

Hebrews

**Study series as posted at the website
and originally e-mailed to the subscribers.**

© 2009

**A Voice in the Wilderness
P.O.Box 9531
Spokane, WA 99209 USA**

www.a-voice.org

The unconventional punctuation styles you will see are related to the way these studies were originally intended for the e-mail audience, using plain text to keep file sizes smaller for bulk mailing; creatively 'formatting' with punctuation, for various kinds of emphases, in the absence of formatting the actual type. You may find occasional misspellings, and the more rare cases of a Scripture reference going to a wrong passage; those will be 'typos', not intentional. With this type of POD (Print On Demand) publishing, it seems simplest, and the most prudent use of time, to not completely go through and revamp everything, but to just leave things as they are. Please accept this book, warts and all; but rather, please pay attention to, and receive God's Truth presented herein.

Hebrews

Contents:

- 05 - Introduction
- 11 - God's Essence (1:1-3)
- 15 - Better than Angels (1:4-14)
- 20 - Man (2:1-8)
- 24 - Made Flesh (2:9-18)
- 28 - Chief Apostle (3:1-6)
- 32 - Disobedience & Unbelief (3:7-19)
- 35 - Sabbath Rest (4:1-16)
- 40 - Priest Appointed (5:1-10)
- 45 - Dull of Hearing (5:11-6:8)
- 50 - Holding Fast (6:9-20)
- 52 - Order of Melchizedek (7:1-28)
- 56 - Priest in Heaven (8:1-13)
- 59 - Earthly vs Heavenly (9:1-28)
- 63 - Heavenly Replaces Earthly (10:1-18)
- 66 - Bold Entrance (10:19-25)
- 69 - No More Excuses (10:26-39)
- 72 - Faith (11:1-40)
- 77 - Perseverance (12:1-4)
- 81 - Discipline (12:5-13)
- 85 - Don't Turn Away (12:14-29)
- 89 - Conduct (13:1-8,16-25)
- 92 - Doctrine (13:9-15)

Addendum:

- 95 – Q/A –Believe or Obey?

Introduction

In the New Testament there are two major (specifically) doctrinal books. True, the Gospels contain much doctrine, but they are specifically historical accounts of Jesus' incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. Acts contains a lot of doctrine, but it is primarily history of the early church. The epistles by Paul, Jacob, Peter and Judas contain doctrine... about a lot of different things. And of course, while some doctrine can be derived from Revelation, it is pretty much mostly history and prophecy.

Today's latter day apostasy likes to speak of "unity in diversity" where (so-called) christians agree to disagree on 'periferal' issues, but to agree on the "essentials". So, for a moment, let's assume there is some validity to this line of reasoning:

-WHAT- are the "essential" doctrines? What doctrines are necessary for Eternal Life? For which doctrines can we not do without correct understanding? Would that not be:

- 1) Salvation (and its)
- 2) Source

Salvation is what gets us to Heaven. And the Source is what validates that the claimed Salvation is real. If something claiming to be "Salvation" is offered, but the source is of questionable origins and qualifications, then the efficacy of that alleged salvation is also in doubt. And when the everlasting destinations are so eternally permanent, Salvation is not something one wants to take chances with. A skydiver would not jump with a parachute prepared and packed by a two-year-old, or someone else totally unqualified. No; the skydiver wants to be sure the chute will open; that it was packed by someone certified with the necessary skills. Otherwise... SPLAT!!

The two books in question are Romans and Hebrews. We've already been through Romans at www.a-voice.org/library/romans.htm Romans, in sequence, covers from the world's sinful state, conscience, the Law, the heart, faith, Salvation provided by Jesus' death and resurrection. And as Jesus said that "salvation is of the Jews" (Jn4:22), Paul describes Israel's significance in preserving the scriptures (Rom3:1-2), and their fall and future restoration. (Rom9-11)

Whereas Paul was the apostle "to the gentiles" (Ac28:28, Rom11:13,15:16) he also makes it plain that what is currently called in some circles "replacement theology" is in error. Paul always went "to the Jew FIRST and -ALSO- to the Greek" (Rom1:16,2:9-10); and makes it *quite* clear that, although Israel "stumbled", that they did not "come to an end" (Rom11:11) Israel was temporarily "broken off" (vs19) "-until- the

fullness of the Gentiles comes in" (vs25); and gives full assurance that "all Israel will be saved" (vs26, Jer31:31-34)

Romans was written to Gentiles, so that we might not "boast" against Israel. (vs18) That we might understand that Israel has not been 'replaced'; but that the Savior and Salvation came through the Seed of the woman, through Israel. (Gen3:15, 22:18)

Many people, however, confuse Paul's teachings in Romans (and Galatians) They think that the Old Testament was about Law, -BUT- the NT is about Grace.

"For the Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (Jn1:17)

They do not understand...

"Therefore the Law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith." (Ga3:24)

But 'why' is this so? When we get to chapter 11, we will see that 'faith' existed throughout history; yes, also in the OT. Yes, even during the time of Moses and Law.

Jesus 'fulfilled' the Law according to the Spirit. (Rom8:1-5) Was the Law done away? No. Jesus said,

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." (Mt5:17)

In Jn1:17 that word "-BUT-" does not mean that Moses is now thrown out the window. There was the OT 'dispensation' of LAW, but Jesus brings a new dispensation...

"that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might sum up in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven and which are on earth; in Him." (Eph1:10)

That's what the book of Hebrews is about. God does not change (Mal3:6); but uses "various ways" (1:1) in His dealings with mankind.

Romans was written to Gentiles, and explains the Israel connection to Jesus Christ and Salvation. Hebrews is written to Jews, and explains, in Jewish terms, how Jesus Christ -fulfills- the Law they received through Moses. About the most that Romans explains about Law to Gentiles is circumcision. That was the primary Jewish ritual; that which -makes- a Jew a "Jew", but explains that even that ritual, if not from the 'heart', is worthless. (Rom2:25-29) And the Gentile, reading into that conversation, can understand that for genuine Saving Faith, the physical Jewish ritual is

not necessary, if the person is keeping the Law in the heart. Even as David says when confessing his sin...

"For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." (Ps51:16-17)

Hebrews takes from the Jewish background and tradition, speaks to Jews, and describes how Jesus Christ fulfilled what the OT priests had been doing all those centuries with the physical rituals.

Just as Romans is written to Gentiles, but Jews can also read and gain understanding; so too, Hebrews is written to Jews, and we Gentiles can also read to gain understanding. We can understand how we keep God's OT Law in our hearts, while we no longer need to repeat the physical rituals. We no longer need to kill animals, and sprinkle blood. We are no longer barred from the Holy of Holies, it being the special domain of the high priest once a year (9:7); we have direct access (10:19); as Jesus' crucifixion made the veil in the temple "torn in two from top to bottom" (Mt27:51) It is not the writer of Hebrews 'opening' the veil; Jesus, Himself, did it from the cross!

So... to summarize: While Romans addresses Jesus Christ and the OT Law, its primary overall doctrine is -Salvation-. On the other hand, while Hebrews talks about Salvation, its primary doctrine is the -Priesthood- of Jesus Christ. Thus, while Romans is 1) Salvation, Hebrews is the 2) Source. Hebrews validates Salvation, and explains what it really is.

But we'll get to all these things as we progress through the book.

BOOK's AUTHOR?

This is the big question that many theologians spend time speculating. Just out of curiosity I pulled out this one-volume Wycliffe commentary on the shelf. Other than a few little commentaries on individual books, or topics, the Wycliffe is the only full-Bible commentary I own, only because it was a required/recommended purchase when I was at Bible school. But I don't spend much time in any commentaries; the Scriptures are pretty much self-explanatory, via the Holy Spirit's enlightening. And as I read what they have to say about Hebrews, there is an awful lot of speculation from Alexandrian sources, and early Roman traditions.

Many names are offered, including Paul, Timothy, Luke, and others; as well as some from Alexandria and the early church 'fathers' of the first couple of centuries. They speculated that Paul probably did not write it, because its writing style seems more 'level-headed' than Paul, like a historian might write. But when it comes right down to it, nobody knows, for sure, who wrote the book.

During college I was asked to direct the choir of this one particular church. First Wednesday Bible study I attended (choir practice was after prayer meeting), among other things, the pastor asks: who wrote Hebrews? I raised my hand and piped up, "Nobody knows for sure" With a smug expression, he reminded everybody present how they had already been previously brainwashed that "Paul" had written it. But can we know, from the text, why Paul was -NOT- the author?

"...spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him" (2:3)

If Paul had written it, he would not have used the word "those". Paul heard Jesus directly...

"So I said, Who are You, Sir? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute." (Ac9:5,22:8,26:15)

This was a (if you will) face-to-face conversation. Paul "heard" the voice of Jesus speaking to him. Thus, by grammatical definition, Paul was one of "those" who heard Jesus, as distinguished from "us", including the writer.

Also, Paul's usual style was to begin every epistle with his own name, "Paul". Hebrews begins with "God". In this, there is a similarity to the writings of John, who begins his books with, "In the beginning was the Word" (Jn1:1), "That which was in the beginning" (1Jn1:1), etc. John's opening greeting is about Jesus, not his own name. In fact, the Gospel of John, while he refers to himself, he never names himself, but speaks of the one "whom Jesus loved". (Jn13:23, 20:2, 21:7, etc)

Notice also that the author speaks of Timothy as "our brother Timothy" (13:23) Paul referred to Timothy as "my son". (2Ti2:1) And also, if Paul, nearing the point of his death writes to Timothy, asking him to "Endeavor to come to me quickly" (2Tim4:9), Timothy was not in prison yet. But Heb13:23 speaks of Timothy as having "been set free". It would seem obviously to have been written sometime -later- than 2Tim4.

Also, the speculations of the theologians that "Timothy" might have authored it is refuted by the same verse. If Timothy wrote it, but speaks of "Timothy" being set free (from prison?) in the grammatical third person...if it had been Timothy writing, would he not have used the first person "I" having been "set free".

What about Luke? Unlike John, the (simple) fisherman, Hebrews is written as of one who is educated. This is one reason many equate Hebrews with Paul. We won't spend time analyzing here, but even as the Wycliffe commentary notes, comparing how the Greek is written, Paul's epistles and Hebrews are written differently. The English, which comes from the Greek, has a different 'feel' to word orders and sentence structures. While it has a more 'scholarly' feel, like Paul, it is not the same writer. But Luke?

For the Gospel of Luke, he does not identify himself by name; but begins the text setting out "in order a narrative" of the things that happened (Lk1:1), as he also relies a lot on "eyewitnesses" (vs2); just as Heb2:3 suggests a reliance on "those who heard Him"; i.e. eyewitnesses. Acts becomes a follow-up to Luke, written to "Theophilus" (Ac1:1)

Paul writes to Timothy, "Only Luke is with me" (2Tim4:11) He relays a greeting from Luke to the Colossians (Col4:14) and Luke he calls a "fellow laborer" (Phm1:24) It is thought, from these things, that Luke was likely a travelling companion with Paul during Paul's ministry.

A line of reasoning for a minute: If Luke was a physician (Col4:14), it indicates an 'educated' individual (as was Paul); and being a physician, also a person given to detail. Educated people tend to know how to properly use linguistic grammar. There are certain ways that educated people communicate, compared to more 'common' uneducated folk. In English, for instance, "spelling ishoos and bad tawking" indicate a person "hooo izunt gud at tauking two yo". And yes, this sort of stuff (and worse) comes to me in e-mails regularly.

Also, consider how when people spend a lot of time together, such as candidates for political office, and they have developed a party platform: do not their speeches begin sounding alike? They say the same things, they promote the same agendas, and answer questions with the same answers. John McCain might have said, "My friends..." a lot, and Sarah Palin, "You betcha!" But they spoke from the same platform.

If Luke spent as many years with Paul as it seems he might have, would it not be reasonable to assume he knew the doctrinal "platform" well. Thus, if he were to write such a book as Hebrews, would it not stand to reason that his writing might sound similar to Paul's. However, he was his own 'individual'...thus, those who wish to study the intricacies notice the little grammatical differences and nuances.

Thus, there is reason to suggest that Luke -might- have written the book. But in the final analysis, since the book itself does not tell us, such a thing can only be a speculation.

God's Essence - (Hebrews 1:1-3)

"God, Who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son..." (vs1-2a)

"God"

If Romans is about Salvation, and Hebrews is about the priesthood of Jesus Christ, the author of salvation (2:10, 5:9); where did Jesus come from? From God. (Jn16:27-30, 17:8) Thus, we don't need to be distracted by other things like "who wrote" the book. God is the author of all things.

As Romans begins describing man's utterly sinful state; when Adam and Eve first sinned, who came knocking? As they tried to hide their sin, God came calling, "Adam, where are you?" (Ge3:9) Just as Adam and Eve did, mankind has been doing...running from God. But God pleads,

"I take no delight in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! For why will you die...?" (Ezk33:11b)

There is a rift between God and man. Man's sin puts up a barrier from the presence of the Holy God. He -will- NOT countenance sin. (Is59:1-2) But He is always desirous of making contact with man, to reconcile man to Himself. But if man is slamming the door, what to do? In human relationships and at the level of nations, there are friends and ambassadors who attempt to mediate. If the person slammed the door, perhaps talking with a relative, who in turn talks. If that doesn't work, contact a mutual friend who makes an attempt. If Turkey is unsuccessful, perhaps Egypt's ambassador can get through? If not Egypt, perhaps France, or Canada, or...?

The series "Covenants and Dispensations" at www.a-voice.org/library/covenant.htm outlines how at "various times" in history God has attempted by "various ways" to speak to sinful man. By definition: Dispensations. There are those who disdain "dispensational" theology. But vs1 here, by definition proclaims it. If one way doesn't work, He tries another way, to get through to the hard heart of sinful man. When the sinner is thrown into the Lake of Fire, he cannot claim that he "didn't know", or had "no choice". Throughout history God has been bending over backwards in His desire for "all men to be saved" (1Ti2:4) Just like today's "safety" conscious society mandates more and more lights, reflectors, and signs to keep people 'safe' in traffic; God throughout history has erected signs, banners, billboards, announcers, preachers, and -PROPHETS-.

Jesus described it as a landowner, managing his property from a distance, sending representatives to collect his share of the harvest, but the hired help killing all the different ones sent. So then he decides to try...

"Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, They will reverence my son." (Mk12:6)

God has always been God; He does not change. (Mal3:6) As we will also see, Jesus Christ is the "same yesterday, today and forever" (13:8) Sin has always been sin. And Salvation has always been through repenting of sin and receiving Jesus' Salvation, offered by God's grace through Faith. These basics have never changed. They have always been the same. The only thing that has changed is the time of history, the messengers, the tone of their message, and manner of God receiving man's repentance and of man demonstrating his faith. In a nutshell, that's it.

When God sent the prophets, it was always a -promise- of the Messiah. When He spoke "by His Son", that was the fulfillment of those prior millennia of prophecies. Prophecy spoke of the Lamb of God who -would-die...in the 'future'. When His Son came, he died, literally, physically, personally, and fulfilled those prior promises.

So... Who (or) What is the Son?

If He is "appointed heir of all things" (vs2b) what does that mean? When an heir takes ownership, what happens? He is now the "boss". Previously somebody else owned everything and everybody bowed to and obeyed them. But when the "heir" takes ownership, everybody now obeys the heir. He is "in charge". In this case, Jesus Christ, the Son, the one whom mankind had "seen with [their] eyes, had looked upon, and [their] hands had handled/touched" (1Jn1:1)... He's the -BOSS-. This authority has been given to Him by "God".

Not only that, but "through Whom also He made the worlds" (vs2c)

As John tells us...

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not lay hold of it." (Jn1:1-4)

When Gen1:1 says that "In the beginning God created....", that was "His Son" Notice that John says that all things were made "through" Him. Did the Son -decide-, on His own, to create the universe? That word "through" suggests that "God" (whom we know as the "Father") issued the order and the Son 'complied'. As Jesus in His humanity says, "I always do those things that please Him" (Jn8:29)

God is "Spirit" (Jn4:24) But we also know that...

"No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (Jn1:18, 1Jn4:12a)

As Jesus explains spirit:

"The Spirit breathes where He wishes, and you hear His voice, but do not know where He comes from and where He goes. So is everyone who is born from the Spirit." (Jn3:8)

Notice that God first creates "light" (Gen1:3); there's a couple of days creating the firmament, waters, vegetation, and -then- finally creates the "luminaries" of the universe. (Gen1:14) As if, in the Spirit, He creates all the splendor of what we have come to know as "earth" in darkness, and then "turns on the lights" on the 4th day to make it all visible. But if He hadn't first created a conduit called "light", turning on the light switch of the sun and moon would have been meaningless.

God is Spirit, and exists in the "thick darkness" (Ex20:21, De5:22, 1Ki8:12) I don't claim to understand this. I don't. But He created light, and made man, a creature of 'sight'. In order for sight to work, there must be light. God created that. Since the Father is Spirit, and dwells in the Thick Darkness, how is man, a creature of sight, to see Him? Through the Son.

"Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His essence" (vs3a)

Previously God (Spirit) spoke through the prophets, who were "clothed" with the "Spirit of Jehovah" (Jdg6:34, 1Ch12:18, 2Ch24:20, etc) Even though the prophets did not see God, God's Spirit came upon them, and they spoke God's Word. The prophets spoke "as they were propelled along by the Holy Spirit" (2Pt1:21) When those prophets spoke, it was really -God- speaking. That was one "way" God spoke. But what people saw was a 'man'. The prophet.

So, when Jesus Christ came, while He came in the form and likeness of man (Php2:7), He was more than -just- "man". He was the very "image and essence" of the Father. As Jesus says, "he who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn14:9)

Thus, when Jesus -spoke- and calmed the storm, He was illustrating the Father's essence of "upholding all things by the Word of His power" (vs3) Is it any wonder the disciples were in awe, "Of what sort is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Mt8:27)

"And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." (Col1:17)

Thus, do we understand the -price- that purchased our Salvation? What is said later, "...so great a salvation.." (2:3) God Himself, in the image and essence through the Son, offered Himself on the cross to redeem us.

Jesus said,

"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This precept I have received from My Father." (Jn10:17-18)

And so, thus being "heir of all things", He has the right to have...

"sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (vs3)

Conclusion: Jesus -is- very God. He is the essence of God's power, glory, authority. Everything of which God consists... "expressed" (vs3) (like an image impressed in a stamp, an exact image, a facsimile exactly reproduced) in the Son, Jesus Christ.

Better than Angels - (Hebrews 1:4-14)

"...having become so much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they." (vs4)

When considering God, to my own mind it almost seems redundant to speak of Jesus being "better than"... anything. Is not God "far above all gods" (Ps97:9), and is "far above all the heavens" (Eph4:10) For Him to be considered as "better" than something seems 'silly' to me. OF COURSE He is "better", just as the one who -builds- the house has "more honor" than the house. (3:3) A person who makes anything is "better" than that thing.

We must remember that Hebrews is written to people who, all they knew of Jesus was that He was a -man-. One of the taunts was,

"For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a man, make Yourself God." (Jn10:33)

And at that, they thought His birth was "illegitimate"... "We were not born of fornication" (Jn8:41) as if to presume, "like You were!"

The Jews of Jesus' day did not have a problem with the fact that Jesus Christ had "come in the flesh" (1Jn4:2) They -knew- He was a 'man'. They had a problem with His claims to Deity, using God's name "I AM" (Jn8:58) So as the blinders are chipped away, bit by bit, they must be shown how Jesus was better than something which they held in high regard. We could give various examples from the OT of people to whom angels appeared, and after the experience they were overcome with fright and awe. Ditto where Jesus, Himself, appeared in the form of the Angel of Jehovah.

Even today, angels are held in high esteem by people of all stripes and colors. They speak of "guardian angels", and angels that appear to them in dreams. Today they build entire stories around the theme of angels and ghosts: Touched by an Angel, Ghost Whisperer, and such things. Any sort of spiritual encounter is viewed as, essentially, the -ultimate- in experiences. They don't think much of the Almighty, if they have an encounter with an angelic being. Those who worship angels (Col2:18) pretty much also adhere to the modern "god-within" spirituality; and so they also pray -to- angels, asking them to do their bidding; as though they were in charge, and angels were subservient to them. However, even though they have these beliefs, if they think they've seen an angel, even if they are their own god, the angel, truth be told, is likely the highest spiritual being they would hope to encounter, even above themselves.

And so, for people with such a mentality, viewing the -man- Jesus, need some persuading. This -man-, Jesus Christ, is "SO MUCH better" than angels. And this superiority is in His "name".

"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 shall be to Me a Son? And again, when He brings the Firstborn into the world, He says: Let all the angels of God do homage to Him." (vs5-6)

The -man- Jesus was "begotten" in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit.

"And the angel answered and said to [Mary], The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." (Lk1:35)

The Father proclaims, "You are My Son" and claims His own paternity with

"I have begotten You" When Jesus was born as a man, the relationship between God and Jesus was of "Father and Son". Jesus is God's "heir" (vs1,2)

God, the Almighty, Most High (terms indicating that there is nothing more powerful or higher), bequeaths to Jesus, His "heir", the appointment of "all things" (vs2) All this is wrapped up in this -man-?

Unbelieving Jews, even today, speak of "this man", or "the man". The One for whom they can only muster the expression "this man" is the physical (and human) embodiment of the -totality- of God's essence, power, glory, authority and dominion. Everything that God (the Father) is, Jesus (the man) is also.

Please see also the article: "God's Only Begotten Son"

www.a-voice.org/main/voice175.htm

Thus, Jesus is "better" than the angels in that He -is- God, and the Father proclaims at His incarnation: Let all the angels bow down to Him. Homage is not proffered unless the object of that worship is "better" than the one prostrating.

Angels are ministering spirits. (vs7) Those who 'minister' are "less" than the One who appoints and proclaims them thus. Jesus is at the seat of honor, the "right hand of the Majesty on high" (vs3b), and angels are those who serve.

When David was nearing death, before he dies, he appoints Solomon, his son, to the throne. And as Solomon ascends the throne, it says that David, Solomon's father, just up to that moment the 'present' king, "bowed himself on the bed" and praises God, "Blessed is Jehovah the God of Israel, who has given one to sit on my throne this day, with my eyes seeing it! (1Ki1:46-48)

Somewhat in the same way, at Jesus' incarnation, the Father proclaims,

"But to the Son He says: Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness, beside Your companions. And: You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands." (vs8-10)

God (the Father), saying to God (the Son), "You, -Lord-..." The Father ascribing to the Son all the glories and authority of God: His righteousness, His authority, His creative work. All the things the angel proclaims to the world before the final judgments, to...

"Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; also, do homage to Him who made the heavens and the earth, the sea and springs of water." (Rev14:7)

We won't look them up now...but when God is proclaimed to the world, He is done so as the "Creator", the One who...

"...made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of Heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He served with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things." (Ac17:24-25)

And finally God's ETERNITY. As Jesus becomes incarnate, the Father proclaims, "You remain...You are the same, and Your years will not fail" (vs11-12) as compared to the creation: "they will be destroyed, like a cloak You will fold them up"...as we are given a picture,

"And all the host of the heavens shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; and all their host shall wither, as a leaf withers off the vine, and as fruit falling from the fig tree." (Is34:4)

"And the heavens separated as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." (Re6:14)

And Jesus also makes the proclamation...

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Words will by no means pass away." (Mt24:35)

But the angels? Which angel has ever been invited to

"Sit at My right hand, till I place Your enemies as Your footstool?" (vs13)

Certainly, satan has sought this place, as he challenged...

"I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High."
(Is14:14)

But God has never made such a proclamation regarding him, as He did to Jesus, incarnate.

In fact, angels are "less" than man. Next chapter addresses man's place. But what are angels to man?

"Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who are about to inherit salvation" (vs14)

Are they "guardian" angels? Perhaps? When the Father "draws" those who are to be saved (Jn6:44), are angels the messengers who protect the person until they are saved? Are they the ones who, at God's directive, go before to arrange the path and circumstances by which the sinner comes to himself, and repents before God? Or when Jesus promises that, regarding "all the power of the enemy", since our warfare is in the "heavenlies", that "nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Lk10:19, Eph6:12), do they "minister" by warding off the evil angels? I don't know. Until we are given to know, these are speculations.

But are they to be worshipped? No! When John attempted to do so, twice (he didn't catch on the first time), the angel reprimanded him,

"Look out! No! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Do homage to God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Re19:10)

"Now see here! No! For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the Words of this Book. Do homage to God." (Re22:9)

And ultimately, I would suspect once we have been glorified with incorruptibility (1Co15:53), Paul says we will "judge angels". (1Co6:3) Is that -all- the angels? Or just the 'fallen' ones? Paul doesn't say.

Thus we understand Paul's comments about false worship by those who engage in "worship of angels" (Col2:18) Angels are not to be worshipped. Jesus is. As we concluded last lesson that Jesus is -very- God. Yes, Jesus the "begotten" -man- through the "Seed" of the woman, is -very- God. The Father has given Him all rule and all authority. In a very real sense, just as David bowed on his bed to Solomon, so too the Father has bowed to "this Man". Or as the herald announces the newly crowned king as he takes the steps up to the throne, thus too does God (the Father) to God (the Son).

Your throne, O God...!

Angels: Bow the knee before your God!

Jesus was not just some famous man in history. He -is- VERY God Himself!

Man - (Hebrews 2:1-8)

"What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You look upon him? You have made him, for a little while, less than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all things in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But at this time we do not yet see all things subjected under him." (vs6-8)(Ps8:4-8)

The quoted Psalms passage says, "..lacking a little from God.." (The Hebrew word is "Elohiym") Different translations have chosen to translate it variously: Angels, God, god-like ones, Heavenly beings. But Elohiym is the same word that is proclaimed "In the beginning 'Elohiym' created the heavens and the earth" (Gen1:1) I don't have a copy, but perhaps that's one of the errors in the LXX, which Greek speaking people of that day were using? The Greek translation of the Hebrew OT?

The LXX was sourced out of Alexandria, the same source as the other texts that make up the "critical" texts from which today's perverted English translations originate. Except for the NASB, the English translations related to Alexandria or Rome say "angels". The Geneva, LITV, MKJV, NASB and VW say "God". In the previous lesson did we not mention those who worship angels; attributing to angels the honor due God. And: the Alexandria-based translations do many things which detract from Deity, and other such things. So, rather than being a Bible "contradiction", is the book of Hebrews accurately documenting translation issues that existed even back then? If it is the case that Luke is the author, would not a non-Jew have been more likely to be reading what was available in Greek, and have quoted the same? Nevertheless, this issue will not hinder our understanding of Truth.

Whatever the case, we see here a divinely intended situation for man. If Jesus was made flesh (vs14), He became "man", part of our understanding of Jesus is derived from a proper understanding of what man was originally intended to be, which circling back, is revealed to us by who and what Jesus is.

Man was made "in the image of God" (Gen1:27,9:6), not angels. Remember? Jesus is the "image of [God's] essence" (1:3) Thus, the comparison is also to God. Certainly, since Jesus is compared to angels for the reasons we observed in the previous lesson, man might be, as well. But Jesus is God's "Son"; and Believers into Jesus Christ become "children of God". (Jn1:12) So, you see the realms in which we carry on this present discussion.

Before Adam sinned, God gave him a task to do, which fits with this "set him over the works of Your hands". God commissioned Adam to name all

the animals. And "whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name" (Gen2:19) God made it, but He gave authority over what He had made into man's hands. Mankind was given "dominion" over the earth. (Ge1:26,28) And this passage tells us something we never see in history, likely due to the intervening sin and Adam and Eve getting kicked out of the garden: God "left NOTHING that is not put under him". Since Jesus was the -perfect- Man, do we get an idea of what man -would- have been capable of, had he not sinned: Jesus speaks and "rebukes the winds and the sea" (Mt8:26) and they become calm. Is that what is behind His other words,

"if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Move from here to there, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible unto you." (Mt17:20) ?

Does this then also give us better understanding of...

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1Jn3:2)

What Jesus is, we will be -like- that. And perhaps also, what we -will- be like, is what man was -intended- to be from the beginning, if he hadn't sinned? Man would have had all sorts of authority, that he does not now possess (which the apostasy likes to claim they have "in Jezzzzus' name", as they 'name-and-claim'), but we -will- when the sin nature is removed. You see, that's why the verse also says...

"But at this time we do not yet see all things subject under him" (vs8b)

In other words, what we see of Jesus, historically, as He was on earth, is what mankind -would- have been, had sin not entered the picture. But it is what we -will- be, once we have shed these bodies of corruption and have been "changed" (1Co15:51) Recent politics have been promising "change". The -change- I am looking forward to is the one when Believers "meet the Lord in the air". (1Th4:17)

This authority of which we speak is NOT for angels. (vs5) However, at this time, in our sinful state, angels are "greater in power and might" (2Pt2:11) When they act as God's messengers, they come with God's authority; and when somebody would disobey or doubt a message given through an angel, the person suffered consequences. For instance, when Gabriel was sent to Zacharias to announce the birth of John, and Zacharias doubted: At the pronouncement of the angel, Zacharias was mute for those following nine months until John was born. (Lk1:18-20,63-64) The two angels were given the duties to implement the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and struck the man blind when they were pounding on Lot's door. In Revelation we see many things given to the angels to do, not to mention the things in Daniel, etc.

So, even though ultimately angels are less than Jesus or man, and as long as man is in the present sinful state angels are greater in power; if the word of messenger angels was doubted and suffered consequences, what are the consequences for those who reject Jesus' word? (vs2-3)

Jesus came preaching with signs and wonders. (vs4) And it says...

"But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe into Him," (Jn12:37)

Jesus said...

"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin... If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin. But now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father." (Jn15:22,24)

If -we-, studying these things like we are right now, we come to a fuller understanding of just who Jesus is, we understand what man should have been, but where he now is due to sin, and the degree to which Jesus has provided Salvation...but if we reject...

"how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him..." (vs3)

Jesus existed. History knows it. That fact is not in doubt. The Scriptures tell us about Him. Those who were with Him and witnessed what He spoke and did, wrote down their accounts. There is more historical documentation for Jesus than there is for any other great person who lived in the days of antiquity. And yet Godless scholarship whines that documentation for Jesus is "questionable at best". They will not "escape".

But for those who believe, we are exhorted...

"Therefore we need to more abundantly heed the things we have heard, so that they do not slip our minds" (vs1)

Many translations say things about -us- "slipping away"; suggesting something that sounds like a possibility to "lose" one's salvation. But Paul is quite clear in Rom8:35-39 that God's Salvation is secure.

But we are creatures of forgetfulness. How many times didn't Moses exhort Israel, "you shall REMEMBER....." God and His works. (De8:2,18, 15:15, etc) And "beware that you DO NOT FORGET Jehovah your God..." (De8:11), etc. They setup memorials, so they would 'remember' God's works.

Listen carefully. An OT expression was to "extend your ear" (Pr4:20,22:17, Is55:3) Like animals that turn their ears to hear, or birds cocking their heads sideways to aim their ears and eyes. Pay attention. Hide God's Word in your heart so that you do not sin. (Ps119:11)

Man, without sin, has God's full authority; but mankind -has- sin; and even Believers at present are still beset by these bodies of corruption. So don't become lackadaisical. Don't take Jesus' Salvation for granted. Don't assume that the originally-intended authority is presently ours. Not all things are subject to us right now. Don't think that we can do any old things we want, and thus transgress and disobey. If we do, there will be consequences.

But this now sets the stage for the next lesson, so we understand better - what- Jesus came to when He became "man".

Made Flesh - (Hebrews 2:9-18)

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little less than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone." (vs9)

In this one verse is summed up the purpose for Jesus' incarnation, and the reasons why He came -as- He did.

If Jesus created the universe, how do we know He was "less than" the angels? Any examples?

After He was tempted by the devil, it says that "angels came and ministered to Him" (Mt4:11) When He was in agony before the crucifixion, it says, "Then an angel appeared to Him from Heaven, strengthening Him." (Lk22:43) As He was being led away to trial, notice He says, "Or do you think that I am not able now to pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" (Mt26:53) This, even though He had just demonstrated His Deity by invoking His name, "I AM", and sending them hurling backwards onto their backsides. (Jn18:5-6) And yet, even though being -very- God, He had submitted Himself to being in the form of a servant (Php2:7), such that, presumably, considering how He speaks of calling for angels to assist Him, He was just like man, where compared to His submitted state in humanity, to Him at that time, angels were "greater in power" (2Pt2:11) He became "less than" the angels.

Why?

For the suffering of death.

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that THROUGH DEATH He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and set free those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (vs14-15)

How would Jesus, the Man, die? How could He, the Creator of the universe, be put to death? Only if He became "less than" the one given the "power of death". An angel. The devil. If Jesus had retained His full power, the devil would have no thoughts regarding His death. But being the God/Man, Jesus proclaims:

"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This precept I have received from My Father." (Jn10:17-18)

Jesus, being "less than" angels, presumably in a place where satan could have his way with Him, "lays down" His own life. But He does not die, and it's over. No. He lays down His life -THAT- He would "take it again" Jesus was not -killed- on the cross, but says...

"...Father, into Your hands I -commit- My spirit. Having said this, He *breathed* out the spirit." (Lk23:46)

He -committed- (active voice) Himself to death. And so then, when He "took back" His life again at the resurrection, He (if you will) thumbed His nose at Satan. Stuck His thumbs in His ears, waved His hands, "Nya Nya!" at Satan. If the devil was the authority on death, but Jesus dies and rises again, where did the devil's power go? Out the window.

"Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1Co15:54-57)

The earthly saying is that the only two certainties in life are "death and taxes". Well, for the Believer into Jesus Christ the only certainty is "taxes", because Jesus was the "firstfruits" of the resurrection. Jesus was first, and then "afterward those who are Christ's at His coming" (1Co15:23) And as Jesus said to Martha...

"I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes into Me, though he may die, he shall live. And EVERYONE LIVING and believing into Me shall NEVER EVER DIE. Do you believe this?" (Jn11:25-26)

But if Jesus had not been fully "man", with sinful man's limitations of being "less than" angels, it could not be said...

"For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are ALL OF ONE, for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (vs11)

If the "wages of sin is death" (Rom6:23); because when Adam and Eve ate the fruit "for in the day that you eat of it you shall die the death" (Gen2:17); if Jesus was to be a true substitute to pay that penalty, how could He do so if He was not on equal footing with those for whom He was dying? As the verse says, "of one". How could He be "brothers" with those He rescued? In human terms, when somebody rescues another through heroic feats, they often develop a bond. But if some superhuman swooped down and made the rescue, and disappeared again, where is the love? Just prior to His crucifixion Jesus prays...

"that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be ONE IN US, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (Jn17:21)

When an animal is rescued by a human, a bond often forms. God rescued man from death. He did so in the form of the Man, Jesus. And a bond forms. God and (redeemed) man become "brothers". How could Jesus be a "brother" to man, unless He took on the same form as man? Thus, Jesus "shared in the same" (vs14) He took on "flesh and blood". Thus the doctrine by which the spirit of antichrist is discerned...

"By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world." (1Jn4:2-3)

How did Jesus come into the world? Did God come down to earth, razzle dazzle, bright shining lights, loud trumpet sounds, earthquakes, lightning flashes....and 'announce' Himself to the world, and then as He disappeared....what was left remaining was "Jesus"? When man thinks of a 'deity' making a rescue, is that not how he imagines things, like in mythology. Thus, something flashing and bright like an angel.

But if Jesus was to be truly "man", He needed to come -through- one of earth's lineages.

Remember how 1:1 starts out proclaiming the doctrine of dispensations. If you clicked the earlier link to the "Covenants and Dispensations" series, we observed how God created a special nation. The nation of Israel had a couple of functions: to be a "light" to the world, to be a nation representing God to the world (a kingdom of priests Ex19:6); -AND- the lineage through whom God would send His Son.

"For indeed He does not take on the form of angels, but He does take on the SEED of ABRAHAM." (vs16)

Israel. Remember, Jesus says to the woman of Samaria that...

"Salvation is of the Jews" (Jn4:22)

In that same discussion, as the woman speaks of the coming of Messiah, Jesus acknowledges to her...

"I AM! the one speaking to you" (Jn4:26)

Salvation is OF THE JEWS -through- the SEED OF ABRAHAM, JESUS CHRIST.

Most of the rest of the book addresses Jesus as High Priest. A priest is a *person* appointed to act as a go-between between man and God. A representative of man before God.

Paul informs us...

"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus," (1Ti2:5)

We'll get into this topic more in future lessons. But a priest is a -person- because he represents -people- before God. Upon his shoulders rests the vicissitudes of the people he represents; all their vacillations and weaknesses. He represents before God the 'nature' of those on whose behalf he intercedes.

"Therefore, in all things He had to be made -like- His brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in the things pertaining to God, in order to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tested, He is able to help those who are tested" (vs17-18)

If He was not a "man" how can He make impassioned pleas before the Father on behalf of humanity, if He did not share in the same passions. In coming to the rescue of man, how could he claim, "I feel your pain", if He was not the -same-. He could not claim, "I know what you are going through"

But He is, He did, and He can.

Jesus not only "feels our pain", He suffered death on our behalf so that we don't need to. For the one who receives His Salvation, Jesus actually took on a "pain" (Is53:4) that we, as a result, no longer have to. He was the "propitiation for [our] sins". (vs17) That is: the conciliation and payment of the required debt to appease the "wrath of God" that is against sin (Rom1:18) to "reconcile" us "to God" (Rom5:10)

And in doing so Jesus Christ brings "many sons to glory" (vs10)

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those believing into His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (Jn1:12-13)

And when that Day comes, Jesus will announce the redeemed...

"...I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." (Lk12:8, Re3:5)

"Here am I and the children whom God has given Me" (vs13, Is8:18a)

Chief Apostle - (Hebrews 3:1-6)

"Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the Heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house." (vs1-2)

Therefore: Now that we have understood who Jesus is, how He shared in flesh and blood, and became the Author of Salvation, providing propitiation for sins...

Consider: Let's now take a look at...

As if being God's "Son" was a small thing. As though providing Salvation was, somehow, insignificant, by comparison. These things are NOT "small" nor "insignificant". But now we begin to discuss Titular matters. Suffering and death do not typically garner trumpet flourishes. It's the -big-stuff like titles, rank, position.

Jesus Christ is Apostle and High Priest.

But... I thought: Jesus -picked- "12" as apostles? (Lk6:13) Thus, in the context, since the 12 followed Jesus around...apostles are "disciples", yes? If Jesus -picked- some apostles, how -is- He also an apostle? What is an apostle?

If one looks this up in a dictionary, the first two definitions are related to Jesus choosing the 12; and the Mormon cult. But then, when one gets away from the "religious" undertones one finds more generically:

- a. One who pioneers an important reform movement, cause, or belief
- b. A passionate adherent; a strong supporter

The 12 apostles and Mormonism would certainly fit "b". The way Mormonism works, their 12-member administrative council might also fit "a".

Regarding the Church of Jesus Christ, most Christians often forget that "a" also applies to the "12" Jesus appointed. When Jesus was taken up into Heaven, it was the 12 who 'began' the Church at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came. They were setting forth new guidelines and traditions, and the NT epistles give instructions different from the OT rituals. Things go a new direction. But then a point of time came where 'all' instructions had been given. All doctrine was final, and so both Paul and Judas issue statements as to the finality of what had been given, and issued curses regarding anybody who might try to introduce something new, 'beyond' what had been given. (Ju1:3, Ga1:8-9) Paul even calls such "accursed".

Thus, for today...if it claims to be the Church of Jesus Christ, BY DEFINITION, there is no such thing as an "apostle". It was all given when the canon of Scripture was complete..."once for all" (Ju1:3) No new 'revelations' are appropriate today. Those who stand up, claiming to have had visions "I have dreamed, I have dreamed" (Jer23:25), and thereby claim to be "apostles" are "lying". They are, by Paul's definition, Accursed. They claim to have revelations from angels, or this, or that. Paul says,

"..even if we, or an ANGEL FROM HEAVEN, preach any other gospel" (Ga1:8)

Never forget that demons are angels. Fallen, yes. But angels, nevertheless. Just because it claims to be an angel, and shines brightly, remember that Paul also warned that satan makes himself appear as an "angel of light" (2Co11:14) Just because it is bright and dazzling, doesn't mean it came with God's message. If he came with horns, pitch fork, fangs and a smell of sulfur, there would be no deception, would there!

The fact that Jesus is High Priest we won't spend time with right now. Beginning with ch5, that is pretty much what the rest of the book is about. These first chapters are laying the ground work for those discussions.

But in what way is Jesus an Apostle? Jesus is not really a "supporter", thus "b" is not really fitting. Jesus is God, and He is followed -by-'supporters'...like the "b" application for the "12". So if it is definition "a", what did Jesus "pioneer"? What "movement" did He establish. Ah, yes!

Is it not the Church -of- Jesus Christ. "I will build My church" (Mt16:18) If it is His Church, He is the One who started it. When we profess our Faith (also known as a "confession"), whom do we profess/confess? Jesus Christ. As Paul says,

"if you -confess- with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Ro10:9)

The Jews looked to Moses as their 'apostle'. In the OT he was called a "prophet". Moses -spoke- on God's behalf, and "pioneered" the new "movement"...or as we know it..."dispensation". The Dispensation of Law. Moses was a prophet, and also, by definition, an apostle.

But notice it says that Jesus is worthy of "more glory than Moses" (vs3) To the Jews of Jesus' day such a statement would be tantamount to blasphemy. Who is greater than Moses...except for God Himself? In fact, when Jesus is debating the rulers, and He is claiming Deity and to being God's Son, at one point they retort with, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father; God." (Jn8:41)

Well, remember that Moses, even for as great as he was, was warned,

"And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." (Ex25:40)

This was because the Law did not come forth from Moses. It was not something Moses went up into the mountain, and sat, meditating, figuring and conjuring up some good ideas due to his vast wisdom, like Hammurabi, or some other famous person. The Law came -from- God, from out of Heaven.

But -who- is Jesus? Who is the Son of Man? Very God, Himself. Jesus Christ created the universe. He gave His own life to atone for sin. When God's "Angel" was going before Israel in the wilderness, who was it that Moses was talking to "face to face"? (Ex33:11) Jesus Christ. Moses might have been the one carrying the staff, but it was Jesus Christ who was directing Moses in what he should do and say. As Paul says, "that Rock was Christ" (1Co10:4b)

Moses needed to be careful to follow the pattern -given- 'to' him. Why? Because it was not of his own musings. It was not Moses' Law that was given. Moses was merely the prophet. The messenger. He was taking from God, and -relaying- it to the people.

And that's why he didn't get to go into the promised land. For a little moment he (apparently?) 'forgot' -who- was in charge when he grumbles, "Hear now, you rebels! Shall -we- bring water for you out of this rock?" (Nu20:10) It was -not- "Moses" who brought water...it was Jesus Christ. In that moment Moses did not give God due sanctity and credit. (vs12)

Jesus Christ is a Son "over His -OWN- house" (vs6a) Everybody speaks of "Moses' law", as though it belonged to Moses. That is a cultural and theological misnomer. It was -not- Moses' law. It was God's. And so, Jesus comes along saying things like...

"You have heard that it was said to those of old"... "But I SAY TO YOU..." (Mt5:21,27,33, etc.etc.)

In ch4 we look at the Sabbath. Jesus would also claim,

"For the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath." (Mt12:8, Mk2:28)

It's like we observed in the Matthew and John series: God/Jesus -made- the law, He also had the right to change it.

Just as, if I had the ability to play all three movements of Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata, I could not then start into some other music and claim it to be Beethoven's "4th movement". The Moonlight only has three movements. However, if Beethoven, himself, rose from the dead, and appeared on stage...he -could- go on and play more music, and make the

claim. The "Moonlight" was his originally... and being 'his', he also would have the right to make changes to it.

The Law was given through Moses, and he performed his duties with dispatch, faithfully. But the Law Moses gave was Jesus Christ's, the "Angel of Jehovah". The Law was Christ's "OWN house". He is the -Head- of the house; He makes the rules.

And so, the "confession" we speak of is the Church. Jesus Christ is the (if you will) -Head- Apostle. He's the one in charge. It is -His- Church.

"And He put all things under His feet, and gave Hm to be head over all things to the church,

"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

"And He is the Head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn out from the dead, that in all things He may be preeminent."
(Eph1:22, 5:23, Col1:18)

Disobedience & Unbelief - (Hebrews 3:7-19)

"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the provocation, in the day of temptation 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 their heart, and they have not known My ways." (vs7-10)

Now, we get into practicalities. It's one thing to know who and what Jesus Christ is. It's another, completely, to be a Believer or an infidel.

Notice the strong language. "Do not HARDEN YOUR HEARTS" (vs8) "They always go astray in their heart, and they have NOT KNOWN MY WAYS" (vs10)

And so notice God's verdict: "They shall not enter into My rest" (vs11)

Something we are going to see several times is the quashing of the false notion that has been coined, "Once Saved Always Saved". In this passage we begin to see the pattern of the matter.

There is also the error taught by the (so-called) Eternally Secure camp that suggests that: Once a person is saved, IT DOESN'T MATTER. If the person commits sin, it is -impossible- to "lose" one's salvation. If we were saved "not of works" (Eph2:9), then works cannot 'secure' (keep) us, either. This last sentence may be true, but it -DOES- MATTER. What sort of heart does behavior reveal? A person -does- what is in the heart. Jesus said also, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Mt12:34) The tree is known by its fruit. (Mt7:16-20)

Let's not forget something, as we progress here. Moses might have been their leader, but Israel was under Jesus Christ. Always was. They might have heard Moses' voice, but it was Jesus 'calling the shots'. And now the Church is also under Jesus Christ. And we will see later the reminder that "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever." (13:8) Whatever Jesus' standards were for Israel, they are also for the Church. Dispensations may vary and differ according to the time of history, but God's holiness and standards of righteousness do not.

We see the picture of Israel's -salvation- when they "came out of Egypt" (vs16) But not all of them made it to the land of promise. Why did they not make it? They "did not -obey-". (vs18) Paul expresses it...

"Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were immersed into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank out of

that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for they were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became examples for us, so that we should not..." (1Co10:1-6)

They all "showed their faith by their works" (Ja2:18b) when they killed the Passover lamb and put the blood on the door posts. They went through the Red Sea, a symbol of immersion. They all partook of the spiritual food, manna. But -MOST- of them died in the wilderness. They did NOT MAKE IT! Why? They were all crying out to God because of their bondage in Egypt...God, -save- us! So He saved them. But then what?

They "[withdrew] from the living God" (vs12b) An expression we'll see again later about "[drawing] back" (10:38-39) Notice that Salvation was not "LOST". The enemy did not come along, hogtie and hold them down, and 'yank' it from them, kicking and screaming. They "withdrew". To "withdraw" is 'active' voice. It is something the 'subject' -does-. It is not done -to- the person. (passive voice) They do it, themselves, each, individually.

And so, when the person withdraws, what do they do? They do according to their sinful heart. They see all the good around them that God is doing. But then they also see the holy standard that God requires, and instead behave according to their heart. Their -hard- heart. It is not that they don't know any better...they -know-, but refuse. They came out of Egypt, all 'happy' to be out of Pharaoh's clutches (We're saved! Hallelujah! Praise God! They sang praises Ex15), but did not remain "steadfast to the end". They continually lusted: Oh, if only we had stayed in Egypt, where we had all sorts of yummy stuff to eat...out here in this wilderness? All we have is this stupid manna! (Nu11:6) They hadn't yet reached the land "flowing with milk and honey" (Ex3:17) They were still IN TRANSIT, in the wilderness! What were they expecting? A camel caravan carrying all sorts of yummys? And why were they in the wilderness so long? They got to the promised land and refused to go in. If we can take from modern tongue-in-cheek comedy: They got to Heaven, saw St.Peter at the gate, saw through the gate all the splendors on the other side, and then said, Naw...we don't need this stupid place! (Sorry to be crass...but isn't that the equivalent of what they did at Kadesh Barnea?) They stopped at Sinai to receive the Law, and then progressed to the edge of promise, saw it, and refused to 'finish' the trip. They did not have "perseverance". As we will see later...

"For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:" (10:36)

Notice that we are "partakers of Christ -IF- we HOLD FAST to the origin of our Foundation steadfast to the end" (vs14) "If" is a conditional word: One thing happens 'if' this other thing is done. Thus, conversely, if this 'other' thing is NOT done, then the 'one' thing also does NOT happen.

It's like another exmple we've used (I believe in Romans): We are in the water, Jesus lets down the rope (or life preserver) to pull us out to safety, and the Holy Spirit is alongside giving us encouragement to "hang on". All we need to do is hang on. Jesus has the top side of the rope and is pulling us up to Himself. The rope is a 'non-slip' rope...and we have a good solid grip. All we have to do is "hang on", and we will be there, we're saved. But if we let go the rope...we fall back in. And Jesus provides only -one- 'rope', only -one- life preserver. There is no other. (6:6) He sent the rope down only "once for all" (9:28)

Notice the relationship. It says that those who did not enter were "those who DID NOT OBEY" (vs18) But then the conclusion is that they could not enter "BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF" (vs19)

Obedience and Faith are a close pair. Notice...

"obedience of faith" (Rom1:5)

"obedience to the faith" (Rom16:26)

"The one BELIEVING into the Son has eternal life; but the one DISOBEYING the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (Jn3:36)

What encourages the Believer to obey? A -heart- that is pliable to God's will. God provides a path of righteousness, but the hard heart "goes astray" (vs10) Faith in a chair's ability to hold up a person is demonstrated by -sitting- in the chair. If the person doesn't believe the chair is strong enough, or for whatever reason doesn't want to comply with the invitation to "sit", they will stray from the chair, looking for alternatives.

God says, "This is the way, walk in it..." (Is30:21)

The Child of God believes God's way is best and complies. Faith causes the person to obey. But when a person refuses to obey, it demonstrates the person's -true- heart as being -hard-. What they claim as 'belief' is not -true- "faith".

Such a person cannot enter. Where? That's the next lesson.

Q/A: Believe or Obey? (page 95)

Sabbath Rest - (Hebrews 4:1-16)

"Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear so that none of you should show evidence of falling short." (vs1)

The title of this section is somewhat redundant with itself. Sabbath and Rest mean somewhat the same thing. However, there are also several different words used. In vs1 the Greek word is "katapausis", meaning to be calm, take rest, a resting place, a quiet place. In vs9 the word is "sabbatismos", meaning to keep sabbath, rest from toils and troubles, abstaining from work.

But then if we consider Jesus' invitation "I will give you rest" (Mt11:28) that's the same word as "that they may rest from their labors" (Rev14:13) That's "anapauo", to cease from labor in order to be refreshed and collect strength"

You see how they are all similar, but with slight variations, and their accompanying meanings.

As mankind was multiplying, after the fall into sin, it says that Noah was born. Noah (Noach) means rest. Mankind was burdened with the "toil of our hands, because of the ground which Jehovah has cursed" (Ge5:29), which God had done, "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life." (Ge3:17b) Noah was the first hope to mankind for "rest" from toils.

What is one of the prime expectations of Heaven? Glittering gold? Sparkling gems? Bright angels flashing back and forth at lightning speed? No. The promise 'remains'. It hasn't yet been fulfilled. We haven't yet experienced it: To "enter His rest".

Recall that there is the "pure river of Water of Life" along with the "Tree of Life" with leaves that "heal" (Re22:1-2)

Whenever I daydream about Heaven, there are many things I wonder about: What will my first (visible) face-to-face meeting with Jesus be like? Will it be like Peter after the resurrection, or John in Revelation ch1? Or something in-between? Who will I see there? Will I be pleasantly surprised that, some of whom I question their salvation, will they be there? Who else will -not- be there? But I must say, the #1 dream I have, that I think about most often, is to go and sit along the shore of the River. There is the old song, "Shall we Gather at the River" But for me it is more than just a song. I wonder what sort of new (individual) bonds and friendships will be made while sitting by the River. I don't dream of it as a 'gathering' (like the song) of -lots- of people, but of me being 'solitary', with perhaps another person, or two. Of it being a 'quiet' and 'peaceful' rest.

At Spokane, along the Spokane River there is a place called the "Bowl and Pitcher". After 20-some years of living here, I haven't yet figured out why it is called that. Before they started charging a parking fee, I used to go there, walk across the suspension bridge, climb around on the rocks; stand on the bridge and watch the water go by, sit on the rocks and be soothed by the sounds of the rushing water. There is a road that follows the river a few miles that I will sometimes take on my way home from work. It is a 'relaxing' place. I've even been known to ride my bicycle down to the cemetery just beyond the VA hospital a few blocks from where I live, go through the cemetery and ride over to this one spot that overlooks the river, and sit there on the grass and -RELAX-. REST.

Israel did not enter into Rest. Why? "unbelief" (3:19) The Gospel was preached to both Israel and us (the Church). But the Gospel, by itself, does not save. There are some 'universalists' who proclaim a "gospel" of "You are already saved, because Jesus died. Rejoice in that fact." But they teach nothing of Faith. Israel had their sacrifices and Sabbath feasts. They had seven annual feasts, aside from the weekly 7th day Sabbaths. All of the feasts were Sabbaths. For all of them they were not to do any "labor of work". (Le23:7,etc) They had the form and ritual, but...

"the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (vs2)

That, compared to...

"For we who believe do enter into rest..." (vs3)

Even though they called him "Noah", the rest of the world perished in the flood. He was a "preacher of righteousness" but they were the "world of the ungodly" (2Pt2:5) He preached, but they didn't hear; they refused to believe.

But just as we learned several lessons ago what God's original intent for mankind was, as we see it revealed in Jesus the "Man"; God also intended for man to know His "rest". God rested. Even though creation is called the work of His "fingers" (Ps8:3) (In other words, it was not laboriously difficult nor exhausting for Him), when He had finished and proclaimed it "extremely good" (Ge1:31), He rested (Shabbat). (vs4, Gen2:2) The work was finished, and then Sabbath.

If we consider the 'works' of this creation, they will come to an end, and then Sabbath. The "works...will be burned up" and then will be the "new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2Pt3:10,13)

As it says of those who are martyred during the 70th week,

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow with them." (Rev14:13)

They have labored through faithful sufferings for Christ. When they die, their work is finished. Sabbath.

This was something Israel didn't understand as Jesus was continually *breaking* the Sabbath by -healing- people. A person in the midst of the toils and labors of an illness or deformity... was Jesus -working-? Not hardly! He was giving those people "rest" from their infirmities. What better activity to be doing on the Sabbath! It's a day of "rest"? Make it possible for the infirm also -to- 'rest'.

But the only ones who will partake in that Sabbath at the end of this creation will be those who "do not harden [their] hearts" (vs7), who do not "fall according to the same example of [Israel's] disobedience" (vs11)

But who's to say -who- is a Believer, and -who- has the hard heart?

"For the Word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not revealed in His presence, but all things are naked and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we must give answer." (vs12-13)

No... this is not talking about the Bible. Directly. Although, by knowing the Bible, many things are revealed to us through the Holy Spirit. But remember? Who is this book about? What is the ongoing context? The One who is the "image of His essence", the Word who "was in the beginning with God" who "was God". (1:3, Jn1:1-2) Jesus Christ.

Nathanael counters Jesus' -familiarity- with him, with, "From where do You know me?" (Jn1:48) Presumably, if Nathanael was from Bethsaida (NE side of the Sea of Galilee), but Jesus had been way SW of there, on the other side of the lake, when Jesus "saw" Nathanael "under the fig tree" (Jn1:48), it was obviously not a happenstance that Jesus 'walked by' and '*happened* to notice' him sitting there. Jesus "discerned" Nathanael. And when He says, "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit" (vs47); such a statement is one that discerns Nathanael down into his heart. Many people are skilled at -reading- people. But they use technology to -detect- lies. But even those are not 100%.

But Jesus "pierces" into the heart and soul. It says "joints and marrow". Where does the soul reside? The "soul is in the blood" (Lev17:11) Where does blood come from? Bone marrow. Not only does Jesus know the soul, He even pierces to where that soul comes from. (Perhaps another indication of the 'physician' Luke writing the book? The average person

might not think to use such a medically figurative expression.) He is the One who "covers" us in our mother's womb. (Ps139:13) He knows not only if we are telling the truth, He also knows the -intents- of the heart. There is no such thing as being "caught" and (quick!) pull the wrap around to cover our nakedness. We are lying sprawled on the table, stripped naked, and every place is being poked and prodded, stared at and scrutinized. Like an autopsy: Cut it open, pull flaps back, cut through the ribs with a saw, dig round in the organs, and find -everything- that's there. -THAT- is how Jesus knows each and every individual.

And so as the tattoo is found: What's this?? Disease ridden organ tugged on: Why did you let this happen? Something else: Why did you do that? And as thoughts, plans, and hard-heartedness is exposed: Just who do you think you are? No, I don't hate You: LIAR! Yes, I want to serve You: LIAR!

"To whom we must give answer" (vs13b)

"So then each of us shall give account concerning himself to God." (Rom14:12)

If we are making 'claims' for Christ...

"Let us hold fast our confession" (vs14)

Jesus is our "Great High Priest". He is presently in Heaven. He is our "Mediator between God and man" (1Ti2:5) And being fully "MAN", He knows our weaknesses. He was tempted just as we are, "yet without sin" (vs15) He -knows- the temptation that led to getting that (aforementioned) 'tattoo'. He knows why this, that and the other thing. He was there (here). He went through it. He knew what it was to grow up on the "wrong side of the tracks", being taunted that His mother was a "whore". (Jn8:41) He knew the other extreme, being offered the ultimate in human global power and prestige. (Mt4:9) And yet, He did not sin. When He says, "I feel your pain" He is not lying. When He says, "I know what you're going through" that is the truth. He does. And so as we are required to answer for what we have done, failed, and been restored; we have an "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous" (1Jn2:1) Jesus argues our case before the Father.

Therefore, we do not need to fear. If we have done wrong, which is all of us (1Ki8:46, Rom3:23), we can -ask- for mercy, and it will be given. When we are struggling, we do not need to pridefully try it on our own. We can ask for "help in time of need". Yes, God's presence is awesome and "fearful" (10:31); but if we come with the nakedness of our heart laid bare before Him, not trying to deceive... we are able to

"...come boldly to the throne of grace" (vs16a)

Jesus promises those who "come" to Him...

"I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Mt11:28-30)

And when it's all finished: SABBATH!

Priest Appointed - (Hebrews 5:1-10)

"For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." (vs1)

Where do preachers come from? Certainly Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus are the -standards- regarding ecclesiastical ministerial doctrine. They give the standard of holiness that is expected, the duties, and the few essentials that make up the meeting of the Saints: most specifically reading, preaching, teaching, exhortation, of Sound Doctrine. (1Ti4:13, Tit1:9,2:1)

We certainly know where false prophets come from. Many of them come "from among yourselves, speaking perverse things" (Ac20:30) Among other things, they arise from out of the midst of the congregation. Is that where "majority rule" is flawed? Congregations take votes, and the 'popular' ones rise to prominence, instead of 'whom?'.

If we are to properly understand the priesthood of Jesus Christ, we need, first, to understand what the priesthood under Moses was. To understand His humanity we needed to understand man in God's original intentions, which in turn was understood by seeing who Jesus is. A similar sort of 'circular' understanding is involved in the priesthood. Just as humanity became flawed due to sin, the human priesthood was also flawed, since it involved sinful man. Even Aaron, the first high priest, led Israel into corporate idolatry, even -while- Moses was in the mountain receiving God's Law. (Ex32)

We won't look up all the OT references, but before the priests could minister, or even put on the priestly robes, they had to dip in the mikvah and wash. Animals were killed, their blood collected, and dipped and sprinkled on the priest's thumb, big toe, and right ear lobe; and other such rituals. These were all before they even began to offer the sacrifices that the people brought. Before they could intermedate for the sins of the people, they first needed to ritually purify themselves. How can a sinful person perform atoning rituals for others, when he himself is ritually defiled? Thus...

"Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins" (vs3)

But also with this ritual for self-purification came the continual reminder of his own sin. He is not like the Babylonish "fathers" who promenade around "holier than thou", the head "father" in Rome alleging to be without error; as though being God, Himself! But no! Rather, it is a continual reminder of man's 'weaknesses'. When the priest counsels the sinner, the sinner does not come to the man, "Bless me father for I have sinned" It is not in the

man to bless anybody with absolution. All he can do is say, "I understand. I have that problem, too." Thus, instead of pontificating, the priest has

"compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also encompassed by weakness" (vs2)

So, if the priest is so flawed, where does he come from? On what basis does he attain to the position?

He is "taken from among men". He is -APPOINTED-. (vs1) How? By whom? The clerical council assembled by the denominational hierarchy?

So, the young man is nearing completion of his Bible school and/or seminary studies. Graduation is nearing. Now it's time to get into his 'career'. He speaks to the career counselor: What are your aptitudes? What do you 'like' to do? Are you a "people person"? Do you "care" about people? Do you have oratory skills? Are you a preacher, or an administrator? So...all these -ideas- are laid out; perhaps an idea per piece of paper with its own heading, and two columns, "Pro" and "Con". Let's assign numerical values to each idea as to presumed strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps by now somebody has devised a computer program to take all the -data- and start 'crunching' some numbers, to give the upcoming graduate a "score" and "recommendation" for "ministry"..??

If that's the way God works, I'd still be doing professional music. My strengths were music performance. Anything in school that involved public speaking or written composition were the courses in which I got less-than optimal grades. Music was usually pretty much 4.0 all the way through. These other fields were in the 1.0-3.0 range. Where is music for me today? The MP3 files, created from all my old albums and tapes, in the computer connected to the stereo. But -writing-, one of my absolute *worst* subjects, is what God has me doing. Oh, I always got straight A's in English grammar (not that I necessarily adhere to all the rules when writing); which came in mighty handy when compiling the VW-edition Bible. But I was -never- a 'compositional' writer.

And if that's the way God works, we would not have Peter preaching at Pentecost; he was a fisherman. The shepherd Joseph would not have been second-in-command in Egypt. The shepherd David would not have been a mighty warrior and king. Go through Scripture and make your own list.

Is the ministry an "aptitude" or "recommendation"? No! It is an *APPOINTMENT*. By whom? God. If you go through the OT prophets, many of them recorded their 'call' from God. As for the OT priests, they were appointed through the line of Aaron; by God; through Moses. Moses, himself, was called by God from the burning bush. As Moses appointed the first priests, he did so at God's appointment.

Men! Heed this next bit carefully. We have addressed this matter on a few other occasions. If you are -considering- the ministry... FORGET IT! If you are -weighing- your 'options', and "ministry" is one of those options... FORGET IT! I 'think' God -would- want me in the ministry... FORGET IT! I 'think' God -might- be calling me... FORGET IT!

"AND NO MAN TAKES THIS HONOR TO HIMSELF, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was" (vs4)

Moses lets Israel know:

"By this you shall know that Jehovah has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them from my own heart." (Nu11:28)

Even Balaam the wayward prophet knew better:

"I cannot go beyond the mouth of Jehovah, to do good or bad of my own heart; but what Jehovah speaks, that I will speak?" (Nu24:13)

False prophets are characterized by:

"...they speak a vision from their own heart, not out of the mouth of Jehovah... How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart," (Jer23:16,26)

"Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, Hear the Word of Jehovah! Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!"

"Likewise, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own heart; prophesy against them," (Ezk13:2-3,17)

Notice the same thing in all these verses. The false prophets speak from their "own heart". They are taking the -honor- "to themselves". They prophesy but God...

"DID NOT SEND THEM" (Jer14:14)

Did we change subjects, from 'priests' to 'prophets'? If you check in the OT, you will see that several of the prophets came from the priestly line. They might have been priests through the Aaronic lineage. But their prophetic ministries were God's "CALL".

Earlier I suggested that if you are "considering" the ministry, to FORGET IT! Why? If God -calls- you, you will -KNOW- IT! It is CERTAIN! When God

calls, His Word is like a burning fire. You cannot help -but- proclaim. It is not merely a 'choice' or 'consideration'.

"Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak in His name any more. But His Word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with holding it in, and I could not." (Jer20:9)

"Is not My Word like a fire? says Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jer23:29)

As Paul says...

"For if I preach the gospel, there is no glory to me, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel." (1Co9:16)

And so Jesus comes along...

"So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: You are My Son, today I have begotten You. As He also says in another place: You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (vs5-6)

Melchizedek is addressed in ch7. But notice that Jesus, the full-embodiment of God, did not -take- the priesthood. Just as God "called" the priesthood (and prophets...Jesus was also called a prophet Lk24:19), He also "called" Jesus Christ. The one who calls is greater than the one ministering. As Jesus would say...

"...for I always do those things that please Him." (Jn8:29)

Jesus was not glorifying Himself, but pleasing the Father. And in learning "compassion" (vs2), Jesus suffered according to man's frailties...and submitted. The song says, "He could have called ten thousand angels...but He died alone for you and me"

In the garden Jesus prayed "with vehement cries and tears" (vs7)

"And He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." (Mt26:39)

And in this praying...

"And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Lk22:44)

Jesus knew that the Father "had the power to save Him from death" (vs7, Mt26:53) but He submitted. He...

"learned -obedience- by the things which He suffered" (vs8)

"He humbled Himself and became -obedient- unto death, even the death of the cross." (Php2:8)

Jesus' "perfection" was not demonstrated by His "self-esteem". His "esteem" was that He was "stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted" (Is53:4) His perfection was demonstrated by His submission and OBEDIENCE; one of the requirements for Eternal Life; without which one does "not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (Jn3:36b) In being obedient, Jesus became the "author of Salvation to all who obey Him" (vs9)

Adam was the author of sin:

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to every person, because everyone sinned." (Rom5:12)

"Therefore, as through one man's (Adam) offense judgment was to every person unto condemnation, even so through one Man's (Jesus) righteous act the free gift is to every person unto justification of life. For as through one man's (Adam) disobedience many were declared sinners, so also through one Man's (Jesus) obedience many will be declared righteous." (Rom5:18-19)

Sin existed in the heavenly realms before Adam, otherwise the serpent would not have enticed Eve. But for humanity, Adam was the author of sin; but Jesus is the Author of Eternal Life. Adam disobeyed. Jesus obeyed. Thus, He is

"CALLED BY GOD, High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek" (vs10)

Dull of Hearing - (Hebrews 5:11-6:8)

"of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain with words, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the rudimentary principles of the Words of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food." (5:11-12)

If the writer is Luke, he certainly would have been there when Paul is meeting with the Jews at Rome, and when they reject, proclaims...

"for the heart of this people has grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, that they should not see with their eyes nor hear with their ears, that they should not understand with their hearts and turn, and I should heal them. Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" (Ac28:27-28)

This book is being written to hard-hearted Jews. What had been one of Israel's purposes?

"What, then, is the superiority of the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way: chiefly because they were entrusted with the Words of God." (Rom3:1-2)

And that passage goes on to speak of Israel's "unbelief". The writer here also takes a time-out to discuss his hearers. The discussion is Jesus Christ, having been "called" to be High Priest. The next aspect of the discussion will start to move from Jesus' -humanity- to His Eternal nature. But if Jews only view Jesus as "this man", how can such a discussion continue? How does one throw "pearls before swine" or what is "holy to dogs"? (Mt7:6) These are terms the Jews would use of Gentiles; unbelievers. They viewed themselves as being in a vaunted position, and the writer acknowledges: You -should- be 'teachers'. But you know nothing. You are required to re-learn the basics. You are like babies, suckling milk, not solid food. You've got a name you boast, but have not used what you have to grow. You are ignorant as to the basics of "good and evil" (vs14) The ones being written to are barely acknowledging that Jesus -is- the Christ, the Messiah.

Just like some today, who say that "the OT was that" but "the NT is this"; the Jews of the early Church days were also rejecting Grace. This new "church" is not doing things the way "we've always done them". But the writer explains, like we do often from these pages, that Righteousness has never changed. What it was for Adam, is what it is today. They might have killed "thousands of rams" and "ten thousands of rivers of oil" (Mic6:7) in sacrifice; but what was the Foundation?

"Therefore, leaving the discussion of the rudiments concerning Christ, let us move along to maturity..." (6:1)

Years ago I worked at a factory in quality control, where they made electronic transformers and chokes. They made 'donut' toroidals as well as the traditional laminates. One day in casual conversation with the boss, discussing the state of electronics (PCs were -just- coming onto the scene: the argument then was PC/M or IBM? and a 10Mb harddrive was considered -huge-), and some of those tiny toroidals, wound with wire fine as hair, were built to exacting specs because they were used in precision military missile guidance systems. Their measurements went out to .0000. He used the expression that the circuits that those toroidals go into were at the "Master's level" of electronics engineering. It was not something where you go to Radio Shack, pick up some generic parts, and 'breadboard' the project.

This is where this book is now heading... to the "Master's level" We are beyond: This is a transistor, this is a resistor. This is Ohm's Law. These are the parameters of the laws of parallel and series circuits. (In my day, these were taught in grade school... they are so basic)

In matters of Righteousness, what are the transistors and Ohm's Law?

FOUNDATION: Repentance from dead works and faith toward God (vs1)

As Paul summed up the bare essentials of nothing having been missing from his messages of what was necessary: "testifying both to Jews, and also to Greeks, REPENTANCE toward God and FAITH toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ac20:21)

DOCTRINES: Immersion, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, eternal judgment

These are the -basics-. The way today's apostasy wants to 'dialog' about things, and "tear down the walls" of doctrine, they claim they want unanimity in the "essentials". Well, by definition, -these- just listed are the "essentials". But even today, as it apparently was during the time this book was being written: How many do you know who hold to these essentials? They wrangle about even these. Some today who hold themselves in vaunted states deny the necessity of Repentance. They deny that there is an Eternal Judgment. Some wrangle and deny the doctrines related to the Resurrection. As such, how can they possibly understand anything else that follows. He says, these are the 'rudiments'; let's understand these, and now MOVE ON to greater things.

Those who wrangle the basics, also totally misunderstand these very next few verses. Misunderstanding what Eternal Security is, confusing it with Once Saved Always Saved, use the following verses to support that error. But as we shall see, these next verses have -nothing- to do with (so-

called) Eternal Security, but are a -condemnation- of Israel's hard heartedness.

"For it is impossible for those who at one time were given understanding, and have tasted the Heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come, and also turn aside, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and expose Him to public disgrace." (6:4-6)

Many people misunderstand this little passage. And by the time (so-called) Reformed Theology gets finished with their explanation, a person can never remember the explanation, because it does not resemble what the verses -say-. We've addressed this a bit differently in the past.

"OSAS-VW answers traditional views"

www.a-voice.org/qa/qa-2save.htm

First of all notice that the three verses are all ONE SENTENCE. And if we sort through all the descriptions and qualifiers, what is the core sentence? It has a subject and predicate. In it's simplest form it is:

"It is impossible...to renew them again to repentance"

That is the basic gist of the core statement. Everything else modifies (explains) this core sentence. Around this core is a statement of 'who', 'what' makes them who, what did they 'do', and finally 'why' the consequence.

WHO: They have 'understanding'. The Heavenly gift has been tasted. They have partaken. They have the Holy Spirit.

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." (Rom8:9)

By definition, they have been "Saved". They have the "Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph1:13)

WHAT DID THEY DO: They "also turned aside"

This little spot right here is the crux of the whole matter, and of the prevailing error. It is in the proper understanding of the word rendered in KJV/NKJV/Geneva/NIV/Tyndale as "IF". What is quoted in this study comes from the VW-edition, which essentially agrees with Wycliffe/NASB/LITV/MKJV/Darby/ALT.

What -kind- of "if" is it? Is it 'conditional' or 'cumulative'? It is not 'wrong' for the first listed versions to use "if", but the reader must understand what *kind* it is.

Most people view "if" as being IF this is done, THEN that will happen. Going backwards, then, if 'that' didn't happen, then 'this' was not done. People usually understand it as cause-and-effect.

They also take this "if" in the middle of the sentence, and for purposes of their argument move it to the beginning, twist the words around to say, "If it were possible..." Thus to suggest: If it were possible to be saved, and then lost, it would be like crucifying Jesus over again. But in their logic, such a twisting is then supposed to suggest that, "Of course, this is not the case...that one loses their salvation". So therefore, Jesus is not re-crucified. Or the other twist: Since Jesus is not re-crucified, therefore a person cannot be lost after having been saved. But the Word does not say, "If it were possible.." It says, "it is impossible". But let's continue...

The "if" in this passage is 'cumulative'. 'This' happens... "if" (and also) 'that' happens. ALT says "and having fallen away". NASB says "and [then] have fallen away"

Now the Greek also indicates "deviate", thus VW-says "turn aside".

The term "fallen away" could easily be mistaken with the concept of "losing" one's salvation. They "lost" it... they "fell". But no, it is "active" voice. The person -does- the action. It didn't slip or get lost, as if by 'accident'. They were saved... they had the Holy Spirit...(vs4) but then *turned* away. (vs6) They "withdrew" (3:12). They "drew back" (10:38-39)

In simple English: They were Saved, and then Turned Away. There is no "if" (maybe) they did (or not). The statement is active. They were saved, and then -purposely- (actively) turned away. That's "who", "what" makes them who, and what they "did".

Such a person, the predicate now tells us: Such a person (who was saved AND THEN ALSO turned away) cannot be saved -again-. It is -impossible- to "renew" them to repentance. Repentance being the fundamental core of Salvation. (vs1) This puts the nails in the coffin of Nazarene doctrine where they are continually being saved, losing their salvation, going forward to be re-saved, losing, re-saved, etc.etc. over and over.

Salvation is a ONE-TIME-DEAL. Jesus died "once for all". (Rom6:10, Heb7:27,9:12) He did not "suffer often" but did so "once for all" (9:26)

That's what this immediate passage explains. To be re-saved would be the same as to "expose Him to public disgrace". (vs6b) To re-crucify Him.

This is what is SO WRONG about Babylon's doctrine of transubstantiation as they -continue- sacrifice of (what they call) Jesus in their eucharist, claiming that His wounds are "continually bleeding". They always depict him in the wretched state on the cross... not the Resurrected Lord in "victory". (1Co15:57) Same thing the Jews objected to, that the disciples "preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Ac4:2)

Now, to the OSAS crowd this next allegedly clinches their argument...

"For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God" (vs7)

They stop there. And I can never quite remember their explanation as to 'why' this verse supports OSAS for the preceding verses. I suppose it has something to do with the "rain" that falls and God's "blessing"? The explanation never made sense when I would hear it, and thus now after all these years I have also forgotten it. But the next verse follows it...

"but if it bears thorns and briars, it is unfit and near to being cursed; its end is to be burned up" (vs8)

God's blessing is fully available to raise 'good' produce. But if it is unfit, notice the judgment that matches the unregenerate. To be "burned up".

Jesus said...

"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many works of power in Your name? [we are also eternally secure] And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who work out lawlessness!" (Mt7:21-23)
Jesus explained...

"You will know them from their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree produces excellent fruit, but a corrupt tree produces evil fruit. A good tree is not able to produce evil fruit, nor is a corrupt tree able to produce excellent fruit. Every tree that does not produce excellent fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore from their fruits you will know them." (Mt7:16-20)

It is not enough to taste of Heaven and acquire the Holy Spirit, if one then turns away. OSAS tries to proclaim that Salvation, once attained, is now unconditional. They lack understanding that Salvation is also something that one "holds fast to". (vs9) That's next lesson.

Once Saved-Always Saved: www.a-voice.org/search/o.htm#oncesave

Holding Fast - (Hebrews 6:9-20)

"But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, indeed, holding fast to salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God is not unjust, to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister." (vs9-10)

So... is the writer bawling them out, or encouraging them? Probably a bit of both? When an athletic team has played an exceptionally bad first half, and are now in the locker room at half-time, does not the coach start out bawling them out for their failures! But then the energy of that bawling shifts. OK you knuckleheads, blah, blah, blah, what's the matter with you? Don't you remember what we worked on at practice. OK now, let's get our heads together, clean out the cob webs, and let's go to the second half and let's go get'em!! Or something like that?

You are still babies doctrinally and spiritually developmentally. You haven't done much growing. Are you getting tired of the struggle? Well, if you want to give up, you can do that...but if you do, you can't ever be saved again. God don't accept no quitters! If you quit, you're done! Make up your mind. But surely, you are not like that. Yes? Surely you are still "holding fast to salvation"? Yes? Even though I've just been bawling you out. (vs9b)

Perhaps, something like that?

Apparently there had been some "fruits" on their part. Their "labor of love" and "ministry". (vs10)

The Christian life requires "diligence" and "full assurance of hope unto the end" (vs11) Examples are given, of people to "imitate" who demonstrated "faith and patience" to "inherit the promises" (vs12) And gives the example of Abraham.

God promised Abraham a son. It was TEN YEARS before the promise was fulfilled. Did Abraham's faith stumble? Indeed. He listened to his wife and sired Ishmael through the servant woman. And for Abraham's lack of faith, Israel even today has troubles with their neighbors who wish to wipe them off the map, and lob continual barrages of rockets at them.

But even though history shows us his wavering, it says that he "patiently endured" and "obtained the promise" (vs15) Abraham never turned away from God. And as it says, "God is not unjust, to forget.." (vs10) God "swore by Himself" (vs13b) God also knows that "we are dust" (Ps103:14) He knows our frailties. Remember: that's one of the premises of Jesus' priesthood, in becoming "man"; He was "tempted as we are" (4:15) He knows our frame.

Man waffles, but God does not. God makes a promise, and swears by Himself. What God promises he is "able also to perform" (Rom4:21) Thus, the "security" of our Salvation is not in our own abilities, but the "love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom8:35-39) The surety of this is an...

"anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters in within the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (vs19-20)

It's like that prior example: Jesus has hold of the rope, He is now behind the veil in the Father's presence interceding for us, and He is pulling us to the Father. It's a sure thing. He -is- in Heaven, and we -are- attached to the rescue rope. If we "hold fast" (vs9), He will get us to Heaven. But if we "turn aside" (vs6), that's it. That ship has sailed, and isn't coming back anymore.

Order of Melchizedek - (Hebrews 7:1-28)

"For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God... first being translated king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, meaning 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 continually." (vs1-3)

Who, exactly, was Melchizedek? Was he a theophany? (appearance of God in human form?) He was king of Salem; an actual king of an actual city. If a person looks at various maps, Abraham's "Salem" is at the same place as "Jerusalem". Historians agree that they are one and the same place. Jerusalem, the place where God "chose...to put His name there" (1Ki14:21)

Jacob calls Bethel the "house of God" (Ge28:17) There are some Jews and also Messianic 'christians' who expound on Jacob's vision of the angels coming and going on the ladder between Heaven and earth. They have created a fanciful supposition that there is a sort of heavenly 'vortex' where Jacob's "ladder" was; that this vortex is the connecting point between Heaven and earth; that all prayers to God pass through this vortex, and that all God's help to man is channeled through the vortex. So they assume that to be physically near this vortex is to be "closest to God" that is possible on this earth. But then, they also speak of this vortex as being focused on the Temple Mount at the spot where they presume the Holy of Holies was, where the Muslim Dome of the Rock now rests. Thing is, Bethel and Jerusalem are separated by some distance. They are not the same place. While we know that Jacob had a vision, and that location became a place they would resort to, to make sacrifice to God (Gen35); Jerusalem became the place for God's temple for Israel, after David conquered it (2Sam5), and purchased the Temple Mount area for sacrifice. (2Sam24) Jerusalem is the place over which the nations will grumble and quarrel. (Zec12:2-3) It is the place to which Messiah will come to reign. (Zec14:16) The Temple Mount is also traditionally presumed to be the place where Abraham took Isaac to offer him to God. (Ge22) Thus, Jerusalem has a long and special history between God and man.

Even though Melchizedek was likely a man, like any man, his existence in history is a 'type'. It does not say that he -was- the Son of God, but that he was made "like" the Son of God. (vs3) While he probably did have parents, we don't know who they were. Thus, figuratively, historically, it is for this discussion AS IF he didn't have parents. Nothing is recorded as to his birth or death; it's AS IF he was 'eternal'. Scripture records a few selected names here and there, like Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, etc. But between these millennia were many generations of people being born and dying. In Acts we know the names of the apostles, who, it records, went around establishing churches and appointing pastors. What were the names of all those pastors? We don't know. It was not recorded for us. In the same

way, before Melchizedek there were likely priests and prophets, not recorded; and also since then. But Melchizedek happens to be recorded for his proximity to Abraham. And due to Abraham's fame, he also provides a 'type' for Jesus, our High Priest. We know nothing about him except his 'name'. We don't know which of the sons of Noah he hails from. Just... there he is... plopped into the middle of history.

On the other hand, the OT Israeli priesthood was very specific. Moses and Aaron were of the tribe of Levi. (vs5) The priesthood was passed down, father-to-son, generation after generation. By Law.

So, what is the relationship between Melchizedek and Levi? Who is better? Who is above the other?

Where did Levi come from? Is he not the seed of Abraham. And according to ancient tradition, the father is greater than those he sires. Thus Abraham is greater than Levi, even though the Levitical priests mediated between God and man.

But Melchizedek was not of Abraham's (Israel) seed. And furthermore, as "priest of the Most High God" (vs1) Abraham gives him a tithe. (Gen14) The one receiving the tithe is greater than the one giving it. And also, Melchizedek blessed Abraham. The one giving a blessing is greater than the one receiving. In other words, Melchizedek was 'greater' than Abraham; who in turn was greater than Levi.

Thus, the Melchizedek type was greater than the Levitical priesthood. And being without lineage, was also a picture of Jesus Christ. Jesus did not have an earthly father. Jesus did not come through the seed of the Levitical priesthood. Jesus' mother was of the lineage of Judah; not a priestly line. (vs14)

The order of Melchizedek was -different- from that of Levi. Figuratively it was also -better- than Levi. Both of these, types of the Priesthood that is Jesus Christ.

When Jesus came along, being 'better', the better priesthood replaces the inferior. The Levitical becomes "annulled"; it is wiped out. (vs18) It was based on Law, which was imperfect. (vs19)

"Therefore by the deeds of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for through the Law is the full true knowledge of sin." (Rom3:20)

And: "the wages of sin is death" (Rom6:23)

The Law could not make anybody righteous. A priesthood was needed that could bring the "power of an endless life" (vs16) The Old Covenant led to death. Infractions resulted in death. A different (better) covenant was needed... and along with it, a better priesthood.

The New Covenant (to Israel) is...

"Behold, the days are coming, says Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, says Jehovah. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, says Jehovah, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall no more teach each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says Jehovah. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jer31:31-34)

Also, the priesthood needed to be a -continuing- priesthood. The trouble with the Levitical priesthood was that they were mortal men. They were "prevented by death from continuing" (vs23)

But since Jesus, being God, His "years will not fail" (1:12); He is able to provide an "unchangeable priesthood"; He "continues forever" (vs24) His intercession is "forever" (vs25) It is not limited like the Levitical priesthood.

Being God, being sinless, Jesus does not need to make continual daily sacrifices for Himself. (vs27) He offered Himself "once for all". He proclaimed, "It has been finished" (Jn19:30) His priesthood has been ritually "perfected forever" (vs28) He is not limited by human infirmity. He is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" and is "higher than the heavens" (vs26)

The Aaronic priests were appointed without an oath. An oath being like a seal of a promise. God "with an oath" of promise appointed Jesus...

"The Lord has sworn and will not repent (recant/withdraw it), You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (vs21)

As such, Jesus...

"has become -surety- of a better covenant" (vs22)

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom8:35,38-39)

Melchizedek, a type and symbol of an eternal priesthood, situated in Jerusalem (peace), where the Holy of Holies represented God's presence.

Jesus, the "prince of peace" (Is9:6), being -very- God, seated in the Father's presence...

"..who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." (Rom8:34)

Thus, "He is also able to save to the uttermost (ultimate Salvation) those who come to God through Him, since He lives forever to make intercession for them" (vs25)

If His intercession is forever, Salvation is also forever.

Priest in Heaven - (Hebrews 8:1-13)

"Now this is the main point of the things being said: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man." (vs1-2)

These next three lessons, in many ways, will probably seem redundant, essentially repeating what has already been said. Some preachers at pulpits often tend to keep talking, when some listeners might be tempted to, "Yeah, yeah, we've already heard that...let's get to something new!" But if you've read much of Moses, when he was talking to Israel, you will note that he -repeats- himself a lot. He was talking to a "rebellious house" (Ezk2:3,5) God told Ezekiel to say "Thus says Jehovah" whether they would hear or not. This book is written to the same "rebellious house"; Jews. It is written in the same style as Moses and the other prophets whom God sent, "rising early and sending" (2Ch36:15, Jer11:7,44:4) And so we will go through, in kind. If the Word repeats...we will repeat. Some things seem to take a bit more effort to drive home, to sink into the heart, to understand with the mind.

This present topic is at the root core and foundation of Eternal Salvation. Without these truths, Salvation would not exist. While Salvation, at the individual level, is attained through Repentance and Faith (Ac20:21); this that we are presently discussing is the Foundation to that, that which makes Repentance and Faith even possible. Remember? The "master's level" of understanding. "moving along to maturity" (6:1) Without the priesthood of Jesus Christ in Heaven, we would be eternally lost. While we use an expression like "master's level", for the one with understanding, the topic is actually quite simple. And if you are with understanding, it is like I suggested: perhaps 'redundant'. But there are those who do not understand. Some suggest that a mystical "mary" (Queen of Heaven) is co-redemptress. Others think that redemption comes through meditation and mysticism, as they make themselves into "deity". A lot of people are trying to get there "some other way" (Jn10:1) But Jesus is -the- Way, Truth and Life. "No one comes to the Father except through [Him]" (Jn14:6) There is NO OTHER WAY. (Ac4:12,10) And, Jesus -is- the "Way" through (because of) His Heavenly Priesthood. In a very real sense, for doctrinal teaching, Hebrews is -the- "bull's eye" of what Scripture is all about. Historically, it is Jesus on the cross, and then resurrected in the Gospels. Doctrinally, it is these chapters we are on right now in Hebrews. These chapters explain exactly what happened on the cross (Jn19:30), at the resurrection (Rom6:4), and then when Jesus ascended up to Heaven. (Ac1:9)

You see, Salvation is "not of [mans'] works" (Eph2:9)

Israel built a tabernacle in the wilderness, which remained in one form or another through David's reign. Then Solomon built a building of wood, stone and gold. The Levitical priesthood served in things pertaining to these man-made things. But they were a "copy and shadow" of the Heavenly. Moses was strictly warned, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain" (vs5) What was made by Moses and Solomon was a -copy- of the -real- in Heaven. In a sense (and please don't read anymore into this than the context suggests)... the Aaronic priests were -pretend- priests. Not the REAL THING. Theirs was a shadow-priesthood. They were merely 'pictures' of the REAL. Like the kitten that chases the shadow, but when it pounces, nothing is there. The Aaronic priesthood was a physical enactment to represent the heart of sinful man before God. And since Salvation has always been by -FAITH-, the "just lives by faith" (Hab2:4, Rom1:17, Heb10:38); even though the Aaronic priesthood was 'make-believe', being 'figurative' of the REAL in Heaven. It was all a 'type' of Jesus Christ.

But Jesus is seated at the Father's right hand, the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, and is priest of the -TRUE-TABERNACLE- built by God, not man. Jesus is the -real-, of which the Levitical was merely the -shadow-.

But all they understood was the -shadow-. The kitten never quite figures out that the person is holding the real -object-, moving against the light, creating the shadow it chases around. It cannot grab the shadow, play with it and bite and kick on it. But if it could grab the real object, then it could play with it. The shadow is lacking. Kitty needs the real object for real play; something, as the saying goes, it can "sink its teeth into".

"For if that first had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant, and bring fulfillment to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not regard them, says the Lord." (vs7-9)

The New Covenant will be one which Israel, when it is instituted, will not turn away from. Israel will no more worship idols...

"For I will take away the names of the Baals out of her mouth; and they shall no more be remembered by their name." (Hos2:17)

"And it shall be in that day, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no longer be remembered, says Jehovah of Hosts. And I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land." (Zec13:2)

The 'new', from Heaven itself, makes the first old.

"Now what is becoming worn out and growing old is ready to disappear"
(vs13b)

Just like kitty's shadow.

Earthly vs Heavenly - (Hebrews 9:1-28)

"Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of service and the earthly sanctuary. For the first tabernacle was prepared: [with all the items that you can read for yourselves] ... Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins of the people, committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit signifying by this that the way into the Holy of Holies was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing." (vs1-8)

Ordinary people could not just waltz into the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies was a representation of God's presence. If a person went in without the proper rituals, they would be struck down dead. In fact, as Israel's apostasy increased, there is a tradition that they would tie a rope around one ankle as the high priest went in, in case there was iniquity, so that the corpse could be pulled back out, without others having to go in, and be struck down, themselves. Remember how Uzzah was struck down for touching the Ark, as the oxen fell, as David was attempting to bring the Ark to himself on the ox cart. (2Sa6:6,9) God's law was that the Ark was to be carried by the priests. (2Sa6:13)

The earthly rituals were a "comparison". They illustrated how the performance of physical service could not do anything "in regard to the conscience" (vs9) Remember? Conscience is something God has put into the heart of each person, Jew or Gentile, as distinct from the Sinai Law. It has to do with the Law "written in the heart" (Rom2:15) But the killing of an animal, spilling the blood, roasting and boiling foods, pouring drink offerings... it's all "fleshly ordinance". A temporary (if you will) stop-gap

"until the time when things were set right" (vs10)

What needed to be "set right"? What had been set wrong? God had created man in perfection...but he went the "wrong" way. All of humanity was thus corrupted. God promised the "Seed" of the woman (Gen3:15), which wouldn't be for another 4000 years. So, what to do until that time? These physical rituals were a "comparison" to the Heavenly. But they were merely a "shadow". (8:5) Physical ritual cannot cleanse the conscience within the heart. Just like all the pagan religions of the world perform rituals, but they are never sure if they have ever done "enough". That's because the earthly is only a 'type' of the Heavenly. What is needed is a clear conscience in Heaven, before God's throne, which no earthly ritual can provide. So...

"Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation" (vs11)

If man is sinful, and Heaven is pure, then Salvation cannot originate from out of what is sinful. That would be like a person who has been outside working, his body is all dirty, and his clothes are all dirty; but he tries to clean his hands by rubbing them against each other, or against his own dirty cloths. No matter how much he works at it, dirt only begets dirt. He needs an 'outside' source, water, clean clothes, etc.

Likewise, Salvation must be sourced from Heaven; some place other than sinful earth and from sinful man. That's where Jesus came from. He did not offer more animals, but His own "body" (10:5) "undefiled" (7:26) He offered "his own blood" and with His own blood "entered the Holy of Holies once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (vs12)

Again the comparison: If the blood of animals served for the flesh, "how much more" does the blood of Christ "cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (vs14)

Thus it is called a "new covenant" that He mediates. (vs15) Jesus said..

"For this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins." (Mt26:28)

Everything regarding cleansing and purification in the OT involved blood. Why? Blood is life.

"For the soul of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul." (Le17:11)

The soul had sinned. The "soul who sins shall die" (Ezk18:4) Thus a 'soul' needed to be offered as substitute... thus 'blood'. If a soul is to be redeemed, another soul must pay the price. Blood needed to be shed. When Jesus died on the cross, what God saw was His soul...

"He shall see the travail of His soul, and shall be fulfilled. By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." (Is53:11)

So, while there were 4000 years of the (representative) blood of animals, Jesus came and fulfilled all that with "better sacrifices than these" (vs23) When Jesus died, the veil of the temple was torn in two (Mt27:51); but He did not go there. The veil was torn to indicate two things: First of all, figuratively, that the way had been opened for man to have direct access to God. But more importantly, to indicate the true 'shadow' nature of that physical veil, as Jesus went "into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf" (vs24) What that physical veil represented was imperfect. It was merely a "copy". Not the real thing. Jesus went to the -real- presence of God.

So as a side note here: If God placed His glory in that Holy of Holies behind the veil, such that, if people entered unworthily they were struck down; of what do you suppose is the grandeur of God's -very- presence in Heaven!

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:31)

One of the complaints the Jews had against the Church (and for which reason Stephen was stoned) was...

"for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us." (Ac6:14)

Jesus taught...

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." (Mt5:17)

One reason the Jews had Jesus crucified was because...

"If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe into Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." (Jn11:48)

They did not understand; and that is one reason this book was written: When the 4000 year tradition has been fulfilled, what further need is there for the shadow? It is not that the temple was "destroyed", or that the old sacrifices are now considered as "naught"; they all have been superceded! The old sacrifices had to be offered "often" because they were not the real thing. But Jesus, the "real thing", offered Himself, the fulfillment of all those shadows.

The pronouncement had been...

"..it is appointed for men to die once, and after this the judgment" (vs27)

So the redemption needed to also be provided "once", in comparison to that "once" judgment. Thus...

"Christ was offered -once- to bear the sins of many" (vs28a)

And notice, in immediate proximity to Salvation is the promise of His appearing to come and "receive" us to Himself (Jn14:3) to -complete- our salvation.

"To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, without sin, unto salvation" (vs28b)

Remember that, right now, our Salvation is a "promise" of the sealing of the Holy Spirit (Eph1:13) We have not yet been "changed". We are still in

these -bodies- of "corruption" and we cannot get into Heaven in this state. (1Co15:50-54) We are still, at this time...

"Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." (Rom8:23)

The gist of the comparison is that the "copies" of the things in Heaven needed to be "purified" with types. Repeatedly. That which is on this sinful earth is a shadow of what is to come. But the fulfillment is Heaven itself. Once for all. What was symbolized behind the veil is God's very presence; His glorious throne.

Heavenly Replaces Earthly - (Hebrews 10:1-18)

"For the Law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of those things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then, would they not have ceased to be offered? For those serving, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins." (vs1-2)

This is a question of logic. Let's address it with something more tangible. When a person buys something like a car, on the installment plan, there is a schedule of payments. Every month those payments must be made faithfully. If not, the car will be repo'd. Now, supposing a wealthy relative comes along and sees the struggle to make ends meet, they go to the bank and pay the balance of the loan. It is now "Paid in Full". Do further monthly payments need to be made? No. Its full price has now been paid. But until full payment is made, the person is not in full ownership...the *bank* owns the title.

In a similar way, in the repeated offering of animals it was "not possible" to pay "in full" the debt of sin. (vs4) Every year the 'bill' came due as a "reminder of sins" (vs3)

Did God -want- all that killing of animals?

"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me" (vs5)

There were some in the OT who understood that it was not -about- the animals. David in confessing his sin says...

"For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." (Ps51:16-17)

What does God want? Animals or the heart?

"Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? O man, He has declared to you what is good. And what does Jehovah require of you, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." (Mic6:7-8)

You see, the Law was not the end in itself.

"Therefore the Law was our tutor to BRING US TO CHRIST, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Ga3:24-26)

Those who crucified Jesus thought it was all about -the- "Law". They did not understand that it was -about- Jesus Christ. The Law was merely a vehicle leading to when Jesus Christ should arrive and -complete- the Law. That it is about the 'conscience'. The conscience can only be totally free when the debt is fully paid. When installments are made each month, in the back of the mind is the remembrance that there is yet the -rest- of the debt to be finished off. But once the debt is fulfilled, what need is there to retain the payment coupons?

Jesus "takes away the first in order that He may establish the second" (vs9) Jesus came and took away the payment coupon book, and in its place gives the "paid in full" -Title-. If one has the Title, there is no more need for the payment coupons. That's why we no longer "keep the law".

Jesus, "this Man", took care of the debt "for all time" and then "sat down at the right hand of God" (vs12) To 'sit down' indicates that one's work is done, and now one can rest. Mediations are typically done as the parties are -sitting- next to each other. God is on the throne, Jesus is at His right hand...and as they observe humanity, Jesus can point to the Father the ones who in faith have received Him, and says, "That one is Mine...Yes, I paid for that one, too"

We've quoted it already, but this section closes with it. It is a different *kind* of covenant. The reason there is no more need for payment is because, when the debt is paid, the conscience is also cleared. And with a clear conscience, service to God is from the heart, not out of requirement. The conscience of debt is replaced with...

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My Laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them, then He adds, Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." (vs16-17)

Where the sin nature was in rebellion, the heart with God's nature infused is one where God sees no more sin.

"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Ps103:12)

It has moved from earth to Heaven. Once in Heaven, the earthly is no more remembered.

"And the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind." (Is65:17b)

And regarding the physical "shadows" of the earthly rituals?

"And it shall come to pass, when you have multiplied and increased in the land in those days, says Jehovah, that they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of Jehovah! Nor shall it come to mind; nor shall they

remember it; nor shall they seek it; nor shall it be made anymore."
(Jer3:16)

Since Jesus has paid the debt, and sins have been remitted, for those who are of the Faith of Christ there is "no longer an offering for sin" (vs18b)

"It has been finished!" (Jn19:30)

Bold Entrance - (Hebrews 10:19-25)

"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil; that is, His flesh; and having a High 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 bodies washed with pure water." (vs19-22)

Who is entering the Holy of Holies? This is all one sentence. The exhortation is to "let -us- draw near". Everything else in one way or another modifies "us". We have boldness. The cause of this boldness is the blood of Christ. It is a new way, not the OT way. It is because Jesus is our High Priest. We draw near with a True Heart. Our faith is fully assured. Our conscience is sprinkled from evil. And as they would dip in the mikvah, our bodies are washed. As Jesus said, "you are clean" (Jn13:10)

You see, the "new" way is that we no longer need to stand outside, while the priest goes in, and then comes back out. The High Priest, Jesus Christ, has already gone in. He is -there-. When we enter boldly, we are coming not only to the Father, but Jesus is there next to Him. If God's presence is 'fearful', we don't need to fear, because we know Jesus. Little children are typically fearful of walking out on a big stage surrounded by a huge audience. But like we have seen of the Obama girls, if 'dad' or 'mom' was on the stage, there was no trouble at all running out there eagerly. The audience ceases to be scary, because mom and dad are there. Right now it is the case that "No one has seen God at any time" But we know the "only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father" (Jn1:18) And so we are able to boldly enter the Holy of Holies, God's presence...to Jesus Christ.

Just as Salvation is an individual meeting with Jesus, so too is our entrance into the Holy of Holies. The conscience is an -individual- thing within one's own soul and spirit. The conscience is in direct relationship to the "accounting" we give before God. (Rom14:12) Notice it says that we "each" give account concerning "himself". That's singular. One person, each, alone before God.

In the same vein...

"Let us hold fast the confession of the hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (vs23)

The "confession"... that's Faith. That's doctrine. The "hope" is about the promise the Holy Spirit has sealed in our hearts. (Eph1:13) And knowing Jesus is faithful (He -will- perform what He has promised), we -know- that our hope is well-placed: THAT He will come and "receive" us to Himself. (Jn14:3) THAT these corrupt bodies will also be "redeemed" at His

coming. (Rom8:23) Again, this is -individual-, as each person's heart is faithful.

But we do not neglect fellow-believers.

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting; and so much the more as you see the Day drawing near." (vs24-25)

These two verses are a couple of the most-abused verses in all of Scripture. They are twisted to suggest that anybody who neglects "church" is well-nigh unto being lost for eternity; or if not that, in jeopardy of backsliding. And they will give examples of people who stopped attending "church", and next thing you know, those people had become drunks, prostitutes and other sorts of similar things. They view any sort of 'slipping' as being -from- the 'congregation'. That the individual duty is -to- the 'congregation'.

So, what is the function when Believers are together? To "stir up" to Christian behavior. And what else. "Exhorting". What is it to exhort. A relative of "stir up": to urge by strong, often stirring argument, admonition, advice or appeal. Why? Because "Jesus is coming", the "Day" is approaching.

Where's the part about "fellowship" and "worship"? Hmmm... as I look it over, I seem to be missing those concepts, here.

What is the group -doing-? What has been the context for the past six chapters? Fellowship of Believers together WITH EACH OTHER? That is what those who twist this passage claim. What has been the context?

Jesus our High Priest. To what goal? To what end?

Entrance of the Believer into the Holy of Holies. The Believer's fellowship with Jesus Christ is for the purpose to have fellowship with the Father.

"that which we have seen (the Word of Life vs1) and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." (1Jn1:3)

As Jesus has gone before, the Father and Son are in fellowship together. As we individually follow Jesus into the Holy of Holies, the fellowship now consists of Father, Son and Believer (who is also indwelt by the Holy Spirit). If there is one Believer, the "assembly" consists of four. For each Believer who -individually- enters the Holy of Holies, that assembly in God's presence increases.

Fellowship with EACH OTHER is not nearly so big a deal, if we each, individually, are in fellowship in the Holy of Holies. If we are in fellowship with God, having a clear conscience and true heart, the fellowship with each other will be -automatic-. Jesus prayed for it. It is fact...

"I do not pray concerning these alone, but also concerning those who will believe into Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (Jn17:20-21)

If there is lack of fellowship, then some (or all) in the (physical) group are not in the Holy of Holies.

You see, it is not a matter of holding TO EACH OTHER. One person cannot save another. One person cannot lead another into the Holy of Holies. Only Jesus Christ can do that. That's why -He- is the High Priest. That is His 'job'.

We need to be "holding fast to the Head" (Col2:19) Jesus is the "Head of the Body, the church..." (vs18)

What is the hope? Jesus coming to redeem these bodies, and taking us into His presence. Scripture calls that event "the Day". If a group of people are insisting on sitting around fellowshiping and worshiping, but are not exhorting and stirring... they refuse to have "true hearts"... the 'Day' will come when they are "not expecting Him" (Mt24:50) and they will find themselves being "distanced from Him in shame at His coming" (1Jn2:28)

If a True Believer finds the group he has been fellowshiping with to be such a group, what should he do? Does he hold fast to the 'group', or does he hold fast to the "Head"? If the group is not in the Holy of Holies, he is outside of Jesus' fellowship. His conscience is compromised. They like to use this verse to strong-arm people into staying with -them-, no-matter-what. But there are also times, when the group is not in the Holy of Holies, that the individual needs to obey the command to...

"Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." (2Co6:17)

In so-doing, the individual re-joins the pure fellowship that is gathered in the Holy of Holies.

No More Excuses - (Hebrews 10:26-39)

"For if we sin willfully after we have received the full true knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour those who oppose." (vs26-27)

Is this talking about how we get our feet dirty while walking in the world? Where Jesus said,

"He who is bathed has no other need than to wash his feet, but is completely clean." (Jn13:10)

As John reminds us (as did Solomon) that there is no one who does not commit sins...

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1Jn1:8, 1Ki8:46)

But when we do slip...

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." (1Jn1:9-2:2)

There is a difference between "sin" and "sins". Jesus was the

"Lamb of God who takes away the -SIN- of the world!" (Jn1:29)

This is the "sin" that came through Adam. (Rom5:12) It is the "sin" in which "my mother conceived me" (Ps51:5) Mankind 'sins' because we have the 'sin' -nature-.

This is a similar scenario that Ezekiel outlines. The "righteous" man who *turns* from his righteousness to again become a sinner. (Ezk18:24-26, 33:12-18)

This is 'active' voice. The person sins "willfully"...not in ignorance, after having received the Truth. Jesus -is- the "Truth". (Jn14:6) It is that about which Jesus said...

"And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven." (Lk12:10)

To get past the "rudiments concerning Christ" and the basic doctrines of "repentance from dead works and of faith toward God" (6:1); to be understanding doctrine more at the "master's level" of understanding, such that the relationship of the Holy Spirit to everything is understood...to then blaspheme the Holy Spirit...there is no forgiveness. In the series we have been discussing Jesus Christ the High Priest, entering the Holy of Holies, and how we as Believers have followed Jesus into the Holy of Holies...such understanding is "full true knowledge of the truth" Master's Level of understanding.

This is the same place where satan was as the "anointed cherub that covers" (Ezk28:14) He -was- the (real) cherub overshadowing the Mercy Seat. He was -in- the Holy of Holies with God. And then "sinned willfully" by boasting, "I will be like the Most High" (Is14:14)

See: "Treason"

www.a-voice.org/main/voice011.htm

Of him it is proclaimed, "Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the recesses of the Pit." (vs15) to the place that was "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt25:41)

Satan cannot be "saved". He was there, in God's presence. Now, while Jesus died on the cross for sinful man; if the sinner comes to God in repentance and comes to full knowledge and fellowship in the Holy of Holies, and then does like satan did; like satan... he is done for. There is no more sacrifice for sins. Jesus died "once for all". If the sinner is saved, and then rejects salvation once received, Jesus does not go to the cross *again*.

Under the 'shadow' of the Heavenly things, those who sinned were taken out and stoned to death "without mercy" (vs28) If that was the case under the 'shadow', what is the case for the 'real'?

"Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled on the Son of God, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of Grace?" (vs29)

When a sinner exists in ignorance, God's wrath is due, because the person also has a conscience of God's Law in the heart. (Rom2:15) But God will "overlook" those times, when the sinner repents. (Ac17:30) But when those called "His people" turn to sin, God's wrath is called "vengeance". (vs30) It is a multiplied times 'worse' form of punishment.

And notice it says He punishes "His people". No, not a misprint. In the beginning was not satan part of God's "people". One of His created beings. Part of the crowd called the "morning stars" and "sons of God" (Job38:7) But when he became satan, his judgment is certain and

irrevocable. Those claiming participation in the Salvation of Jesus Christ, and understanding fully what they have done, but then turn away...as we saw a few lessons ago: It is "impossible...to renew them to repentance" (6:4,6)

And so the exhortation to "-REMEMBER- the former days in which, after you were given understanding, you endured a great struggle with afflictions" (vs32)

Jesus promised, "In the world you have affliction" (Jn16:33) He promised that much of it would come from the synagogue rulers. (If you will: churches and pastors) (Jn16:2) When a sinner comes to God through Jesus Christ, the enemy will come along to 'test'. A True Believer will "endure" and see it through. The Believer will "hold fast to Salvation" (6:9) A True Believer will see the suffering of fellow-believers and have compassion on each other. (vs34) And as we will see in more depth next chapter, those who through Faith continue to the end will "receive the promise" (vs36) And even though it is a struggle while in the midst of it, the encouragement is that Jesus -will- return...

"For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not linger" (vs37)

You see... all over the place the Scriptures are 'crammed' with little reminders of Jesus' -return-. Thus also, is it any wonder that one of the doctrines that is most maligned by the apostasy in these last days is the set of doctrines surrounding the return of Christ. But the affliction we experience is only momentary....

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is achieving for us a surpassing and eternal weight of glory," (2Co4:17)

Thus...do we put our hand to the plow and then "look back"? Jesus said such a person is not "fit for the Kingdom of God" (Lk9:62)

In the same vein, neither do we enter the fight and then "draw back". The "just shall live by faith" (vs38) Next chapter. Faith is not merely that we -have- faith. But faith is also in God's preservation.

Hopefully it can be said of you...

"But we are not of those who draw back to destruction, but of those who believe to the preserving of the soul." (vs39)

Faith - (Hebrews 11:1-40)

"Now faith is the certainty of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders bore witness." (vs1-2)

What is faith? Years ago I happened upon Oprah as she was proclaiming that one should have "faith in your heart". Faith -about- 'what'? There was no focus. Just a sort of -mystical- "faith" that one (I suppose?) feels. Like an emotion. The same way many people -feel- "holy". But by definition holiness has clear parameters, a -distinction- from things around it. God's holiness is distinct from sin. A holy person is one who puts away sin and embraces righteousness. In the same way, faith has an object.

Jesus said... "Have faith in God" (Mk11:22)

And then goes on to describe such faith...

"For truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, Be removed and be cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will be done, it will be to him, whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, Everything whatever you ask when you pray, believe that you receive, and it will be to you." (Mk11:23-24)

Faith is a -certainty- about things that are NOT SEEN. It is certainty about what is hoped. It is faith, often, about that which hasn't yet happened, but is promised; faith being the surety that it -will- happen, as though it had already happened.

And our opening words say that by faith the "elders bore witness". The chapter also closes with the statement that...

"All these, having borne witness through faith, did not obtain the promise" (vs39)

In this case the word "elder" does not necessarily mean leader or ruler, as elders are often called. But it means "older". Such as: those from ancient times. Those who lived centuries and millennia ago, if they still lived today, would be our elders. They are the elders of history, having come before us. As we mentioned relative to Melchizedek, Abraham was 'greater' than Levi due to being Levi's "father" hereditarily. Remember, this book is written to Jews who understood ancient eastern heritage traditions.

What does it mean to "bear witness"? It is usually thought of as being an *observer*. But quite often, when a person -witnesses- something, they also WENT THROUGH IT. They witnessed it as -participants-. Such as a witness to an earthquake: the building was shaking as they ran outside to safety; or got trapped in the rubble and were rescued.

But how do people bear witness to faith? Can a person -see- inside another person's mind and heart? Faith is witnessed in -action-. As Jacob explains...

"...I will show you my faith from my works." (Ja2:18b)

If Jesus says to "have faith in God", but "No one has seen God at any time" (Jn1:18), how do we know God exists?

The first item of faith is...

"By faith we understand that the universe was prepared by the Word of God, so that the things which are seen did not come into existence from things which are visible" (vs3)

Creation. When people of the world cling to the unprovable and scientifically impossible theories of evolution, they are demonstrating their lack of faith. They spend billions of dollars sending technology to Mars, hoping against hope to find "signs of life" there. They want desperately to know "where did we come from?" But they reject God. The origin of the universe points to the existence of God.

That is the second item of faith: -THAT- God exists. (vs6)

If a person doesn't hold to that tenet, the whole rest of this book is meaningless. If we have progressed to the Holy of Holies, following Jesus into God's presence; such "master's level" of understanding presumes how the book started: that Jesus is the "express image" of God. But if God doesn't exist (vs6), then neither does Jesus Christ. And if Jesus doesn't exist, there is also no Holy of Holies. There is no Salvation. We are "most pitiable" for our foolishness. (1Co15:19)

As Paul introduces the gentiles to the "Unknown God", he does so with a recap of creation...

"God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of Heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He served with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things." (Ac17:24-25)

And as God's final judgments are about to be poured out upon mankind, before Jesus comes to establish His rule of justice and righteousness, the final exhortation is given to mankind...

"Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; also, do homage to Him WHO MADE THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, the sea and springs of water." (Rev14:7)

God's existence, which must be received in faith, even though we have not seen Him; He has "borne witness" to Himself through creation.

"For ever since the creation of the world the unseen things of Him are clearly perceived, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Ro1:20)

And so... How does the Believer "bear witness"? Jesus said, "You are witnesses of these things" (Lk24:48) Of 'what' things? Of the Believer who has "repented" and received "remission of sins" (vs47)

How does a Believer give witness to a changed life? By -living- a changed life. How does anybody else know the life is changed, unless they can see the change? They don't have faith. They do not have the "witness" of the Holy Spirit in the Believer. (Rom8:16)

One of the ways the world sees is that the Believer puts away the filth of the world, and no longer engages in it..

"And you being dead in trespasses and sins, in which you FORMERLY WALKED according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all FORMERLY CONDUCTED ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and -WERE- by nature children of wrath, just as the others;" (Eph2:1-3)

"But now you yourselves are to PUT OFF ALL THESE: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth." (Col3:8)

But often, this change only serves to make former associates angry.

"In this regard, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same overflow of dissipation, blaspheming." (1Pt4:4)

And so, what is the ultimate test for them? What is the most important thing to anybody? What is the most important thing even in nature? The preservation of life. First of all, one's -own- life; and then the life of one's offspring and family. Well, Jesus stated it...

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (Jn15:13)

This chapter contains brief accounts of many of the 'famous' saints of faith: Abel, Noah, Abraham. And it says...

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that

they were foreigners and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland." (vs13-14)

Abraham was even going about to kill his son Isaac on the altar, because of his faith in God's word that it was "in Isaac your Seed shall be called" (vs18) His faith was so strong that, even though there had not been a resurrection yet, he believed in God's word so fervently, that he even allowed in his mind and heart that God had the ability to "raise him up, even from the dead" (vs19)

And indeed, the rest of the chapter summarizes the faith of those who gave their own lives for their testimony; often in horrendous torturous ways.

What would cause somebody to endure such tortures and be killed, unless they knew "something" their killers did not! Even though they "did not obtain the promise" (vs39) they -knew- with "certainty" (vs1) that a "homeland" (vs14) awaited them. And so, as the world observes the steadfastness of the one dying, knowing their own predilection for "life", such a willingness to undergo such excruciations surely -must- indicate a reality they are not aware of. How many people have been saved throughout history when observing the "death of His saints" (Ps116:15)

No! Testimony to the world is not achieved by being -like- the world, and embracing the world's demonic filth, and calling it "worship". It is by standing up to and against the world, being holy unto God, being distinct, being "Godly in the present age" (Tit2:12) Also, when called, to endure "affliction" (Jn16:33), not being like the "stony ground" seed that...

"Afterward, when affliction or persecution arises on account of the Word, immediately they stumble." (Mk4:17)

Truth FAITH is FAITH-IN-ACTION. Having convictions, and standing on those convictions, and enduring any consequence such a stand might result in, as hurled at us by the enemy.

True Faith is not a -feeling-, but rather the outcome of...

"...having done all, to stand" (Eph6:13b)

This is the summation of Faith:

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live with sound mind, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all lawlessness and purify a people for His own possession, zealous unto good works.

"Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you." (Tit2:11-15)

Perseverance - (Hebrews 12:1-4)

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so persistently harasses us, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (vs1-2)

Who is this cloud of witnesses? As we follow and continue the context that has been building, these are the "elders" who "bore witness" (11:2) These are the ones who "having borne witness through faith, did not obtain the promise" (11:39) Those of whom "the world was not worthy" (11:38) The elders, as ch11 begins way back at the beginning with Abel (11:4), and continues to the present, speaking to "us" (12:1) Anyone who has come before us, who has lived through faith, is in this cloud. These are the ones who, when Jesus comes "with clouds" (Re1:7), these are the "saints" that come "with" Christ. (Zec14:5)

And in another sense, if we consider that "we shall not all sleep" (1Co15:51), perhaps this cloud also includes any other Believer, who might be alive, who is not us individually? In other words, as we consider this passage, each of us -individually-, might this cloud also include anybody -else- who knows the Lord? This might not be the original intent when written, but I suspect such an application could be made, as we continue, seeing what it says. Not every -witness- was martyred, but experienced struggles. Those same struggles of Faith are going on even today amongst our brethren. (1Pt5:9)

Perhaps this "cloud" also explains who the "great multitude" is?

"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one was able to number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!

Who are they?

"These are the ones coming out of great affliction, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them." (Rev7:9-10,14-15)

As they are "before the throne of God", is that not what we have just been discussing? Entrance and fellowship in the Holy of Holies, through Jesus Christ our High Priest.

So... since we are surrounded by this cloud of witnesses, now what? Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Let's all dance and worship together?? No!

Two things: 1) Get rid of any sin that keeps pestering us, and 2) Persevere in the race that we are in.

#1 is, by definition, Holiness. This is pretty much in stark contrast to what the emerging church has been doing all the last century. The further back one goes, the more of a sense of 'separation' from the world was understood. As the decades progressed, especially the past half-century, standards have laxed and laxed, at almost an exponential rate of acceleration. Today, that which calls itself "church" pretty much has NO STANDARDS of holiness! The psalmist speaks of having been pulled out of the "horrible pit, out of the miry clay" (Ps40:2); but what calls itself "church" today is sloshing around in the muck and mire, claiming it is doing so in order to "-relate- to" the world. Yes, they "relate" as being 'one -with-' the world! The old "unity in diversity" argument.

Thing is, we have not been called to lounge around "feeling the love" as TV's Meredith Vieira likes to swoon, but we are in a race. Sin is trying to overtake us. We are supposed to be running -away- from it. When athletes race, they design attire with the least possible wind 'drag'. If they need to wear helmets, those are designed aerodynamically. They don't spend their time turning around looking back at what they have left. As Paul says,

"Brethren, I do not count myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and stretching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Php3:13-14)

We know that we are not saved by works; but perhaps a little mental imagery is in order: The winds are fanning the flames. It's a wildfire. If we run with everything we got, we can stay ahead of it. So we run. We see somebody floundering, we stop to "snatch them out of the fire" (Ju1:23) and keep going. We run. The person we snatched, we urge them on to run. "Run for your life!!!" If we stop, the fire overtakes. We don't weigh ourselves down with overcoats or even fire suits. They are too heavy. When David went against Goliath, conventional wisdom offered him Saul's armor. But it weighed him down. He had not "tested" them. (1Sa17:39) He took off the weight, and faced the enemy with that which God had trained him...his sling, and some stones. And approached with,

"Then all this assembly shall know that Jehovah does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is Jehovah's, and He has given you into our hands." (1Sa17:47)

We have the same guarantee of victory...

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1Co15:57-58)

That's the answer to the next question: How do we know which way to run? We are "looking unto Jesus". Where is Jesus? That is where we run to.

"...who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters in within the veil" (6:18-19) Jesus Christ.

You see, as Believers, we CANNOT AFFORD to get bogged down in sin. We HAVE TO be DIFFERENT. We MUST leave those old unregenerate fellowships. We must live lives the world thinks is STRANGE. (1Pt4:4) If we don't leave it behind, we are not allowed entrance into the Holy of Holies. In the OT they would station...

"...gatekeepers at the gates of the house of Jehovah, so that no one who was in any way unclean could enter." (2Ch23:19)

If this was for the physical (shadow) temple worship, HOW MUCH MORE the rejection of that which is unholy into God's Holy of Holies!

As we are running, do we "play to the crowds"? No! We are "looking unto Jesus". This little phrase is how I typically close e-mails with people. A lot of what the Lord requires of me to say is not always accepted by the recipient. It is not -my- message. It is -God's- Word. I am merely a messenger. They may disagree or retort back with nastiness. Such used to bother me when I was younger, when I was seeking the approval of man. At the time I didn't yet understand that -most- of those calling themselves "christian" were NOT part of the grandstands. They were not part of the "cloud of witnesses". I was trying to look to Jesus, but was also distracted by the taunts of words: So you think that -you- are right, and -ALL- of us are wrong??!!

But when we look to Jesus, we...

"Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners against Himself"

and when we do so, then we don't need to

"...become weary and faint in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin" (vs3-4)

Whatever obstacles we may experience, remember Jesus our High Priest. He already experienced them. He persevered. He endured. He died and rose again. The -reward- is to those to whom sinners may "-SAY- every

evil word against you falsely" because of Christ. (Mt5:11) But even if they kill this body, Jesus also encourages...

"And do not fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him who has power to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna." (Mt10:28, Lk12:4-5)

Discipline - (Hebrews 12:5-13)

"And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked by Him. For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and whips every son whom He receives." (vs5-6)

Around the time this is being prepared, the "other day" a customer of one of my neighbor businesses had taken his little boy (a toddler) to the restroom. I often work with my back door open, and in that area of the back hallway, the restroom door is often left open, and sounds 'travel'. Once the incident was done, a neighbor employee explained that the little guy had apparently -really- messed up his pants (which was evident to me later when I then got my Lysol can and sprayed to refresh the air); so the dad had set the fellow in the large utility sink that is there, had stripped him down, and was giving an impromptu 'bath'.

Well, let me tell you. Anybody hearing the commotion would have thought the dad was abusing the kid...even 'killing' him by slow torture. I've never (ever) before heard such screaming, anywhere. He was squalling 10 times worse than a cat yowls when being given a bath. The dad would tell the boy to "Sshhh! Be quiet... Stop yelling... Shut Up!" The more the dad yelled, the louder the boy screamed...'bloody murder'. One thing I did not hear was a "Smack!" ...nor the suggestion or threat of one. I still can remember back to when I was a little tyke...if I had raised such a commotion, my dad would have suggested in a calm voice: "Do you need something to cry about?" That would shut me -right- up. Apparently there must have been some prior incident/s, that I no longer remember, where I had not shut up, and had been smacked..?

Of course we can quote...

"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." (Pr22:15)

And this passage reminisces how when we were children, our parents punished wayward behavior. Some parents, I'm sure, get it right. I can remember back to my youth with memories of some abuse (not always). Today the general societal consensus seems to be to let kids do "what they want", and there is essentially -no- discipline.

"For they indeed for a few days disciplined us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness" (vs10)

What is the purpose of God's discipline? Because He is "mean" and doesn't want us to have any "fun"? Because He is so legalistic and a tyrant, and a "control freak"? What has been the thrust of the book? Jesus our High Priest? Yes. To what end? That we might follow Him into God's

Holy of Holies. Let's never forget the goal; the destination. God's presence. God and sin are complete opposites. He does not allow sin into His presence. We have the "promise" of Eternal Life, but we do not yet possess it. These bodies are yet in corruption, and we tend to get our feet dirty, walking in this world. When guided, our old natures tend to make us want to wander.

When teaching a dog to "heel", and it wants to sniff the air and go to investigate everything, sometimes the leash needs to be yanked. To make a horse go where desired, the bit puts (uncomfortable) pressure in the horse's mouth; they would also often put blinders so the horse would not be distracted by things from the side, but only look straight ahead. Where they use oxen for field work or other labor, the ring in the ox's snout provides similar 'persuasion' for the ox to obey. A race horse is often whipped to give it a bit of added 'incentive' to go faster.

Remember? We are running the "race that is set before us" (vs1) We need incentives. We need course-corrections. Depending on the severity of our waywardness, to such a degree is the discipline. Discipline is not always punitive, for having done 'wrong'; but might be incentive, to 'get going'. In other cases, it might be punishment.

Corinth was so carnal, they were abusing the Lord's Supper, and the Lord disciplined them with illness and death. (1Co11:30) Death? Yes. As in that other place...

"deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (1Co5:5)

Sometimes called the "sin unto death" (1Jn5:16) Such a person "makes it" but "yet so as through fire" (1Cor3:15) They have Eternal Life, but no rewards. They are "holy", in that their fleshly deeds got burned up. But they have nothing worthy of rewards. But having the evil burned away, they are (by definition) "holy", and can follow Jesus into the Holy of Holies.

You see... this business we speak of regularly, coming apart from the filth of the world, and churches not embracing the world's ways... is SERIOUS BUSINESS. God does not play around. God is HOLY and He guards His holiness with extreme jealousy.

"I, Jehovah your God, am a jealous Mighty God..." (Ex20:5)

So, although in the previous chapter we spoke of persecution, there is some adversity that comes from the hand of God. It is not persecution, but God's discipline.

"but rejoice in so far as you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also rejoice with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory

and of God rests upon you. According to them He is blasphemed, but according to you He is glorified. BUT LET NONE OF YOU SUFFER AS A MURDERER, A THIEF, AN EVILDOER, OR AS A MEDDLER IN OTHER PEOPLE'S MATTERS. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this regard. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God" (1Pt4:13-17)

We are no longer under Law, but under Grace.

"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under Law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under Law but under grace? Let it not be!" (Rom6:14-15)

Just because the Law is now done away does not mean we can start sinning. Like that (black) lady who, when Obama was elected, stopped paying rent. When addressed by the landlord, "We have a new president now, and things are going to be changing" That's well-and-good, but you still need to pay your rent. "Like I said, we now have a new president, and things are going to be changing"

In God's economy, things do not change. God does not change. (Mal3:6) His standards of holiness have remained the same; they -are- the same. The Law had rituals, which pointed to Christ. (Ga3:24) But now that we no longer offer sacrifices, does not mean we start sinning again, because we don't offer sacrifices. Contrariwise, if we understand what we've been studying up to this point, we should be -more- diligent to be holy... to keep pure. To "keep yourselves away from idols" (1Jn5:21)

But where we slip, the Lord gives us 'reminders'. "reasons" to behave. Sickness, economic misfortune, debilitating accident, etc. Paul was given a "thorn in the flesh" to help curb his pride. (2Co12:7) He gives us each in this way, according to our tendencies and needs. When such is the case, it is not a "cross" (that I must bear...poor me, poor me). Such people are not learning...and we often observe them, continually ill and complaining.

The exhortation is to...

"Therefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be turned aside, but rather be healed" (vs12-13)

Due to certain ways towards apostasy my life had taken years ago, what had been a hereditary mild form of allergy became severe, sometimes to the point where I could barely breathe, and could not eat certain things. Due to those same things, what had been a 'normal' correction in eyeglasses became a totally twisted up situation where the two eyes were opposite of each other, with severe astigmatism. When the Lord opened the door for the unequal yoke to depart, and He had my attention about my apostasy, it was repented, and I was restored: the first immediate fix was

the allergies. The confrontation/restoration occurred at the height of the worst of allergy season. Immediately the next day the allergies were restored to their prior 'normal' -mild- version. And over time, when I thought my eyes were again getting worse...I went and had them tested, and actually, they had become restored to their pre-apostate state. In fact 'better'...in that, I always had a -bit- of astigmatism, and they say that once you have it, it never goes away. For a time, the astigmatism was COMPLETELY GONE in that one eye...the eye that had been SO BAD during the apostasy.

So you see...when we misbehave, the Lord brings adversity. When we confess, He removes the adversity.

But how do we "lift" the hands? How do we strengthen the feeble knees? By confessing our sin. We do not grab the bit in our mouth and plow ahead down the wrong path -ANYWAY-. We follow a straight path... Looking unto Jesus. We see Jesus, and go -toward- Him...not meandering all over the countryside, smelling this flower, picking that one...la dee dah; as Jesus is calling to us, and we ignore Him!

"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Turn away from you the crooked mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your EYES LOOK STRAIGHT AHEAD, and let your eyelids look straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet, then all your ways will be established. Do not turn to the right hand or to the left; REMOVE YOUR FOOT FROM EVIL." (Pr4:23-27)

Don't Turn Away - (Hebrews 12:14-29)

"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord; watching carefully that no one fall short of the grace of God..." (vs14-15)

As my generation was growing through maturity into adulthood there was a predominant doctrine. The doctrine of "PEACE" And the foundations of societal and political "peace" also became the foundations for (alleged) "christian" faith. They would hold up the two "V" fingers and chant, "Peace, man!" And the underpinning for peace was -compromise-. College classrooms for certain topics ceased to be lectures where truth was proclaimed, but became "discussion groups" where people sat around expressing their opinions. Then at the end of the quarter each student gave themselves the grade they thought they deserved. Yes, when I thought to take a double-major (Music and Education), that's what one of those education classes was. It was partly because of that stupid class that I dropped the "education" major.

But so-called "christian" Bible studies did the same thing. Read the Bible, see what it says... now: What does it mean to you? And so all sorts of ideas get "shared". The world's permissiveness interjected into God's Word, munched around. The Thesis of God's Word, the Antithesis of the world... munched it around and arrive at Consensus; what I have come to understand in the years since, as being the Dialectic model. I was -in-those Bible 'studies', seeing it happen and knowing it was wrong, before I knew the term Dialectic, and that it was a socialist agenda and methodology.

The world was talking "peace", and -christians- were talking "love". The world's "love" was not love at all, but "free sex". But the christian thing that corresponded to the world's "peace" was "love". Jesus was quoted a lot during those days...

"By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have -LOVE- for one another." (Jn13:35)

But in the passage under consideration, -what- things are paired up? Peace and -what-? -HOLINESS- And notice it says that 'without' this pairing, a person does not see the Lord.

The apostasy says, Peace and Immorality. Peace and Perversity. Peace and Lying. Peace and -whatever- other swill you wish to compromise and claim is "OK". Dialectic...Consensus. Don't tell anybody they are wrong. Don't judge. Accept everybody "as they are", because after all God accepts us "just as we are".

Holiness is the direct opposite of that. Where consensus welcomes everything with open arms, Holiness PUSHES AWAY. Consensus 'hugs' everybody. Holiness keeps aloof. Consensus 'accepts'. Holiness 'rejects'.

So, if the Believer is pushing away, how is peace achieved? It's somewhat related to the old Reagan Doctrine (I wonder if Sarah Palin knows this one?): "Trust but Verify". You say you are destroying certain types of weapons? We believe you, but let's have a panel of people whose job it is to go in and take a count. See what the -facts- are. Keep everybody honest.

"There is no peace, says Jehovah, unto the wicked" (Is48:22, 57:21)

But God... we luuuuv You! Well, OK then...prove it. Let us take pad and pencil and -document- the life: the Righteous deeds and attitudes compared to the Sinful ones. Holiness is not a -feeling- of "luuuuv". It is cold hard facts. This is Righteousness, and over here is Wickedness. How much of each comprises your life?

Sin "defiles" (vs15b) A person who wishes to compromise away his life might as well be like Esau. With no concerns he gave away his birthright for a measly bowl of stew. And it was not God's irresistible sovereignty that made him such. It was not that Esau had NO CHOICE when he rejected God. God made known His foreknowledge when the two were in the womb "the elder shall serve the younger" (Rom9:12, Ge25:23)

When Esau came to full understanding of what he had done, and the result, he did not repent. He did not say, "I'm sorry for what I have done" it was...

"Bless me; me also my father! Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me; me also, O my father! And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. (Ge27:34,38)

Me, me... gimme, gimme... Waaaah!

By birth, Esau -was- the "heir". It was -already- his. But he gave it away. He did not "lose" it. He -gave- it away. And he "found no place for repentance" (vs17)

"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many works of power in Your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who work out lawlessness!" (Mt7:21-23)

It's not enough to intone "Lord, Lord" when praying, while perhaps also calling Him "JC", while the next minute embracing the world. If a person

claiming to be a "christian" refuses to be HOLY from the world's filth, they are not really saved. Their embracing of sin betrays their true heart. All the pretences of being in "church" will not get a person into God's presence. If a person refuses holiness while on this earth, why should God receive such a person into His Holy of Holies? It isn't going to happen!

"Do not be led astray, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." (Ga6:7)

This is the true context of "grace". Grace is not a feeling, "graaaaeeesss!"; said with fluttering eyelids, and a tone in the voice like TV's Meredith Vieira when she swoons about "ooooohh...feel the luuuuuuv!" Grace is in the context of Salvation... AWAY FROM sin! As Paul asks...

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? LET IT NOT BE! How shall we who DIED TO SIN live any longer in it?" (Rom6:1-2)

Those who refuse to consecrate themselves unto God after claiming to have been "saved" are pretenders. No matter how much they may faintly swoon the words "grace" and "peace", if they still have a foot in the world and are not "holy", they are "falling short" of God's grace (vs15) They have not a clue what grace is! And that is the preponderance of today's "church". They are those who...

"...have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were set forth to this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God, even our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ju1:3)

Please read the next verses in the passage.

In the wilderness at Sinai God revealed Himself in a way that made everyone shudder and cower away in fear. Even Moses was "in terror and trembling" (vs21) But for as fearsome as that was, that was part of the aforementioned "shadow". What we face is so much more than that was. When John saw Jesus, he "fell at His feet as dead" (Re1:17)

We do not face thunders, earthquakes and darkness, but (read it) Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, the host of the angels, and those who have gone before...those "witnesses" we have already spoken of. We are not in some wilderness on the Sinai Peninsula, but headed to Heaven itself.

When God spoke in the wilderness Israel, of whom it was said that "with most of them God was not well pleased" (1Co10:5), they cowered away and requested that God -NOT- speak to them, but that He should speak to Moses, and they would listen to Moses. God responded...

"They have done well in all that they have spoken. Oh, that this heart of theirs would be fully yielded, to fear Me and to keep all My commandments at all times, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!" (De5:28-29)

But the rest of the Pentateuch records their rebellion. They didn't want to hear His voice... -because- ...as their works revealed... they didn't want to follow Him.

The exhortation to us is...

"See to it that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from the One speaking from Heaven" (vs25)

Where Israel was, when they refused God, was earth... which is being overthrown at the final judgments. They looked for a kingdom in the land of Caanan. That, too, is going to be burned up. These are all "shadows". But we look for the permanent that will NOT be consumed...

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." (vs28)

Another thing my generation did not understand, nor practice: Reverence and godly fear. They did (do) not really -know- God. Aside from our *desire* to be with God, and all those things; why do we approach with reverence and fear? Remember how Moses was instructed to remove his sandals in God's presence at the burning bush? God said, "the place where you are standing is holy ground" (Ex3:5)

"For our God is a consuming fire." (vs29)

Conduct - (Hebrews 13:1-8,16-25)

"But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased... Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably" (vs16,18)

Early in the series we suggested that, along with Romans, Hebrews is the 'other' primarily "doctrinal" book of the New Testament. And just like Romans, Hebrews spends most of the book on doctrine; and then briefly summarizes at the end about a few specifics regarding behavior.

You see... the Christian life is not about 'lists'. Do this, do that, don't do this, or don't do that. And those of the liberal bent usually taunt those who seek to live holy lives that, "You just can't do anything!" As though the lists were all about "don'ts".

If a Believer is truly living a holy life, we are possessed of conscience. Even without a Bible, the unregenerate know what is good and bad. (Rom2:15) Thus, so much more, a Believer who knows the Lord, knows the Word, and understands doctrine... Well... what was the question? Particularly this book, which talks about Jesus our High Priest; as we grow in understanding about entering the Holy of Holies... again... What was the question?

It's like I've suggested on some other occasions: For those who claim to "not be sure" what is right or wrong, in terms of those things they like to wrangle over, of worldliness vs holiness; I've suggested that, if such a person suddenly found themselves in Jesus' physical presence, they were looking Jesus in the face: I submit to anybody willing to hear... THERE WOULD BE NO QUESTION in their minds as to what was right or wrong behavior. In their heart, in their conscience, THEY -KNOW-. When they claim to not know, they are covering for secret desires to be naughty, which they consider to be "fun". But if they were in what they could observe as God's 'presence'...they would suddenly be devoid of any questions and doubts. This book has spoken of "conscience" quite a few times. (9:9, 9:14, 10:22)

This book covers doctrine in a way that none of the others do. It takes the Believer -into- the Holy of Holies. Thus, it is not very 'necessary' to enumerate very much on specifics of behavior. A Believer who is ordering a holy life... -KNOWS-. However, there are a couple of things of which to be reminded.

Brotherly love. (vs1) Of course. A close relative: hospitality. (vs2) As being part of the body, when others are suffering, we remember them. (vs3)

Nothing wrong with the marriage bed. God made it, He designed it, and Paul says to "not deprive one another..." (1Co7:5a) But any sort of sexual

perversity receives judgment. (vs4) And this is worth noting, because of all the things mankind might slip on, this is likely the most prevalent. It seems to be -the- #1 perversion over which society is militant about. It drives commercials, it is the basis for that which is called "entertainment", and so much of society thinks they must get themselves up to appear as whores, even in everyday life. That to be accepted, they must be slutty. So... beware!

Be content in the state you are in. (vs5) Paul says...

"And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content." (1Ti6:8)

So, don't covet what you don't have, and don't need. If you need it, the Lord will provide. The Lord will "never leave you nor ever forsake you" As David also observed...

"I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." (Ps37:25)

And another couple of greatly abused verses...

"Remember those in authority over you, who have spoken the Word of God to you. Observing the outworkings of their behavior, imitate their faith" (vs7)

"Obey those in authority over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.(vs17)

First of all, those who minister the Word are not "rulers" (kjb) When Cornelius bowed to Peter, Peter picks him up and says, "Stand up; I myself am also a man" (Ac10:26) Even angels, who are "greater in power" (2Pt2:11) are not our rulers. When John bows to the angel, twice, the angel reprimands him, twice. (Re19:10, 22:9)

But there is a special place of honor for those who minister the Word. When vs7 says "remember", that is a word saying "support". As Paul speaks of "double honor" in relationship to being "worthy of his wages" (1Ti5:17-18) And when vs17 speaks of submission, note that that is in the context of also "observing their behavior". If somebody in a position as pastor is also corrupt, God does not establish a "chain-of-command" such that, if they lead in apostasy, the 'laity' are supposed to obey in the apostasy. One of the things that keeps these bad people going is that they stand on their 'position', and since "the Bible says" that they are "rulers" (kjb), everybody must obey them blindly. And so, sometimes, the righteous are afraid to disobey their false ways, for fear of disobeying the imagined "chain-of-command" principle. The "obedience" (vs17) is to "imitate their faith" (vs7) As they proclaim from the Word, "This is the way, walk in it" (Is30:21), they should also be able, as they -lead-, to say, as Paul did,

"Be imitators of me, just as I am also of Christ." (1Co11:1)

In the OT the priesthood was somewhat what the pastorate is to the Church. The priesthood was a "shadow" of the Heavenly. The high priest would enter the (shadow of the) Holy of Holies on behalf of the people. Since Jesus is our High Priest in the (real) Holy of Holies, if a Godly pastor is doing his 'job' correctly, he should be leading his hearers to follow him, as he follows Jesus Christ, into the Holy of Holies. This is why the OT false prophets were chided...

"But if they had stood in My counsel and had caused My people to hear My Words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings." (Jer23:22)

Holiness!

We cannot get into the Holy of Holies with sin. The pastor's job is not to cajole and make the people -feel- 'good', **CONDONING THEIR SIN**, and building up their self-esteem. No! His job is to grab shoulders, shake people: Listen to me! This is God's Word. Obey it. Cleanse your lives. This is the way into the Holy of Holies. I'm going there. Who will follow and imitate me?

When we enter the Holy of Holies, we will "be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" Therefore, what? Let's rejoice, praise the Lord, and dance around to happy "worship" music? No! No! No!

"And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (1Jn3:2-3)

Holiness!

Doctrine - (Hebrews 13:9-15)

"Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat." (vs9-10)

Romans also closes with warnings against strange doctrine:

"Now I exhort you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and snares, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and turn away from them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple." (Rom16:17-18)

What are the primary doctrines of the book of Hebrews?

- Jesus the Man, 'essence' of God in flesh and blood (1:3, 2:14)
- The 'shadow' nature of the OT Law and rituals (8:5)
- Jesus, High Priest in the 'real' Holy of Holies (9:12)
- Jesus in the Heavens 'replaces' earthly priests (10:9,12)
- Believers direct 'access' to the Holy of Holies in Christ (10:19)

And so, since we have this direct access, we have something which the OT saints never experienced while on earth before they died. They lived in faith but "did not obtain the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made complete apart from us" (11:39-40) We have that "better" thing... the 'real', not the shadow.

However, in fulfilling the Law, Jesus did as the OT sacrifices. Once the animals had been offered, their ashes were carried outside the camp. Thus, to fulfill that type, Jesus also "suffered outside the gate" (vs12) The outside ash heap was a place of uncleanness. Jesus made Himself unclean, in order to cleanse us from all sin.

"Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach." (vs13)

Jesus promised that in this world we have "affliction". (Jn16:33) Also, if we are Jesus' disciples, we cannot expect things to be better for us. If He suffered, we can expect the same.

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the Word that I said to you, A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My Word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you

on account of My name, because they do not know Him who sent Me." (Jn15:18-21)

Paul expressed it this way...

"I now rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, on behalf of His body, which is the church," (Col1:24)

If a person is heading outside the city for martyrdom, it's a one-way trip... never to go back. The homes, comforts, family and support are -behind-us. We must leave all behind to follow Jesus. We are "foreigners and pilgrims on this earth" (11:13) When we leave the world's city, even if it is through death, we are headed to our "homeland" (11:14) Our "citizenship is in Heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Php3:20) Because...

"Here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come" (vs14)

Like the song: "Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken"

Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow Thee;
Destitute, despised forsaken - Thou from hence my all shalt be.
Perish ev'ry fond ambition - All I've sought and hoped and known!
Yet how rich is my condition - God and heav'n are still my own!

Let the world despise and leave me, they have left my Savior, too;
Human hearts and looks deceive me-Thou are not, like man, untrue
And while Thou shalt smile upon me, God of wisdom, love, and might,
Foes may hate and friends may shun me-Show Thy face and all is bright

(There's also vs 3 & 4 at www.a-voice.org/songbook/ghf390.htm)

No... you will not likely find much of anybody singing this song anymore. It does not fit the modern sensuous self-esteem rock-n-roll party model.

If you are tempted to look back "remember Lot's wife" (Lk17:32) When she yearned for home (perhaps the daughters that refused to escape with them? Ge19:14) in the middle of sin, she died in the destruction.

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life on account of Me will find it." (Mt10:37-39)

And if you should experience it like Sadu Sundar Singh did (as I remember the story from it being read to me when a child), when his family chased

him out of home for his faith in Christ, and he trudged along the trail, singing the song quoted above, just remember...

"When my father and my mother forsake me, then Jehovah will gather me up." (Ps27:10)

And as we -follow- Jesus, on the way to the Holy of Holies, carrying His cross, we...

"Confess to His name" (vs15)

"...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom10:9-10)

Israel had been intended to be a "kingdom of priests" unto God. A testimony to the world. But they refused to be a "holy nation". (Ex19:6)

But as those who "now have mercy", the Church is to

"...proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1Pt2:9-10)

"Let your light so shine before men, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven." (Mt5:16)

So in closing...

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen." (vs20-21)

The writer says...

"And I appeal to you, brethren, endure the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words" (vs22)

Read it. Listen. Pay attention. Submit to the Lord. And -do- it!

Amen!

Addendum Section:

Believe or Obey?

READER QUESTION:

The King James Bible says He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. John 3:36

And your Bible says (I don't mean like you wrote it) The one believing into the Son has eternal life; but the one disobeying the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. John 3:36.

It seems to me that obedience is not taught much these days. Do you think its because of errors like this.

VW ANSWER:

Indeed. This is addressed in the series in Hebrews, lesson 07 from ch3.

It is interesting to notice -which- translations say what. The ones (in my OLB collection) that say "believe" are ALT, KJV, MKJV, NKJV. The ones that say "obey" are GENEVA, LITV, NASB, VW. And then Darby says "subject" and NIV says "rejects" (The ALT surprises me; its compiler is better at the Greek than that!) And then the older Wycliffe and Tyndale (which I have in html) also are on the "unbelieve" side of this question. Wycliffe's older English says "vnbileueful" (unbelievable).

The one "believing" is "pisteuo": think to be true, persuaded of, have confidence, entrust

The one "disobeying" is "apeitheo": refuse belief and obedience, not to comply with. And is related to "apeithes": impersuasive, not compliant, disobedient

Notice that the second word includes aspects of faith, but the predominance seems to be the non-compliance aspect. Disobedience.

God "commands all men everywhere to repent" (Ac17:30) The word "command" naturally expects obedience to or compliance with the command. But the sinner refuses the command. Right now man has been given 'choice': Moses closed off his review of the Law with, "Therefore CHOOSE life...." (De30:19) God does not come up to each person with a gang of thugs, knocking everybody in the back of their knees, forcing them into subservience. He is "longsuffering", not having a desire for any to perish. (2Pt3:9) But eventually the pronouncement will be made: "the time is at hand" (Re22:10) and then, all those who had refused will be rounded up, handcuffed and dragged before God's throne by two hulks of wardens

and knocked down to their knees (**) to "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Php2:11). But they won't be going to Heaven! They will make their confession; some will also be forced to bow to the True Believers they had taunted (Rev3:9); and then be tossed into the Lake of Fire.

** No...I know the Bible doesn't say that. Is a little imagery permissible, after talking about 'thugs'? Jesus used many illustrations: of virgins knocking on the door (Mt25:11), of fishermen sorting the good from the bad out of the dragnet (Mt11:47-48), of the wealthy farmer building barns (Lk12:19), farmer seed and birds (Mt13), banquets (Mt22), bread and stones (Mt7:9), etc.

Remember: THERE ARE NO UNBELIEVERS IN HELL! "Sola Fide" is of no benefit there! Whoever is in Hell knows that God exists; there are no atheists there, either. They know that Jesus died to save sinners, They know that "Jesus is Lord". Thus, rebellious lips repeating those words like a mantra is meaningless. WHAT IS IN THE HEART?

"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual perversions, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." (Mt15:19)

Keep in mind that "every tongue" will confess Jesus to be Lord, but not everybody is going to Heaven. (Like the old Negro spiritual: Everybody talkin' 'bout Heaven ain't goin' there!) "Many" are on the "broad way" leading to destruction, and it is only the "few" who find the way to Life. (Mt7:13-14) And it is immediately after that statement that Jesus warns against the "false prophets"

Yes, they "believe". The demons also "believe and shudder" (Ja2:19) But they refuse to obey! They refuse to comply with God's standards of holiness.

"...as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also become holy in all conduct, because it is written, Be holy, because I am holy. And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, behave yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your vain way of life received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1Pt1:14-19)

Also: is the Greek word, that from which our word "apathy" comes? The person might hear the Gospel, and feel good about it. Oh, isn't it wonderful... this thing called "Salvation". They might even believe that it is true, that God exists, and that Jesus died to save the sinner, and that repentance and faith are necessary. Oh yes, I believe all that; I believe it deeply and with great emotion. But in their apathy, they 'ho-hum' along through life and don't actually -respond- to God's -call- upon them. It is not enough to believe -about- faith and repentance. One must actually -obey-, and meet Jesus at the foot of the cross. They must "receive" Jesus Christ

(Jn1:12) through the sealing of the Holy Spirit (Eph1:13) and the birth "from above" (Jn3:3) They must actually take on the new nature. (2Co5:17)

Many people will be in the Lake of Fire who, in this life, had "good thoughts" regarding Christianity; and possibly even went to church regularly. But they will experience "weeping and gnashing of teeth" They will be like the "sons of the kingdom" in the "outer darkness" (Mt8:12)

If a person were producing a literal "amplified" Bible, to include the full degree of meaning, perhaps that verse would include:

"The one believing into the Son has eternal life; but the one disobeying [in non-compliant apathy towards] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (Jn3:36)

Dear Reader:

Do you "feel good" with "warm fuzzy thoughts" about the Lord; and you can hypnotize yourself in 'worship' mantras, with the rest of them at church? Is He your (purported) "friend"?

Or have you obeyed? Can you truly say:

"The Lord is -MY- Shepherd" (Ps23:1) ??