



A BETTER COVENANT

TAKING ENCOURAGEMENT FROM HEBREWS



WEST MAIN
CHURCH OF CHRIST

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INTRODUCTION

For most of those who have a passing familiarity with the Bible, Hebrews is not one of the most noteworthy books. Families don't do readings out of Hebrews at Eastertime; TV preachers don't argue that people should send them money because Jesus is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek. The gospels, Acts, and Romans all get more play. Even the stories of Moses and David from the Old Testament are more familiar than Hebrews. In many ways, despite its length, Hebrews is a forgotten book.

That notwithstanding, Hebrews is actually one of the main doctrinal pillars upon which genuine Christianity rests. The gospels tell the what of the story of Jesus; Hebrews tells the why. In a dazzling display of intricate logic, the anonymous writer of Hebrews raises the hood on Christianity and explains how it works. In so doing, he addresses thousands of years of needs: the needs of its original audience, the wavering Hebrew Christians who needed a reason to keep serving Christ, as well as our needs for understanding today. Despite all of this abstract, technical detail, though, the writer also manages to make a number of practical applications. His analyses of the two covenants are thickly sown with reasons why Christians of all times should persevere.

Hebrews is a book that the Lord's church needs to study and understand, even if no one else does. We cannot simply believe everything we're told. We must be responsible for our own faith, and many of the arguments that the Hebrews writer raises explain the practical differences between us and the denominational world. Without this book, our understanding of Christianity would be immeasurably poorer. To enrich our understanding and our lives, we need to plunge into Hebrews, to learn why we ourselves are heirs of a better covenant.

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LESSON ONE: A More Excellent Name

SPOKEN THROUGH ANGELS

One of the most confusing ideas in early Hebrews is the one presented in Hebrews 2:2, which says that the word was "spoken through angels." This idea is repeated twice more in the New Testament, in Acts 7:53 and Galatians 3:19, yet it appears to directly contradict Exodus 20:1, which presents Jehovah as the lawgiver.

We can resolve this contradiction by paying attention both to the word "angel" itself and to the context of Hebrews. "Angel" is nothing more than the transliteration of the Greek *angelos*, which means "messenger," and may refer to both celestial and human intermediaries. This fits with Hebrews 1:1, which says that God spoke to the fathers "in the prophets in many portions and in many ways." At times, men like Moses were the messengers; at others, angels delivered God's message to non-prophets like Gideon. The rest of Hebrews 1 establishes that even the most glorious of these messengers was inferior to the glorious Christ, who delivered His word directly to the people. Thus, if the angelic word proved steadfast, how much more will the word of Christ be?



HEBREWS 1:1-14

1. What contrast does the writer present in Hebrews 1:1-2? What does this tell us about the multitude of holy books written since the resurrection that claim to be from God? Why is this important?
2. How is the Son described in Hebrews 1:2-3? What do these things mean? Why does the writer describe Him in these ways?
3. In Hebrews 1:4, to what is the Son compared? Why would the writer make this comparison? Passages like Acts 7:53 may help you in your answer.
4. What proof of this statement does the writer offer in Hebrews 1:5-6? Identify the two quotes from the Old Testament and explain the significance of the writer using them here.
5. We see another contrast made between Hebrews 1:6-7 and Hebrews 1:8-9. Explain this contrast, identify its source quotations, and discuss the significance of their use here.

LESSON ONE: A MORE EXCELLENT NAME

6. Yet another contrast appears in Hebrews 1:10-12. Identify the things being contrasted, give the Scripture reference for the Old Testament passage being cited, and show its relevance to the discussion.
7. The final contrast of Hebrews 1 (but not of the book!) shows up in Hebrews 1:13-14. What is it? Why is it important? Also, in this instance, identify the Old Testament quotation and explain why the definition of Hebrews 1:14 is important.



HEBREWS 2:1-8

1. Hebrews 2:1 begins with the words, "For this reason." What reason is that? Why is this important?
2. Also in Hebrews 2:1, what conclusion does the writer say we should draw from those reasons? How should we apply this?
3. What comparison does the writer make in Hebrews 2:2-3? How does this prove his point?
4. According to Hebrews 2:3-4, how were the words of the Lord presented? Why is this significant?
5. Specifically, what does Hebrews 2:4 tell us about the role of the Holy Spirit in these things? How is this significant to our understanding of miracles and miraculous spiritual gifts?
6. The writer returns to making more comparisons in Hebrews 2:5-8. What is he comparing? Identify the source of the quote in Hebrews 6:6-8, and explain the point.
7. What does the last half of Hebrews 2:8 tell us about the Son of Man? What is this talking about? Why is it important? 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 may help.

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LESSON TWO: Worthy of More Glory

WHOSE HOUSE WE ARE

One of the peculiar things about the Christian experience is the recurring desire of Christians to identify themselves with men rather than with Christ. In 1 Corinthians 1:12-13, Paul condemns the Corinthians' tendency to describe themselves as disciples of Paul, Apollos, or Cephas. Strangely enough, most self-professed Christian groups in the world today repeat this error. They refer to themselves by the names of their founders or names that their founders chose. Sadly, such names only reflect the way they obey those men, rather than God.

We, by contrast, belong to a different house, not a house ruled by those who oppose the will of God, or even a house of those who served God faithfully, like Moses. We belong to the household of Christ, and we need no man to serve as our intermediary with God or to tell us what God's will is. Each one of us has known the adoption as sons, each one of us is beholden to God and God alone, and each one of us will be judged for how we have obeyed Him. This is the dignity of the simple name "Christian." Let us never abandon it.



HEBREWS 2:9-18

1. What steps in the elevation of Jesus does Hebrews 2:9 record? How does this relate back to the previous discussion?
2. What does Hebrews 2:10 reveal about God's plan for Jesus? How does it describe the appropriateness of this plan? According to Hebrews 2:11, what makes the plan appropriate?
3. In Hebrews 2:12-13, the writer cites a number of Old Testament passages to support his argument. Identify the quotations, and explain their significance to the text.
4. According to Hebrews 2:14, what fact motivated Christ to act? What action did He take? In Hebrews 2:14-15, what two consequences of this act are described? Why is this important?
5. What does Hebrews 2:16 tell us about those who can and cannot expect help from God? Why would this be true? Why is it important?

LESSON TWO: WORTHY OF MORE GLORY

6. What action of God's does Hebrews 2:17 mention? What capacity did this give Jesus? What is Jesus able to do in this capacity? Why is this important?
7. What does Hebrews 2:18 reveal about why Jesus is now a suitable high priest? Why is this relevant?



HEBREWS 3:1-14

1. In Hebrews 3:1, how is Jesus described? What does this mean?
2. Hebrews 3:2 compares two people. Who are they? According to the text, how are they similar?
3. According to Hebrews 3:3, what difference exists between these two people? What does Hebrews 3:4-6 tell us about why they are different? What's the importance of this discussion?
4. In Hebrews 3:2-6, the word "house" is used repeatedly. What does this word refer to? What do we have to do to belong to the house of Christ? Why is this significant?
5. What Old Testament quotation appears in Hebrews 3:7-11? How does this support the writer's contention in Hebrews 3:6? What should it teach us today?
6. What does Hebrews 3:12 warn us against? What way of dealing with the problem does the writer prescribe in Hebrews 3:13? What effect will this course of conduct have? How do we need to put it into practice?
7. What desirable state does Hebrews 3:14 describe? What do we have to do to enter into this state? What are some actions we need to carry out to achieve this goal? How does Hebrews 3:16 pose a contrast to this idea?

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LESSON THREE: Diligent to Enter

THE WORD AND THE PRIEST

Hebrews 4:11-16 marks a transition between two of the major divisions of Hebrews. Because of its transitional language, it gives two reasons to persevere that appear to be pointing in opposite directions. On the one hand, Hebrews 4:11-13 summarizes the argument for obedience that the writer has used the first four chapters to make. Because the word of God is a keen tool of judgment, and because God is an omniscient and just judge, we can be sure that our sin will find us out. Thus, our only alternative is to continue faithfully.

By contrast, Hebrews 4:14-16 introduces the theme of grace that will occupy the attention of the writer until the midpoint of Hebrews 10. It tells us why we should persevere even when we don't measure up to the perfect standard of the word of God. It tells us that through the intercession of Christ, our great high priest, we can come confidently before the throne of God and receive His mercy instead of His judgment. At the intersection of these two ideas of obedience and grace, we find the tension that defines our Christian walk.



HEBREWS 3:16-4:13

1. What series of Israelite actions is described in Hebrews 3:16-18? What series of responses does God embark on to deal with these actions? What should this teach us?
2. What conclusion does the writer draw from these things in Hebrews 3:19? What justifies his conclusion even though unbelief is not mentioned in the previous few verses? What does this tell us about the connection between belief and obedience?
3. What fear does the writer encourage in Hebrews 4:1? What reason to fear does he provide in Hebrews 4:2? What deficiency does he identify in the Israelites? What should we take from this?
4. What statement does the writer make at the beginning of Hebrews 4:3? How does he justify that statement? What objection to his logic does he raise at the end of the verse? How do Hebrews 4:4-5 address the objection?
5. What two divine "therefores" does the writer cite in Hebrews 4:6? What does God do in consequence in Hebrews 4:7?

LESSON THREE: DILIGENT TO ENTER

6. What logical proposition does the writer advance in Hebrews 4:8? What conclusion does he draw from it in Hebrews 4:9? What meaning does he assign to the rest in Hebrews 4:10? What application does he urge us to draw from this in Hebrews 4:11?
7. What does Hebrews 4:12 reveal about the word of God? What does Hebrews 4:13 reveal about the eyes of God? How do these things relate back to the conclusion of Hebrews 4:11?



HEBREWS 4:14-5:10

1. In Hebrews 4:14, what action is urged upon us? Why?
2. What does Hebrews 4:15 say Christ is not? What does it say He is? What action does Hebrews 4:16 accordingly urge upon us? What will happen if we do? How do we do this?
3. What general description does Hebrews 5:1 offer of the role of the high priest? According to the last part of Hebrews 5:2, what problem does the high priest have? What does this allow him to do? What does Hebrews 5:3 say he must do in consequence?
4. What does Hebrews 5:4 reveal of the priesthood? What does Hebrews 5:5 say about Christ and this qualification? According to Hebrews 5:6, when did this happen?
5. According to Hebrews 5:7, what did Christ do during the days of His flesh? What response did He meet with? How does this relate back to Hebrews 5:2-3?
6. In Hebrews 5:8, what does the writer say happened to Christ despite His Sonship? What result does he attribute to this in Hebrews 5:9? What's the meaning of this to us?
7. How is Christ described in Hebrews 5:10? How does this differ from the earthly priesthood discussed in Hebrews 5:1-4?

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LESSON FOUR: Convinced of Better Things

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS?

Perhaps the weakest of the five points of Calvin's T-U-L-I-P doctrine of predestination is the fifth, perseverance of the saints. It argues that once a man is saved, he cannot become un-saved. This follows logically from the idea that we cannot choose ourselves to obey the gospel, that it is God who irresistibly chooses the elect. After all, if we cannot save ourselves, we cannot un-save ourselves either.

Unhappily for the Calvinist, the doctrine of perseverance of the saints wrecks itself on the book of Hebrews. Generally speaking, the entire book is an appeal to Hebrew Christians to remain faithful. If it is indeed impossible for them to fall away, why would the writer have bothered? In more specific detail, Hebrews 6:4-6 describes one who has undeniably been saved, yet still falls away. The truth about the perseverance of the saints is at once liberating and sobering. It is we ourselves, not God, who choose whether we take advantage of the offer of His grace. On the other hand, it is also we ourselves who bear the responsibility for remaining faithful.



HEBREWS 5:11-6:8

1. What abrupt change of direction do we see in Hebrews 5:11? Why? What does this tell us about the relationship between the writer and his audience?
2. According to Hebrews 5:12, where should the Hebrews be? Where are they? When we take this in conjunction with passages like James 3:1, what should it teach us?
3. In Hebrews 5:13-14, the writer describes two different states. What are they? What determines whether a Christian is in one state or the other? How do we need to apply this?
4. What exhortation does the writer give in Hebrews 6:1? What things in Hebrews 6:1-3 does he want to avoid? Is there anything inherently wrong with those things? If not, what's the point for us?
5. What personal pattern of behavior is described in Hebrews 6:4-6? What important spiritual truth does this reveal?

LESSON FOUR: CONVINCED OF BETTER THINGS

6. What does Hebrews 6:6 say about the fallen-away Christian? What does this mean? Passages such as Hebrews 2:3 may help you with your answer.
7. Hebrews 6:7-8 compares two things. What are they? What is the difference between them? How should this affect the way we consider our lives?



HEBREWS 6:9-20

1. In Hebrews 6:9-10, what does the writer reveal about his real attitude toward the Hebrews? What justification does he give for his conviction? What does this teach us about God?
2. What does the writer say he wants for the Hebrews in Hebrews 9:11? What does this mean? How do we need to apply it?
3. Hebrews 6:12 once again contrasts two states. What are they? What goal does the passage set before us? How does it say we should achieve that goal? What does this teach us about faith?
4. What Old Testament character is introduced in Hebrews 6:13? What does Hebrews 6:13-14 tell us about God's dealings with this character? According to Hebrews 6:15, what does the character do? What does he receive?
5. What general statement does Hebrews 6:16 make? How does God put that general statement into practice in Hebrews 6:17?
6. Hebrews 6:18 begins by discussing "two unchangeable things." What are they? What do they mean to us? How does Hebrews 6:19 describe them? How does this relate back to Abraham?
7. What does Hebrews 6:20 reveal about the actions of Jesus? What does it reveal about the office of Jesus? How does this relate back to Hebrews 5:10?

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LESSON FIVE: The Likeness of Melchizedek

TWO PATHS TO GOD

The Hebrews writer intended his comparisons of two priesthoods in Hebrews 7 to illuminate the differences between the old and new covenants. In this, however, he also distinguished between two religious worldviews.

The first is exemplified by the pattern of the Law of Moses. In it, believers do not approach God directly. Instead, they have a special class of priests or clergymen. This group of religious specialists tells the people what God wants them to do and deals with Him for them so that they can go on about their lives and basically ignore God. Though outmoded, this Mosaic pattern is evident throughout the denominational world today.

By contrast, under the terms of the New Covenant, every believer is a priest. Every one of us has the right to approach God directly through the intercession of Jesus Christ. This right, however, also places upon each one of us the responsibility to study the word ourselves and be devoted to God ourselves. Let us cherish both.



HEBREWS 7:1-17

1. What Bible character is introduced in Hebrews 7:1? What does Hebrews 7:1-2 say we know about him? What does Hebrews 7:3 say that we don't know about him? How does this make him comparable to the Son of God?
2. In Hebrews 7:4, what does the writer say he is going to prove in the succeeding verses? What basis for comparison does he provide in Hebrews 7:5?
3. What does Hebrews 7:6 say Melchizedek did? According to Hebrews 7:7, what does this establish?
4. What argument does the writer advance in Hebrews 7:8-10? What does he mean to prove?
5. What rhetorical question does the writer ask in Hebrews 7:11? What does he mean for us to understand from this question?

LESSON FIVE: THE LIKENESS OF MELCHIZEDEK

6. What contention does the writer make in Hebrews 7:12? What problem does Hebrews 7:13 bring up if the law is not changed? How is Christ's unsuitability for the Mosaic priesthood established in Hebrews 7:14? Why is this significant?
7. What is the "this" in the first part of Hebrews 7:15? What event is described in Hebrews 7:15-16? How does it make "this" clearer? How does Hebrews 7:17 show us that Jesus has this power?



HEBREWS 7:18-28

1. Hebrews 7:18-19 lists two things that a change of law accomplishes. What are they? What do they mean to us?
2. In Hebrews 7:20-21, what distinction is made between the priests of the Old Law and our Lord? Upon what basis is this distinction made?
3. How is Jesus described in Hebrews 7:22? Why is this true? Hebrews 6:17-18 and Hebrews 7:21 may help you answer.
4. What two things are contrasted in Hebrews 7:23-24? How are they different? What passage in Hebrews 7 tells us that this difference genuinely exists?
5. According to Hebrews 7:25, what is Jesus able to do? Why? What does this mean for us? 1 John 2:1-2 may provide insight.
6. How does Hebrews 7:26 describe Jesus as high priest? Why is this "fitting?"
7. What new contrast is offered in Hebrews 7:27? What contrast then is drawn in Hebrews 7:28? How does the second contrast explain the first?

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LESSON SIX: A New Covenant

THE OBSOLETE COVENANT

The religious world around us fails to understand many things about the Bible, but one of the most astonishing of these gaps concerns the passing of the Old Law. The distinction between the Law of Moses and the law of Christ is one of the major themes of the New Testament. It appears as one of the primary arguments not only of Hebrews, but also of Romans and Galatians. It tells us that we are no longer under the authority of Moses.

The implications of this are profound, yet few if any recognize them. Most so-called believers revere the Ten Commandments, yet the Ten Commandments as such are not binding upon us unless they are repeated in the New Testament (which nine of them are). Tithing was certainly a commandment for the Jews, and most denominations still practice it, but it is not bound in the New Testament, so we have no authority to tithe. Instrumental music in worship is everywhere in the Law of Moses, but nowhere in the law of liberty, so we do not use them in worship. Our understanding this of one apparently abstract point actually defines our service to God.



HEBREWS 8:1-6

1. Early in Hebrews 8:1, the writer refers to the "main point" of his discourse. What is this main point? How has he been working toward it?
2. Hebrews 8:1 also mentions "such a high priest." Explain this, using the previous discussion.
3. How is this high priest described in Hebrews 8:1-2? What does this mean?
4. What basic statement is made in Hebrews 8:3? What conclusion does the writer draw from this statement? Logically, what does this enable him to do later?
5. What does the Hebrews writer reveal about Jesus on earth in Hebrews 8:4? Why? What insight does this give us into the doctrine of premillennialism? Why?

LESSON SIX: A NEW COVENANT

6. How is the offering of gifts according to the Law described in Hebrews 8:5? Why is this description accurate? What should we learn from the conduct of Moses here?
7. What does Hebrews 8:6 tell us Jesus has obtained? Why? How is this true?



HEBREWS 8:7-13

1. What statement is made in Hebrews 8:7? Is this logical? Why? What does it imply? Where does the "fault" in the first covenant come from, according to Hebrews 8:8?
2. What promise does God make in Hebrews 8:8? What should the Jews have expected on the basis of that promise? Does a similar promise appear in the New Testament? What should we expect from this?
3. How does God describe this new covenant in relation to the old covenant in Hebrews 8:9? What reason does He give for this?
4. According to Hebrews 8:10, what does God say He will do under the new covenant? What does this mean? What result will it have for God and us? What does this mean? 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 may help inform your answer.
5. What does God say will not happen under the new covenant in Hebrews 8:11? Why? Practically, what does this mean?
6. What reason does God give why the people will know Him in Hebrews 8:12? What does this mean? How is it true in practice?
7. In Hebrews 8:13, what implication does the writer draw from the presence of the new covenant? What happens to the old covenant as a result? What does this mean for us?

A BETTER COVENANT

LESSON SEVEN: All Things Are Cleansed with Blood

THE IMPORTANCE OF BLOOD

Today, most of us live in a suburban setting, far from the gritty realities of rural life. In some ways, this makes it more difficult for us to understand the Bible. We abstractly grasp the point of Leviticus 17:11, which tells us that the life is in the blood. However, to the man who regularly kills animals, this is a visceral truth.

It's a visceral truth that we need to understand because it is blood that saves us. Our covenant with God is based on blood that was shed 2000 years ago, but is no less real for that. We earned the death penalty for our sin, but Christ died in our place, His life for our life, His blood for our blood. It was the only way to balance the scales of God's justice. Justice demanded blood, and so blood was provided.

This brutal, yet beautiful truth must be the center of our existence. Jesus gave up everything He had, even His own life, and gave it to us. It's up to us to answer this incomprehensible sacrifice by giving everything to Him.



HEBREWS 9:1-10

1. What does Hebrews 9:1 say about the first covenant? What does this mean? Why does it say "even" the first covenant had these things?
2. In the space provided below, draw the tabernacle as the writer describes it in Hebrews 9:2-5. The writer says of this description that he is not speaking in detail. What does this tell us of the writer's knowledge of the Law of Moses?
3. According to Hebrews 9:6-7, what is the difference between the outer and the inner tabernacles? What ritual does Hebrews 9:7 refer to? Where is it found in the Old Testament?
4. According to Hebrews 9:8, what did the Holy Spirit mean for the arrangement of the tabernacle to tell us? What does this mean?

LESSON SEVEN: ALL THINGS ARE CLEANSED WITH BLOOD

5. What does Hebrews 9:9 say about the gifts and sacrifices of the old covenant? What does this mean?
6. According to Hebrews 9:10, what problem do those sacrifices have? What two competing views of holiness does this reveal? Why is this important?



HEBREWS 9:11-22

1. How is Christ described in Hebrews 9:11? How is the place He entered described? How does all of this relate to Hebrews 8:5?
2. According to Hebrews 9:12, what did Christ do? How did He do it? Why does the text focus on blood? What does it mean that He did this "once for all?" What does this tell us about the faith described in Jude 3?
3. Hebrews 9:13-14 presents a contrast between two things. What are they? What did the first do? What does the second do? Why?
4. Hebrews 9:15 begins with the words "For this reason." For what reason? How is Christ described in this verse? What necessary thing did He do? What does this mean? What did His action permit?
5. What statement is made in Hebrews 9:16? What explanation is given for this in Hebrews 9:17? How is this true? What does it mean?
6. In Hebrews 9:18-21, what event is described? Where is this found in the Old Testament? What is the significance of this to the writer's previous statements?
7. What statement is made in Hebrews 9:22? Why is this true? How does it help us to understand the Bible? Leviticus 17:11 may help.

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LESSON EIGHT: The Consummation of the Ages

THE DAY THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

History is filled with momentous dates. However, as the centuries roll by, those dates fade into insignificance. Few in modern America remember the day that William the Conqueror won the English throne in 1066, even though the Norman Conquest had consequences that reverberate even into the present.

One day, however, that retains its significance, and will do so until the end of time, was the day that Jesus died on the cross. Few on that day recognized its significance, but with Jesus' dying cry on that hilltop outside Jerusalem, the world was changed forever. One man, by His willingness to live and die for God, solved in a moment of time the biggest problem of human existence. With explosive force, that death leveled the barriers that sin had built between the Creator and His creation. For those who had nothing to look forward to but death, the future suddenly held out the hope of eternal life. All of creation to that point waited in expectation of that moment; now, all of creation looks back to it. It truly was "the consummation of the ages."



HEBREWS 9:23-10:4

1. To what does the "therefore" at the beginning of Hebrews 9:23 refer? What does it say about the difference between earthly and heavenly cleansing? What are the implications of this statement?
2. According to Hebrews 9:24, what did Christ not do? What did He do? What does He do now? Why is this important?
3. According to Hebrews 9:25, what else does Christ not do? Who does have to do that? What does Hebrews 9:26 reveal about what Christ would have to do otherwise? What has He done once instead? What is this moment called?
4. What basic truth about mankind is cited in Hebrews 9:27? How is this applied to Christ in Hebrews 9:28? How does this relate to the previous discussion?
5. According to Hebrews 10:1, what is true of the Law? What is not true of the Law? What failing does the Law have in consequence?

LESSON EIGHT: THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGES

6. What question does Hebrews 10:2 ask? Why does it ask it? How does the question relate back to Hebrews 10:1?
7. How are the sacrifices of the Law described in Hebrews 10:3? What does this tell us about them? According to Hebrews 10:4, why is this true? Why would that be true?



HEBREWS 10:5-18

1. In contrast, Hebrews 10:5-7 attributes an Old Testament quotation to Christ. Where is it from? How does it relate to the previous discussion?
2. What new contrast is set up in Hebrews 10:8-9? How is it a contrast? According to Hebrews 10:9, what is the effect of this contrast? What does that mean?
3. Hebrews 10:10 includes the words "by this will." By what will? What is done by this will? How? For how long? Why should we care?
4. Yet another contrast appears in Hebrews 10:11-12. What is contrasted in this comparison? What's the point of the contrast?
5. What does Hebrews 10:13 describe Christ as doing now? What does Hebrews 10:14 reveal about why? What is the significance of all of this? 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 may help you answer.
6. What Old Testament quotation appears again in Hebrews 10:15-17? What is it being offered to prove? What should we learn from its use here?
7. Hebrews 10:18 uses the words "these things." What things? What's the meaning of the verse? Why? What is its relevance to us?

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LESSON NINE: In Full Assurance of Faith

WHY GOD ISN'T CUDDLY

One of the worst things that happens when believers don't study their Bibles is that they lose touch with who God really is and instead remake Him in their own image. In modern America, where we enshrine tolerance and acceptance, we naturally think of God as tolerant and accepting. In a recent television interview, the famous evangelist Joel Osteen wasn't even willing to affirm that God would condemn the atheist to hell.

The problem with re-creating God in our own image is that in reality, the process went the other way around. We are made in the image of God, yes, but we cannot comprehend the totality of God. Our human blindness causes us to tolerate and excuse evil, but God with His infinite understanding sees it for what it truly is. He has commanded us to hate evil and to shun it, and when we reject His commandments, His nature compels Him to condemn us. In His mercy, He did everything He could to save us from the consequences of our own actions by sending His Son, but when we reject even that, no hope remains for us. It is foolish to believe otherwise.



HEBREWS 10:19-25

1. What does Hebrews 10:19 say that we have? In light of the previous discussion, why do we have it?
2. In Hebrews 10:20, how is the blood of Jesus described? Is the flesh mentioned in this verse the veil or the way through the veil? How does all of this work? Ephesians 2:14-15 may prove useful.
3. What other reason is given in Hebrews 10:21? What has the writer previously said that tells us this is true?
4. What does Hebrews 10:22 say we should do on the basis of these reasons? What two things make us able to respond in this way? What are those two things? What does this teach us?
5. According to Hebrews 10:23, what else should we do? What reason does the writer give why we should do it? What proof has he previously offered in support of this idea?

LESSON NINE: IN FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH

6. According to Hebrews 10:24, what else are we supposed to do? What does this mean? How should we do it?
7. What does Hebrews 10:25 instruct us not to do? What are we to do instead? Why? Practically, how can we carry this command out?



HEBREWS 10:26-39

1. What hypothetical course of action is mentioned in Hebrews 10:26? What is no longer present after this course of action is chosen? According to Hebrews 10:27, what is present? What should this teach us?
2. What two things are compared in Hebrews 10:28-29? How are the elements of this comparison parallel? What meaning should we take from it?
3. What two Old Testament quotes appear in Hebrews 10:30? Where are they from? How do they support the writer's argument here?
4. What does Hebrews 10:31 reveal about God? What does this mean? How does it compare to the modern American view of God? What should this teach us?
5. In Hebrews 10:32, what are the Hebrews urged to remember? According to Hebrews 10:32-34, what happened at that time? Why? What does this tell us about the Hebrews?
6. What are we instructed not to do in Hebrews 10:35? Why? What does Hebrews 10:36 tell us about claiming this reward? How should this shape the way we think about Christianity?
7. What prophecy is made in Hebrews 10:37? What two possible actions now are given in Hebrews 10:38? What happens as a result of each? What does Hebrews 10:39 urge us to do as a result?

A BETTER COVENANT

LESSON TEN: By Faith

WHAT IS FAITH?

One of the most pernicious false doctrines floating around is the idea that we are saved by “faith only,” that once we give mental assent to the idea that Jesus is the Christ, nothing we do can cause us to be lost. Thus, salvation is divorced from any sort of obedience or righteousness. This tragic teaching will cause millions of souls to be lost before the end of time, and it’s all the more tragic because of the Bible’s depiction of faith.

In Hebrews 11, Abel didn’t just give mental assent to the idea that he was supposed to sacrifice to God. Only when his faith led him to do what God wanted was he justified. Abraham did not receive the promises because he spent his life in Haran while testifying loudly that he loved God. Instead, God made His covenant with Abraham because Abraham did what God had commanded. True Biblical faith is not a matter of thought. It is a matter of action, of constantly working to fulfill the will of God. We are saved by faith, yes, but it is not merely faith that Christ will justify the ungodly, but that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.



HEBREWS 11:1-16

1. According to Hebrews 11:1, what is faith? What does Hebrews 11:6 tell us that the components of faith are? According to Hebrews 11:2, what is the result of faith? Why is this important?
2. For each of the heroes of faith listed below, give their act of faith and its result. Then, describe the lesson that their story teaches us.
 - Abel (Hebrews 11:4).
 - Enoch (Hebrews 11:5).
 - Noah (Hebrews 11:7).
 - Abraham (Hebrews 11:8-10).
 - Sarah (Hebrews 11:11-12).

LESSON TEN: BY FAITH

6. According to Hebrews 11:13, what happened to all of these faithful people? What did they do anyway? What does Hebrews 11:14 say that this proved to God? Why should we care?
7. Hebrews 11:15-16 describes two attitudes. What are they? What does each lead to? What should this teach us? Consider Hebrews 10:39 in your answer.



HEBREWS 11:17-40

1. In Hebrews 11:17-19, Abraham makes a repeat appearance. What does he do now? What obstacles does he face? Why does he overcome them? What's the significance of this to us?
2. Hebrews 11:20-21 describes two people doing the same thing. Who are they? What are they doing? Why is this an act of faith?
3. According to Hebrews 11:22, what did Joseph do? Why is this significant? Genesis 50:24-25, Exodus 13:19, and Joshua 24:32 may help with your answer.
4. Below, list the acts of faith of Moses and his family described in Hebrews 11:23-27, along with the things that motivated them. Why do you think the writer emphasizes the faith of Moses?
5. Hebrews 11:28-31 describes four acts of faith carried out during the Exodus. What are they? Who did them? Are the faithful mentioned here always people we would expect to be mentioned? What should this teach us?
6. Hebrews 11:32-35a lists a bunch of good things that people did. Hebrews 11:35b-38 lists a bunch of bad things that happened to people. Why do both make the list of triumphs of faith?
7. According to Hebrews 11:39, what happened to all of these people? How does Hebrews 11:40 explain this? What does this tell us about our lives as Christians?

A BETTER COVENANT

LESSON ELEVEN: Run with Endurance

DISCIPLINE

The difference between God and Satan is not that God never causes us pain, while Satan does. Instead, it is that God causes us pain with a purpose, while Satan does not. God's goal for our lives here is not to give us ease and earthly pleasure; rather, it is to do whatever is necessary to prepare us for heaven. Sometimes, God's actions to do that cause us pain. The divorcee endures tremendous pain whenever she hears that she must leave her husband to find Jesus, the churchgoing non-Christian suffers every time an invitation reminds him that he is lost, and the adulterer undergoes immense anguish when his sin finds him out at last.

Even though they are painful, all of those things are from the hand of God. God promises us that every Christian will face pain like that in his life; in fact, the Bible tells us that if we never endure chastening, we are not actually sons of God at all. Rather than resenting this discipline when it occurs, we need to pay attention instead. The lessons that we learn through pain are costly, but they are better than no lesson learned at all.



HEBREWS 12:1-17

1. Hebrews 12:1 mentions "so great a cloud of witnesses." What witnesses? What are they witnessing? What should we do about it? Why?
2. According to Hebrews 12:2, upon whom are we to fix our eyes? How is He described here? What did He do? How does this fit in with the preceding discussion? What does Hebrews 12:3 say we should do about it?
3. Of what two things does the writer accuse the Hebrews in Hebrews 12:4-5? What exhortation is he talking about? Where is it found?
4. Yet another contrast appears in Hebrews 12:7-8. What two states are being contrasted? What parentage is assigned to each state? What should this teach us?
5. The writer returns again to contrasts in Hebrews 12:9-10. What two things are being contrasted? How are they different? According to Hebrews 12:11, how are they similar? Why should we care?

LESSON ELEVEN: RUN WITH ENDURANCE

6. What admonitions are given in Hebrews 12:12-13? According to Hebrews 12:14-15, what are some of the things that this practically means for us? Taking Deuteronomy 29:14-18 into account, what is the "root of bitterness" of Hebrews 12:15? How do we need to apply all this?
7. What Bible character appears in Hebrews 12:16? What did he do? Why? According to Hebrews 12:17, what happened to him as a result? What does this mean to us?



HEBREWS 12:18-29

1. To what is Hebrews 12:18 referring when it begins with "for"? According to Hebrews 12:18-19, to what have we not come? What is it talking about? How do we react to this description?
2. What two reactions are described in Hebrews 12:20-21? What underlies both of these reactions? Why would God present Himself in this way? We see a similar message from God in Hebrews 9:8.
3. According to Hebrews 12:22-23, to what have we come instead? What different impression does this description leave?
4. To whom else does Hebrews 12:24 say we have come? In what role do we see Him? What other thing is mentioned in this verse? Why does it speak better than the blood of Abel? Genesis 4:10 may be useful here.
5. What are we told not to do in Hebrews 12:25? What comparison is then made? What lesson should we take from the comparison?
6. What Old Testament quotation appears in Hebrews 12:26? Where is it located? What does Hebrews 12:27 say about this quotation? What does that mean?
7. With what statement is Hebrews 12:28 begun? How are we supposed to react to this fact? What attitude should we have while doing this? How should Hebrews 12:29 inform our attitude?

A BETTER COVENANT

LESSON TWELVE: This Word of Exhortation

OUTSIDE THE CAMP

Hebrews 13:13 contains a curious instruction. The writer tells the Hebrews to go to Jesus “outside the camp, bearing His reproach.” At first glance, this is confusing; at second, it is powerful. Remember: one of the big problems the Hebrews were facing was the pull back into Judaism from their Hebrew countrymen. When the writer instructs them to go outside the camp, he’s telling them to leave behind the Jewish community just like Jesus did, to abandon their old lives for the hope of eternal life with Him.

Even today, there are many Christians who are unwilling to go outside the camp. They want Christianity to be a hobby, not a life, and so they maintain connections with those in the world who constantly discourage them from doing what God wants them to do. The cure for the disease of divided allegiance is as obvious as it is unpleasant. If we want to go to heaven, we have to be Christians first, last, and only. We must reject everything in our lives that pulls us away from God. Only then, truly outside the camp, can we be with Christ.



HEBREWS 13:1-14

1. What does Hebrews 13:1 admonish us to do? What two applications of this commandment do we see in Hebrews 13:2-3? How should we carry these things out today?
2. What command appears in Hebrews 13:4? Why is this important? How do we need to practice this?
3. What does the writer further instruct us to do in Hebrews 13:5? How are we supposed to do this? What quotations from the Old Testament appear in Hebrews 13:5-6? Where are they from? How do they support the writer’s argument?
4. What exhortation is given in Hebrews 13:7? About whom is this talking? What does it mean to us?
5. What general statement does Hebrews 13:8 make? What application does the writer take from this statement in Hebrews 13:9? About what does the writer seem to be talking (Colossians 3:20-23 may help here)? How should this passage shape our attitude toward serving God?

LESSON TWELVE: THIS WORD OF EXHORTATION

6. What comment is made in Hebrews 13:10? What does Hebrews 13:11 say? What's it talking about? How does this show the preceding comment to be true? How does all this relate to earlier verses?
7. According to Hebrews 13:12, how did Jesus conform His own behavior to the pattern of the Old Testament? What does Hebrews 13:13 tell us about the way we need to respond to Jesus' actions? What would this have meant to the Hebrews? What attitude does Hebrews 13:14 describe that would move us to behave in this way?



HEBREWS 13:15-25

1. What general command is given in Hebrews 13:15? What specific acts fulfill this command? How does this relate back to the previous few verses? How should we practice this today?
2. According to Hebrews 13:16, what else are we supposed to do? Why? How?
3. What command appears in Hebrews 13:17? Why should we do this? What mindset does the verse urge upon us? What does all this mean practically?
4. In Hebrews 13:18, what does the writer request? With what does he appear particularly concerned? According to Hebrews 13:19, what result does he hope will follow? What does this reveal to us about the writer?
5. How is God described in Hebrews 13:20? Why? What did He do? What means did He use to accomplish this? What does the language the writer uses here reveal to us?
6. What prayer does the writer offer in Hebrews 13:21? How does this relate to the epistle generally?
7. What interesting historical details do we see appearing in Hebrews 13:22-24? What do they tell us?

A BETTER COVENANT

LESSON THIRTEEN: Review

THE SO-WHAT OF HEBREWS

Hebrews is among the least accessible books of the Bible for those who do not already know the Scripture well. It's not a chattily informal letter like 1 Thessalonians or a heroic adventure story like Acts; instead, it is ordered around a number of intricate comparisons between the new and old covenants. Even though we may struggle to wrap our minds around these details, the main points that Hebrews makes are of enormous relevance.

First, it makes a compelling argument for the spiritual supremacy of Christianity. The new covenant is not some strange extrusion grafted onto the teaching of the Law of Moses; rather, it is the logical development and conclusion of that teaching. The things of the Law reach their highest possible form in Christ, and nothing better than He can or should be expected. Because this is so, Hebrews also encourages us to remain faithful. On the one hand, Christ's pre-eminence gives us assurance of His power to save us; on the other, if we reject Him, we have no hope. This book, then, speaks to each one of us, and teaches us, like them, to run with endurance.



HEBREWS, PART I

For each of the passages given below, describe the comparison made in the passage, its importance in the overall argument of Hebrews, and its meaning for us today.

1. Hebrews 1.
2. Hebrews 2:1-4.
3. Hebrews 3:1-6.
4. Hebrews 6:16-20.
5. Hebrews 7:1-10.

6. Hebrews 7:20-28.

7. Hebrews 9:11-14.



HEBREWS, PART II

1. Hebrews 9:18-28.

2. Hebrews 10:1-10.

3. Hebrews 10:11-18.

4. Hebrews 10:26-31.

5. Hebrews 12:18-24.

6. Hebrews 12:25-29.

Additional Notes

Additional Notes

Additional Notes

Additional Notes

The Book of Hebrews

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1

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

For to which of the angels did He ever say,

“YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU”?

And again,

“I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME”?

And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says,

“AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.”

And of the angels He says,

“WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS, AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE.”

But of the Son *He says*,

“YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. “YOU HAVE

LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE
GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS
ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS.”

And,

“YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE
EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; THEY
WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN; AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD
LIKE A GARMENT, AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP;
LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED. BUT YOU ARE THE
SAME, AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END.”

But to which of the angels has He ever said,

“SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A
FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET”?

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for
the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

2

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have
heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*. For if the word spoken
through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and
disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we
neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through
the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also

testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. But one has testified somewhere, saying,

“WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU REMEMBER HIM? OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIM? “YOU HAVE MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS; YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR, AND HAVE APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET.”

For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.

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

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one *Father*; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying,

“I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE.”

And again,

“I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM.”

And again,

“BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME.”

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.

Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

3

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the

house. For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says,

“TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED *Me* BY TESTING *Me*, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS. “THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, ‘THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS’; AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, ‘THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.’”

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, while it is said,

“TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS,
AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME.”

For who provoked *Him* when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt *led* by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? *So* we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

4

Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said,

“AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,”

although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh *day*:

“AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS”;

and again in this *passage*, “THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.”

Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because

of disobedience, He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS." For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

5

For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness; and because of it he is obligated to offer *sacrifices* for sins, as for the people, so also for himself. And no one takes the honor to himself, but *receives it* when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.

So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him,

“YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU”;

just as He says also in another *passage*,

“YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.”

In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is* hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

6

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permits. For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and *then* have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God;

but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.

But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way. For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU." And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. For men swear by one greater *than themselves*, and with them an oath *given* as confirmation is an end of every dispute. In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for

us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

7

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all *the spoils*, was first of all, by the translation *of his name*, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace. Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.

Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils. And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham. But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on. And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid

tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need *was there* for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become *such* not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. For it is attested *of Him*,

“YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.”

For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. And inasmuch as *it was* not without an oath (for they indeed

became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him,

“THE LORD HAS SWORN AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND, ‘YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER’”);

so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

The *former* priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, *appoints* a Son, made perfect forever.

8

Now the main point in what has been said *is this*: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this *high priest* also have something to offer. Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “SEE,” He says, “THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN.” But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says,

“BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD,

WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH; NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS ON THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE

HAND TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT, AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD. “FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. “AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, ‘KNOW THE LORD,’ FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM. “FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE.”

When He said, “A new *covenant*,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

9

Now even the first *covenant* had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which *were* the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron’s rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant; and

above it *were* the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship, but into the second, only the high priest *enters* once a year, not without *taking* blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit *is* signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing, which *is* a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they *relate* only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.

But when Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to

God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid *only* when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. Therefore even the first *covenant* was not inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, “THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD COMMANDED YOU.” And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. And according to the Law, *one may* almost *say*, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one,

but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him.

10

For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? But in those *sacrifices* there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says,

“SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME; IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND *sacrifices* FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE. “THEN I SAID,

‘BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE SCROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD.’”

After saying above, “SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND *sacrifices* FOR SIN YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, NOR HAVE YOU TAKEN PLEASURE *in them*” (which are offered according to the Law), then He said, “BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL.” He takes away the first in order to establish the second. By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying,

“THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,”

He then says,

“AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.”

Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer *any* offering for sin.

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on *the testimony of* two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.” And again, “THE

LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.” It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.

But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

11

Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval.

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. By faith Noah, being warned *by God* about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Therefore there was born even of

one man, and him as good as dead at that, *as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.*

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten *son; it was he* to whom it was said, “IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED.” He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come. By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though *they were passing* through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of* righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from

weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received *back* their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (*men* of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

12

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,

“MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”

It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?

But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace

of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that *there be* no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a *single* meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

For you have not come to *a mountain* that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which *sound was such that* those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. For they could not bear the command, "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED." And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, "I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel.

See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned *them* on earth, much less *will we escape* who turn away from Him who *warns* from heaven. And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has

promised, saying, “YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN.” This *expression*, “Yet once more,” denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.

13

Let love of the brethren continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, *and* those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body. Marriage *is to be held* in honor among all, and the *marriage bed is to be undefiled*; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. *Make sure that* your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,” so that we confidently say,

“THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?”

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Jesus

Christ *is* the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest *as an offering* for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking *the city* which is to come.

Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Obeys your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. And I urge *you* all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you the sooner.

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you. Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.

Grace be with you all.