to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people.

After Abraham offered Isaac, God swore an oath (Genesis 22:16-18). When people swear an oath, they call on someone greater than themselves. But there is no one greater than God. So He swore by Himself. He put His own name and character on the line. His promise to Abraham could not fail unless God Himself failed.

Old Testament links: Genesis 22:16 (alluded to)

6:14 *saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."*

"Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." The writer is quoting Genesis 22:17. The repeated words are a Hebrew way of saying something strongly. It means, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply you.

God kept that promise. Abraham's descendants became a great nation, and through his Seed, Christ, blessing has come to all the nations (Galatians 3:8, 16). God is still keeping His promises to Abraham, including His promises to Abraham's physical descendants, the people of Israel (Romans 11:28-29).

Old Testament links: Genesis 22:17 (quoted)

6:15 *And thus, having waited patiently, he obtained the promise.*

"And thus, having waited patiently, he obtained the promise." Abraham waited twenty-five years for Isaac to be born (Genesis 12:4; 21:5). Then God asked him to offer Isaac, and Abraham obeyed, trusting God (11:17-19). After that test, God confirmed the promise with His oath.

Abraham is our example of faith and patience. He did not see all of the promise fulfilled in his lifetime, but he saw enough to know God was faithful. Waiting is hard. But God's timing is never wrong. Are you waiting on God for something? Abraham's story says, Keep trusting. God keeps His word.

6:16 *For men indeed swear by the greater **one**, and in all their dispute the oath **is** an end for confirmation.*

"For men indeed swear by the greater one, and in all their dispute the oath is an end for confirmation." When people disagreed in the ancient world, an oath often settled it. A man swore by God that what he said was true, and that ended the argument.

People still do this. A witness in court swears to tell the truth. An oath is meant to make a word certain. The writer's point is that if an oath settles things among men, how much more does God's oath settle things for us?

6:17 *In which God, desiring more abundantly to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, guaranteed **it** by an oath,*

"In which God, desiring more abundantly to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, guaranteed it by an oath." God's word alone is enough. He cannot lie. But God wanted to make it extra clear. He was "desiring more abundantly to show" that His purpose will never change. So He added an oath to His promise.

"The heirs of the promise" are Abraham and all who share his faith. God did this for us. He knows how weak our faith can be, and He gave us more than we needed to be sure. That is how much He wants His children to be confident in Him.

6:18 *so that through two unchangeable things, in which **it is** impossible **for** God to lie, we who have fled for refuge may have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope being set before **us**,*

"So that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie." The two unchangeable things are God's promise and God's oath. Neither one can change. And God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Notice the word "impossible." In 6:4 the writer said it was impossible to renew those who fall away. Here he says it is impossible for God to lie. Set the two side by side.

"We who have fled for refuge may have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope being set before us." This pictures the cities of refuge in Israel. A man who killed someone by accident could run to one of these cities and be safe (Numbers 35:9-15). We have fled to Christ for refuge. We take hold of the hope set before us, and we hold on.

6:19 *which we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and firm, and entering into that within the veil,*

"Which we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and firm." An anchor keeps a ship from drifting (2:1). Storms come, and the waves toss the ship, but the anchor holds. Our hope in Christ is that kind of anchor. It is sure, it does not slip, and firm, it does not break.

"And entering into that within the veil." Here the picture changes. A normal anchor goes down into the sea. This anchor goes up, into the Most Holy Place behind the veil, the curtain where God's presence was. Our hope is fastened to God's own throne. It cannot be moved, because it is held by Someone who cannot be moved.

Old Testament links: Leviticus 16:2 (alluded to)

6:20 *where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

"Where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us." A forerunner runs ahead to prepare the way for others who will follow. The high priest in Israel went behind the veil alone, and no one could follow him. Jesus has gone into God's presence for us, and we will follow Him there (John 14:2-3).

"Having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." The writer has come back to where he stopped in 5:10. Now he is ready to explain what it means that Jesus is a priest like Melchizedek, and he will do it in chapter 7. For now, the point is clear. Our hope is as secure as Jesus Himself, and He lives forever.

Old Testament links: Psalm 110:4 (quoted)

Chapter 6 Summary

The writer urges his readers to go on to maturity and not keep laying the foundation of repentance and faith, washings and laying on of hands, resurrection and eternal judgment. He warns that it is impossible to renew to repentance those who were once enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God and the powers of the coming age, and then fell away, since they crucify the Son of God again and put Him to open shame. Bible teachers read this warning in four main ways, and all agree it must be taken seriously. Land that drinks the rain and bears fruit is blessed, but land that bears thorns is near to a curse. Yet the writer is confident of better things for his readers, things that go with salvation, because God has not forgotten their work and love. He urges them to keep the full assurance of hope to the end and to imitate those who inherit the promises through faith and patience. God promised Abraham and swore by Himself, and Abraham waited patiently and obtained the promise. By two unchangeable things, God's promise and His oath, we who have fled to Him have strong encouragement. Our hope is an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, reaching behind the veil, where Jesus has entered as our forerunner and High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Chapter 6 Study Questions

1. What six things make up the foundation in 6:1-2?

2. What does it mean to go on to maturity without throwing away the foundation? (6:1)

3. List the experiences described in 6:4-5. What do they tell you about the people the writer has in mind?

4. Why does the writer say it is impossible to renew such people to repentance? (6:6)

5. What does the picture of the land in 6:7-8 teach?

6. What made the writer confident of better things for his readers? (6:9-10)

7. What two unchangeable things give us strong encouragement, and why? (6:17-18)

8. How is our hope like an anchor, and where is it fastened? (6:19-20)

9. Has this passage ever troubled you? How do 6:9-20 and John 6:37 speak to that fear?

10. Who in your life is an example of faith and patience? What can you learn from them this week?

Chapter 7: A Priest Like Melchizedek

Scripture

7:1-10 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth of all, ***being*** first, when translated, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace, without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest perpetually. Now consider how great this ***one was***, to whom even Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth out of the best spoils. And those indeed from the sons of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment to collect a tenth from the people according to the law, that is, from their brothers, though they have come out of the loins of Abraham. But the one whose ancestry is not traced from them has collected a tenth from Abraham, and has blessed the one having the promises. Now apart from all dispute, the lesser is blessed by the better. And here indeed dying men receive tithes, but there ***one receives them*** of whom it is testified that he lives. And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, the one receiving tithes, has paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of ***his*** father when Melchizedek met him.

7:11-19 If then indeed perfection were through the Levitical priesthood, for the people had received the law upon it, what further need ***was there*** for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not to be named according to the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is being changed, of necessity a change of law also takes place. For ***He*** concerning whom these things are spoken has belonged to another tribe, from which no one has served at the altar. For ***it is*** evident that our Lord has sprung out of Judah, as to which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet more abundantly evident if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become ***such*** not according to a law of a fleshly commandment, but according to ***the*** power of an indestructible life. For He testifies that, "You ***are*** a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." For indeed there is a setting aside of ***the*** preceding commandment because of its weakness and uselessness, for the law perfected nothing; but ***there is*** the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

7:20-28 And inasmuch as ***it was*** not apart from an oath (for they indeed have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One saying to Him, "***The*** Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, 'You ***are*** a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'"), by so much Jesus has become ***the*** guarantee of a better covenant. And they indeed have become many priests because they are prevented by death from continuing; but He, because He abides forever, holds the priesthood permanently. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, always living to intercede for them. For such a high priest was fitting for us: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and having become higher than the heavens; who does not have need every day, as the high priests ***do***, to offer up sacrifices first for their own sins, then for those of the people; for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints men ***as*** high priests having weakness, but the word of the oath, which ***came*** after the law, ***appoints*** a Son, perfected forever.

Chapter 7 Preview

Now the writer gives the solid food he promised. Melchizedek appears only briefly in the Old Testament: once in Genesis 14, when he met Abraham, blessed him, and received a tenth of the spoils, and once in Psalm 110:4, where God says the Messiah will be a priest forever according to his order. From those two passages the writer draws a great truth. Melchizedek was both king and priest. His name means king of righteousness, and he was king of Salem, which means peace. Scripture records no father, mother, or genealogy for him, no beginning or end, and in that way he pictures the Son of God. He was greater than Abraham, because Abraham gave him a tenth and received his blessing, and so he was greater than Levi and all the priests who came from Abraham.

Then the writer shows why a new priest was needed. If the Levitical priesthood could make people perfect, God would not have promised another priest of a different order. Jesus came from Judah, not Levi, and His priesthood rests on the power of an indestructible life. The old commandment was set aside because it was weak, and a better hope brings us near to God. God made Jesus a priest with an oath, and He has become the guarantee of a better covenant. The old priests died, one after another, but Jesus lives forever. So He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to pray for them. He is holy, innocent, and undefiled, and He offered Himself once for all.

Chapter 7 Study

7:1 *For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,*

"For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High." The writer goes back to Genesis 14:17-20. Abraham had just rescued his nephew Lot by defeating four kings. On his way home he met Melchizedek.

Melchizedek was a king, and he was also a priest, which was unusual. Salem is most likely the early name of Jerusalem (Psalm 76:2). He was a priest of "God Most High," the true God, long before the Law of Moses or the tribe of Levi.

He "met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him." Melchizedek brought out bread and wine and blessed Abraham in the name of God Most High (Genesis 14:18-19). That is nearly all we know about him from the Old Testament.

Old Testament links: Genesis 14:17-20 (pictured)

7:2 *to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth of all,* ***being*** *first, when translated, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace,*

"To whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth of all." Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils of the battle. A tenth is called a tithe. Abraham did this freely, as an act of honor to God's priest, hundreds of years before the Law required tithes from Israel.

Then the writer explains the names. "Being first, when translated, king of righteousness." That is what Melchizedek means in Hebrew. "And then also king of Salem, which is king of peace." Salem is close to the Hebrew word shalom, peace. Notice the order. Righteousness comes first, then peace. That is the way of the gospel. God makes us right with Him, and then we have peace with Him (Romans 5:1). Jesus is the true King of righteousness and the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Old Testament links: Genesis 14:18-20 (pictured)

7:3 *without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest perpetually.*

"Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life." In Israel, a priest had to prove his family line from Aaron. Men who could not find their record were put out of the priesthood (Ezra 2:61-62). But Genesis gives no family line for Melchizedek. It tells us nothing of his birth or his death. He steps onto the page and then steps off.

"But made like the Son of God, remains a priest perpetually." The writer uses that silence as a picture. As far as the record goes, Melchizedek's priesthood has no start and no end. In that way he is "made like" the Son of God, who truly has no beginning and no end.

Who was Melchizedek? Bible teachers hold three main views. Most believe he was a real man, a king-priest in Canaan, and that the words of this verse describe what Scripture does not record about him, so that he is a type, or picture, of Christ. Those who hold this view point to the words "made like the Son of God," since a picture is not the same as the one it pictures. Others believe he was an appearance of the Son of God Himself before He was born in Bethlehem, since the verse says he had no beginning or end and still remains a priest. An old Jewish tradition said he was Shem, the son of Noah, but that view has few followers today. Each view honors Christ. The main point is not in doubt. Christ is the real and eternal Priest whom Melchizedek pictured.

Old Testament links: Psalm 110:4 (alluded to)

7:4 *Now consider how great this **one was**, to whom even Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth out of the best spoils.*

"Now consider how great this one was." The writer asks his readers to stop and think. If you want to know how great Melchizedek was, look at what Abraham did.

"To whom even Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth out of the best spoils." Abraham was the patriarch, the father of the whole nation, the man to whom God gave the promises. To a Jewish reader, there was no greater man in the Old Testament. And yet Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth, and he gave it "out of the best spoils," the choicest part. By doing that, Abraham honored Melchizedek as the greater one. That is the writer's point. If Abraham honored him, how great this priest must have been.

7:5 *And those indeed from the sons of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment to collect a tenth from the people according to the law, that is, from their brothers, though they have come out of the loins of Abraham.*

"And those indeed from the sons of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment to collect a tenth from the people according to the law." Under the Law of Moses, the people gave a tenth to the Levites, and the Levites gave a tenth of that to the priests (Numbers 18:21-28). That was their support, since they did not have land like the other tribes.

"That is, from their brothers, though they have come out of the loins of Abraham." The Levites took tithes from their own relatives, fellow descendants of Abraham. They had the right to do that because the Law gave it to them. The priests and the people were all equal as sons of Abraham. The Levites were set above their brothers only by the command of the Law.

Old Testament links: Numbers 18:21 (alluded to)

7:6 *But the one whose ancestry is not traced from them has collected a tenth from Abraham, and has blessed the one having the promises.*

"But the one whose ancestry is not traced from them has collected a tenth from Abraham." Melchizedek was not a Levite. He was not even a descendant of Abraham. And yet he collected a tenth from Abraham himself. He did not need a law to give him that right. His greatness gave it to him.

"And has blessed the one having the promises." This is even more striking. Abraham was the man who held God's promises, the man through whom all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12:2-3). And yet Melchizedek blessed him. Abraham, who carried the blessing for the world, bowed to receive a blessing from this priest-king.

7:7 *Now apart from all dispute, the lesser is blessed by the better.*

"Now apart from all dispute, the lesser is blessed by the better." The writer states a rule that everyone in his day accepted. When one person blesses another in this formal way, as a priest blessing in God's name, the one giving the blessing holds the higher place. A father blesses his son. A priest blesses the people.

So when Melchizedek blessed Abraham, it showed that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham. This is not a put-down of Abraham. He was a great man of faith. But it shows that God had a priest whose order stood above the father of the Jewish nation, and so above the Levites who would come from him.

Old Testament links: Genesis 14:19 (alluded to)

7:8 *And here indeed dying men receive tithes, but there* ***one receives them*** *of whom it is testified that he lives.*

"And here indeed dying men receive tithes." The priests of Levi were mortal. They served, they took tithes, and they died. Then their sons took their place.

"But there one receives them of whom it is testified that he lives." With Melchizedek, Scripture records no death. The record only says he lives, so to speak, because his story has no ending. Once again the writer uses the silence of Genesis as a picture of Christ. As we will see in verses 16 and 24 to 25, the priest Melchizedek pictures really does live forever. Jesus always lives, and that is why His priesthood never ends.

7:9-10 *And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, the one receiving tithes, has paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of* ***his*** *father when Melchizedek met him.*

"And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, the one receiving tithes, has paid tithes." The words "so to speak" show the writer knows this is a way of putting it, not a literal statement. Levi was not born yet. He was Abraham's great-grandson.

"For he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him." In the Bible's way of thinking, a man's descendants are counted as being in him. When Abraham gave a tenth to Melchizedek, all his descendants, including Levi and every priest who would come from Levi, were in a sense giving it with him. So the priests of Levi, who collected tithes, had in effect paid tithes to Melchizedek. His priesthood is greater than theirs.

7:11 *If then indeed perfection were through the Levitical priesthood, for the people had received the law upon it, what further need* ***was there*** *for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not to be named according to the order of Aaron?*

"If then indeed perfection were through the Levitical priesthood." Perfection here means bringing people fully to God, with sins truly dealt with and the conscience made clean (9:9; 10:1, 14). Could the priests of Levi do that?

"For the people had received the law upon it." The Law and the priesthood went together. The Law was given on the basis of the priesthood, and the priesthood was set up by the Law.

"What further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not to be named according to the order of Aaron?" Here is the argument. Psalm 110 was written by David, long after Aaron's priesthood was set up. If Aaron's priesthood was enough, why did God promise a new priest of a different order? The promise itself shows the old order could not finish the job.

Old Testament links: Psalm 110:4 (alluded to)

7:12 *For when the priesthood is being changed, of necessity a change of law also takes place.*

"For when the priesthood is being changed, of necessity a change of law also takes place." The priesthood and the Law were tied together. If God changes one, He changes the other.

This was a big step for these Jewish readers. The writer is saying the arrangement under the Law of Moses was not meant to last forever. God's moral standards do not change. Murder, adultery, and theft are still sin. But the system of priests, sacrifices, and rituals given at Sinai was a temporary arrangement. Now that the new Priest has come, the old arrangement has served its

purpose. Paul teaches the same thing when he says the Law was like a guardian until Christ came (Galatians 3:24-25).

7:13-14 *For **He** concerning whom these things are spoken has belonged to another tribe, from which no one has served at the altar. For **it is** evident that our Lord has sprung out of Judah, as to which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.*

"For He concerning whom these things are spoken has belonged to another tribe, from which no one has served at the altar." Jesus is the One Psalm 110:4 speaks of. But He did not come from the tribe of Levi.

"For it is evident that our Lord has sprung out of Judah." Everyone knew Jesus was from the line of David, from the tribe of Judah (Matthew 1:1-3; Revelation 5:5). The word sprung is a word used for the sun rising, and for a plant springing up, and it is used in the prophets for the Branch from David's line (Jeremiah 23:5).

"As to which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood." The Law never gave priests from Judah. So under the Law, Jesus could not be a priest. That shows His priesthood belongs to a different order, the order of Melchizedek.

7:15-16 *And it is yet more abundantly evident if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become **such** not according to a law of a fleshly commandment, but according to **the** power of an indestructible life.*

"And it is yet more abundantly evident if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek." The writer adds another proof that things have changed. The new Priest is not just from a different tribe. He is a different kind of priest altogether.

"Who has become such not according to a law of a fleshly commandment." The priests of Levi got their place by birth. It was a matter of the flesh, of which family you were born into.

"But according to the power of an indestructible life." Jesus is a priest because of who He is and the life He has. He died, but death could not hold Him. He rose, and now His life cannot be destroyed. The word indestructible means it cannot be broken up or dissolved. His priesthood can never end, because He can never die again (Romans 6:9).

Old Testament links: Psalm 110:4 (alluded to)

7:17 *For He testifies that, "You **are** a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."*

"For He testifies that," and here is the testimony: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." The writer quotes Psalm 110:4 for the third time (5:6; 6:20). The key word is "forever." That word only fits a priest with an indestructible life.

Think about what this means for us. Every human priest, pastor, and helper we have will one day be gone. People we rely on move away, grow old, and die. Our High Priest will never leave His post. He will be there for you every day of your life and forever after. That is why the writer keeps coming back to this verse.

Old Testament links: Psalm 110:4 (quoted)

7:18-19 *For indeed there is a setting aside of **the** preceding commandment because of its weakness and uselessness, for the law perfected nothing; but **there is** the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.*

"For indeed there is a setting aside of the preceding commandment because of its weakness and uselessness." The commandment here is the Law about the priesthood and the whole system that went with it. The words "setting aside" mean it has been cancelled, put out of force.

Why? Because of "its weakness and uselessness." That does not mean the Law was bad. Paul says the Law is holy and good (Romans 7:12). It means the Law could not do what we most needed. "For the law perfected nothing." It could show sin, but it could not take it away. It could point to the cure, but it was not the cure.

"But there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God." Here is that word better again. The better hope is Jesus and what He has done. The Law kept people at a distance. Only the high priest could go into the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. Through Christ, every believer can draw near to God.

7:20-21 *And inasmuch as **it was** not apart from an oath (for they indeed have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One saying to Him, "**The** Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, 'You **are** a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'"),*

"And inasmuch as it was not apart from an oath." The writer gives another way Jesus' priesthood is better. God swore an oath when He made Him a priest.

"For they indeed have become priests without an oath." The priests of Levi took their office by birth and by the Law. God never swore an oath to Aaron that his priesthood would last forever. "But He with an oath through the One saying to Him," and the writer quotes Psalm 110:4 again, this time with its opening words: "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind."

When God swears, the matter is settled forever (6:17-18). He will never take back the priesthood of His Son. "Will not change His mind" means He will never regret it or reverse it.

Old Testament links: Psalm 110:4 (quoted)

7:22 *by so much Jesus has become **the** guarantee of a better covenant.*

"By so much Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant." A covenant is a binding agreement. God made the old covenant with Israel at Sinai. Now Jesus is the guarantee of a better covenant, the new covenant promised in Jeremiah 31, which the writer will explain in chapter 8.

The word guarantee is used only here in the New Testament. It was used for someone who put up his own life or property to make sure a promise was kept, like a person who cosigns a loan. Jesus Himself is the guarantee that every promise of the new covenant will be kept. As long as He lives, the covenant stands, and He lives forever.

7:23 *And they indeed have become many priests because they are prevented by death from continuing;*

"And they indeed have become many priests because they are prevented by death from continuing." Over the centuries, Israel had many high priests. Aaron died, and his son Eleazar took his place (Numbers 20:23-28). Eleazar died, and his son took his place. And so it went, one generation after another.

Each priest served for a while, and then death stopped him. No matter how good a priest was, he could not stay. That meant the people were always losing their priest and getting used to a new one. There was always a break in the work. Death was the enemy that even the high priest could not beat.

7:24 *but He, because He abides forever, holds the priesthood permanently.*

"But He, because He abides forever, holds the priesthood permanently." Jesus will never be replaced. He will never have a successor. The word permanently can mean that His priesthood cannot pass to another. It is His alone, and it never changes hands.

This is a great comfort. You do not have to wonder whether your High Priest will still be there tomorrow. You do not have to get used to a new one. The same Jesus who prayed for Peter (Luke 22:31-32) is the same Jesus who prays for you, and He will never stop.

7:25 *Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, always living to intercede for them.*

"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him." Here is one of the great promises of the Bible. "To the uttermost" means completely, all the way, and for all time. Jesus does not save us part way and leave the rest to us. He saves completely.

Who does He save? "Those who draw near to God through Him." The way to God is through Jesus (John 14:6). Anyone who comes to God through Him will be saved, no matter how far gone they think they are.

And why can He do it? "Always living to intercede for them." To intercede means to speak to God on someone's behalf. Jesus is at the Father's right hand, praying for His people right now (Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1). His death paid for our sins once for all, and His life in heaven keeps us. If you belong to Christ, the Son of God is praying for you today.

7:26 *For such a high priest was fitting for us: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and having become higher than the heavens;*

"For such a high priest was fitting for us." Jesus is exactly the High Priest we need. Then the writer describes Him. He is holy, devoted to God completely. He is "innocent," without evil or harm toward anyone. He is "undefiled," never stained by sin.

He is "separated from sinners." He lived among sinners, ate with them, and touched them, but He was never one of them in His character. And now He is separated from them in place too, "having become higher than the heavens," seated at God's right hand. A sinful high priest could only offer for others what he also needed for himself. Our High Priest is spotless, and He is exalted above all.

7:27 *who does not have need every day, as the high priests **do**, to offer up sacrifices first for their own sins, then for those of the people; for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.*

"Who does not have need every day, as the high priests do, to offer up sacrifices first for their own sins, then for those of the people." The priests offered sacrifices day after day, and the high priest had to deal with his own sin before he could deal with the people's (5:3).

"For this He did once for all when He offered up Himself." Here is the heart of the gospel. Jesus was both the Priest and the sacrifice. He did not bring a lamb. He was the Lamb (John 1:29). And He did it "once for all." That phrase will be repeated in chapters 9 and 10. His sacrifice never needs to be repeated, because it was enough. Nothing can be added to it.

7:28 *For the law appoints men **as** high priests having weakness, but the word of the oath, which **came** after the law, **appoints** a Son, perfected forever.*

"For the law appoints men as high priests having weakness." The high priests under the Law were weak, sinful, and mortal.

"But the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints a Son, perfected forever." The oath of Psalm 110:4 came centuries after the Law of Moses, which shows that God was replacing the old order with something better. And it appointed not a weak man but a Son, the eternal Son of God, who became man and was "perfected forever." He finished His work, and He is complete forever as our Savior and Priest.

This verse sums up the chapter. The Law gave weak men. God's oath gave His perfect Son.

Old Testament links: Psalm 110:4 (alluded to)

Chapter 7 Summary

Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, met Abraham after the defeat of the kings, blessed him, and received a tenth of the spoils. His name means king of righteousness, and Salem means peace. Scripture records no father, mother, genealogy, beginning, or end for him, so he pictures the Son of God, a priest who remains forever. He was greater than Abraham, because he received tithes from him and blessed him, and so in a sense Levi paid tithes to him through

Abraham. If the Levitical priesthood had brought perfection, God would not have promised a priest of Melchizedek's order. A change of priesthood means a change of law. Jesus came from Judah, and He is a priest by the power of an indestructible life. The old commandment was set aside because it was weak and made nothing perfect, and a better hope has come through which we draw near to God. Jesus was made a priest with God's oath, and He is the guarantee of a better covenant. The old priests were many because death stopped them, but Jesus lives forever, so He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, always living to intercede for them. He is holy, innocent, undefiled, and exalted above the heavens. He does not need to offer sacrifices every day, because He offered Himself once for all. The Law appointed weak men, but God's oath appointed a Son, made perfect forever.

Chapter 7 Study Questions

1. What do we learn about Melchizedek in 7:1-2 and Genesis 14:18-20?

2. What do his name and title mean, and how do they point to Christ? (7:2)

3. How does the writer show that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham and Levi? (7:4-10)

4. Why was a new priest needed, according to 7:11?

5. What made Jesus a priest, if it was not His family line? (7:16)

6. What was weak about the Law, and what has taken its place? (7:18-19)

7. Why does it matter that Jesus was made a priest with an oath? (7:20-22)

8. What does 7:25 promise, and why can Jesus do it?

9. How does it help you to know that Jesus is praying for you right now?

10. Is there anything you are adding to Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, as if it were not enough? (7:27)

Chapter 8: A Better Covenant

Scripture

8:1-13 Now the main point of the things being spoken ***is this***: we have such a high priest, who sat down at ***the*** right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; therefore ***it was*** necessary ***for*** this ***One*** also to have something that He may offer. For if indeed He were on earth, He would not even be a priest, since there are the priests who offer the gifts according to the law, who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly ***things***, just as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to complete the tabernacle; for "See," He says, "***that*** you make all things according to the pattern which was shown to you on the mountain." But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also ***the*** mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first ***covenant*** had been faultless, a place would not have been sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says, "Look, days are coming, says ***the*** Lord, and I will complete with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in ***the*** day of My taking hold of their hand to lead them out of ***the*** land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says ***the*** Lord. For this ***is*** the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says ***the*** Lord: putting My laws into their mind, I will also inscribe them on their hearts; and I will be to them for God, and they will be to Me for a people. And they shall certainly not teach each his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because all will know Me, from ***the*** least of them to ***the*** greatest of them. Because I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will certainly not remember any more." In saying "new," He has made the first obsolete; and what is growing obsolete and aging ***is*** near vanishing.

Chapter 8 Preview

The writer now tells us the main point of everything he has been saying. We have a High Priest who sat down at the right hand of God's throne in heaven. He serves in the true tabernacle, the one the Lord set up, not man. The priests on earth served in a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. That is why God told Moses to build the tabernacle exactly according to the pattern shown him on the mountain.

Jesus has a better ministry because He is the mediator of a better covenant, built on better promises. If the first covenant had been without fault, there would have been no need for a second. So the writer quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34, the longest Old Testament quotation in the New Testament. God promised to make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. He would write His laws on their hearts, all of them would know Him, and He would remember their sins no more. By calling it new, God made the first one old, and what is growing old is ready to vanish away.

Chapter 8 Study

8:1 *Now the main point of the things being spoken **is this**: we have such a high priest, who sat down at **the** right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,*

"Now the main point of the things being spoken is this." The writer stops to sum up. After all the detail about Melchizedek, here is the point: "We have such a high priest."

"Who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." This is the third time the letter speaks of Jesus seated at God's right hand (1:3, 13), and it will come back again (10:12; 12:2). The priests on earth never sat while they served. There was no chair in the tabernacle. Jesus sat down because His sacrifice was finished. And He sat down at the right hand of the throne, the place of power. Our High Priest is also the King. He is not only praying for us. He rules over all.

Old Testament links: Psalm 110:1 (alluded to)

8:2 *a minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.*

"A minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle." A minister here is one who serves in worship. Jesus serves as Priest in "the holy places," the real presence of God in heaven.

"The true tabernacle" does not mean the one on earth was false. God commanded it to be built. True means real, the original, compared to a copy. The tabernacle on earth was a model. The real one is in heaven.

"Which the Lord pitched, and not man." Moses and the people built the earthly tent with their own hands, using gold, wood, and cloth. The heavenly one was set up by God Himself. Jesus does not serve in a building made by men. He serves in God's own presence.

8:3 *For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; therefore **it was** necessary **for** this **One** also to have something that He may offer.*

"For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices." This is what a priest does (5:1). A priest without an offering is not a priest.

"Therefore it was necessary for this One also to have something that He may offer." So what did Jesus offer? The writer has already said it (7:27), and he will say it more fully in chapters 9 and 10. He offered Himself. He did not bring the blood of animals into the presence of God. He brought His own blood (9:12). The offering He made was once for all, and it does not need to be repeated. His work in heaven now rests on that one offering.

8:4 *For if indeed He were on earth, He would not even be a priest, since there are the priests who offer the gifts according to the law,*

"For if indeed He were on earth, He would not even be a priest." Jesus was from Judah, not Levi (7:14). Under the Law of Moses, He could not serve as a priest in the temple in Jerusalem. That place was already taken.

"Since there are the priests who offer the gifts according to the law." Notice the present tense. The writer speaks as though the priests are still offering their gifts in the temple. That is one of the reasons many believe Hebrews was written before A.D. 70, when the Romans destroyed the temple and the sacrifices stopped.

Jesus' priesthood is not of this earth. His service is in heaven, and that is why it is better.

8:5 *who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly **things**, just as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to complete the tabernacle; for "See," He says, "**that** you make all things according to the pattern which was shown to you on the mountain."*

"Who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things." The earthly priests served in a copy, a sketch or outline of the real thing. A shadow has the shape of the object that casts it, but it is not the object. You can tell something about a person from his shadow, but you cannot shake hands with a shadow.

"Just as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to complete the tabernacle." God gave Moses exact directions (Exodus 25:9, 40). God told him to make all things by the pattern shown to him on the mountain. Why did God care so much about the details? Because the tabernacle was a picture of heaven and of the work of Christ. Every piece meant something. The ark, the altar, the lampstand, and the veil all pointed to Him.

Old Testament links: Exodus 25:40 (quoted)

8:6 *But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also **the** mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.*

"But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry." Jesus' service is better than that of the priests on earth, just as the real thing is better than the shadow.

"By as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant." A mediator is a go-between who brings two sides together. Moses was the mediator of the old covenant at Sinai. Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant. He brings God and people together, and He does it by His own blood (9:15; 1 Timothy 2:5).

"Which has been enacted on better promises." The old covenant promised blessing for obedience and curses for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28). It depended on the people keeping their side. The new covenant rests on what God promises He will do. The writer lists those better promises in verses 10 to 12.

8:7 *For if that first **covenant** had been faultless, a place would not have been sought for a second.*

"For if that first covenant had been faultless, a place would not have been sought for a second." The writer argues as he did about the priesthood (7:11). If the first had done everything needed, God would not have promised a new one.

The first covenant was not evil. God gave it, and it was good for what it was meant to do. It showed God's holiness, revealed sin, and pointed to Christ. But it could not change the human heart. The

very fact that God promised a new covenant through Jeremiah shows that the old one was never meant to be the last word.

8:8 *For finding fault with them, He says, "Look, days are coming, says **the** Lord, and I will complete with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant,*

"For finding fault with them." Notice who the fault is with: them, the people. The problem with the old covenant was not God's side. It was that the people did not keep it. The Law was holy, but it could not make sinners holy.

"Look, days are coming, says the Lord, and I will complete with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant." Here begins the quote from Jeremiah 31:31-34. Jeremiah spoke these words near the time Jerusalem fell to Babylon, around 600 B.C. The nation had broken God's covenant, and judgment was coming. But God promised a new day.

Notice who the promise is made to: "with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." The kingdom had split into north and south. God promised to make the new covenant with the whole nation, both parts brought back together. This is a promise to the people of Israel, and God has not forgotten it.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 31:31 (quoted)

8:9 *not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in **the** day of My taking hold of their hand to lead them out of **the** land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says **the** Lord.*

"Not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day of My taking hold of their hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt." The new covenant would not be like the old one made at Sinai. Look at the tender picture: God took Israel by the hand, like a father leading a child, and brought them out of Egypt.

"Because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord." Israel broke the covenant again and again. They worshiped idols, ignored the prophets, and turned from God. So God let them go their own way for a time, and sent them into exile. The old covenant showed that people cannot keep God's Law in their own strength. Something had to change inside them.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 31:32 (quoted)

8:10 *For this **is** the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says **the** Lord: putting My laws into their mind, I will also inscribe them on their hearts; and I will be to them for God, and they will be to Me for a people.*

"For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord." Now God tells what the new covenant will do. The first promise is this: "Putting My laws into their mind, I will also inscribe them on their hearts."

Under the old covenant, God's Law was written on tablets of stone. Under the new, God writes it on the heart. That means God changes us from the inside, so we want to do His will. Ezekiel spoke of the same thing: a new heart and God's Spirit within (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

"And I will be to them for God, and they will be to Me for a people." This is the heart of every covenant God makes. He will be our God, and we will be His people. It means a real, lasting relationship with Him.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 31:33 (quoted)

8:11 *And they shall certainly not teach each his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because all will know Me, from **the** least of them to **the** greatest of them.*

"And they shall certainly not teach each his neighbor and each his brother," telling him to know the Lord. Under the old covenant, many in Israel did not know God personally. They had to be told to know Him. Under the new covenant, every member will know Him.

"Because all will know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them." This does not mean we will never need teachers. The New Testament gives teachers to the church (Ephesians 4:11). It means that knowing God will not be for a few. Every member of the new covenant, from the least to the greatest, will have a real, personal relationship with God. Do you know God that way, not just know about Him?

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 31:34 (quoted)

8:12 *Because I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will certainly not remember any more."*

"Because I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will certainly not remember any more." This is the foundation of the whole covenant. Notice the first word, because. God writes His law on hearts and lets all know Him because He forgives.

To "not remember" does not mean God forgets like we do. God knows everything. It means He will never bring them up against us again. He will not hold them against us. They are dealt with forever. Under the old covenant, the sacrifices reminded people of their sins every year (10:3). Under the new, the sins are gone. The writer will quote this verse again in 10:17.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 31:34 (quoted)

8:13 *In saying "new," He has made the first obsolete; and what is growing obsolete and aging **is** near vanishing.*

In saying new, "He has made the first obsolete." When God spoke of a new covenant through Jeremiah, He was already saying the old one would not last. To call one new is to call the other old.

"And what is growing obsolete and aging is near vanishing." The writer says the old covenant system is "near vanishing." If the letter was written in the 60s, as many believe, the temple was

destroyed only a few years later, in A.D. 70, and the sacrifices ended. The writer did not know the date, but he knew God's plan. The shadow was passing because the real thing had come.

How does the new covenant, made with Israel and Judah, apply to the church? Jesus said at the Last Supper that the cup was the new covenant in His blood (Luke 22:20), and Paul called himself a minister of the new covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6). So believers today, Jew and Gentile, already share in its spiritual blessings: forgiveness, a new heart, and knowing God, all through the blood of Jesus. But the church has not replaced Israel. God made this promise to the house of Israel and the house of Judah, and He will keep it to them. Paul says that one day all Israel will be saved, when God takes away their sins as He promised in His covenant (Romans 11:25-29). The church shares in the new covenant now. Israel as a nation will receive all of it when Christ returns.

Chapter 8 Summary

The main point is this: we have a High Priest who sat down at the right hand of God's throne in heaven. He serves in the true tabernacle, set up by the Lord, not man. Every high priest must offer something, and if Jesus were on earth He would not be a priest, since the priests there offer gifts by the Law. They serve in a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, which is why God told Moses to make everything by the pattern shown him on the mountain. Jesus has a better ministry, because He is the mediator of a better covenant built on better promises. If the first covenant had been without fault, there would be no need for a second. God found fault with the people and promised through Jeremiah a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, unlike the one made when He led them out of Egypt. In it He would write His laws on their hearts, be their God, and they would be His people. All would know Him, from the least to the greatest, and He would be merciful to their sins and remember them no more. By calling it new, God made the first old, and what is old is near to vanishing away. Believers today share in the new covenant through the blood of Jesus, and God will keep this promise to Israel as a nation.

Unfortunately, I do keep bringing up sins God has promised to remember no more. Hebrews 8:12 says He will not remember them. If God has let them go, I need to stop picking them back up.

Chapter 8 Study Questions

1. What does the writer say is the main point of all he has said? (8:1)

2. Why does it matter that Jesus sat down? (8:1; compare 10:11-12)

3. What is the difference between the true tabernacle and the earthly one? (8:2, 5)

4. Why did God tell Moses to follow the pattern exactly? (8:5)

5. What makes the new covenant better than the old one? (8:6-7)

6. Who is the new covenant promised to in Jeremiah 31, and how do believers today share in it? (8:8-10; Luke 22:20; Romans 11:26-27)

7. What does it mean that God writes His laws on our hearts? (8:10)

8. What does God promise to do with our sins? (8:12)

9. Do you know God personally, or mostly know about Him? What is the difference? (8:11)

10. Are there sins you keep bringing up that God has promised to remember no more? How does 8:12 help you let them go?

Chapter 9: Once for All by His Own Blood

Scripture

9:1-14 Therefore indeed even the first ***covenant*** had regulations of worship and the earthly holy place. For a tabernacle was prepared, the first, in which ***were*** both the lampstand and the table and the presentation of the bread, which is called ***the*** Holy Place. And behind the second veil ***was*** a tabernacle which is called ***the*** Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which ***was*** a golden jar having the manna, and the staff of Aaron which budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it ***were the*** cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; concerning which ***things*** it is not ***the time*** now to speak in detail. Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests enter continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services; but into the second the high priest alone ***enters*** once in the year, not without blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of ignorance of the people; the Holy Spirit signifying this, that the way into the holy places has not yet been made manifest while the first tabernacle still has standing, which ***is*** a symbol for the present time, in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which are not able to make the one who worships perfect in regard to conscience, ***being*** only in foods and drinks and various washings, and regulations of ***the*** flesh imposed until a time of reformation. But Christ, having appeared ***as*** high priest of the coming good things, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not of this creation, nor through blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered once for all into the holy places, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and of goats and ***the*** ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of the Christ, who through ***the*** eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve ***the*** living God?

9:15-28 And because of this He is ***the*** mediator of a new covenant, so that, a death having taken place for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where ***there is*** a covenant, ***there is*** necessity for the death of the one who made ***it*** to be established. For a covenant ***is*** firm over dead ***ones***, since it never has force while the one who made ***it*** is living. Therefore not even the first ***covenant*** has been inaugurated apart from blood. For when every commandment according to ***the*** law had been spoken by Moses to all the people, having taken the blood of the calves and of the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, he sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This ***is*** the blood of the covenant which God commanded to you." And likewise he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are purified with blood according to the law, and apart from shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. ***It was*** necessary therefore ***for*** the copies of the things in the heavens to be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered into holy places made by hands, copies of the true ***ones***, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor that He should offer Himself repeatedly, just as the high priest enters into the holy places every year with blood of another; otherwise it would have been necessary for Him to suffer repeatedly since ***the*** foundation of ***the*** world; but now once, at ***the***

consummation of the ages, He has been revealed for ***the*** putting away of sin through the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed to men to die once, and after this judgment, so the Christ also, having been offered once to bear ***the*** sins of many, will appear a second time, apart from sin, to those who eagerly await Him for salvation.

Chapter 9 Preview

Chapter 9 walks us through the tabernacle. The first room, the Holy Place, held the lampstand and the table with the bread. Behind the second veil was the Holy of Holies, with the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat under the cherubim. The priests went into the first room every day, but only the high priest went into the second, once a year, and never without blood. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into God's presence was not yet open. The gifts and sacrifices could not clean the conscience. They dealt with outward things until the time came for God to set things right.

Then Christ came. He entered the true holy place in heaven, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood, once for all, and obtained eternal redemption. If animal blood could make people outwardly clean, how much more will the blood of Christ clean our conscience to serve the living God? The writer explains why a death was needed for the covenant, and why without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Christ did not need to offer Himself again and again. He appeared once, at the end of the ages, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And just as people die once and then face judgment, Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many, and He will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to bring salvation to those who eagerly wait for Him.

Chapter 9 Study

9:1 *Therefore indeed even the first* ***covenant*** *had regulations of worship and the earthly holy place.*

"Therefore indeed even the first covenant had regulations of worship and the earthly holy place." The word "covenant" is supplied in the SLB; the writer is carrying on from the end of chapter 8, where he spoke of the first covenant being made obsolete (8:13). He begins to describe the old covenant's worship. He is not mocking it. God set it up. It had "regulations," rules given by God about how to approach Him.

It also had "the earthly holy place," the tabernacle that Israel built in the wilderness. The writer speaks of the tabernacle rather than the temple, because the tabernacle was the pattern God gave Moses (8:5), and the temple followed the same plan. Everything about it taught that God is holy and that sinful people cannot just walk into His presence.

9:2 *For a tabernacle was prepared, the first, in which **were** both the lampstand and the table and the presentation of the bread, which is called **the** Holy Place.*

"For a tabernacle was prepared, the first, in which were both the lampstand and the table and the presentation of the bread, which is called the Holy Place." The tabernacle was a tent with two rooms. The first room was called the Holy Place.

In it stood the golden lampstand, with seven lamps that burned every night (Exodus 25:31-40; 27:20-21). There was also a table holding twelve loaves of bread, one for each tribe, set out before the LORD and replaced every Sabbath (Leviticus 24:5-9). The priests went into this room every day to tend the lamps and burn incense. Both of these things point to Jesus, who is the Light of the world and the Bread of life (John 8:12; 6:35).

Old Testament links: Exodus 26:35 (alluded to); Exodus 40:4 (alluded to)

9:3 *And behind the second veil **was** a tabernacle which is called **the** Holy of Holies,*

"And behind the second veil was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies." There were two curtains. The first hung at the door of the tent. The second veil, a curtain woven with cherubim, separated the Holy Place from the inner room (Exodus 26:31-33).

The inner room was called the Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy Place. That is a Hebrew way of saying the holiest place of all. This is where God's presence dwelt among His people. When Jesus died, the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). God Himself opened the way.

Old Testament links: Exodus 26:33 (alluded to)

9:4 *having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which **was** a golden jar having the manna, and the staff of Aaron which budded, and the tablets of the covenant;*

"Having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold." The ark was a chest of wood covered with gold (Exodus 25:10-16). It stood in the Most Holy Place.

The golden altar of incense actually stood in the Holy Place, just in front of the veil (Exodus 30:6). Why does the writer connect it with the inner room? Many think it is because its work belonged to the Most Holy Place. On the Day of Atonement the high priest took coals and incense from it into the inner room (Leviticus 16:12-13), and the altar is described as belonging to the inner sanctuary (1 Kings 6:22). Some think the word means a golden censer instead.

Inside the ark were "a golden jar having the manna, and the staff of Aaron which budded, and the tablets of the covenant." The manna reminded Israel that God fed them (Exodus 16:33). Aaron's staff reminded them that God chose the priest (Numbers 17:8-10). The tablets held the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 10:5).

Old Testament links: Exodus 16:33 (alluded to); Numbers 17:10 (alluded to); Numbers 17:8 (alluded to); Exodus 25:11 (alluded to); Exodus 30:6 (alluded to); Deuteronomy 10:5 (alluded to)

9:5 *and above it **were the** cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; concerning which **things** it is not **the time** now to speak in detail.*

"And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat." On top of the ark was a gold lid called the mercy seat, with two golden cherubim, angel-like beings, facing each other with their wings spread over it (Exodus 25:17-22). God said He would meet with Moses there.

The mercy seat is where the high priest sprinkled blood on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:14-15). Below it was the Law that Israel had broken. Above it was the glory of God. Between them was the blood. That is a picture of the gospel. The blood of Christ stands between our broken law and God's holy presence. The Greek word for mercy seat is the same word Paul uses for Jesus as our propitiation (Romans 3:25).

"Concerning which things it is not the time now to speak in detail." The writer could say much more, but he has a point to make.

Old Testament links: Exodus 25:18-20 (alluded to)

9:6 *Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests enter continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services;*

"Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests enter continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services." The ordinary priests went into the Holy Place day after day. They trimmed the lamps, burned incense morning and evening, and changed the bread every Sabbath.

Notice the word "continually." Their work never stopped. They could never say, It is finished. The same tasks had to be done again and again. Notice also that the writer speaks in the present tense, "the priests enter," as if this was still going on in his day. That fits a date before the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70.

9:7 *but into the second the high priest alone **enters** once in the year, not without blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of ignorance of the people;*

"But into the second the high priest alone enters once in the year." Only one man could go into the Most Holy Place, only on one day of the year, the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:2, 34).

"Not without blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of ignorance of the people." He could not go in empty-handed. He carried blood, first for his own sins and then for the people. "Sins of ignorance" may mean sins done in weakness or without knowing it (5:2).

Think about how limited this was. One man, one room, one day a year, and only with blood. Everyone else stayed outside. The way to God was narrow and mostly closed.

Old Testament links: Leviticus 16:34 (alluded to); Exodus 30:10 (alluded to); Leviticus 16:15 (alluded to)

9:8 *the Holy Spirit signifying this, that the way into the holy places has not yet been made manifest while the first tabernacle still has standing,*

"The Holy Spirit signifying this." The Holy Spirit designed the tabernacle to teach a lesson. The details were not random. They were teaching.

"That the way into the holy places has not yet been made manifest while the first tabernacle still has standing." What was the lesson? As long as the old system stood, the way into God's presence was not yet open to the people. The veil was a sign that said, Keep out. The tabernacle showed both that God wants to dwell with His people and that sin keeps them away from Him.

The old covenant could show the problem, but it could not solve it. Only Christ could open the way, and He did (10:19-20).

9:9 *which **is** a symbol for the present time, in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which are not able to make the one who worships perfect in regard to conscience,*

"Which is a symbol for the present time." The word for symbol is parabole, the word that gives us parable. The tabernacle was a parable, a picture lesson.

"In which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which are not able to make the one who worships perfect in regard to conscience." Here is the weakness of the old system. It could not clean the conscience. The conscience is the inner sense of right and wrong that accuses us when we sin. A man could bring his offering and go home still feeling guilty, because the blood of an animal could not take the guilt away from his heart.

Many people today live with a guilty conscience. Religious rituals may cover it for a while, but they cannot remove it. Only the blood of Christ can (9:14).

9:10 ***being*** *only in foods and drinks and various washings, and regulations of **the** flesh imposed until a time of reformation.*

"Being only in foods and drinks and various washings, and regulations of the flesh." The old system dealt with outward things: what to eat and drink, how to wash, how to stay ceremonially clean. These were regulations of the flesh, rules for the body.

They were not wrong. God gave them to teach Israel that He is holy and to keep them separate from the nations. But they could not change the heart. Jesus taught that it is not what goes into a man that defiles him, but what comes out of his heart (Mark 7:18-23).

"Imposed until a time of reformation." These rules were given for a set time, until God would set things right. That time came with Christ.

9:11 *But Christ, having appeared **as** high priest of the coming good things, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not of this creation,*

"But Christ, having appeared as high priest of the coming good things." Here is the turning point. "But Christ." The old system was a shadow of the good things to come (10:1). Christ brings the good things themselves: forgiveness, a clean conscience, and access to God.

"Through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not of this creation." Jesus did not serve in the tent in the wilderness or the temple in Jerusalem. He served in the real presence of God in heaven, which no human hand built. The earthly tabernacle was made from materials of this creation. The heavenly one belongs to God Himself.

9:12 *nor through blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered once for all into the holy places, having obtained eternal redemption.*

"Nor through blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood." The high priest brought the blood of a bull and a goat into the Most Holy Place (Leviticus 16:14-15). Jesus brought His own blood. He was both the Priest and the sacrifice.

"Entered once for all into the holy places." The high priest went in once a year, every year. Jesus went in once for all, never to be repeated.

"Having obtained eternal redemption." Redemption means setting someone free by paying a price. The old sacrifices covered sin for a year. Jesus' sacrifice set us free forever. His redemption is eternal. It never wears off, and it never needs to be renewed.

Old Testament links: Leviticus 16:15 (alluded to)

9:13 *For if the blood of bulls and of goats and **the** ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctifies for the purification of the flesh,*

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled" The writer names two parts of the old system. The blood of goats and bulls was used on the Day of Atonement. The ashes of a red heifer were mixed with water and sprinkled on anyone who had touched a dead body, to make him clean again (Numbers 19:1-22).

"Sanctifies for the purification of the flesh." These things did work, in their own way. They made a person outwardly clean, so he could take part in Israel's worship again. But they could only reach the outside, the flesh. They could not reach the heart.

Old Testament links: Numbers 19:9 (alluded to); Numbers 19:18 (alluded to)

9:14 *how much more will the blood of the Christ, who through **the** eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve **the** living God?*

"How much more will the blood of the Christ." Here is the argument from lesser to greater. If animal blood could make the body clean, how much more can the blood of the Son of God make the heart clean.

"Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God." All three Persons of the Trinity are here. The Son offered Himself to God the Father through the eternal Spirit. He was "unblemished," like the lambs the Law required, but perfectly so, with no sin at all (1 Peter 1:19). And He "offered Himself." No one forced Him (John 10:18).

"Purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." His blood cleans the guilty conscience. Dead works are works that lead to death, or works done to earn God's favor that cannot give life. We are made clean not just to feel better, but "to serve the living God." Do you carry guilt that you have already confessed? His blood is enough to clean your conscience.

9:15 *And because of this He is **the** mediator of a new covenant, so that, a death having taken place for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*

"And because of this He is the mediator of a new covenant." Because His blood cleans the conscience, Jesus is the go-between of the new covenant (8:6).

"So that, a death having taken place for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant." Notice that Christ's death reaches back. The believers who lived under the old covenant, like Abraham, David, and the prophets, were saved by faith, but the price for their sins was paid at the cross (Romans 3:25-26).

"Those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." The called are those God calls to Himself through the gospel. Their inheritance is eternal. The land of Canaan was a wonderful gift, but it could be lost. The inheritance Christ gives cannot be lost or fade away (1 Peter 1:4).

This is the new covenant God promised to the house of Israel and the house of Judah in Jeremiah 31:31. Some teachers say the church has taken Israel's place in it, but as I explained at 8:13, we share its blessings now through the blood of Jesus, and Israel as a nation will receive all of it when He returns.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 31:31 (alluded to)

9:16-17 *For where **there is** a covenant, **there is** necessity for the death of the one who made **it** to be established. For a covenant **is** firm over dead **ones**, since it never has force while the one who made **it** is living.*

"For where there is a covenant, there is necessity for the death of the one who made it to be established." The Greek word for covenant, diatheke, was also the normal word for a last will and testament. Many Bibles translate it will in these two verses. A will only takes effect when the person who made it dies.

"For a covenant is firm over dead ones, since it never has force while the one who made it is living." Whether we read it as a will or as a covenant sealed by death, the point is the same. A death was needed. Jesus had to die for the promises of the new covenant to come into force. Other

Bible teachers read the verses as speaking of covenants in general, which in the Old Testament were sealed by the death of an animal standing in for the one who made it (Genesis 15:9-18).

9:18 *Therefore not even the first **covenant** has been inaugurated apart from blood.*

"Therefore not even the first covenant has been inaugurated apart from blood." Even the old covenant needed blood. To inaugurate means to put into effect, to dedicate.

At Sinai the covenant between God and Israel was sealed with the blood of sacrifices (Exodus 24:3-8). Blood stands for life given up in death (Leviticus 17:11). From the very start, God was teaching His people that a relationship with Him, as sinners, can only be made through a death. The old covenant began with blood, and so did the new.

9:19-20 *For when every commandment according to **the** law had been spoken by Moses to all the people, having taken the blood of the calves and of the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, he sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This **is** the blood of the covenant which God commanded to you."*

"For when every commandment according to the law had been spoken by Moses to all the people." Moses read the words of the covenant to Israel, and the people said they would do all that the LORD had said (Exodus 24:3, 7).

"Having taken the blood of the calves and of the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, he sprinkled both the book itself and all the people." Hyssop was a plant with small leaves, good for sprinkling. Exodus 24 tells of the blood on the altar and the people. The writer adds details that Exodus 24 does not record, such as the water, the scarlet wool, and the sprinkling of the book. Water, scarlet wool, and hyssop were used together in other cleansings in the Law (Leviticus 14:4-7; Numbers 19:6, 18).

Moses said, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded to you." These are close to the words Jesus spoke at the Last Supper, when He took the cup and spoke of His blood of the covenant, poured out for many (Matthew 26:28). Jesus was saying that His death would seal the new covenant, as the blood at Sinai sealed the old.

Old Testament links: Exodus 24:8 (quoted); Numbers 19:6 (alluded to); Exodus 24:6-7 (alluded to)

9:21 *And likewise he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.*

"And likewise he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry." When the tabernacle was finished and set up, Moses anointed it and its furnishings, and the blood of sacrifices was used to make the altar and the priests holy (Exodus 40:9-11; Leviticus 8:10-15, 30).

Why would a holy place built at God's command need to be cleansed? Because it stood among a sinful people. Everything that sinful people touch needs cleansing. That shows how deep sin goes. It affects not just what we do but where we live and what we use.

9:22 *And almost all things are purified with blood according to the law, and apart from shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*

"And almost all things are purified with blood according to the law." The word almost is honest. The Law allowed a very poor person to bring flour instead of an animal (Leviticus 5:11-13), and some things were cleaned by water or fire (Numbers 31:22-23). But the general rule was blood.

"And apart from shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." This is one of the key verses in the Bible. Sin brings death (Romans 6:23). For sin to be forgiven, a death must take place. God did not make this rule up for no reason. It shows how serious sin is and how holy He is. And it shows the depth of His love, that He would give His own Son to shed His blood for us.

9:23 ***It was*** *necessary therefore* ***for*** *the copies of the things in the heavens to be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*

"It was necessary therefore for the copies of the things in the heavens to be purified with these." The earthly tabernacle was a copy of heaven. It was cleansed with the blood of animals.

"But the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." What does it mean that heavenly things needed to be purified? Heaven is not dirty with sin. Many think the writer means that the way into God's presence had to be opened and set apart for sinful people to come in. Others think of the cleansing that the work of Christ brings to all creation (Colossians 1:20). The plural, "better sacrifices," may simply mean better than all the sacrifices of the old system. It points to the one sacrifice of Christ.

9:24 *For Christ has not entered into holy places made by hands, copies of the true* ***ones****, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;*

"For Christ has not entered into holy places made by hands, copies of the true ones." Jesus did not go into the temple in Jerusalem as a priest. That was a copy.

"But into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Jesus went into heaven itself, into the very presence of God. And He is there for us. The high priest stood before God for the people for a few minutes each year. Jesus appears before God for His people all the time (7:25).

Think about that. Right now, as you read this, the Son of God stands in the presence of the Father on your behalf, if you belong to Him.

9:25 *nor that He should offer Himself repeatedly, just as the high priest enters into the holy places every year with blood of another;*

"Nor that He should offer Himself repeatedly, just as the high priest enters into the holy places every year with blood of another." The high priest went in year after year. And he went in "with blood of another," the blood of animals, not his own.

Jesus is different in both ways. He offered His own blood, not another's, and He did it once, not over and over. His sacrifice does not need to be repeated. To suggest that it does, or that it can be added to, would be to say His sacrifice was not enough.

9:26 *otherwise it would have been necessary for Him to suffer repeatedly since **the** foundation of **the** world; but now once, at **the** consummation of the ages, He has been revealed for **the** putting away of sin through the sacrifice of Himself.*

"Otherwise it would have been necessary for Him to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world." If His sacrifice had to be repeated, He would have had to die again and again, ever since sin entered the world. That is unthinkable.

"But now once, at the consummation of the ages, He has been revealed for the putting away of sin through the sacrifice of Himself." The consummation of the ages means the end point of history, the time all the earlier ages were pointing to. Jesus came at the right time (Galatians 4:4). He came "for the putting away of sin." The old sacrifices covered sin. Christ put it away, cancelled it. And He did it "through the sacrifice of Himself."

9:27 *And inasmuch as it is appointed to men to die once, and after this judgment,*

"And inasmuch as it is appointed to men to die once, and after this judgment." Every person will die once. Then comes judgment. There is no second chance after death, and there is no coming back to live another life. This verse rules out the idea of reincarnation, that a person is born again and again into new lives.

Notice the order: death, then judgment. Every person will stand before God. For those who do not know Christ, that means the judgment of the great white throne (Revelation 20:11-15). For believers, it means the judgment seat of Christ, where our works are judged for rewards, not for salvation (2 Corinthians 5:10). Are you ready to meet God?

9:28 *so the Christ also, having been offered once to bear **the** sins of many, will appear a second time, apart from sin, to those who eagerly await Him for salvation.*

"So the Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many." Just as men die once, Christ died once. He bore our sins, carrying them in His body on the cross (Isaiah 53:12; 1 Peter 2:24). Many means the great number of those He saves.

"Will appear a second time, apart from sin, to those who eagerly await Him for salvation." Jesus is coming again. The first time He came to deal with sin. The second time He will come "apart from sin," not to suffer for it again, but to bring the full salvation His people are waiting for. The picture is of the high priest coming back out of the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement, while the people waited outside to know that the sacrifice had been accepted.

I believe Scripture teaches that Christ's coming has two parts. First, He will come for His church before the seven-year Tribulation, to take His people to be with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; John 14:1-3). Then, at the end of the Tribulation, He will return visibly to the earth in power and glory, to judge and to reign (Matthew 24:29-31; Revelation 19:11-16). This verse speaks of His coming for those who are eagerly waiting for Him. Are you waiting for Him?

Old Testament links: Isaiah 53:12 (alluded to)

Chapter 9 Summary

The first covenant had rules for worship and an earthly tabernacle with two rooms. The Holy Place held the lampstand and the table with the bread. Behind the second veil was the Holy of Holies, with the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant, holding the manna, Aaron's staff, and the tablets, with the cherubim over the mercy seat. The priests went into the first room every day, but only the high priest entered the second, once a year, with blood for himself and the people. By this the Holy Spirit showed that the way into God's presence was not yet open. Those gifts and sacrifices could not clean the conscience. They were outward rules until the time God would set things right. But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come. He entered the true tabernacle in heaven, not with the blood of animals, but with His own blood, once for all, and obtained eternal redemption. If animal blood made the flesh clean, how much more will the blood of Christ, who offered Himself through the eternal Spirit, clean our conscience to serve the living God. He is the mediator of a new covenant. A covenant needs a death, and the first covenant was put in force with blood, for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Christ entered heaven itself to appear before God for us. He does not offer Himself again and again. He appeared once at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. As people die once and then face judgment, Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many, and He will appear a second time, apart from sin, to bring salvation to those who eagerly wait for Him.

Chapter 9 Study Questions

1. What was in the Holy Place and in the Holy of Holies? (9:2-5)
2. Who could go into the Holy of Holies, how often, and with what? (9:7)
3. What lesson was the Holy Spirit teaching through the tabernacle? (9:8)
4. What could the old sacrifices not do, according to 9:9-10?
5. How is Christ's offering different from the high priest's offering? (9:11-14, 24-26)
6. Why is blood needed for forgiveness? (9:18-22)
7. What does "once for all" mean to you? (9:12, 26-28)
8. What two things does 9:27 say every person faces?
9. Is there guilt you are still carrying? How does 9:14 speak to it?
10. Christ will appear a second time "to those who eagerly await Him." Are you eagerly waiting for Him? How does that show in your life?

Chapter 10: Draw Near and Hold Fast

Scripture

10:1-18 For the law, having a shadow of the coming good things, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices which they offer continually every year perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased being offered, because those serving, once purified, would no longer have any conscience of sins? But in these ***there is*** a reminder of sins every year. For ***it is*** impossible ***for the*** blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins. Therefore, coming into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You prepared for Me; in burnt offerings and ***offerings*** for sin You did not delight. Then I said, 'Look, I have come (in ***the*** scroll of ***the*** book it has been written of Me) to do Your will, O God.'" Saying above, "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and ***offerings*** for sin You did not desire nor delight in" (which are offered according to the law), then He has said, "Look, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first so that He may establish the second. By which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest indeed stands every day ministering and repeatedly offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at ***the*** right hand of God, from then on waiting until His enemies are placed ***as*** a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after having said before, "This ***is*** the covenant which I will make with them after those days, says ***the*** Lord: putting My laws on their hearts, I will also inscribe them on their minds," ***He then says***, "and their sins and their lawless deeds I will certainly not remember any more." Now where ***there is*** forgiveness of these, ***there is*** no longer an offering for sin.

10:19-31 Having therefore, brothers, confidence for the entrance into the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and ***having*** a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having ***our*** hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and ***our*** body washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of ***our*** hope without wavering, for He who promised ***is*** faithful; and let us consider one another for stirring up of love and of good works, not forsaking the assembling together of ourselves, as ***is the*** custom of some, but encouraging ***one another***, and so much the more as you see the day drawing near. For if we sin willingly after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire about to devour the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside ***the*** law of Moses dies without mercies on ***the testimony of*** two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will he be considered worthy of who has trampled on the Son of God, and has regarded as common the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance ***is*** Mine; I will repay, says ***the*** Lord." And again, "***The*** Lord will judge His people." ***It is*** a fearful ***thing*** to fall into ***the*** hands of ***the*** living God.

10:32-39 But remember the former days in which, having been enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly being made a spectacle both by reproaches and by tribulations, and partly having become partners of those who were treated so. For you both sympathized with my

bonds and accepted with joy the plundering of your possessions, knowing that you have in yourselves a better and abiding possession in ***the*** heavens. Therefore do not throw away your boldness, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that having done the will of God you may receive the promise. "For yet a very little while, ***and*** the One who is coming will come and will not delay. But the righteous will live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul takes no pleasure in him." But we are not of ***those who*** shrink back to destruction, but of ***those who have*** faith to ***the*** preserving of ***the*** soul.

Chapter 10 Preview

The writer finishes his teaching on Christ's sacrifice. The Law was only a shadow of the good things to come. Its sacrifices were offered year after year, and they could never make the worshipers perfect, because the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins. If they could, they would have stopped. Instead, they reminded people of their sins every year. So the Son, coming into the world, said to the Father, A body You prepared for Me; I have come to do Your will. By that will we have been set apart as holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. The priests stand every day offering the same sacrifices, but Christ offered one sacrifice for sins for all time and sat down. By one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. And where sins are forgiven, there is no more offering for sin.

Then the writer turns to what this means for us. Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near to God, hold fast our hope, and stir one another up to love and good works, not giving up meeting together. Then comes the fourth warning. If we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins remains, only a fearful expectation of judgment. But the writer reminds his readers of their early days, when they suffered with joy, knowing they had a better possession in heaven. Do not throw away your confidence. The One who is coming will come. We are not of those who shrink back, but of those who have faith.

Chapter 10 Study

10:1 *For the law, having a shadow of the coming good things, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices which they offer continually every year perfect those who draw near.*

"For the law, having a shadow of the coming good things, not the very image of the things." The writer comes back to the picture of a shadow (8:5). The Law had the outline of the good things Christ would bring, but not the real thing. "The very image" means the actual form, the reality itself.

"Can never with the same sacrifices which they offer continually every year perfect those who draw near." Notice the words "the same," "continually," and "every year." The same sacrifices were repeated over and over. That repetition proved they were not enough. They "can never" make worshipers perfect, which means bringing them fully and finally to God with their sins dealt with for good.

10:2 *Otherwise, would they not have ceased being offered, because those serving, once purified, would no longer have any conscience of sins?*

"Otherwise, would they not have ceased being offered." If the sacrifices had worked completely, people would have stopped offering them. You do not keep paying a debt that has been paid in full.

"Because those serving, once purified, would no longer have any conscience of sins." If the worshipers had been cleansed once and for all, they would not carry a guilty conscience about their sins anymore. They would know their sins were gone.

Here again the writer speaks of the sacrifices as still being offered in his day. Many see this as one of the clearest signs that Hebrews was written before the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70.

10:3 *But in these **there is** a reminder of sins every year.*

"But in these there is a reminder of sins every year." The Day of Atonement did not take away the memory of sin. It brought it back. Every year Israel was reminded that sin was still a problem.

Compare this with the new covenant promise. God says He will remember their sins no more (8:12; 10:17). The old sacrifices reminded people of their sins. The new covenant removes them from God's record. Many believers still live as if they were under the old system, reminding themselves of their sins over and over. If you have confessed your sin to God, He has forgiven it (1 John 1:9). Live as one forgiven.

10:4 *For **it is** impossible **for the** blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins.*

"For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins." That is a strong statement, but it is true. An animal cannot pay for a person's sin. A bull does not know right from wrong, and it did not choose to die for anyone. Its blood could cover sin for a time and point forward to something greater, but it could never take sin away.

So how were believers in the Old Testament saved? By faith in God and His promise, as chapter 11 will show. The sacrifices were a picture, and the payment was made later by Christ (9:15; Romans 3:25). The blood of animals pointed to the blood of the Lamb of God.

10:5-7 *Therefore, coming into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You prepared for Me; in burnt offerings and **offerings** for sin You did not delight. Then I said, 'Look, I have come (in **the** scroll of **the** book it has been written of Me) to do Your will, O God.'"*

"Therefore, coming into the world, He says." The writer quotes Psalm 40:6-8 and puts the words in the mouth of Christ as He came into the world. "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You prepared for Me."

God did not want animal sacrifices for their own sake. He wanted obedience and a heart that loves Him (1 Samuel 15:22). "A body You prepared for Me." The Greek Old Testament reads this way, while the Hebrew of Psalm 40 speaks of ears that God has opened. Both point to the same thing: a

servant ready to obey. God prepared a body for His Son so that He could become a man and offer that body as the true sacrifice.

"Then I said," the Son goes on, and He says He has come "to do Your will, O God." Jesus came to do the Father's will. The Old Testament scroll was written about Him (Luke 24:27, 44).

Old Testament links: Psalm 40:6-8 (quoted)

10:8-9 *Saying above, "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and* ***offerings*** *for sin You did not desire nor delight in" (which are offered according to the law), then He has said, "Look, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first so that He may establish the second.*

"Saying above," the writer lists the four kinds of offering again: sacrifice, offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin. God "did not desire nor delight in" them, even though they were "offered according to the law." That does not mean God never accepted them. He commanded them. But He did not take pleasure in them by themselves, apart from the hearts of the people or the Christ they pointed to.

"Then He has said," and these are His words: "Look, I have come to do Your will, O God." Christ came to do what those sacrifices never could.

"He takes away the first so that He may establish the second." The first is the old system of sacrifices. The second is the will of God done by Christ in His sacrifice. One had to be removed so the other could stand.

Old Testament links: Psalm 40:6 (quoted); Psalm 40:7-8 (quoted)

10:10 *By which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

"By which will we are sanctified." God's will was for His Son to offer Himself. And by that will, by what Christ did in obeying it, "we are sanctified." To be sanctified here means to be set apart as holy for God. It is something God has done for us.

"Through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Not through our good works, our feelings, or our religious efforts, but through His body offered on the cross. And it was "once for all." Believers are set apart as God's holy people because of what Christ did once, and it does not need to be done again.

10:11 *And every priest indeed stands every day ministering and repeatedly offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;*

"And every priest indeed stands every day ministering and repeatedly offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." Picture the priests in the temple. They stand. They never sit down, because their work is never done. Every day they offer. And they offer "the same sacrifices," the same animals, the same blood, the same smoke rising from the altar.

And it all "can never take away sins." All that work, all that blood, year after year, and it never took away one sin. That is not a criticism of the priests. It is the honest limit of the system. It was a shadow waiting for the reality.

10:12-13 *but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at **the** right hand of God, from then on waiting until His enemies are placed **as** a footstool for His feet.*

"But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God." Here is the contrast. The priests stand; Christ sat down. They offered many sacrifices; He offered one. Theirs could never take away sins; His was "for all time."

"From then on waiting until His enemies are placed as a footstool for His feet." This points back to Psalm 110:1 again (1:13). Christ's work of paying for sin is finished. Now He waits, seated in victory, for the day when every enemy is put under His feet. That day will come when He returns in glory to reign (1 Corinthians 15:24-26; Revelation 19:11-16). He is not anxious or rushing. He is seated, because the outcome is certain.

Old Testament links: Psalm 110:1 (alluded to)

10:14 *For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*

"For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." This is one of the great assurance verses in the Bible.

"He has perfected." It is done. By His one offering, Christ has made those who belong to Him complete and right before God, "for all time." Nothing can be added to it, and nothing can undo it.

"Those who are being sanctified." This is the other side. Believers are already perfected in God's sight, and at the same time, they are being made holy in daily life. Our standing is complete. Our growth is in progress. Both are true at once.

If you belong to Christ, your standing with God does not go up on your good days and down on your bad days. It rests on His one offering, and it is perfect for all time.

10:15-17 *And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after having said before, "This **is** the covenant which I will make with them after those days, says **the** Lord: putting My laws on their hearts, I will also inscribe them on their minds," **He then says**, "and their sins and their lawless deeds I will certainly not remember any more."*

"And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us." The writer brings in the Holy Spirit as a witness, and he quotes Jeremiah 31 again, as he did in 8:8-12. The Spirit is the One who spoke through Jeremiah.

"This is the covenant which I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: putting My laws on their hearts, I will also inscribe them on their minds." The new covenant changes us from the inside.

"He then says," and here is the line he wants: "and their sins and their lawless deeds I will certainly not remember any more." In the new covenant, sins are forgiven completely. God will never bring them up against us again.

Some teachers say the church has taken Israel's place, so these promises are now fulfilled in the church. As I explained at 8:13, I read them as written: believers share in the forgiveness of the new covenant now through the blood of Jesus, and Israel as a nation will receive all of it when Christ returns (Romans 11:26-27).

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 31:33-34 (quoted)

10:18 *Now where **there is** forgiveness of these, **there is** no longer an offering for sin.*

"Now where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer an offering for sin." This is the conclusion of the whole teaching section of the letter. If sins are truly forgiven, then no more sacrifice is needed.

That is why it would be pointless for the readers to go back to the temple sacrifices. They would be going back to something that could not help them, from something that already had. It also means that no religious act can add to what Christ has done. When Jesus said, "It has been finished" (John 19:30), He meant it. Forgiveness is complete. We do not need another sacrifice. We need to trust the one He made.

10:19-20 *Having therefore, brothers, confidence for the entrance into the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,*

"Having therefore, brothers, confidence for the entrance into the holy places by the blood of Jesus." Now the writer turns from teaching to living. The word "therefore" points back to everything in chapters 7 to 10. Because of what Christ has done, we have "confidence," boldness to go into God's presence. Under the old covenant, only the high priest could go in, once a year, trembling. Now every believer can go in by the blood of Jesus.

"By a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh." The way is new, never open before. It is living, because it is a living Person, Jesus. He opened it "through the veil, that is, His flesh." When His body was torn on the cross, the veil in the temple was torn too (Mark 15:37-38). His death opened the way to God.

10:21-22 *and **having** a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having **our** hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and **our** body washed with pure water.*

"And having a great priest over the house of God." We have not only a way, but a Priest. Jesus is over God's house, which is His people (3:6).

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." Here is the first of three let us commands. Draw near to God. Come with "a true heart," sincere and honest. Come "in full assurance of faith," fully confident because of what Christ has done.

"Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our body washed with pure water." The priests were sprinkled with blood and washed with water before they served (Exodus 29:4, 21). Our hearts have been cleansed from guilt by Christ's blood. Many teachers see "our body washed with pure water" as a reference to baptism, the outward sign of the inward cleansing. Others see it as a picture of the cleansing work of the Spirit and the Word (Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5).

Old Testament links: Exodus 29:4 (alluded to)

10:23 *Let us hold fast the confession of **our** hope without wavering, for He who promised **is** faithful;*

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering." This is the second let us. Hold on tight to what we believe and confess. Do not waver. The readers were under pressure to let go. The writer says, Hold on.

"For He who promised is faithful." Here is why we can hold fast. Our holding fast rests on His faithfulness. We may be weak, but He is faithful. Paul says the same thing: He who calls you is faithful, and He will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:24). Our hope does not depend on how strong our grip is. It depends on the One we are holding.

10:24 *and let us consider one another for stirring up of love and of good works,*

"And let us consider one another for stirring up of love and of good works." This is the third let us. "Consider" means to think carefully about one another. Think about each other the way you would think about a problem you want to solve. How can I help this person love God and others more?

"Stirring up" is a strong word. It usually meant provoking someone, often in a bad sense. Here it is used in a good way. We are to provoke one another to love and good works. That takes being involved in each other's lives. You cannot stir up someone you never see.

10:25 *not forsaking the assembling together of ourselves, as **is the** custom of some, but encouraging **one another**, and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.*

"Not forsaking the assembling together of ourselves, as is the custom of some." Some of the readers had stopped meeting with the other believers. Maybe they were afraid of persecution. Maybe they had grown cold. Maybe they thought they did not need it. The writer says, Do not give it up.

Christians need each other. We cannot obey verse 24 if we are not together. Gathering with the church is not about checking a box. It is where we encourage and are encouraged, where we hear God's Word, worship, pray, and serve. A coal pulled out of the fire soon goes out.

"But encouraging one another, and so much the more as you see the day drawing near." The day is the day of Christ's return. Most Bible teachers read it that way, as Paul does in 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4 and Romans 13:12. Some think it also refers to the coming destruction of

Jerusalem in A.D. 70, which the readers might have seen approaching. Either way, as the end draws nearer, we need each other more, not less.

10:26-27 *For if we sin willingly after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire about to devour the adversaries.*

"For if we sin willingly after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." This is the fourth warning in Hebrews (10:26-39). The writer includes himself: if we. "Willingly" means on purpose, deliberately, and the tense in Greek points to going on doing it. In context, the sin in view is turning away from Christ, rejecting His sacrifice (verse 29). If a person rejects the one sacrifice that saves, there is no other one to fall back on. Going back to the temple would not help.

"But a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire about to devour the adversaries." Those who reject Christ have nothing left but judgment. The word "adversaries" means those who set themselves against God.

This does not mean that any believer who sins on purpose is lost. Every believer sins, sometimes knowingly, and God forgives those who confess (1 John 1:9; 2:1). The warning is about rejecting Christ Himself.

10:28 *Anyone who has set aside **the** law of Moses dies without mercies on **the testimony of** two or three witnesses.*

"Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercies on the testimony of two or three witnesses." Under the Law, some sins brought the death penalty, such as turning to idols. If the charge was proven by two or three witnesses, the guilty person was put to death (Deuteronomy 17:2-7).

"Set aside" means to reject, to treat as nothing. The writer is speaking of open, deliberate rejection of God's covenant, not ordinary failures. If rejecting the Law of Moses brought such a penalty, the writer is about to ask what rejecting Christ brings.

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 17:6 (alluded to); Deuteronomy 19:15 (alluded to)

10:29 *How much worse punishment, do you think, will he be considered worthy of who has trampled on the Son of God, and has regarded as common the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?*

"How much worse punishment, do you think, will he be considered worthy of." Here is the argument from lesser to greater again. Three things describe the person.

He "has trampled on the Son of God." To trample is to treat with contempt, as something to walk on. He "has regarded as common the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified." He treats Christ's blood as ordinary, as worth nothing. And he "has insulted the Spirit of grace," the Holy Spirit who offers grace.

The phrase "by which he was sanctified" is part of why this passage is debated. Does it mean the person was truly saved? It may mean he was set apart by his link with God's people, or that he claimed to be. Others take it as truly saved.

10:30 *For we know Him who said, "Vengeance **is** Mine; I will repay, says **the** Lord." And again, "**The** Lord will judge His people."*

"For we know Him who said," and here are His words: "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord." The writer is quoting Deuteronomy 32:35. God will judge. He does not leave sin unpunished. Paul quotes the same words to tell believers not to take revenge themselves (Romans 12:19).

The writer goes on, "And again," and quotes, "The Lord will judge His people." This is Deuteronomy 32:36. In the context of the song of Moses, it means God will act for His people, judging between the faithful and the faithless among them. The writer reminds his readers that God judges even within His own people. Being part of the covenant community does not exempt anyone from God's justice (1 Peter 4:17).

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 32:35 (quoted); Deuteronomy 32:36 (quoted)

10:31 ***It is** a fearful **thing** to fall into **the** hands of **the** living God.*

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." This is one of the most sobering verses in the Bible. God is living. He is not an idol made of wood or stone. He sees, He acts, and He judges.

For those who reject Christ, falling into His hands means judgment. For the believer, there is another side. David once chose to fall into the hands of the LORD, because His mercies are great (2 Samuel 24:14). The same hands that judge are the hands that were pierced for us.

How should we read this fourth warning? Bible teachers read it in the same four main ways as the others. Some say it speaks to true believers who turn away and face God's severe discipline, even physical death, and loss of reward, but not hell. Some say it speaks to those who professed faith and were among believers but never truly trusted Christ, and who now reject Him. Some say a true believer who willfully turns away from Christ loses salvation. Some say it describes what would happen if a believer could turn away from the only sacrifice, to keep the readers from doing it. The writer's own words in verse 39 must be read alongside it: "But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction."

10:32-33 *But remember the former days in which, having been enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly being made a spectacle both by reproaches and by tribulations, and partly having become partners of those who were treated so.*

"But remember the former days in which, having been enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings." After the warning, the writer turns to encouragement, as he did in chapter 6. He reminds them of how they lived right after they came to Christ.

"Partly being made a spectacle both by reproaches and by tribulations." Some of them were mocked and mistreated in public, put on display like people in an arena. "And partly having become partners of those who were treated so." Others stood with those being persecuted. They did not hide. They shared the shame of their brothers and sisters.

Remembering how God carried us in the past can help us keep going now. What has God brought you through?

10:34 *For you both sympathized with my bonds and accepted with joy the plundering of your possessions, knowing that you have in yourselves a better and abiding possession in **the** heavens.*

"For you both sympathized with my bonds." The SLB follows the Greek text that reads "my bonds," which points to the writer's own imprisonment. Many older Greek copies read the prisoners instead. Either way, they cared for believers in chains.

"And accepted with joy the plundering of your possessions." Their property was seized, maybe by mobs or by officials, and they took it with joy. How could they do that?

"Knowing that you have in yourselves a better and abiding possession in the heavens." They knew they had something better, something that would last. The word better again. What they lost on earth could not touch what they had in heaven (Matthew 6:19-20). That kind of joy comes only from knowing what is really ours.

10:35-36 *Therefore do not throw away your boldness, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that having done the will of God you may receive the promise.*

"Therefore do not throw away your boldness, which has a great reward." Do not toss away your confidence like a soldier throwing away his shield to run. That confidence "has a great reward." God rewards those who hold on.

"For you have need of endurance." Endurance means staying under a load without giving up. They had started well. Now they needed to finish well.

"So that having done the will of God you may receive the promise." First doing God's will, then receiving what He promised. The promise is all that God has prepared for His people when Christ comes. The Christian life is not a sprint. It is a long race (12:1).

10:37-38 *"For yet a very little while, **and** the One who is coming will come and will not delay. But the righteous will live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul takes no pleasure in him."*

"For yet a very little while, and the One who is coming will come and will not delay." The writer quotes Habakkuk 2:3-4, along with words from Isaiah 26:20. Christ's coming will not be late. From God's view, it is "a very little while" (2 Peter 3:8-9). We should live every day ready for Him.

"But the righteous will live by faith." This line from Habakkuk is quoted three times in the New Testament (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11). Here the focus is on living by faith while waiting, trusting God when things are hard.

"And if he shrinks back, My soul takes no pleasure in him." To shrink back means to pull away in fear, like a soldier backing away from the battle line. God takes no pleasure in that. He delights in those who trust Him and keep going.

Old Testament links: Habakkuk 2:3 (quoted); Habakkuk 2:4 (quoted)

10:39 *But we are not of **those who** shrink back to destruction, but of **those who have** faith to **the** preserving of **the** soul.*

"But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul." Here the writer ends the warning with confidence. "We are not" those people. He counts himself and his readers among the faithful.

"To the preserving of the soul" means the saving of the soul, the final salvation of the whole person. The writer does not leave his readers in fear. He tells them who they are. Faith keeps going, and God keeps those who trust Him. This verse leads right into chapter 11, where the writer shows what that kind of faith looks like.

Chapter 10 Summary

The Law had only a shadow of the good things to come, and its sacrifices, repeated every year, could never perfect the worshipers or take away sins. They only reminded people of their sins. So Christ came into the world to do God's will, and by that will we are sanctified through the offering of His body once for all. The priests stand daily offering the same sacrifices, but Christ offered one sacrifice for sins for all time and sat down at God's right hand, waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool. By one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. The Holy Spirit bears witness in the new covenant that God will remember our sins no more, and where there is forgiveness, there is no more offering for sin. Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, through the new and living way He opened through His flesh, let us draw near with a true heart, hold fast our hope, and stir one another up to love and good works, not giving up our meeting together, all the more as the day draws near. If we sin willfully after receiving the truth, no sacrifice for sins remains, only fearful judgment, since rejecting the Son of God and His blood is worse than rejecting the Law of Moses. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But the readers had endured suffering before, with joy, knowing they had a better possession in heaven. They must not throw away their confidence, because the One who is coming will come. We are not of those who shrink back, but of those who have faith to the saving of the soul.

May 29, 2020, is the day I stopped drinking. It was a battle I had been losing on my own strength for a long time. When I face a hard problem now, I remember who actually pulled me out. Hebrews 10 says to remember the earlier days and hold on to your confidence.

Chapter 10 Study Questions

1. Why could the sacrifices of the Law never take away sins? (10:1-4)

2. What did Christ come to do, according to 10:5-10?

3. What is the difference between the priests who stand and Christ who sat down? (10:11-12)

4. What does 10:14 tell you about your standing before God if you belong to Christ?

5. What three let us commands does the writer give in 10:22-24?

6. Why is meeting together with other believers so important? (10:24-25)

7. What sin is the writer warning about in 10:26-29, and what makes it so serious?

8. How did the readers respond when they suffered in their early days? (10:32-34)

9. Have you been tempted to stop gathering with other believers? What would help you stay connected?

10. What has God brought you through in the past, and how can remembering it help you hold fast today? (10:32, 35)

Chapter 11: The Hall of Faith

Scripture

11:1-16 Now faith is ***the*** assurance of ***things*** hoped for, ***the*** conviction of things not seen. For by this the elders were commended. By faith we understand the ages to have been formed by ***the*** word of God, so that the things which are seen have not come into being out of things that are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as being righteous, God bearing witness about his gifts; and through it, having died, he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken up so as not to see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him up; for before his taking up he has been commended ***as*** having pleased God. And without faith ***it is*** impossible to please ***Him***; for the one who draws near to God must believe that He is, and ***that*** He becomes a rewarder to those who earnestly seek Him. By faith Noah, having been divinely instructed concerning the things not yet seen, moved with reverent fear, prepared an ark for ***the*** salvation of his household, through which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which ***is*** according to faith. By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed to go out into the place which he was going to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he sojourned in the land of the promise as in a foreign ***land***, having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was awaiting the city having the foundations, whose architect and builder ***is*** God. By faith even Sarah herself received power for ***the*** conception of seed, and gave birth beyond the time of age, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Therefore also from one ***man***, and that one as good as dead, were born ***descendants*** just as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the countless sand which ***is*** by the shore of the sea. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them from afar, and having been persuaded ***of them***, and having embraced ***them***, and having confessed that they are strangers and sojourners on the earth. For those who say such things make it manifest that they are seeking a homeland. And if indeed they had been remembering that ***homeland*** from which they came out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they stretch out for a better ***one***, that is, a heavenly ***one***. Therefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

11:17-31 By faith Abraham, being tested, has offered up Isaac; and the one who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten ***son***, as to whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed will be called," having reasoned that God ***was*** able to raise even from ***the*** dead, from where he also received him back in a figure. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped ***leaning*** on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, dying, made mention concerning the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. By faith Moses, having been born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw ***that*** the child ***was*** beautiful; and they did not fear the edict of the king. By faith Moses, having become great, refused to be called ***the*** son of Pharaoh's daughter, having chosen rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to have ***the*** temporary enjoyment of sin, having esteemed the reproach of the Christ greater wealth than the treasures in Egypt; for he was looking toward the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not having feared the anger of the king; for he endured as seeing the Invisible ***One***. By faith he has kept the Passover and the

sprinkling of the blood, so that the one destroying the firstborn might not touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as through dry ***land***, which the Egyptians, having attempted, were swallowed up. By faith the walls of Jericho fell, having been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who disobeyed, having received the spies with peace.

11:32-40 And what more shall I say? For the time will fail me telling of Gideon, and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, and David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, shut ***the*** mouths of lions, quenched ***the*** power of fire, escaped ***the*** mouths of ***the*** sword, out of weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put to flight armies of foreigners. Women received their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not having accepted the release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others received trial of mockings and of scourgings, and in addition of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they were tested, they died by slaughter of ***the*** sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, being oppressed, being mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and the holes of the earth. And these all, having been commended through faith, did not receive the promise, God having planned something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Chapter 11 Preview

Chapter 10 ended with the words, the righteous will live by faith. Chapter 11 shows what that looks like. It opens with a description of faith: the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Then the writer walks through the Old Testament, from creation to the prophets, and shows men and women who trusted God. By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice. By faith Enoch was taken up without seeing death. Without faith it is impossible to please God. By faith Noah built the ark. By faith Abraham left home not knowing where he was going, lived in tents in the land of promise, and looked for a city whose builder is God. By faith Sarah received power to conceive. They all died without receiving the promises, but they saw them from far away and confessed they were strangers on the earth, seeking a better, heavenly country.

By faith Abraham offered Isaac, reasoning that God could raise him from the dead. Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph looked ahead to what God would do. By faith Moses chose to suffer with God's people rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin in Pharaoh's house, and he led Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea. By faith Jericho's walls fell, and Rahab was spared. The writer runs out of time to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. Some by faith won great victories. Others by faith were tortured, mocked, imprisoned, stoned, and killed, people the world was not worthy of. All of them were commended for their faith, but they did not receive what was promised, because God had planned something better, so that they would be made complete together with us.

Chapter 11 Study

11:1 *Now faith is **the** assurance of **things** hoped for, **the** conviction of things not seen.*

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." This is not a full definition of faith, but a description of what faith does.

"The assurance" translates the same word used of the Son as the exact representation of God's "substance" in 1:3. It means a solid foundation, something that stands under and holds up. Faith gives substance to what we hope for. It treats God's promises as real, because they are.

"The conviction" means proof or evidence, being convinced. Faith is not wishful thinking. It is being sure of what we cannot see, because God has said it. We cannot see God, heaven, or the return of Christ. But faith takes God at His word, and so it lives as if those things are as real as anything we can see, because they are.

11:2 *For by this the elders were commended.*

"For by this the elders were commended." The elders here are the people of the Old Testament, the ancestors of Israel. "Commended" means God bore witness to them, approved of them.

How did they gain God's approval? By faith. Not by perfect lives, because many of them were far from perfect. Not by keeping the Law, because some of them lived before it was given. By faith. That has always been the way people please God (Romans 4:1-5). The rest of the chapter shows the witness God gave about each one. And these same people will be called a great cloud of witnesses in 12:1.

11:3 *By faith we understand the ages to have been formed by **the** word of God, so that the things which are seen have not come into being out of things that are visible.*

"By faith we understand the ages to have been formed by the word of God." The writer starts at the very beginning, with creation. "The ages" means the universe and all its history (1:2). God formed it all "by the word of God." He spoke, and it was (Genesis 1:3; Psalm 33:6, 9).

"So that the things which are seen have not come into being out of things that are visible." God did not make the world from something already there. He made it from nothing. No one saw it happen. We know it by faith, because God has told us.

This is the first act of faith in the chapter. Before we can trust God for anything else, we must believe that He is the Creator. Everything else rests on that.

Old Testament links: Genesis 1:1 (alluded to); Psalm 33:6 (alluded to)

11:4 *By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as being righteous, God bearing witness about his gifts; and through it, having died, he still speaks.*

"By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Genesis 4:3-5 tells the story. Cain brought fruit of the ground. Abel brought the firstborn of his flock and the fat portions. God accepted Abel's offering and rejected Cain's. Why? The writer says Abel offered "by faith." His heart trusted God, and his offering showed it. Cain's did not (1 John 3:12).

"Through which he was commended as being righteous, God bearing witness about his gifts." God accepted Abel and his offering. Jesus called him "Abel the righteous" (Matthew 23:35).

"And through it, having died, he still speaks." Abel was the first man to die, killed by his own brother. But his faith still speaks to us today. A life of faith keeps speaking long after it ends. What will your life say when you are gone?

Old Testament links: Genesis 4:4 (alluded to); Genesis 4:5 (alluded to)

11:5 *By faith Enoch was taken up so as not to see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him up; for before his taking up he has been commended **as** having pleased God.*

"By faith Enoch was taken up so as not to see death." Genesis 5:21-24 tells of Enoch. In the middle of a chapter that keeps saying and he died, there is Enoch, who walked with God, and was not, because God took him.

"And he was not found, because God had taken him up." Enoch went to be with God without dying. Only Elijah, in all the Old Testament, is said to have gone the same way (2 Kings 2:11). His going is often seen as a picture of the day when believers who are alive at Christ's coming for His church will be caught up to meet Him without dying (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

"For before his taking up he has been commended as having pleased God." What did Enoch do to please God? Genesis says he walked with God. That is a life of faith, day after day, for three hundred years.

Old Testament links: Genesis 5:24 (alluded to)

11:6 *And without faith **it is** impossible to please **Him**; for the one who draws near to God must believe that He is, and **that** He becomes a rewarder to those who earnestly seek Him.*

"And without faith it is impossible to please Him." This is one of the most important verses in the chapter. It is not that faith is a nice extra. Without it, no one can please God. No amount of good works, religion, or effort can take its place.

"For the one who draws near to God must believe that He is." First, we must believe that God exists. Not some vague power, but the living God who has made Himself known.

"And that He becomes a rewarder to those who earnestly seek Him." Second, we must believe that God is good and that He responds to those who seek Him. Faith is not just believing a fact about

God. It is trusting His character. He is not a God who hides or teases. He rewards those who seek Him. Are you seeking Him?

11:7 *By faith Noah, having been divinely instructed concerning the things not yet seen, moved with reverent fear, prepared an ark for **the** salvation of his household, through which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which **is** according to faith.*

"By faith Noah, having been divinely instructed concerning the things not yet seen." God told Noah a flood was coming (Genesis 6:13-22). Noah had never seen anything like it. Some think it had never even rained before, though Scripture does not say so plainly (Genesis 2:5-6).

"Moved with reverent fear, prepared an ark for the salvation of his household." Noah took God seriously. His faith was not just a feeling. It led him to work, for many years, building a huge boat on dry ground while others watched.

"Through which he condemned the world." His obedience showed that the warning was real and that the world was without excuse. "And became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." Noah was not saved because he was a good builder. He was counted righteous because he believed God.

Old Testament links: Genesis 7:1 (alluded to); Genesis 6:13 (alluded to)

11:8 *By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed to go out into the place which he was going to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.*

"By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed to go out into the place which he was going to receive for an inheritance." God called Abraham to leave his country, his relatives, and his father's house (Genesis 12:1-4). Notice the order: called, then obeyed. Faith answered God's call with action.

"And he went out, not knowing where he was going." Abraham did not have a map. He had a promise. He was about seventy-five years old, and he left everything he knew in Haran.

That is what faith often looks like. God does not always show us the whole road. He shows us the next step, and asks us to trust Him with the rest. Is God asking you to take a step without knowing where it leads?

Old Testament links: Genesis 12:1 (alluded to); Genesis 12:4 (alluded to)

11:9-10 *By faith he sojourned in the land of the promise as in a foreign **land**, having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was awaiting the city having the foundations, whose architect and builder **is** God.*

"By faith he sojourned in the land of the promise as in a foreign land." To sojourn means to live somewhere as a stranger, without settling down. God promised Abraham the land, but he never owned any of it except a burial cave he bought (Genesis 23).

"Having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the fellow heirs of the same promise." For three generations, the family lived in tents. Tents can be packed up and moved. They are not permanent homes.

"For he was awaiting the city having the foundations, whose architect and builder is God." Abraham looked beyond the land. He was waiting for something permanent, a city with real foundations, built by God Himself. That city is the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22; Revelation 21:2, 10-14). Abraham's faith was not only about this life. It looked to the city God will build.

God's promise of the land to Abraham's descendants also still stands. It will be fulfilled for Israel in Christ's kingdom, just as God promised (Genesis 17:8; Ezekiel 37:21-28).

Old Testament links: Genesis 35:27 (alluded to); Genesis 37:1 (alluded to)

11:11-12 *By faith even Sarah herself received power for **the** conception of seed, and gave birth beyond the time of age, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Therefore also from one **man**, and that one as good as dead, were born **descendants** just as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the countless sand which **is** by the shore of the sea.*

"By faith even Sarah herself received power for the conception of seed, and gave birth beyond the time of age." Sarah was about ninety, long past the age of having children (Genesis 17:17; 18:11-14). At first she laughed when she heard the promise (Genesis 18:12). But in the end, she trusted God.

"Since she considered Him faithful who had promised." That is the heart of faith. It is not faith in faith. It is faith in God's faithfulness. She looked past her own body and her own age to the One who had promised.

"Therefore also from one man, and that one as good as dead, were born descendants just as the stars of heaven in multitude." From Abraham, who was old enough to be "as good as dead" for having children, came a nation as many as the stars and the sand, just as God promised (Genesis 15:5; 22:17). When God promises, nothing is too hard for Him (Genesis 18:14).

Old Testament links: Genesis 18:11 (alluded to); Genesis 22:17 (alluded to); Genesis 21:2 (alluded to)

11:13-16 *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them from afar, and having been persuaded **of them**, and having embraced **them**, and having confessed that they are strangers and sojourners on the earth. For those who say such things make it manifest that they are seeking a homeland. And if indeed they had been remembering that **homeland** from which they came out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they stretch out for a better **one**, that is, a heavenly **one**. Therefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.*

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises." Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah died without seeing the promises fulfilled. They did not get the land or the nation or the Messiah in their lifetimes.

"But having seen them from afar, and having been persuaded of them, and having embraced them." Like travelers who see their home from a distance, they saw what was coming and welcomed it. "And having confessed that they are strangers and sojourners on the earth." Abraham called himself a stranger and sojourner (Genesis 23:4). Jacob spoke of his life as a pilgrimage (Genesis 47:9).

"For those who say such things make it manifest that they are seeking a homeland." If they had only wanted the land they came from, "they would have had opportunity to return." Abraham could have gone back to Ur or Haran. He did not.

"But now they stretch out for a better one, that is, a heavenly one." Their real home was with God. "Therefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God." God calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 3:6). He is proud to be known as their God. "For He has prepared a city for them." Jesus said the same: He has gone to prepare a place for us (John 14:2-3). Do you live like a stranger here, or like this world is all there is?

Old Testament links: Exodus 3:6 (alluded to); Genesis 23:4 (alluded to); Genesis 47:9 (alluded to)

11:17-19 *By faith Abraham, being tested, has offered up Isaac; and the one who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten* ***son****, as to whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed will be called," having reasoned that God* ***was*** *able to raise even from* ***the*** *dead, from where he also received him back in a figure.*

"By faith Abraham, being tested, has offered up Isaac." This is the greatest test of Abraham's life (Genesis 22:1-19). God told him to offer up Isaac, the son of promise, as a sacrifice.

"And the one who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son." Isaac was the son of the promise. God had said, in the words of verse 18, "In Isaac your seed will be called." Everything God promised was tied to Isaac. If Isaac died, how could God keep His word?

"Having reasoned that God was able to raise even from the dead." Abraham's faith worked it through. God had promised. God cannot lie. So if Isaac died, God would raise him up. Abraham even told his servants that he and the boy would come back (Genesis 22:5).

"From where he also received him back in a figure." God stopped Abraham's hand and provided a ram instead. In a picture, Abraham received Isaac back from the dead. And the picture points to Christ, the only Son of the Father, who was really offered, and really raised from the dead.

Old Testament links: Genesis 21:12 (quoted); Genesis 22:1-2 (alluded to); Genesis 22:12-13 (alluded to)

11:20-22 *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped **leaning** on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, dying, made mention concerning the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.*

"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come." Isaac blessed his sons, looking ahead to what God would do with their families (Genesis 27:27-40). Even though the blessing did not go the way Isaac first planned, he trusted that God's word would come true.

"By faith Jacob, dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped leaning on the top of his staff." Jacob, near death in Egypt, blessed Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis 48:1-20). The words about the staff follow the Greek Old Testament of Genesis 47:31, where the Hebrew speaks of the head of his bed. Jacob, the wanderer, ended his life worshiping.

"By faith Joseph, dying, made mention concerning the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones." Joseph had all the power of Egypt, but he knew Egypt was not home. He made Israel promise to carry his bones to the land God promised (Genesis 50:24-25). And they did (Exodus 13:19; Joshua 24:32). These three men all looked ahead, at the end of their lives, to what God would do after they were gone.

Old Testament links: Genesis 50:24 (alluded to); Genesis 47:31 (alluded to); Genesis 50:25 (alluded to); Genesis 27:39 (alluded to); Genesis 27:33 (alluded to); Genesis 48:20 (alluded to)

11:23 *By faith Moses, having been born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw **that** the child **was** beautiful; and they did not fear the edict of the king.*

"By faith Moses, having been born, was hidden three months by his parents." Pharaoh had ordered every Hebrew baby boy to be thrown into the Nile (Exodus 1:22). Moses' parents, Amram and Jochebed, hid him (Exodus 2:1-3; 6:20).

"Because they saw that the child was beautiful." The word means well-formed, pleasing. Stephen said he was beautiful to God (Acts 7:20). His parents sensed that God had a purpose for him.

"And they did not fear the edict of the king." Their faith was greater than their fear. They risked their lives to obey God rather than the king. Sometimes faith means saying no to those in power when they order us to do wrong (Acts 5:29).

Old Testament links: Exodus 1:22 (alluded to); Exodus 2:2 (alluded to)

11:24-26 *By faith Moses, having become great, refused to be called **the** son of Pharaoh's daughter, having chosen rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to have **the** temporary enjoyment of sin, having esteemed the reproach of the Christ greater wealth than the treasures in Egypt; for he was looking toward the reward.*

"By faith Moses, having become great, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Moses grew up in the palace. He had wealth, education, and power (Acts 7:22). But when he was grown, he chose to stand with his own people.

"Having chosen rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin." Sin does bring pleasure, but it is "temporary." Moses chose suffering with God's people over pleasure that would not last.

"Having esteemed the reproach of the Christ greater wealth than the treasures in Egypt." How could Moses bear the reproach of Christ, centuries before Jesus? He suffered for the same hope, the promised Messiah, and for identifying with God's people. The shame he bore was the same shame Christ's people bear.

"For he was looking toward the reward." Moses looked past the treasure of Egypt to the reward God gives. That is not selfish. It is faith (11:6).

Old Testament links: Exodus 2:11 (alluded to); Exodus 2:10 (alluded to)

11:27-28 *By faith he left Egypt, not having feared the anger of the king; for he endured as seeing the Invisible **One**. By faith he has kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that the one destroying the firstborn might not touch them.*

"By faith he left Egypt, not having feared the anger of the king." Moses left Egypt twice: once when he fled to Midian (Exodus 2:15), and once when he led Israel out in the Exodus. Many think the Exodus is meant here, since Moses did fear when he fled the first time (Exodus 2:14).

"For he endured as seeing the Invisible One." Here is the secret of Moses' life. He kept going because he kept his eyes on God, whom no one can see, but whom faith sees.

"By faith he has kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that the one destroying the firstborn might not touch them." On the night of the last plague, God told Israel to put the blood of a lamb on their doorposts (Exodus 12:1-13, 21-23). Moses believed God and obeyed. The blood of the lamb protected them, a picture of Christ our Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Old Testament links: Exodus 12:21 (alluded to); Exodus 12:27 (alluded to)

11:29-31 *By faith they passed through the Red Sea as through dry **land**, which the Egyptians, having attempted, were swallowed up. By faith the walls of Jericho fell, having been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who disobeyed, having received the spies with peace.*

"By faith they passed through the Red Sea as through dry land." Israel walked between walls of water on dry ground (Exodus 14:21-31). "Which the Egyptians, having attempted, were swallowed up." The same sea that saved Israel destroyed Egypt. The difference was faith in the God who opened the way.

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell, having been encircled for seven days." God told Israel to march around the city once a day for six days and seven times on the seventh day (Joshua 6:1-20). It made no military sense. But they obeyed, and the walls fell.

"By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who disobeyed, having received the spies with peace." Rahab was a Canaanite woman with a sinful past. But she believed the God of Israel was the true God (Joshua 2:9-11), she hid the spies, and she was saved when the city fell (Joshua 6:22-25). She became part of Israel and an ancestor of Jesus (Matthew 1:5). God's grace reaches anyone who believes.

Old Testament links: Joshua 2:1 (alluded to); Exodus 14:22 (alluded to); Joshua 6:20 (alluded to); Joshua 6:25 (alluded to); Exodus 14:28 (alluded to); Nehemiah 9:11 (alluded to)

11:32-34 *And what more shall I say? For the time will fail me telling of Gideon, and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, and David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, shut* ***the*** *mouths of lions, quenched* ***the*** *power of fire, escaped* ***the*** *mouths of* ***the*** *sword, out of weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put to flight armies of foreigners.*

"And what more shall I say? For the time will fail me telling of Gideon, and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, and David and Samuel and the prophets." The writer could go on and on. He names six, and they are not perfect people. Gideon was fearful. Barak was hesitant. Samson was ruled by his desires. Jephthah made a rash vow. David sinned greatly. But each one, at a key moment, trusted God. God does not use perfect people. He uses people who trust Him.

"Who through faith conquered kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions." David and others conquered kingdoms. Judges and kings worked righteousness. Daniel was spared in the lions' den (Daniel 6:22).

"Quenched the power of fire." Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the furnace (Daniel 3:27). "Escaped the mouths of the sword." Elijah, Elisha, and David escaped those trying to kill them. "Out of weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put to flight armies of foreigners." God takes weak people and makes them strong (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Old Testament links: Daniel 6:22 (alluded to); Daniel 3:27 (alluded to)

11:35-38 *Women received their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not having accepted the release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others received trial of mockings and of scourgings, and in addition of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they were tested, they died by slaughter of* ***the*** *sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, being oppressed, being mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and the holes of the earth.*

"Women received their dead by resurrection." The widow of Zarephath and the woman of Shunem received their sons back from death (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:32-37).

"And others were tortured, not having accepted the release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection." Here the chapter turns. Not every person of faith was delivered. Some were tortured and refused to give up their faith to be set free. They looked for a resurrection better than coming back to this life, the resurrection to eternal life. Jewish history tells of faithful people in the years before Christ who died this way rather than deny God.

"And others received trial of mockings and of scourgings, and in addition of chains and imprisonment." Jeremiah was beaten, put in stocks, and thrown into a pit (Jeremiah 20:2; 37:15; 38:6).

"They were stoned, they were sawed in two." Zechariah the son of Jehoiada was stoned in the temple court (2 Chronicles 24:20-21). An old Jewish tradition says Isaiah was sawn in two under the wicked king Manasseh. "They went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, being oppressed, being mistreated." Elijah wore a garment of hair (2 Kings 1:8).

"Of whom the world was not worthy." The world treated them as worthless. God says the world was not worthy of them. "Wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and the holes of the earth." Obadiah hid a hundred prophets in caves (1 Kings 18:4).

This passage is honest. Faith does not always lead to escape in this life. Sometimes it leads to suffering and death. But it always leads to God's approval and a better resurrection.

Old Testament links: 1 Kings 18:4 (alluded to); 2 Chronicles 24:21 (alluded to); 1 Kings 17:22-23 (alluded to); 2 Kings 4:35-37 (alluded to)

11:39-40 *And these all, having been commended through faith, did not receive the promise, God having planned something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.*

"And these all, having been commended through faith, did not receive the promise." Every person in this chapter was approved by God for their faith. And yet none of them received the full promise, the coming of the Messiah's work and the final inheritance, during their lives.

"God having planned something better for us." The better theme comes back one more time. God's plan included us, those who live after Christ came.

"So that apart from us they should not be made perfect." God did not plan to complete His people in pieces. The saints of the Old Testament and the believers of today will be made complete through the work of Christ, and they will share in the resurrection and the kingdom He brings. They are waiting, and they are watching, as the next chapter will say. They ran their race. Now it is our turn to run ours.

Chapter 11 Summary

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen, and by it the elders were approved by God. By faith we understand that God formed the universe by His word. By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice, Enoch was taken up without dying, and Noah built the ark. Without faith it is impossible to please God, for those who come to Him must believe that He is and that He rewards those who seek Him. By faith Abraham left home not knowing where he was going, lived as a stranger in the land of promise, and looked for the city God would build. By faith Sarah received power to conceive, and from one man as good as dead came descendants as many as the stars. They all died without receiving the promises, confessing they were strangers seeking a heavenly country, and God is not ashamed to be called their God. By faith Abraham offered Isaac, believing God could raise him from the dead. By faith Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph looked ahead

to God's future for their families. By faith Moses' parents hid him, Moses chose the reproach of Christ over the treasures of Egypt, kept the Passover, and led Israel through the Red Sea. By faith Jericho's walls fell and Rahab was spared. Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets conquered kingdoms and escaped death, while others by faith were tortured, mocked, imprisoned, stoned, sawn in two, and killed, people of whom the world was not worthy. All were approved for their faith, but they did not receive the promise, because God had planned something better, so that they would be made complete together with us.

Chapter 11 Study Questions

1. How does 11:1 describe faith? Put it in your own words.

2. Why is it impossible to please God without faith, and what must the one who comes to God believe? (11:6)

3. What did Abel, Enoch, and Noah each do by faith? (11:4-7)

4. What did Abraham's faith look like when he left home, and when he offered Isaac? (11:8-10, 17-19)

5. What does it mean that these people confessed they were "strangers and sojourners on the earth"? (11:13-16)

6. What did Moses give up, and why? (11:24-26)

7. Many of the people in this chapter were far from perfect. What does that teach you? (11:31-32)

8. How does 11:35-38 show that faith does not always lead to escape from suffering?

9. Which person in this chapter encourages you most, and why?

10. Where is God asking you to trust Him right now without seeing the whole road?

Chapter 12: Run the Race, Looking to Jesus

Scripture

12:1-13 Therefore we also, having so great a cloud of witnesses encompassing us, having laid aside every weight and the sin that easily entangles, let us run with endurance the race lying before us, looking to the founder and perfecter of the faith, Jesus, who for the joy lying before Him endured ***the*** cross, having despised ***the*** shame, and sat down at ***the*** right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary, fainting in your souls. You have not yet resisted to ***the point of*** blood, struggling against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons: "My son, do not regard lightly ***the*** discipline of ***the*** Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; for whom ***the*** Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure discipline, God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we indeed had the fathers of our flesh as correctors, and we respected ***them***; shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed disciplined ***us*** for a few days according to what seemed good to them, but He for ***our*** benefit, so that ***we may*** share His holiness. Now all discipline for the present does not seem to be of joy, but of grief; but afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift up the hands that hang down and the weakened knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be turned aside, but rather be healed.

12:14-29 Pursue peace with all, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord, watching lest anyone fall short of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and through this many be defiled; lest ***there be*** any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one meal sold his birthright. For you know that even afterward, when he wished to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, although he sought it with tears. For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that has been kindled with fire, and to blackness and darkness and storm, and to ***the*** sound of a trumpet and to a voice of words, which those who heard begged that no word be added to them. For they could not bear what was being commanded: "If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned or shot down with an arrow." And so fearful was the sight ***that*** Moses said, "I am terrified and trembling." But you have come to Mount Zion and to ***the*** city of ***the*** living God, ***the*** heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to ***the*** festal gathering and church of ***the*** firstborn who are enrolled in ***the*** heavens, and to God, ***the*** judge of all, and to ***the*** spirits of righteous ***men*** made perfect, and to Jesus, ***the*** mediator of a new covenant, and to ***the*** blood of sprinkling that speaks better ***things*** than ***that of*** Abel. See that you do not refuse the One speaking. For if they did not escape who refused the One who instructed ***them*** on earth, much more ***will*** we ***not escape*** who turn away from the One ***who speaks*** from heaven, whose voice shook the earth at that time; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," signifies the removal of the things being shaken, as of things that have been made, so that the things not being shaken may remain. Therefore, receiving a kingdom that

cannot be shaken, let us have grace, through which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God ***is*** also a consuming fire.

Chapter 12 Preview

After the long list of the heroes of faith, the writer turns to us. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. So let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily tangles our feet, and run with endurance the race set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of the faith, who endured the cross for the joy set before Him and sat down at the right hand of God. When we grow weary, we should think of Him. Then the writer speaks of hardship as God's discipline. God disciplines every son He loves, just as a good father does, and though discipline hurts at the time, it later yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. So strengthen your weak hands and knees, and make straight paths for your feet.

The second half of the chapter holds the fifth and last warning. Pursue peace with everyone and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. Watch that no one falls short of God's grace, that no bitter root springs up, and that no one is like Esau, who sold his birthright for one meal. Then the writer sets two mountains side by side. Israel came to Mount Sinai, with fire, darkness, storm, and a voice so fearful that even Moses trembled. We have come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, to angels without number, to the church of the firstborn, to God the Judge, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, whose blood speaks better than Abel's. So do not refuse Him who speaks from heaven. God will shake heaven and earth once more, and only what cannot be shaken will remain. We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, so let us serve God with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

Chapter 12 Study

12:1 *Therefore we also, having so great a cloud of witnesses encompassing us, having laid aside every weight and the sin that easily entangles, let us run with endurance the race lying before us,*

"Therefore we also, having so great a cloud of witnesses encompassing us." The "therefore" points back to chapter 11. The witnesses are the men and women of faith the writer has just named. Are they watching us from heaven, like fans in a stadium? Some Bible teachers think so. Others think the main point is that they are witnesses to us, people whose lives testify that faith in God is worth it. Either way, we are not the first to run this race.

"Having laid aside every weight and the sin that easily entangles." A runner does not carry extra weight. Some things are not sin, but they slow us down. Other things are plain sin, and sin wraps around our feet like a long robe and trips us.

"Let us run with endurance the race lying before us." The Christian life is not a sprint. It is a long-distance race, and God has set the course. We run it with endurance, steady and patient, to the finish.

12:2 *looking to the founder and perfecter of the faith, Jesus, who for the joy lying before Him endured **the** cross, having despised **the** shame, and sat down at **the** right hand of the throne of God.*

"Looking to the founder and perfecter of the faith, Jesus." Where do we look while we run? Not at ourselves, not at others, and not at our problems. We look at Jesus. He is the "founder," the pioneer who went first and opened the way (2:10). He is the "perfecter," the One who completed the race of faith perfectly and brings our faith to its goal.

"Who for the joy lying before Him endured the cross, having despised the shame." What was that joy? The joy of doing the Father's will, of being raised and exalted, and of bringing many sons to glory (2:10). He kept His eyes on that joy, and so He endured the worst pain and shame anyone has ever faced. "Despised the shame" means He counted it as nothing compared to what lay ahead.

"And sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." The race ended in victory. He is seated now. And He will finish what He started in us (Philippians 1:6).

Old Testament links: Psalm 110:1 (alluded to)

12:3 *For consider Him who has endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary, fainting in your souls.*

"For consider Him who has endured such hostility from sinners against Himself." Think it over. Compare what you are going through with what Jesus went through. He was hated, mocked, beaten, spit on, and crucified by the very people He came to save. And He was sinless.

"So that you may not grow weary, fainting in your souls." The readers were tired. They were tempted to quit. The writer says, Look at Jesus. When we think about what He endured for us, our own troubles take their right size, and we find strength to keep going. When you feel like giving up, stop and consider Him.

12:4 *You have not yet resisted to **the point of** blood, struggling against sin;*

"You have not yet resisted to the point of blood, struggling against sin." The readers had suffered loss, mockery, and prison for some (10:32-34). But none of them had yet been killed for their faith. They had not shed their blood, as Jesus did, and as some of the heroes in chapter 11 did.

This is not to make their suffering seem small. It is to give it perspective. Their struggle "against sin" may mean their fight against temptation to give up, or their fight against sinners who opposed them. Either way, the writer is saying, You have not reached the limit. You can keep going, and God will give you strength.

12:5-6 *and you have forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons: "My son, do not regard lightly **the** discipline of **the** Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; for whom **the** Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives."*

"And you have forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons." The writer quotes Proverbs 3:11-12. God speaks to them as His children.

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him." There are two wrong ways to respond to God's discipline. One is to take it lightly, to shrug it off and learn nothing. The other is to faint, to give up and think God has turned against us.

"For whom the Lord loves He disciplines." Discipline is a sign of love. The word discipline here means child training, the whole work of raising a child, which includes teaching and correction. "And He scourges every son whom He receives." The word scourges is strong. God's training can hurt. But it is always the work of a loving Father, never of an enemy.

Old Testament links: Proverbs 3:11-12 (quoted)

12:7 *If you endure discipline, God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not discipline?*

"If you endure discipline, God is dealing with you as with sons." The writer now applies the proverb. The hardships they were facing, including the persecution, were not signs that God had abandoned them. God was treating them as His children.

"For what son is there whom a father does not discipline?" A good father trains his children. He does not let them run wild. He corrects them because he cares about who they become.

Not every hardship is punishment for a specific sin. Sometimes it is, as when God disciplined believers in Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:30-32). But often it is training, to make us stronger and more like Christ (James 1:2-4). In every case, the right response is to endure it and ask what God is teaching us.

12:8 *But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.*

"But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons." In the ancient world, a father might not bother training a child born outside of marriage, because that child would not be his heir. He invested in his true sons.

The writer's point is sobering. If a person claims to be God's child but God never corrects or trains him, something is wrong. All true children share in God's discipline. It is one of the marks that we really belong to Him. If you are going through a hard time and God is using it to shape you, that is evidence that He loves you as His own.

12:9 *Furthermore, we indeed had the fathers of our flesh as correctors, and we respected* ***them****; shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?*

The writer compares our earthly fathers with God. "We indeed had the fathers of our flesh as correctors, and we respected them." Our human fathers corrected us, and most of us came to respect them for it.

"Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?" God is "the Father of spirits," the One who gives us spiritual life. If we respected our human fathers, how much more should we submit to God's training. And the result is "and live." Submitting to God leads to real life.

We should also say this with care. Some readers had fathers who were harsh, cruel, or absent, and who did not correct in love. God is not like that. He is the perfect Father, and His discipline is never abuse. Where an earthly father failed, the heavenly Father does not.

12:10 *For they indeed disciplined* ***us*** *for a few days according to what seemed good to them, but He for* ***our*** *benefit, so that* ***we may*** *share His holiness.*

"For they indeed disciplined us for a few days according to what seemed good to them." Our earthly fathers trained us for a short time, during childhood. And they did it as best they knew how. Sometimes they got it right, and sometimes they did not. Their discipline was limited by their own wisdom and their own flaws.

"But He for our benefit, so that we may share His holiness." God's discipline is always for our good. He never makes a mistake. And His goal is the highest goal there is: that we would share His holiness, that we would become like Him. Everything God allows in your life, He can use for that purpose (Romans 8:28-29).

12:11 *Now all discipline for the present does not seem to be of joy, but of grief; but afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

"Now all discipline for the present does not seem to be of joy, but of grief." The writer is honest. Discipline hurts. It is not fun. No one enjoys it while it is happening. Scripture never asks us to pretend that pain does not hurt.

"But afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Afterward. That is the key word. Like a farmer waiting for a harvest, we wait for the fruit. And the fruit is "peaceful," a settled, right life, close to God.

Notice who receives this fruit: "those who have been trained by it." The word trained is the word for an athlete in training (5:14). Discipline only bears fruit in those who let it train them, who do not resist or run from it.

12:12-13 *Therefore lift up the hands that hang down and the weakened knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be turned aside, but rather be healed.*

"Therefore lift up the hands that hang down and the weakened knees." The writer goes back to the picture of a race. Tired runners let their arms drop and their knees go weak. The words echo Isaiah 35:3, a promise of God's coming salvation. Get your strength back. Keep running.

"And make straight paths for your feet." This echoes Proverbs 4:26. Clear the track. Remove what trips you up.

"So that the lame may not be turned aside, but rather be healed." Our choices affect others. When we run straight, we make it easier for weaker believers, those who are limping, to follow. When we stumble or wander, we can cause others to fall. The goal is that the lame would be healed, not hurt further. Who is watching how you run?

Old Testament links: Isaiah 35:3 (quoted); Proverbs 4:26 (quoted)

12:14 *Pursue peace with all, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord,*

"Pursue peace with all." This begins the fifth and last warning in Hebrews (12:14-29). Pursue means to chase hard after something. Peace does not happen on its own. We have to go after it, with everyone, as far as it depends on us (Romans 12:18).

"And the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." Holiness means being set apart for God, living a life that belongs to Him. "Without which no one will see the Lord" is strong. Bible teachers explain it in different ways. Some say it means the holiness God gives every believer in Christ (10:10, 14), which always shows itself in a changing life. Others stress that a believer's practical holiness is needed to see and know the Lord now, in fellowship. Either way, holiness is not optional for the Christian.

12:15 *watching lest anyone fall short of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and through this many be defiled;*

"Watching lest anyone fall short of the grace of God." The word "watching" is the word from which we get bishop or overseer. Believers are to watch out for one another, so no one falls behind or misses God's grace.

"Lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and through this many be defiled." This picture comes from Deuteronomy 29:18, which warns against a root bearing poison among God's people, a person turning away from God to idols. A bitter root starts small and hidden. But it grows, and it spreads. One bitter person can poison a whole church. Is there bitterness growing in your heart? Pull it out before it spreads.

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 29:18 (alluded to)

12:16 *lest* ***there be*** *any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one meal sold his birthright.*

"Lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau." A fornicator is someone who commits sexual sin. Profane means common, treating holy things as ordinary. Some read both words of Esau. Others read the first as a general warning and the second as the one that fits Esau.

"Who for one meal sold his birthright." Esau came in hungry and traded his birthright, the rights and blessing of the firstborn son, to Jacob for a bowl of stew (Genesis 25:29-34). He despised it. He traded something of lasting value for something that satisfied for a moment.

That is what sin often does. It offers a quick meal, and asks us to give up what is precious. Are you trading something eternal for something that will be gone tomorrow?

Old Testament links: Genesis 25:33 (alluded to); Genesis 25:34 (alluded to)

12:17 *For you know that even afterward, when he wished to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, although he sought it with tears.*

"For you know that even afterward, when he wished to inherit the blessing, he was rejected." Later, when Isaac was ready to give the blessing, Jacob got it instead, and Esau could not get it back (Genesis 27:30-40).

"For he found no place of repentance, although he sought it with tears." Bible teachers read this in two main ways. Some say Esau could not change his father's mind. Isaac would not take back the blessing. Others say Esau could not find a real change of heart in himself. He wept over what he lost, not over his sin. Either way, the lesson is clear. Some choices have consequences that cannot be undone, even with tears.

Like the other warnings, this passage (12:14-29) is read in the four main ways given at chapter 6: as a warning to true believers about discipline and loss of reward, as a warning to those who professed faith but never truly believed, as teaching that a believer can lose salvation, or as a warning of what would happen if a believer turned away. I do not settle that here.

Old Testament links: Genesis 27:34-38 (alluded to)

12:18-19 *For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that has been kindled with fire, and to blackness and darkness and storm, and to* ***the*** *sound of a trumpet and to a voice of words, which those who heard begged that no word be added to them.*

"For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that has been kindled with fire." The writer now compares two mountains. The first is Mount Sinai, where God gave the Law (Exodus 19:16-25; Deuteronomy 4:11-12). It was a real mountain that could be touched, and it burned with fire.

"And to blackness and darkness and storm, and to the sound of a trumpet and to a voice of words." There was thick darkness, thunder, a trumpet blast growing louder, and the voice of God Himself speaking the Ten Commandments.

"Which those who heard begged that no word be added to them." The people were so afraid that they begged Moses to speak to them instead of God (Exodus 20:18-19; Deuteronomy 5:23-27). Sinai showed God's holiness, and it showed how far sinners are from Him.

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 4:11 (alluded to); Deuteronomy 4:12 (alluded to); Exodus 19:18 (alluded to); Exodus 20:19 (alluded to); Deuteronomy 5:25 (alluded to)

12:20-21 *For they could not bear what was being commanded: "If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned or shot down with an arrow." And so fearful was the sight* ***that*** *Moses said, "I am terrified and trembling."*

"For they could not bear what was being commanded." God commanded that even an animal that touched the mountain must be put to death (Exodus 19:12-13). "If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned or shot down with an arrow." That showed how holy God's presence was. No one could come near.

"And so fearful was the sight that Moses said," in his own words, "I am terrified and trembling." Even Moses, the man who spoke with God face to face, was afraid. Deuteronomy 9:19 records his fear after the golden calf. If Moses trembled, who could stand?

That is the old covenant's mountain. It is a place of fear and distance. The writer's readers were tempted to go back to it. But they had come somewhere far better.

Old Testament links: Exodus 19:12-13 (quoted); Deuteronomy 9:19 (alluded to)

12:22 *But you have come to Mount Zion and to* ***the*** *city of* ***the*** *living God,* ***the*** *heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,*

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Here is the second mountain. Believers have already come, by faith, to God's own dwelling place. Mount Zion was the hill in Jerusalem where David brought the ark and where the temple stood. The heavenly Jerusalem is the real city of God above, the one Abraham looked for (11:10, 16).

This does not cancel God's promises for the earthly Jerusalem. The prophets say Jerusalem will be the capital of Christ's kingdom on earth (Isaiah 2:2-4; Zechariah 14:4, 16). The heavenly city will one day come down (Revelation 21:2, 10).

"And to myriads of angels." A myriad is ten thousand, and myriads means numbers too large to count. At Sinai the angels were present in terror. At Zion they are gathered in joy.

12:23 *to* ***the*** *festal gathering and church of* ***the*** *firstborn who are enrolled in* ***the*** *heavens, and to God,* ***the*** *judge of all, and to* ***the*** *spirits of righteous* ***men*** *made perfect,*

"To the festal gathering and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in the heavens." The "festal gathering" is a joyful assembly, like a great feast. The "church of the firstborn" is God's people. Firstborn speaks of their rights as heirs. Their names are "enrolled in the heavens," written in God's book (Luke 10:20; Revelation 21:27).

"And to God, the judge of all." We come to God Himself, the Judge. That would be terrifying, except for what comes next.

"And to the spirits of righteous men made perfect." These are the believers who have died, the Old Testament saints and others, now with the Lord and made complete in His presence. Our loved ones who died in Christ are part of this gathering.

Old Testament links: Genesis 18:25 (alluded to)

12:24 *and to Jesus, **the** mediator of a new covenant, and to **the** blood of sprinkling that speaks better **things** than **that of** Abel.*

"And to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant." This is why we can come to God the Judge without fear. Jesus stands between us and God, and He made the new covenant by His blood (8:6; 9:15).

"And to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel." Abel's blood cried out from the ground for justice against his murderer (Genesis 4:10). Jesus' blood speaks better things. It does not cry out for vengeance. It speaks of mercy, forgiveness, and peace with God. Abel's blood said, Guilty. Jesus' blood says, Forgiven.

This is the mountain we have come to. Why would anyone go back to Sinai?

The new covenant Jesus mediates is the one God promised to the house of Israel and the house of Judah in Jeremiah 31:31. Some teachers say it now belongs to the church in Israel's place, but as I explained at 8:13, we share its blessings now through the blood of Jesus, and Israel as a nation will receive all of it when He returns.

Old Testament links: Genesis 4:10 (alluded to); Jeremiah 31:31 (alluded to); Exodus 24:8 (alluded to)

12:25 *See that you do not refuse the One speaking. For if they did not escape who refused the One who instructed **them** on earth, much more **will** we **not escape** who turn away from the One **who speaks** from heaven,*

"See that you do not refuse the One speaking." The God who speaks is the same God who spoke in His Son (1:1-2). Do not turn Him away.

"For if they did not escape who refused the One who instructed them on earth." At Sinai, God spoke on earth, through Moses and from the mountain. Those who would not listen were judged.

"Much more will we not escape who turn away from the One who speaks from heaven." Now God speaks from heaven through Christ. If refusing the message at Sinai brought judgment, refusing the message from heaven brings even greater judgment. This is the same argument as in 2:2-3 and 10:28-29. The greater the message, the greater the danger of refusing it.

12:26-27 *whose voice shook the earth at that time; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," signifies the removal of the things being shaken, as of things that have been made, so that the things not being shaken may remain.*

"Whose voice shook the earth at that time." At Sinai the whole mountain quaked (Exodus 19:18). "But now He has promised," and the promise is this: "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." The writer is quoting Haggai 2:6. God has promised a final shaking of all creation.

The words Yet once more, the writer says, "signifies the removal of the things being shaken." When God shakes heaven and earth, everything that can be shaken will be removed. The present world will pass away, as chapter 1 said (1:10-12; 2 Peter 3:10-13).

"So that the things not being shaken may remain." Only what belongs to God's eternal kingdom will last. That shaking is still future. It comes at the end of this age, when Christ returns to judge and reign. Everything we build our lives on will be tested. Only what is built on Christ will stand.

Old Testament links: Haggai 2:6 (quoted); Exodus 19:18 (alluded to)

12:28 *Therefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, through which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear;*

"Therefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken." Believers are receiving a kingdom that will never be moved. The kingdom of Christ will not be overthrown or replaced (Daniel 2:44; 7:14).

"Let us have grace." This can be read as, let us be thankful. The Greek word charis means both grace and thanks. Both fit. We should be grateful, and we should hold on to God's grace.

"Through which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." The word serve here means to worship and serve as a priest does. Our worship should be full of reverence and awe. God is our Father, but He is not our buddy. He is holy. Our worship should be joyful, and it should never be careless.

12:29 *for our God **is** also a consuming fire.*

"For our God is also a consuming fire." The writer is quoting Deuteronomy 4:24. The same God who burned on Sinai is our God today. He has not changed. He is still holy, and He still consumes what is sinful.

For those who refuse Him, that is a terrifying truth. For those who come to Him through Jesus, it is a different kind of truth. The fire that consumes sin also purifies His people (1 Peter 1:7). We do not need to fear being consumed, because Jesus took the fire of judgment for us. But we should never treat God lightly. Grace and awe go together.

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 4:24 (quoted)

Chapter 12 Summary

Since we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that entangles us, and run with endurance the race before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who endured the cross for the joy before Him and sat down at God's right hand. Consider Him so you do not grow weary. The readers had not yet resisted to the point of blood. They had forgotten that God disciplines His children because He loves them, as Proverbs says. Hardship is God's training, a sign that we are His sons, and while it hurts now, it later yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those trained by it. So strengthen your weak hands and knees and make straight paths for your feet. Pursue peace and holiness, watch that no one falls short of God's grace, that no bitter root springs up, and that no one is like Esau, who sold his birthright for one meal and later could not find a way to undo it. We have not come to the fearful mountain of Sinai, but to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, to countless angels, to the church of the firstborn, to God the Judge, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, whose blood speaks better than Abel's. So do not refuse Him who speaks from heaven. God will shake heaven and earth once more, and only what cannot be shaken will remain. We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, so let us be thankful and worship God with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

Chapter 12 Study Questions

1. Who is the "cloud of witnesses," and how should they encourage us? (12:1)

2. What two things does 12:1 tell us to lay aside?

3. What does it mean to look to Jesus as the founder and perfecter of our faith? What did He look to? (12:2)

4. How should we respond to God's discipline, and what are the two wrong responses? (12:5-7)

5. What is God's goal in disciplining us? (12:10-11)

6. What warning does Esau give us? (12:16-17)

7. What are the differences between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion in 12:18-24?

8. What will remain when God shakes heaven and earth? (12:26-28)

9. What weight or sin is slowing you down in your race right now? What would it take to lay it aside?

10. Is God using a hard time in your life to train you? How can you let it bear the peaceful fruit of righteousness?

Chapter 13: Love, Worship, and the Great Shepherd

Scripture

13:1-16 Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget hospitality, for through this some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember the prisoners as bound with ***them***, ***and*** those being mistreated, as being yourselves also in ***the*** body. Marriage ***is to be*** honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers. ***Let your*** way of life ***be*** without love of money, being content with the things present; for He Himself has said, "I will certainly not leave you, nor will I ever forsake you," so that we, being confident, say, "***The*** Lord ***is*** my helper, and I will not be afraid; what will man do to me?" Remember those who lead you, who spoke the word of God to you; considering the outcome of their way of life, imitate ***their*** faith. Jesus Christ ***is*** the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried about by various and strange teachings; for ***it is*** good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, by which those who walked ***in them*** were not profited. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no authority to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, so that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have an abiding city, but we are seeking the one to come. Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, ***the*** fruit of lips confessing His name. And do not forget doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

13:17-25 Obey those who lead you and submit ***to them***, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they may do this with joy and not groaning, for this ***would be*** unprofitable for you. Pray for us; for we trust that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves well in all things. And I exhort ***you*** more abundantly to do this, so that I may be restored to you more quickly. Now may the God of peace, who brought up from ***the*** dead the great Shepherd of the sheep by ***the*** blood of ***the*** eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus, equip you in every good work to do His will, working in you what ***is*** well pleasing before Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom ***be*** the glory to the ages of the ages. Amen. And I exhort you, brothers, bear with the word of exhortation, for indeed I have written to you in few ***words***. Know that the brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you. Greet all those who lead you and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you. Grace ***be*** with you all. Amen.

Chapter 13 Preview

The last chapter of Hebrews turns to everyday life. Let brotherly love continue. Show hospitality to strangers, for some have welcomed angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison and those who are mistreated. Honor marriage and keep the marriage bed pure. Stay free from the love of money and be content, because God has said He will never leave us or forsake us, so we can say with confidence, The Lord is my helper. Remember the leaders who taught you God's Word and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Then the writer gives one last word about the old system. Do not be carried away by strange teachings about foods. We have an altar that those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat from. As the bodies of the sacrifices were burned outside the camp, Jesus suffered outside the city gate, so let us go out to Him, bearing His shame, because we have no lasting city here. Our sacrifices now are praise, doing good, and sharing. The writer asks his readers to obey their leaders and pray for him. He closes with one of the great blessings of the Bible, asking the God of peace, who brought up the great Shepherd of the sheep from the dead by the blood of the eternal covenant, to equip them to do His will. Then come a few personal words, news about Timothy, greetings, and a final word of grace.

Chapter 13 Study

13:1 *Let brotherly love continue.*

"Let brotherly love continue." The Greek word is philadelphia, love for brothers and sisters in the faith. The readers already had it. They had shown it in caring for one another (6:10; 10:33-34). The writer simply says, Keep it going.

Love among believers can grow cold, especially under pressure, or when people disappoint us. It does not keep going on its own. It takes choosing to love again and again. Jesus said the world will know we are His disciples by our love for one another (John 13:35). All the deep teaching of this letter about Christ's priesthood should lead here: to a people who love each other.

13:2 *Do not forget hospitality, for through this some have entertained angels without knowing it.*

"Do not forget hospitality." Hospitality means love of strangers, welcoming people into your home. In the ancient world there were few safe inns, and traveling believers depended on other believers to take them in. Many churches met in homes.

"For through this some have entertained angels without knowing it." Abraham welcomed three visitors, and two of them were angels, along with the LORD Himself (Genesis 18:1-8; 19:1). Lot also took in two angels (Genesis 19:1-3). The point is not that we should open our homes in hopes of meeting an angel. It is that we never know how God may use a simple act of welcome. Jesus said that when we welcome the least of His brothers, we welcome Him (Matthew 25:35, 40).

Old Testament links: Genesis 18:2 (alluded to); Genesis 19:1 (alluded to)

13:3 *Remember the prisoners as bound with **them**, **and** those being mistreated, as being yourselves also in **the** body.*

"Remember the prisoners as bound with them." In those days prisoners often depended on friends and family for food and care. Believers in prison for their faith needed others to visit them and help them. The readers had done this before (10:34). The writer says, Keep doing it, and do it as if you were chained right beside them.

"And those being mistreated, as being yourselves also in the body." We are all in the body, which can mean we are all still in this life, open to the same suffering, or that we are all part of one body

in Christ. Either way, when one member suffers, all suffer together (1 Corinthians 12:26). There are believers around the world today in prison or mistreated for their faith. Do you remember them in prayer?

13:4 *Marriage **is to be** honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.*

"Marriage is to be honorable among all, and the bed undefiled." God designed marriage, and it should be held in honor by everyone, married or single. "The bed undefiled" means sexual relations in marriage are pure and good, and they should be kept that way, only between husband and wife.

"But God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers." Sexual sin is any sexual activity outside marriage. Adultery is breaking faith with one's own spouse. God takes both seriously. The world often treats them lightly, but God says He will judge. That is a warning, but it is also a call to come to Christ for forgiveness and a fresh start. No sin is beyond His cleansing for those who repent (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). If this touches a painful place in your life, take it to the Lord.

13:5 ***Let your** way of life **be** without love of money, being content with the things present; for He Himself has said, "I will certainly not leave you, nor will I ever forsake you,"*

"Let your way of life be without love of money, being content with the things present." The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). The readers had lost property for their faith (10:34). The temptation might be to worry about money, or to chase it. The answer is contentment, being satisfied with what God has given.

"For He Himself has said," and here is what He said: "I will certainly not leave you, nor will I ever forsake you." This promise comes from Deuteronomy 31:6, 8 and Joshua 1:5. In the Greek it is very strong. It stacks up the words for not, as if to say, I will never, ever leave you. Contentment does not come from having more. It comes from knowing we have God, and He will never walk away.

Old Testament links: Joshua 1:5 (quoted); Deuteronomy 31:6 (quoted); Deuteronomy 31:8 (quoted)

13:6 *so that we, being confident, say, "**The** Lord **is** my helper, and I will not be afraid; what will man do to me?"*

"So that we, being confident, say." Because God has promised never to leave us, we can speak with boldness. Faith hears God's promise and then answers it.

"The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid; what will man do to me?" The writer is quoting Psalm 118:6. When we know the Lord is on our side, people lose their power to make us afraid. They may take our property, as they did from these readers. They may mock us, imprison us, or worse. But they cannot take God from us, and they cannot touch what we have in Him (Romans 8:31-39). What are you afraid of today? Say this verse out loud, and believe it.

Old Testament links: Psalm 118:6 (quoted); Psalm 56:11 (alluded to)

13:7 *Remember those who lead you, who spoke the word of God to you; considering the outcome of their way of life, imitate **their** faith.*

"Remember those who lead you, who spoke the word of God to you." These are the leaders who first taught them the gospel. The words spoke and the call to consider "the outcome" suggest that some of these leaders may have already died, perhaps as faithful witnesses.

"Considering the outcome of their way of life, imitate their faith." Look at how their lives ended. Look at the fruit. Then follow their example. Not their personality, not every habit, but their faith. We all need models of faith, people who have walked with God for a long time and finished well. Who has done that for you? Thank God for them, and follow their faith.

13:8 *Jesus Christ **is** the same yesterday and today and forever.*

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." This verse stands at the center of the chapter, and it ties the whole letter together. The leaders of verse 7 had died, but the Lord they preached has not changed. Teachers come and go. Jesus remains.

"Yesterday": He is the same Christ who died and rose, the One the apostles preached. Today: He is our living High Priest, interceding for us now (7:25). Forever: He will always be the same (1:12). His love, His power, His promises, and His character never change.

That is why the readers did not need new teachings (verse 9). They needed the same Jesus. When everything around you is shifting, hold on to the One who does not change.

13:9 *Do not be carried about by various and strange teachings; for **it is** good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, by which those who walked **in them** were not profited.*

"Do not be carried about by various and strange teachings." Some were being pushed around by new ideas, like a boat tossed by the wind (Ephesians 4:14). These teachings were "strange," foreign to the gospel.

"For it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods." It seems that some of these teachings were about food: Jewish food laws, or meals tied to the temple and its sacrifices. Some thought that eating or not eating certain things made them stronger spiritually. The writer says the heart is strengthened by grace, not by diet.

"By which those who walked in them were not profited." Those rules never did anyone any spiritual good (Colossians 2:20-23). Strength comes from God's grace in Christ.

13:10 *We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no authority to eat.*

"We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no authority to eat." Under the Law, priests could eat parts of many sacrifices (Leviticus 6:16, 26). The writer says believers have an altar of their own, and those who hold on to the old tabernacle system have no right to eat from it.

What is the altar? Most Bible teachers say it refers to the cross, and to Christ Himself and His sacrifice, which believers feed on by faith (John 6:51-56). Some take it to refer to the Lord's Supper, and some churches teach that the Supper is itself a sacrifice. On any of these readings, the writer's point rests on Christ's once-for-all sacrifice (10:10-14), which is received by faith, not by eating temple meals.

13:11 *For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest for sin are burned outside the camp.*

"For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest for sin are burned outside the camp." On the Day of Atonement, the blood of the bull and the goat was brought into the Most Holy Place. But the bodies were not eaten. They were carried outside the camp and burned (Leviticus 16:27).

Here is the writer's point. The sacrifice for sin on the most important day of the year was not eaten by the priests at all. So those who serve the tabernacle had no share in it. In the same way, the great sacrifice of Christ is not something you get by serving at the temple. And the place where the sin offering was burned was outside the camp. That leads to the next verse.

Old Testament links: Leviticus 4:12 (pictured); Leviticus 16:27 (alluded to); Leviticus 4:21 (alluded to)

13:12 *Therefore Jesus also, so that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.*

"Therefore Jesus also, so that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate." Jesus was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem (John 19:17, 20). Just like the sin offering burned outside the camp, He suffered outside the city.

Being outside the camp was a place of shame. It was where lepers and unclean people had to live (Leviticus 13:46), and where criminals were executed (Leviticus 24:14). Jesus went to the place of the rejected, so that He might "sanctify the people through His own blood." He was cast out so that we could be brought in.

13:13 *Therefore let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.*

"Therefore let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach." Here is the call. The readers were tempted to stay inside the camp, in the comfort of the old religion and the respect of their people. The writer says, Go out to Jesus. Leave the camp, and stand with Him.

"Bearing His reproach." That means sharing His shame. Following Jesus may cost us the approval of people around us, our family, our friends, or our culture. Moses chose the reproach of Christ over the treasures of Egypt (11:26). Are you willing to stand with Jesus outside the camp, even if it costs you?

13:14 *For here we do not have an abiding city, but we are seeking the one to come.*

"For here we do not have an abiding city, but we are seeking the one to come." Jerusalem was the city these readers loved, with its temple and history. In A.D. 70, most likely only a few years after this letter, the Romans destroyed it. No earthly city lasts forever.

Like Abraham, we are looking for the city whose builder is God (11:10, 16; 12:22). This world is not our home. That does not mean we stop caring about it. It means we hold it loosely, because our real citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). It is easier to go outside the camp when you know you are headed for a better city.

13:15 *Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is,* ***the*** *fruit of lips confessing His name.*

"Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually." The animal sacrifices have ended in Christ, but believers still offer sacrifices. These are spiritual sacrifices, offered "through Him," through Jesus our High Priest (1 Peter 2:5).

The first is praise. "That is, the fruit of lips confessing His name." This phrase echoes Hosea 14:2. Our words of praise and thanks to God are an offering to Him. And this sacrifice is to be offered "continually," not just on Sunday. In hard times and good times, we praise God for who He is and what He has done. Praise is a choice we make, not only a feeling we wait for.

Old Testament links: Hosea 14:2 (alluded to); Psalm 50:14 (alluded to)

13:16 *And do not forget doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

"And do not forget doing good and sharing." The second kind of sacrifice is practical. Doing good to others and sharing what we have with those in need. Real worship is not only in our words. It is in how we treat people.

"For with such sacrifices God is well pleased." God takes pleasure in His people when they praise Him with their lips and help others with their hands. Paul called a gift sent to him by the Philippians a fragrant aroma, a sacrifice pleasing to God (Philippians 4:18). Who could you do good to or share with this week? That is an offering God is pleased to receive.

13:17 *Obey those who lead you and submit* ***to them****, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they may do this with joy and not groaning, for this* ***would be*** *unprofitable for you.*

"Obey those who lead you and submit to them." The writer now speaks of their present leaders. Believers should follow the godly leaders God has placed over them. This does not mean blind obedience. Leaders must follow Scripture, and no leader has the right to command what God forbids (Acts 5:29). It also never means staying silent about abuse. But where leaders are faithful to God's Word, believers should support and follow them.

"For they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account." Leaders carry a heavy responsibility. They watch over the spiritual health of the people, like shepherds staying awake at night over the flock. And they will answer to God for how they led (James 3:1).

"So that they may do this with joy and not groaning, for this would be unprofitable for you." When people resist good leaders, it wears them down. That hurts the whole church. Do your leaders lead with joy or with groaning?

13:18 *Pray for us; for we trust that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves well in all things.*

"Pray for us." The writer asks for prayer. Even the one who wrote this deep letter needed others to pray for him. Every leader does.

"For we trust that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves well in all things." He is honest. He believes his conscience is clear before God. He wants to live rightly in everything. Some of the readers may have questioned him, or the writer may simply be saying that he has nothing to hide. A good conscience is a gift from God, cleansed by Christ's blood (9:14; 10:22), and kept by honest living. Pray for your pastor and the leaders of your church. They need it more than you might think.

13:19 *And I exhort **you** more abundantly to do this, so that I may be restored to you more quickly.*

"And I exhort you more abundantly to do this, so that I may be restored to you more quickly." The writer had a close connection to these readers. He had been with them before and wanted to come back. Something was keeping him away, but Scripture does not tell us what. It may have been prison, illness, or other duties.

He believed prayer would make a difference. "So that I may be restored to you more quickly." Prayer is not just a nice gesture. God uses it to accomplish His purposes (James 5:16). Paul often asked for the same kind of prayer (Philemon 22). Do you believe your prayers matter?

13:20 *Now may the God of peace, who brought up from **the** dead the great Shepherd of the sheep by **the** blood of **the** eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus,*

"Now may the God of peace." The writer closes with a blessing. God is "the God of peace." Through Christ, He has made peace with us, and He gives His peace to us (Romans 5:1; Philippians 4:7).

"Who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep." This is the only place in Hebrews that speaks plainly of God raising Jesus from the dead, but it has been under the surface all along, since Christ sat down at God's right hand and lives forever. Jesus is "the great Shepherd." He is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:11), and the Chief Shepherd who will appear (1 Peter 5:4).

"By the blood of the eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus." God raised Him in connection with the blood of the new covenant, a covenant that will never be replaced. The resurrection was God's stamp of approval on the sacrifice of His Son.

13:21 *equip you in every good work to do His will, working in you what **is** well pleasing before Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom **be** the glory to the ages of the ages. Amen.*

"Equip you in every good work to do His will." This is the prayer. Equip means to put in order, to make ready, like setting a broken bone or mending a net. The writer asks God to make them fully ready to do His will. We cannot do God's will in our own strength. He equips us.

"Working in you what is well pleasing before Him, through Jesus Christ." God does not just tell us what to do. He works in us to do it (Philippians 2:13). Through Jesus, He changes us from the inside, just as the new covenant promised (8:10).

"To whom be the glory to the ages of the ages. Amen." All the glory goes to Him. The whole letter has been about the greatness of Jesus Christ. It ends with glory to God forever.

13:22 *And I exhort you, brothers, bear with the word of exhortation, for indeed I have written to you in few **words**.*

"And I exhort you, brothers, bear with the word of exhortation." The writer calls his letter "the word of exhortation," a word of encouragement and urging. It reads like a sermon written down, and that is how he wants it received. He asks them to "bear with" it. He knows it has been strong in places, with hard warnings, and he asks them to take it in with patience.

"For indeed I have written to you in few words." Hebrews may not seem short to us. But for all the writer could have said about Christ, he kept it brief (9:5; 11:32). There is always more to learn about Jesus than any letter can hold.

13:23 *Know that the brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you.*

"Know that the brother Timothy has been released," Timothy was Paul's young co-worker and son in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2). The New Testament does not tell us elsewhere about an arrest of Timothy, so we do not know when or where it happened. This verse shows that the writer belonged to the same circle of workers as Paul and Timothy, and it is one reason some have thought Paul wrote the letter.

"With whom, if he comes soon, I will see you." The writer hoped to travel with Timothy to visit them. These personal words remind us that Hebrews was a real letter from a real person to real people. They had names, friends, and travel plans, just like us.

13:24 *Greet all those who lead you and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.*

"Greet all those who lead you and all the saints." The writer wanted his greetings passed on to the leaders and to every believer. Saints means all of God's holy people, every believer (Ephesians 1:1).

"Those from Italy greet you." This can mean believers in Italy sending greetings to the readers somewhere else, or believers from Italy who were with the writer, sending greetings home to Italy. That is why some think the letter was written to Rome, and others think it was written from

Italy. Scripture does not tell us for sure. What we do know is that the church was a family across many places, and they cared for one another.

13:25 *Grace **be** with you all. Amen.*

"Grace be with you all. Amen." The letter ends the way the whole Christian life begins and continues: with grace. The readers needed grace to hold fast, to endure hard times, to draw near to God, and to love each other.

The writer prays grace for "you all." No one is left out, not the weak, not the weary, not those tempted to turn back. God's grace is enough for every one of them, and it is enough for you (2 Corinthians 12:9). That is a fitting end for a letter that has shown us how great Jesus is. Everything we need is found in Him.

Chapter 13 Summary

The writer closes with practical words for daily life. Let brotherly love continue. Show hospitality, for some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember prisoners and the mistreated as if you were with them. Hold marriage in honor and keep the marriage bed pure, because God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers. Be free from the love of money and content, because God has promised never to leave or forsake us, so we can say, The Lord is my helper; what can man do to me? Remember the leaders who spoke God's Word to you and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, so do not be carried away by strange teachings. The heart is strengthened by grace, not foods. We have an altar that those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat from. As the sin offerings were burned outside the camp, Jesus suffered outside the gate to sanctify His people by His blood, so let us go out to Him, bearing His shame, for we have no lasting city here but seek the one to come. Let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually and not forget to do good and share. Obey your leaders, who watch over your souls. Pray for the writer, that he may be restored to them soon. May the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you to do His will. The writer asks them to bear with his word of exhortation, gives news of Timothy's release, sends greetings, and ends with grace.

Chapter 13 Study Questions

1. List the commands in 13:1-5. Which one is hardest for you right now?

2. What promise does God give in 13:5, and how does it help us be content?

3. What does 13:6 teach about fear?

4. Why is 13:8 such good news, especially after 13:7?

5. What does it mean to go out to Jesus "outside the camp"? (13:12-13)

6. What sacrifices do believers offer now, according to 13:15-16?

7. How should believers treat their leaders, and why? (13:17-18)

8. What does the blessing in 13:20-21 ask God to do?

9. Who is a leader whose faith you could imitate? How could you thank them or pray for them this week?

10. What would it look like for you to offer a sacrifice of praise "continually" this week? (13:15)

Conclusion

Hebrews is a letter to tired believers who were thinking about turning back. The writer's answer to them was not a lecture. It was Jesus. In the first ten chapters he showed them who Jesus is and what He has done. God has spoken His final word in His Son. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being. He is greater than the angels, greater than Moses, and a greater High Priest than Aaron. He is a priest forever, like Melchizedek, with an indestructible life. He is the mediator of a better covenant, the new covenant God promised to Israel through Jeremiah, which we share in today through His blood. And He offered Himself once for all, entered heaven itself with His own blood, and sat down at the right hand of God, because His work was finished.

In the last three chapters the writer showed what that means for how we live. We draw near to God with confidence. We hold fast our hope. We keep meeting together and stirring one another up to love and good works. We live by faith, like the men and women of chapter 11, who trusted God even when they could not see the whole road. We run our race with endurance, accepting God's discipline as the training of a loving Father. And we love one another, honor marriage, stay content, and offer God the sacrifice of praise, because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

As I said at the start of this study, the guiding principle throughout has been to read God's Word plainly, as it is written, and let Scripture explain Scripture. Hebrews does that itself on almost every page, as it reads the Old Testament and shows us Christ in it. The warnings in this letter are serious, and good Bible teachers read them in different ways. But the writer never meant them to drive his readers away from Christ. He meant them to drive his readers to Christ, and he set beside them some of the strongest promises in the Bible. "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, always living to intercede for them" (7:25).

I hope this study has done what I set out to do: bring you closer to God, help you grow in your walk with Him, and encourage you to keep going. If you are tired, look to Jesus, "who for the joy lying before Him endured the cross, having despised the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (12:2). He has gone ahead of us as our forerunner, He is praying for us now, and He will appear a second time to those who eagerly wait for Him. The only thing required of us to spend eternity with God is to receive His Son, Jesus, as our Lord and Savior.

If you haven't yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, or if you want to deepen the one you already have with Him, I invite you to pray this prayer with me:

Lord Jesus, You are the Savior of the world, and You forgive all who come to You. I come before You to confess that I have sinned against You. I have rebelled against You and put myself first above You and all others. I want to have a deep, meaningful relationship with You where I can show others by my demeanor and character that You are first in my life. I am asking for Your forgiveness for all my sins. You died for me on the cross so that I could be forgiven and made right with God. Please help me not forget that You gave Your very life for me. I am asking that You take control of

my life and make a new creature out of me and into the person You want me to be. I thank You, Lord, and I love You. Amen.

If you prayed this prayer, tell another believer, ask a pastor about being baptized, and find a church where you can grow and serve, and do not give up meeting together with other believers (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Old and New Testament Links in Hebrews

This table lists every Old and New Testament link printed in this study, in verse order. I took the links from the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, with help from the OpenBible.info cross-references, and I checked each one by reading both passages in the Steadfast Literal Bible. Where I was not sure of a link, I left it out.

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
1:3	Psalm 110:1	alluded to
1:5	Psalm 2:7	quoted
1:5	2 Samuel 7:14	quoted
1:5	1 Chronicles 17:13	quoted
1:6	Psalm 97:7	alluded to
1:7	Psalm 104:4	quoted
1:8-9	Psalm 45:6-7	quoted
1:10-12	Psalm 102:25-27	quoted
1:13	Psalm 110:1	quoted
2:6-8	Psalm 8:4-6	quoted
2:9	Psalm 8:4-5	alluded to
2:12	Psalm 22:22	quoted
2:13	Isaiah 8:17	quoted
2:13	Isaiah 8:18	quoted
3:2	Numbers 12:7	alluded to
3:5	Numbers 12:7	quoted
3:7-9	Psalm 95:7-9	quoted
3:7-9	Exodus 17:7	alluded to
3:7-9	Numbers 14:22	alluded to
3:10-11	Psalm 95:10-11	quoted
3:10-11	Numbers 14:21-23	alluded to
3:13	Psalm 95:7	alluded to
3:15	Psalm 95:7-8	quoted
3:17	Numbers 14:29	alluded to
3:17	Psalm 95:10	alluded to
3:18	Psalm 95:11	alluded to
4:3	Psalm 95:11	quoted
4:4-5	Genesis 2:2	quoted
4:4-5	Psalm 95:11	quoted
4:7	Psalm 95:7-8	quoted
4:8	Joshua 11:23	alluded to
4:8	Joshua 23:1	alluded to
4:10	Genesis 2:3	alluded to
5:3	Leviticus 16:6	alluded to
5:3	Leviticus 9:7	alluded to
5:4	Exodus 28:1	alluded to
5:5	Psalm 2:7	quoted
5:6	Psalm 110:4	quoted
6:7-8	Genesis 3:18	alluded to
6:13	Genesis 22:16	alluded to

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
6:14	Genesis 22:17	quoted
6:19	Leviticus 16:2	alluded to
6:20	Psalm 110:4	quoted
7:1	Genesis 14:17-20	pictured
7:2	Genesis 14:18-20	pictured
7:3	Psalm 110:4	alluded to
7:5	Numbers 18:21	alluded to
7:7	Genesis 14:19	alluded to
7:11	Psalm 110:4	alluded to
7:15-16	Psalm 110:4	alluded to
7:17	Psalm 110:4	quoted
7:20-21	Psalm 110:4	quoted
7:28	Psalm 110:4	alluded to
8:1	Psalm 110:1	alluded to
8:5	Exodus 25:40	quoted
8:8	Jeremiah 31:31	quoted
8:9	Jeremiah 31:32	quoted
8:10	Jeremiah 31:33	quoted
8:11	Jeremiah 31:34	quoted
8:12	Jeremiah 31:34	quoted
9:2	Exodus 26:35	alluded to
9:2	Exodus 40:4	alluded to
9:3	Exodus 26:33	alluded to
9:4	Exodus 16:33	alluded to
9:4	Numbers 17:10	alluded to
9:4	Numbers 17:8	alluded to
9:4	Exodus 25:11	alluded to
9:4	Exodus 30:6	alluded to
9:4	Deuteronomy 10:5	alluded to
9:5	Exodus 25:18-20	alluded to
9:7	Leviticus 16:34	alluded to
9:7	Exodus 30:10	alluded to
9:7	Leviticus 16:15	alluded to
9:12	Leviticus 16:15	alluded to
9:13	Numbers 19:9	alluded to
9:13	Numbers 19:18	alluded to
9:15	Jeremiah 31:31	alluded to
9:19-20	Exodus 24:8	quoted
9:19-20	Numbers 19:6	alluded to
9:19-20	Exodus 24:6-7	alluded to
9:28	Isaiah 53:12	alluded to
10:5-7	Psalm 40:6-8	quoted
10:8-9	Psalm 40:6	quoted
10:8-9	Psalm 40:7-8	quoted
10:12-13	Psalm 110:1	alluded to
10:15-17	Jeremiah 31:33-34	quoted
10:21-22	Exodus 29:4	alluded to
10:28	Deuteronomy 17:6	alluded to

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
10:28	Deuteronomy 19:15	alluded to
10:30	Deuteronomy 32:35	quoted
10:30	Deuteronomy 32:36	quoted
10:37-38	Habakkuk 2:3	quoted
10:37-38	Habakkuk 2:4	quoted
11:3	Genesis 1:1	alluded to
11:3	Psalm 33:6	alluded to
11:4	Genesis 4:4	alluded to
11:4	Genesis 4:5	alluded to
11:5	Genesis 5:24	alluded to
11:7	Genesis 7:1	alluded to
11:7	Genesis 6:13	alluded to
11:8	Genesis 12:1	alluded to
11:8	Genesis 12:4	alluded to
11:9-10	Genesis 35:27	alluded to
11:9-10	Genesis 37:1	alluded to
11:11-12	Genesis 18:11	alluded to
11:11-12	Genesis 22:17	alluded to
11:11-12	Genesis 21:2	alluded to
11:13-16	Exodus 3:6	alluded to
11:13-16	Genesis 23:4	alluded to
11:13-16	Genesis 47:9	alluded to
11:17-19	Genesis 21:12	quoted
11:17-19	Genesis 22:1-2	alluded to
11:17-19	Genesis 22:12-13	alluded to
11:20-22	Genesis 50:24	alluded to
11:20-22	Genesis 47:31	alluded to
11:20-22	Genesis 50:25	alluded to
11:20-22	Genesis 27:39	alluded to
11:20-22	Genesis 27:33	alluded to
11:20-22	Genesis 48:20	alluded to
11:23	Exodus 1:22	alluded to
11:23	Exodus 2:2	alluded to
11:24-26	Exodus 2:11	alluded to
11:24-26	Exodus 2:10	alluded to
11:27-28	Exodus 12:21	alluded to
11:27-28	Exodus 12:27	alluded to
11:29-31	Joshua 2:1	alluded to
11:29-31	Exodus 14:22	alluded to
11:29-31	Joshua 6:20	alluded to
11:29-31	Joshua 6:25	alluded to
11:29-31	Exodus 14:28	alluded to
11:29-31	Nehemiah 9:11	alluded to
11:32-34	Daniel 6:22	alluded to
11:32-34	Daniel 3:27	alluded to
11:35-38	1 Kings 18:4	alluded to
11:35-38	2 Chronicles 24:21	alluded to
11:35-38	1 Kings 17:22-23	alluded to

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
11:35-38	2 Kings 4:35-37	alluded to
12:2	Psalm 110:1	alluded to
12:5-6	Proverbs 3:11-12	quoted
12:12-13	Isaiah 35:3	quoted
12:12-13	Proverbs 4:26	quoted
12:15	Deuteronomy 29:18	alluded to
12:16	Genesis 25:33	alluded to
12:16	Genesis 25:34	alluded to
12:17	Genesis 27:34-38	alluded to
12:18-19	Deuteronomy 4:11	alluded to
12:18-19	Deuteronomy 4:12	alluded to
12:18-19	Exodus 19:18	alluded to
12:18-19	Exodus 20:19	alluded to
12:18-19	Deuteronomy 5:25	alluded to
12:20-21	Exodus 19:12-13	quoted
12:20-21	Deuteronomy 9:19	alluded to
12:23	Genesis 18:25	alluded to
12:24	Genesis 4:10	alluded to
12:24	Jeremiah 31:31	alluded to
12:24	Exodus 24:8	alluded to
12:26-27	Haggai 2:6	quoted
12:26-27	Exodus 19:18	alluded to
12:29	Deuteronomy 4:24	quoted
13:2	Genesis 18:2	alluded to
13:2	Genesis 19:1	alluded to
13:5	Joshua 1:5	quoted
13:5	Deuteronomy 31:6	quoted
13:5	Deuteronomy 31:8	quoted
13:6	Psalm 118:6	quoted
13:6	Psalm 56:11	alluded to
13:11	Leviticus 4:12	pictured
13:11	Leviticus 16:27	alluded to
13:11	Leviticus 4:21	alluded to
13:15	Hosea 14:2	alluded to
13:15	Psalm 50:14	alluded to

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