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# **H E B R E W S**

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**12 Lesson Adult Bible Study**

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**For Northside Church of Christ**

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# LESSON ONE

## “GOD’S LAST WORD”

### Hebrews 1:1-2:4

(1) *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,*  
(2) *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.* (3) *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.* (4) *So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.*  
(5) *For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?*  
(6) *And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."* (7) *In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire."*  
(8) *But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last*

### INTRODUCTION

The title "To the Hebrews" can be traced back to manuscripts of the late second century. Even though it was not a part of the original document, it seems an accurate designation given the very Jewish flavor of the epistle. This letter was probably written to a particular assembly of Jewish-Christian believers (perhaps a house church) that was part of a larger community, quite possibly in Rome.

Whoever these people were, it is clear that they had suffered great persecution (10:32-34) and that they were being tempted to abandon Christianity. What is less clear is the nature of the pressures weighing against them. Perhaps the constant indignities they suffered as Christians were beginning to take their toll. Or perhaps they were facing the prospect of severe persecution in the near future. Or the problem may have been internal. Maybe they were being enticed away from Christ by false teaching that seemed to offer relief from their struggles. They might have been considering a return to a form of Judaism as one way to bring community acceptance and thus lessen tensions.

In any case, the temptation to apostasy or reversion was severe enough that the letter to the Hebrews had to be written to encourage these beleaguered Christians to "hold on" (3:6), to "persevere" (10:36), and to "hold unswervingly to the hope we profess" (10:23) lest they compromise Christ and lose all the enormous blessings of the New Covenant.

The authorship of this book is uncertain. Several names have been suggested, including Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Priscilla, and Paul. Most scholars do not believe that Paul was the author because the writing style of Hebrews is quite different from that of his letters. In addition, Paul identified himself in his other letters and appealed to his authority as an apostle, whereas the writer of Hebrews, who never gives his name, appeals to eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry for authority. Nevertheless, the author of Hebrews evidently knew Paul well as he did Paul's companion, Timothy (Heb.

for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. (9) You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." (10) He also says, "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. (11) They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. (12) You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end." (13) To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? (14) Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

## CHAPTER 2

(1) We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. (2) For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, (3) how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. (4) God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

13:23). Hebrews was probably written by one of Paul's close associates who often heard him preach.

As with the authorship and the recipients, it is difficult to date this letter. Since the Jewish system is "obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear" (Heb. 8:13), the epistle likely predates the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. If the persecutions referred to in the letter were those of Nero, then Hebrews would have been written after A.D. 64.

*By whom was the book of Hebrews written?*

*Why is the apostle Paul an unlikely candidate for the authorship of Hebrews?*

*To whom was the book sent?*

*What was the purpose of the epistle? (See 13:22)*

*What is the theme of the letter?*

### **Hebrews 1:1-2**

God used many approaches to send his messages to people in Old Testament times. He spoke to Isaiah in visions (Isaiah 6), to Jacob in a dream (Genesis 28:10-22), and to Abraham and Moses personally (Genesis 18; Exodus 31:18). Jewish people familiar with these stories would not have found it hard to believe that God was still revealing his will, but it was astonishing for them to think that God had revealed *himself* by speaking through his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the fulfillment and culmination of God's revelation through the centuries.

*How did God speak to people in the past? (1:1)*

*What was God's means for speaking to mankind in "these last days"? (1:2)*

*What unique honors or activities did God the Father delegate to Jesus? (1:2)*

*What were some of the ways God spoke to the prophets in the Old Testament?*

*What was the function of Old Testament prophets?*

*In what ways was Jesus' function similar?*

*How is Jesus superior to the prophets?*

### **Hebrews 1:2-3**

Not only is Jesus the exact representation of God, but he is God himself—the very God who spoke in Old Testament times. He is eternal; he worked with the Father in creating the world (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). He is the full revelation of God. You can have no clearer view of God than by looking at Christ. Jesus Christ is the complete expression of God in a human body.

A total of seven statements about Jesus are made in verses 2-3. These may have been a part of an early Christian hymn:

- The Son is heir of all things
- Through the Son, God the Father created the universe.
- The Son radiates with God's glory.
- The Son is the exact representation of God's nature.
- The Son sustains all things by his powerful word.
- The Son made purification for sins.
- The Son sat down at the right hand of God (See Phil. 2:10-11).

*What kind of relationship does Jesus have with God?*

*What works did Jesus do that only God could do? (1:2-3, 10)*

*Who is Jesus? (1:2-4)*

### **Hebrews 1:3**

The book of Hebrews links God's saving power with his creative power. In other words, the power that brought the universe into being and that keeps it operating is the very power that cleanses our sins. How mistaken we would be to ever think that God couldn't forgive us. No sin is too big for the Ruler of the universe to handle. He can and will forgive us when we come to him through his Son.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 1:3—Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:44; Mark 16:19; John 14:9; 2 Corinthians 4:4;  
Colossians 1:15

*What does Jesus show us about the nature of God? (1:3)*

*What astonishing feat is attributed to the Word of Christ? (1:3)*

*What was Jesus' primary ministry on earth? (1:3)*

*What did Jesus do after completing His earthly ministry? (1:3)*

*Where is Jesus now?*

*What is the significance of Jesus' position? (See 1 Jn. 2:1)*

**Hebrews 1:4**

The superior name that was given to Jesus is “Son of God.” This name given to him by his Father is greater than the names and titles of the angels.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 1:4—Ephesians 1:21; Philippians 2:9-10

**Hebrews 1:4ff**

False teachers in many of the early churches taught that God could be approached only through angels. Instead of worshiping God directly, followers of these heretics revered angels. Hebrews clearly denounces such teaching as false. Some thought of Jesus as the highest angel of God. But Jesus is not a superior angel, and in any case, angels are not to be worshiped (see Colossians 2:18; Revelation 19:1-10). We should not regard any intermediaries or authorities as greater than Christ.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 1:7—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Psalm 104:4

Hebrews 1:8-9—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Psalm 45:6-7

Hebrews 1:13—Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:44

**Hebrews 1:5, 6**

Jesus is God's honored, firstborn Son. In Jewish families the firstborn son held the place of highest privilege and responsibility. The Jewish Christians reading this message would understand that as God's firstborn, Jesus was superior to any created being.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 1:5—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Psalm 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14

Hebrews 1:6—This verse quotes or is quoted in Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 97:7

*How is Jesus distinguished from God? (1:5)*

*What is the relationship of Jesus and the angels? (1:6)*

*to what extent do the angels honor the Son? (1:6)*

### **Hebrews 1:10-12**

The author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 102:25-27. In the quotation, he regards God as the speaker and applies the words to the Son, Jesus. The earth and the heavens rolled up like a coat reveals that the earth is not permanent or indestructible (a position held by many Greek and Roman philosophies). Jesus' authority is established over all of creation, so we dare not treat any created object or earthly resource as more important than he is.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 1:10-12—This verse quotes or is quoted in Psalm 102:25-27

*What is Jesus' nature? (1:10-12)*

*What will happen to the enemies of Christ? (1:12)*

*What do angels do? (1:14)*

### **Hebrews 1:11, 12**

Because the readers of Hebrews had experienced the rejection of their fellow Jews, they often felt isolated. Many were tempted to exchange the changeless Christ for their familiar old faith. The writer of Hebrews warned them not to do this: Christ is our *only* security in a changing world. Whatever may happen in this world, Christ remains forever changeless. If we trust him, we are absolutely secure, because we stand on the firmest foundation in the universe—Jesus Christ. A famous hymn captures this truth: “On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”

### **Hebrews 1:14**

Angels are God's messengers, spiritual beings created by God and under his authority (Colossians 1:16). They have several functions: serving believers (1:14), protecting the helpless (Matthew 18:10), proclaiming God's messages (Revelation 14:6-12), and executing God's judgment (Acts 12:1-23; Revelation 20:1-3).

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 1:14—Psalms 34:7; 91:11

### **Hebrews 2:1-3**

The author called his readers to pay attention to the truth they had heard so that they wouldn't drift away into false teachings. Paying careful attention is hard work. It involves focusing our mind, body, and senses. Listening to Christ means not merely hearing but also obeying (see James 1:22-25).

*What did the writer of Hebrews want his readers to pay attention to? (2:1)*

*What danger awaits Christians who carelessly forget the truth? (2:1)*

### **Hebrews 2:2, 3**

“The message God delivered through angels” refers to the teaching that angels, as messengers for God, had brought—the law to Moses (see Galatians 3:19). A central theme of Hebrews is that Christ is infinitely greater than all other proposed ways to God. The author was saying that the faith of his Jewish readers was good, but faith must point to Christ. Just as Christ is greater than angels, so Christ's message is more important than theirs. No one will escape God's punishment if he or she is indifferent to the salvation offered by Christ.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 2:2—Deuteronomy 33:2; Acts 7:38, 53; Galatians 3:19

Hebrews 2:3—Hebrews 1:2; 10:29

*What happened to those who violated the "message spoken by angels" (that is, the Mosaic Law)? (2:2)*

*Who played a major role in delivering the Mosaic Law? (2:2)*

*What are the consequences for those who pay no attention to the gospel? (2:3)*

*Who revealed the message of "great salvation" to the world? How? (2:3)*

### **Hebrews 2:3**

Eyewitnesses to Jesus' ministry had handed down his teachings to the readers of this book. These readers were second-generation believers who had not seen Christ in the flesh. They are like us; we have not seen Jesus personally. We base our belief in Jesus on the eyewitness accounts recorded in the Bible. See John 20:29 for Jesus' encouragement to those who believe without ever having seen him.

## **Hebrews 2:4**

“God verified the message” continues the thought from 2:3. Those who had heard Jesus speak and then had passed on his words also had the truth of their words confirmed by “signs and wonders and various miracles and by giving gifts of the Holy Spirit.” In the book of Acts, miracles and gifts of the Spirit authenticated the Good News wherever it was preached (see Acts 9:31-42; 14:1-20). Paul, who discussed spiritual gifts in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12–14, and Ephesians 4, taught that their purpose is to build up the church, making it strong and mature.

### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 2:4—Mark 16:20

*Who confirmed the salvation that Jesus announced? How? (2:3-4)*

*What did God do to validate the gospel message? (2:4)*

*How did God distribute gifts of the Holy Spirit? (2:4)*

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. When did Jesus Christ become more than just a name to you?
2. What situations might tempt a Christian to turn his or her back on Christ?
3. Who is one of the people you look upon as your spiritual “forefather”?
4. How important is your spiritual heritage?
5. Of all the qualities of Jesus given in verses 2-3, which are surprising to you?
6. Does it make any difference how we view the NATURE of Jesus?

# LESSON TWO

## “*BROTHER JESUS*”

### Hebrews 2:5-18

(5) *It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. (6) But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? (7) You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor (8) and put everything under his feet." In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. (9) But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

*(10) In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. (11) Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So*

### INTRODUCTION

Jesus is known by many different names—Lord, Savior, King, Redeemer, etc. However, few of us have ever thought about “brother.” In fact, most of us would feel uncomfortable calling Jesus “brother.” Perhaps it is because we know ourselves all too well and are embarrassed. But Jesus is not embarrassed to call us brothers and sisters! It may look as if we have little in common with Jesus, but we share the same Father.

#### Hebrews 2:5

##### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 2:5—Hebrews 6:5

#### Hebrews 2:6-8

##### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 2:6-8—Psalm 8:4-6

#### Hebrews 2:8, 9

God put Jesus in charge of everything, and Jesus revealed himself to us. We do not yet see Jesus reigning on earth, but we can picture him in his heavenly glory. When you are confused by present events and anxious about the future, remember Jesus’ true position and authority. He is Lord of all. This truth can give stability to your decisions day by day.

##### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 2:8—1 Corinthians 15:27

Hebrews 2:9—Philippians 2:6-9



Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. (12) He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises." (13) And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children

Hebrews 2:9-10  
Which is our God-given place on earth? (2:6-8)  
What is the relationship between Jesus Christ and the rest of the universe? (2:8)

Hebrews 2:9-10  
What is Christ's present heavenly status? (2:9)

(14) Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity, so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- (15) and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Cross References:  
Hebrews 2:10—Luke 13:32; 24:46; Acts 3:15; Romans 11:36; Hebrews 5:9

(16) For surely it is not angels who help Christ led to His current exalted position at the right hand of God? (2:9)  
Abraham's descendants. (17)

Hebrews 2:10  
Why was Jesus made perfect through suffering? Jesus' suffering made him a perfect leader, or pioneer, of our salvation. Jesus did not need to suffer for his own salvation, because he was God in human form. (18) Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

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## Hebrews 2:11-13

We who have been set apart for God's service, cleansed, and made holy (sanctified) by Jesus now have the same Father he has, so he has made us his brothers and sisters. Various psalms look forward to Christ and his work in the world. Here the writer quotes a portion of Psalm 22, a messianic psalm. Because God has adopted all Christians as his children, Jesus calls them his brothers and sisters.

### Cross References:

Hebrews 2:11—Matthew 28:10; John 20:17; Romans 8:29; Hebrews 10:10; 13:12

Hebrews 2:12—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Psalm 22:22

Hebrews 2:13—John 17:11-12. This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Isaiah 8:17

*What does Christ do to qualify a person for membership in the family of God? (2:11)*

*What is the relationship between Christ and those who experience the salvation He gives? (2:11-12)*

### **Hebrews 2:14, 15**

Jesus had to become human so that he could die and rise again, in order to destroy the Devil's power over death (Romans 6:5-11). Only then could Christ deliver those who had lived in constant fear of death and free them to live for him. When we belong to God, we need not fear death, because we know that death is only the doorway into eternal life (1 Corinthians 15).

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 2:14—John 1:14; Romans 8:3; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57; 2 Timothy 1:10; 1 John 3:8

*What effect did the death of Christ have on Satan and his power? (2:14)*

*What effect did the death of Christ have on those who were enslaved to the fear of death? (2:15)*

*In what ways is Christ like us? (2:14, 17)*

### **Hebrews 2:16, 17**

In the Old Testament, the high priest was the mediator between God and his people. His job was to regularly offer animal sacrifices according to the law and to intercede with God for forgiveness for the people's sins. Jesus Christ is now our High Priest. He came to earth as a human being; therefore, he understands our weaknesses and shows mercy to us. He has *once and for all* paid the penalty for our sins by his own sacrificial death (atonement), and he can be depended on to restore our broken relationship with God. We are released from sin's domination over us when we commit ourselves fully to Christ, trusting completely in what he has done for us.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 2:17—Philippians 2:7; Hebrews 3:1; 4:15; 5:1; 1 John 2:2; 4:10

### **Hebrews 2:18**

Knowing that Christ suffered pain and faced temptation helps us face our trials. Jesus understands our struggles because he faced them as a human being. We can trust Christ to help us survive suffering and overcome temptation. When you face trials, go to Jesus for strength and patience. He understands your needs and is able to help.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 2:18—Hebrews 4:15; 5:2

*What makes Christ especially qualified to help Christians when they are being tempted? (2:18)*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways are we "a little lower than the angels"?
2. What difference does it make that Christ "tasted death for everyone"?
3. What is the significance of the fact that no trial or temptation can come upon you that Christ does not perfectly understand?
4. How do the temptations Christ suffered on earth affect the way He represents us before God as high priest?
5. What counsel would you give to a Christian friend who was terrified of death?
6. How can it help you on a daily basis to know that you have a "big brother" like Christ?
7. What are the implications of the fact that Jesus' death and resurrection destroyed Satan and his power?
8. What areas of your life do you need to entrust to your understanding, merciful, and powerful high priest/big brother?

# LESSON THREE

## “HARD HEARTS”

### Hebrews 3:1-19

(1) *Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. (2) He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. (3) Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.*

(4) *For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. (5) Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. (6) But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.*

(7) *So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, (8) do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, (9) where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. (10)*

### Hebrews 3:1

This verse would have been especially meaningful to Jewish Christians. For Jews, the highest human authority was the high priest. For Christians, the highest human authorities were God's messengers, the apostles. Jesus, God's Messenger and High Priest, is the ultimate authority in the church.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 3:1—Hebrews 2:17; 4:14

*How did the author of Hebrews address those reading his letter? (3:1)*

*What blessing is promised to those who know Christ? (3:1)*

*What command is given to those who want to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ? (3:1)*

### Hebrews 3:1-6

The author uses different pictures to explain Jesus' relationship to believers: He is (1) the Messenger of God, to whom we should listen; (2) our High Priest, through whom we come to God the Father; and (3) the ruler of God's house ("in charge of the entire household"), whom we should obey. The Bible is filled with different names for and pictures of Jesus Christ, and each one reveals something more about his nature and ministry. What do these images teach you about your relationship with Christ?

*Who is Jesus? (3:1-2)*

*How is Jesus like Moses? (3:2)*

*In what ways are Moses and Jesus similar? (3:2, 5-6)*

*Why is Jesus worthy of more honor than Moses? (3:3-6)*

*That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' (11) So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"*

*(12) See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. (13) But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. (14) We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.*

*(15) As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."*

*(16) Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? (17) And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? (18) And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed?*

*(19) So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.*

### **Hebrews 3:2, 3**

To the Jewish people, Moses was a great hero; he had led their ancestors, the Israelites, from Egyptian bondage to the border of the Promised Land. He also had written the first five books of the Old Testament, and he was the prophet through whom God had given the law; therefore, Moses was the greatest prophet in the Scriptures. But Jesus is worthy of greater honor as the central figure of faith than Moses, who was merely a human servant. Jesus is more than human; he is God himself (1:3). As Moses led the people of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, so Christ leads us out of sin's slavery. Why settle for Moses, the author of Hebrews asks, when you can have Jesus Christ, who appointed Moses?

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 3:2—Numbers 12:7-8

Hebrews 3:3—2 Corinthians 3:7-11

### **Hebrews 3:5**

Moses was faithful to God's calling not only to deliver Israel but also to prepare the way for the Messiah ("his work was an illustration of the truths God would reveal later"). All the Old Testament believers also served to prepare the way. Thus, knowing the Old Testament is the best foundation for understanding the New Testament. In reading the Old Testament, we see (1) how God used people to accomplish his purposes, (2) how God used events and personalities to illustrate important truths, (3) how, through prophets, God announced the Messiah, and (4) how, through the system of sacrifices, God prepared people to understand the Messiah's work. If you include the Old Testament in your regular Bible reading, the New Testament will grow clearer and more meaningful to you.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 3:5—Exodus 14:31; Numbers 12:7

### **Hebrews 3:6**

Because Christ lives in us as believers, we can remain courageous and hopeful to the end. We are not saved by being steadfast and firm in our faith, but our courage and hope do reveal that our faith is real. Without this enduring faithfulness, we could easily be blown away by the winds of temptation, false teaching, or persecution (see also 3:14).

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 3:6—Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 2:5

*How are the people of God or the family of God described in this passage? (3:4-6)*

*How do we demonstrate that we are members of God's household? (3:6)*

*What qualities are necessary for us to be faithful children of God? (3:6)*

### **Hebrews 3:7-15**

In many places, the Bible warns us not to “harden” our hearts. This means stubbornly setting ourselves against God so that we are no longer able to turn to him for forgiveness. The Israelites became hard-hearted when they disobeyed God’s command to conquer the Promised Land (see Numbers 13; 14; 20; and Psalm 95). Be careful to obey God’s Word, and do not allow your heart to become hardened.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 3:7-11—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Psalm 95:7-11

Hebrews 3:8—Exodus 17:7

God’s *rest* has several meanings in Scripture: (1) the seventh day of creation and the weekly Sabbath commemorating it (Genesis 2:2; Hebrews 4:4-9); (2) the Promised Land of Canaan (Deuteronomy 12:8-12; Psalm 95); (3) peace with God now because of our relationship with Christ through faith (Matthew 11:28; Hebrews 4:1, 3, 8-11); and (4) our future eternal life with Christ (Hebrews 4:8-11). All of these meanings were probably familiar to the Jewish Christian readers of Hebrews.

**Cross References:**

**Hebrews 3:11—Numbers 14:21-23**

Hebrews 3:12-14

Our hearts turn away from the living God when we stubbornly refuse to believe him. If we persist in our unbelief, God will eventually leave us alone in our sin. But God can give us new hearts, new desires, and new spirits (Ezekiel 36:22-27). To prevent having an unbelieving heart, stay in fellowship with other believers, talk daily about your mutual faith, be aware of the deceitfulness of sin (it attracts but also destroys), and encourage each other with love and concern.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 3:13—Ephesians 4:22

Hebrews 3:14—Hebrews 3:6

*What warning (first issued by the psalmist) is repeated here by the author of Hebrews? (3:7-8)*

*How is Israel's period of wandering in the wilderness described in this passage? (3:8)*

*Why was God angry with the generation of Israelites who came out of Egyptian exile? (3:9)*

*How did the Spirit of God describe the Israelites of the Exodus? (3:10)*

*What were the consequences of the Israelites' stubborn disobedience? (3:11)*

*In light of the disobedience of the Israelites of the Exodus, what command was given to the Jewish Christians of the first century? (3:12)*

*How are those described who turn away from the living God? (3:12)*

*What is the connection between sin and unbelief? (3:12-13)*

*How might a person show that he or she has "come to share in Christ"? (3:14)*

### **Hebrews 3:15-19**

The Israelites failed to enter the Promised Land because they did not believe in God's protection, and they did not believe that God would help them conquer the giants in the land (see Numbers 14–15). So God sent them into the wilderness to wander for 40 years. This was an unhappy alternative to the wonderful gift he had planned for them. Lack of trust in God always prevents us from receiving his best.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 3:15—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Psalm 95:7-8

Hebrews 3:16-18—Numbers 14:1-35

Hebrews 3:17—Numbers 14:29; 1 Corinthians 10:5

Hebrews 3:18—Numbers 14:22-23

*How long did the disobedient Israelites wander in the wilderness? (3:17)*

*What happened to the generation of Israelites who rebelled against God in the wilderness? (3:17-18)*

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How ought our identity affect the way we live in our daily lives?
2. Why is it important for us to fix our thoughts on Jesus, our apostle and high priest?
3. What are some of the distractions that keep you from fixing your thoughts on Christ?
4. How does biblical hope differ from ordinary hope?
5. What specific behaviors, habit patterns, or attitudes need to change so that you live up to your heavenly calling?
6. What does it mean to harden one's heart?
7. How does a person's heart become hard?
8. What can we do to avoid hardening our hearts toward God?

9. What are the consequences when Christians fail to encourage each other or hold each other accountable?

## LESSON FOUR

# “ARE YOU READY FOR A REST?”

### Hebrews 4:1-13

(1) Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. (2) For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. (3) Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. (4) For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work." (5) And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest."

(6) It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. (7) Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through

### INTRODUCTION

Rest is something that we all need and must have to survive. Unfortunately, many of us live without appropriate rest. The Hebrew author urged Christians not to lose the promised rest of God because of unbelief.

### Hebrews 4:1-3

Some of the Jewish Christians who received this letter may have been on the verge of turning back from their promised rest in Christ, just as the people in Moses' day had turned back from the Promised Land. In both cases, the difficulties of the present moment overshadowed the reality of God's promise, and the people doubted that God would fulfill his promises. When we trust our own efforts instead of Christ's power, we, too, are in danger of turning back. Our own efforts are never adequate; only Christ can see us through.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 4:3—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Psalm 95:11

*What important promise is the subject of this passage? (4:1)*

*How do we know that not everyone will experience God's rest (that is, His salvation)? (4:1-2)*

*Why didn't the Israelites of the Exodus enter God's rest? (4:2)*

*What must a person do to experience God's rest? (4:3)*

### Hebrews 4:2

The Israelites of Moses' day illustrate a problem facing many who fill our churches today. They know a great deal about Christ, but they do not know him personally—they don't combine their knowledge with faith. Let the Good News

about Christ benefit your life. Believe in him and then act on what you know. Trust in Christ and do what he says.



David, as was said before:

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." (8) For if Joshua had given them rest,

God would not have spoken later about another day. (9) There

remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for

the people of God; (10) for

anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. (11) Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will

fall by following their example of disobedience.

(12) For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it

penetrates as far as the soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (13) Nothing in all

creation is hidden from God's

sharp eyes; nothing is uncovered

and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Hebrews 4:5—This verse quotes or is quoted in Psalm 95:11

## **Hebrews 4:6, 7**

God had given the Israelites the opportunity to enter Canaan, but they disobeyed and failed to enter (Numbers 13–14). Now God offers us the opportunity to enter his ultimate place of rest—he invites us to come to Christ. To enter his rest, you must believe that God has this relationship in mind for you; you must stop trying to create it; you must trust in Christ for it; and you must determine to obey him. *Today* is the best time to find peace with God. Tomorrow may be too late.

### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 4:6—Hebrews 3:18

Hebrews 4:7—This verse quotes or is quoted in Psalm 95:7-8

*Why did some who heard the promise of rest fail to enjoy that promise? (4:6)*

## **Hebrews 4:8-11**

God wants us to enter his rest. For the Israelites of Moses' time, this rest was the earthly rest to be found in the Promised Land. For Christians, it is peace with God now and eternal life on a new earth later. We do not need to wait for the next life to enjoy God's rest and peace; we may have it daily now! Our daily rest in the Lord will not end with death but will become an eternal rest in the place that Christ is preparing for us (John 14:1-4).

### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 4:8—Joshua 22:4

Hebrews 4:10—Genesis 2:2; Revelation 14:13

How did the author show that the rest God promised the Israelites involved more than mere physical rest in the land of Canaan? (4:8)

*What rest awaited God's people after Joshua and the Israelites had conquered Canaan? (4:8-9)*

*Entering God's rest has what effect on our work? (4:10)*

### **Hebrews 4:11**

If Jesus has provided for our rest through faith, why must we “do our best to enter that place of rest”? This is not the struggle of doing good in order to obtain salvation, nor is it a mystical struggle to overcome selfishness. It refers to making every effort to appreciate and benefit from what God has already provided. Salvation is not to be taken for granted; to appropriate the gift God offers requires decision and commitment.

*How should we seek to learn from the Israelites' negative example? (4:11)*

### **Hebrews 4:12**

The Word of God is not simply a collection of words from God, a vehicle for communicating ideas; it is living, life-changing, and dynamic as it works in us. With the incisiveness of a surgeon's knife, God's Word reveals who we are and what we are not. It penetrates the core of our moral and spiritual life. It discerns what is within us, both good and evil. The demands of God's Word require decisions. We must not only listen to the Word; we must also let it shape our life.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 4:12—Isaiah 49:2; Jeremiah 23:29; 1 Corinthians 14:24-25; Ephesians 6:17; 1 Peter 1:23

### **Hebrews 4:13**

Nothing can be hidden from God. He knows about everyone everywhere, and everything about us is wide open to his all-seeing eyes. God sees all we do and knows all we think. Even when we are unaware of his presence, he is there. When we try to hide from him, he sees us. We can have no secrets from God. It is comforting to realize that although God knows us intimately, he still loves us.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 4:13—2 Chronicles 16:9; Psalm 33:13-15

*What is unique about God? (4:13)*

What sort of future awaits all of us? (4:13)

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What does it mean to enter God's rest?
2. How is enjoying God's salvation a reality in your life?
3. How does disobedience or unbelief keep us from enjoying God's rest?
4. What prevents you from enjoying God's rest (or salvation)?
5. How does the fact that God sees and knows everything about you (actions, words, thoughts, motives, feelings, and attitudes) motivate you to live a holy life?

# LESSON FIVE

## *“IT’S TIME TO GROW UP”*

### Hebrews 4:14-6:12

(14) Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. (15) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin. (16) Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

### CHAPTER 5

(1) Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. (2) He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. (3) This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

(4) No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. (5) So

### INTRODUCTION

Immaturity is fine when you're five years old. It's something else when one is forty-five years old. The Hebrew Christians were still dwelling on the milk, not the meat of God's truth. This lack of maturity was undermining their faithfulness and obedience to the Lord.

### Hebrews 4:14

Christ is superior to the priests, and his priesthood is superior to their priesthood. To the Jews, the high priest was the highest religious authority in the land. He alone entered the Holy of Holies in the Temple once a year to make atonement for the sins of the whole nation (Leviticus 16). Like the high priest, Jesus mediates between God and us. As humanity's representative, he intercedes for us before God. As God's representative, he assures us of God's forgiveness. Jesus has more authority than the Jewish high priests because he is truly God and truly man. Unlike the high priest, who could go before God only once a year, Christ is always at God's right hand, interceding for us. He is always available to hear us when we pray.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 4:14—Hebrews 2:17; 3:1

*To what important spiritual leader did the author of Hebrews compare Jesus? (4:14)*

### Hebrews 4:15

Jesus is like us because he experienced a full range of temptations throughout his life as a human being. We can be comforted knowing that Jesus faced temptation—he can sympathize with us. We can be encouraged knowing that Jesus faced temptation without giving in to sin. He

Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." (6) And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

(7) During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. (8) Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered (9) and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (10) and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

(11) We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. (12) In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! (13) Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. (14) But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Hebrews 6:1-12

(1) Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, (2) instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection

shows us that we do not have to sin when facing the seductive lure of temptation. Jesus is the only perfect human being who has ever lived.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 4:14—Hebrews 2:17; 3:1

*In what way is Jesus the ultimate high priest? (4:15)*

*In what ways was Jesus tempted? (4:15)*

***How is Jesus able to sympathize with us? (4:15)***

**Hebrews 4:16**

Prayer is our approach to God, and we are to come "boldly." Some Christians approach God meekly with heads hung low, afraid to ask him to meet their needs. Others pray flippantly, giving little thought to what they say. Come with reverence because he is your King. But also come with bold assurance because he is your Friend and Counselor.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 4:16—Heb. 5:1

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 5:1—Hebrews 2:17; 7:27; 8:3

*Because of Jesus' superior high priesthood, how can forgiven sinners approach God? (4:16)*

*How does Christ respond to those who approach Him in faith? (4:15-16) Why?*

**Hebrews 5:2**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 5:2—Hebrews 2:17; 4:15

*What is the role and primary duty of a high priest? (5:1)*

*What makes a good high priest sympathetic to those he represents? (5:2)*

of the dead, and eternal judgment.

**(3)** And God permitting, we will do so.

**(4)** It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, **(5)** who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, **(6)** if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

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

**(9)** Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case-- things that accompany salvation. **(10)** God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. **(11)** We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. **(12)** We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

### **Hebrews 5:3**

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 5:3—Leviticus 9:7; 16:6; Hebrews 7:27; 9:7

*For whom did a high priest offer sacrifices? (5:3)*

### **Hebrews 5:4**

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 5:4—Exodus 28:1; Numbers 14:40

### **Hebrews 5:4-6**

This chapter stresses both Christ's divine appointment and his humanity. The writer uses two Old Testament verses to show Christ's divine appointment: Psalms 2:7 and 110:4. At the time this book was written, the Romans selected the high priest in Jerusalem. In the Old Testament, however, God chose Aaron, and only Aaron's descendants could be high priests. Christ, like Aaron, was chosen and called by God. Melchizedek was a priest of Salem (now called Jerusalem). His Profile is found in Genesis 14. Melchizedek's position is explained in Hebrews 7.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 5:5—Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5. This verse quotes **or** is

quoted in Psalm 2:7

Hebrews 5:6—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in

Psalm 110:4

*Who chose Israel's high priests? (5:4)*

*How is Jesus like Melchizedek? (5:6)*

### **Hebrews 5:7**

Jesus was in great agony as he prepared to face death (Luke 22:41-44). Although Jesus cried out to God, asking to be delivered, he was prepared to suffer humiliation, separation from his Father, and death in order to do God's will. At times we will undergo trials, not because we want

to suffer, but because we want to obey God. Let Jesus' obedience sustain and encourage you in times of trial. You will be able to face anything if you know that Jesus Christ is with you.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 5:7—Psalm 22:24; Matthew 26:38-46;

Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46

*In what priestly activities did Jesus engage while on earth? (5:7)*

**Hebrews 5:7-8**

Have you ever felt that God didn't hear your prayers? Be sure you are praying with reverent submission, willing to do what God wants. God responds to his obedient children. Jesus' human life was not a script that he passively followed. It was a life that he chose freely (John 10:17, 18). It was a continuous process of making the will of God the Father his own. Jesus chose to obey, even though obedience led to suffering and death. Because Jesus obeyed perfectly, even under great trial, he can help us obey, no matter how difficult obedience seems to be.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 5:8—Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 1:2

*What did Jesus' sufferings teach Him? (5:8)*

*Who is described in this passage as the "source of eternal salvation"? (5:9)*

**Hebrews 5:9**

Christ was always morally perfect. By obeying, he demonstrated his perfection to us, not to God or to himself. In the Bible, *perfect* usually means completeness or maturity. By sharing our experience of suffering, Christ shared our human experience completely. He is now able to offer eternal salvation to those who obey him. See Philippians 2:5-11 for Christ's attitude as he took on human form.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 5:9—Isaiah 45:17

**Hebrews 5:10**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 5:10—Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:5

**Hebrews 5:12, 13**

These Jewish Christians were immature. Some of them should have been teaching others, but they had not even applied the basics to their own lives. They were reluctant to move beyond age-old traditions, established doctrines, and discussion of the basics. They wouldn't be able to understand

the high-priestly role of Christ unless they moved out of their comfortable position, cut some of their Jewish ties, and stopped trying to blend in with their culture. Commitment to Christ moves people out of their comfort zones.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 5:12—1 Corinthians 3:2; 1 Peter 2:12

Hebrews 5:13—1 Corinthians 14:20; Ephesians 4:14

### **Hebrews 5:12-14**

In order to grow from infant Christians to mature Christians, we must learn discernment. We must train our conscience, our senses, our mind, and our body to distinguish good from evil. Can you recognize temptation before it traps you? Can you tell the difference between a correct use of Scripture and a mistaken one?

*What was wrong with the group of Hebrew believers originally addressed in this passage? (5:11-14)*

*What are the marks of spiritual maturity? (5:11-14)*

*Of what are infant or baby Christians ignorant? (5:13)*

*What is the benefit of "solid food"? (5:14)*

### **Hebrews 5:14**

Our capacity to feast on deeper knowledge of God ("solid food") is determined by our spiritual growth. Too often we want God's banquet before we are spiritually capable of digesting it. As you grow in the Lord and put into practice what you have learned, your capacity to understand will also grow.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 5:14—Romans 16:19; 1 Corinthians 2:6

### **Hebrews 6:1, 2**

Certain elementary teachings are essential for all believers to understand. Those basics include the importance of faith, the foolishness of trying to be saved by good deeds, the meaning of baptism and spiritual gifts, and the facts of resurrection and eternal life. To go on to maturity in our understanding, we need to move beyond (but not away from) the elementary teachings to a more complete understanding of the faith. And this is what the author intends for them to do (6:3). Mature Christians should be teaching new Christians the basics. Then, acting on what they know, the mature will learn even more from God's Word.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 6:1—Philippians 3:12-14; Hebrews 5:12; 9:14

Hebrews 6:2—Acts 2:4; 6:6; 17:18, 32

*What challenge did the author give to his readers? (6:1)*

*What fundamental or basic doctrines form the foundation of our faith? (6:1-2)*

### **Hebrews 6:3**

These Christians needed to move beyond the basics of their faith to an understanding of Christ as the perfect High Priest and the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies. Rather than arguing about the respective merits of Judaism and Christianity, they needed to depend on Christ and live effectively for him.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 6:3—Acts 18:21

*In the end, what enables us to reach spiritual maturity? (6:3)*

### **Hebrews 6:4-6**

In the first century, a pagan who investigated Christianity and then went back to paganism made a clean break with the church. But for Jewish Christians who decided to return to Judaism, the break was less obvious. Their life-style remained relatively unchanged. But by deliberately turning away from Christ, they were cutting themselves off from God's forgiveness. Those who persevere in believing are true saints; those who continue to reject Christ are unbelievers, no matter how well they behave.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 6:4—John 4:10; Ephesians 2:8; Hebrews 10:32

Hebrews 6:5—Psalm 34:8; 1 Peter 2:3

### **Hebrews 6:6**

This verse points to the danger of the Hebrew Christians' returning to Judaism and thus committing apostasy. Some apply this verse today to superficial believers who renounce their Christianity or to unbelievers who come close to salvation and then turn away. Either way, those who reject Christ will not be saved. Christ died once for all. He will not be crucified again. Apart from his cross, there is no other possible way of salvation. However, the author does not indicate that his readers were in danger of renouncing Christ (see 6:9). He is warning against hardness of heart that would make repentance inconceivable for the sinner.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 6:6—Hebrews 10:26, 29; 2 Peter 2:21; 1 John 5:16

### **Hebrews 6:7, 8**

Land that produces a good crop receives loving care, but land that produces thistles and thorns has to be burned so the farmer can start over. An unproductive Christian life falls under God's condemnation. We are not saved by deeds or conduct, but what we do is the *evidence* of our faith.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 6:8—Genesis 3:17-18

*What are maturing, committed Christians like? (6:7)*

*What are those who fall away from the faith like? (6:8)*

### **Hebrews 6:10**

It's easy to get discouraged, thinking that God has forgotten us. But God is never unjust. He never forgets or overlooks our hard work for him. Presently you may not be receiving rewards and acclaim, but God knows your efforts of love and ministry. Let God's love for you and his intimate knowledge of your service for him bolster you as you face disappointment and rejection here on earth.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 6:10—Matthew 10:40, 42; 1 Thessalonians 1:3

### **Hebrews 6:11, 12**

Hope keeps the Christian from becoming lazy or feeling bored. Like an athlete, train hard and run well, remembering the reward that lies ahead (Philippians 3:14).

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 6:11—Hebrews 3:6; 10:22

Hebrews 6:12—Hebrews 10:36; 13:7

*What danger did the author warn against? (6:12)*

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How does it encourage you to have Jesus as your high priest?
2. What is the difference between sinning and being tempted?
3. How did suffering to the point of death give Jesus insights into obedience?
4. Why do you think suffering was part of God's will for Jesus as our high priest?
5. How can we honor Christ as our high priest?
6. What actions and attitudes would you expect to find in a mature Christian?

7. Of what does your spiritual diet consist?
8. How does it disgrace Christ when a person lapses back into his or her old way of life?
9. What can we do to move forward, or become more mature, in our relationship with Christ a little each day?

# LESSON SIX

## *“A HIGH PRIEST LIKE MELCHIZEDEK”*

### Hebrews 6:13-7:19

(13) When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, (14) saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." (15) And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.

(16) Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. (17) Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. (18) God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. (19) We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, (20) where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

### INTRODUCTION

Melchizedek is one of the most mysterious figures in all the Bible. Appearing suddenly in Genesis, he disappears only to show up again in the epistle to the Hebrews. His life and ministry, however, becomes a type of that of Jesus our Lord.

### Hebrews 6:13-14

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 6:13—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in  
Genesis 22:16

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 6:14—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in  
Genesis 22:17

*Why did God "swear by himself"? (6:13)*

*What promise did God make to Abraham? (6:13-14)*

*How did God guarantee His promise to Abraham? (6:13-14)*

### Hebrews 6:15

Abraham waited patiently; it was 25 years from the time God had promised him a son (Genesis 12:7; 13:14-16; 15:4, 5; 17:16) to Isaac's birth (Genesis 21:1-3). Because our trials and temptations are often so intense, they seem to last for an eternity. Both the Bible and the

testimony of mature Christians encourage us to wait for God to act in his timing, even when our needs seem too great to wait any longer.

## CHAPTER 7

(1) This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, (2) and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace." (3) Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.

(4) Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! (5) Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people-- that is, their brothers-- even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. (6) This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. (7) And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. (8) In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. (9) One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, (10) because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.

(11) If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come-- one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of

### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 6:15—Genesis 21:5

*How did Abraham respond to God's promise, and what was the result? (6:15)*

### **Hebrews 6:16**

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 6:16—Exodus 22:11

*What is the function of oaths? (6:16)*

*How did God confirm His promise? (6:16-17)*

### **Hebrews 6:17**

God's promises are unchanging and trustworthy because God is unchanging and trustworthy. When promising Abraham a son, God took an oath in his own name. The oath was as good as God's name, and God's name was as good as his divine nature.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 6:17—Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 11:9

### **Hebrews 6:18, 19**

These two unchangeable things are God's promise and his oath. God embodies all truth; therefore, he cannot lie. Because God is truth, you can be secure in his promises; you don't need to wonder if he will change his plans. Our hope is secure and immovable, anchored in God, just as a ship's anchor holds firmly to the seabed. To the true seeker who comes to God in belief, God gives an unconditional promise of acceptance. When you ask God with openness, honesty, and sincerity to save you from your sins, *he will do it*. This truth should give you encouragement, assurance, and confidence.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 6:18—Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Titus 1:2

Hebrews 6:19—Leviticus 16:2-3, 12, 15; Hebrews 9:2-3, 7

Aaron? (12) For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law. (13) He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. (14) For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. (15) And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, (16) one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. (17) For it is declared: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

(18) The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (19) (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

*How do we know God won't retract His promise? (6:18)*

*What happens to those who find the hope that Christ offers? (6:18)*

*How is the hope that Christ gives described in this passage? (6:19)*

*Where is the believer's hope anchored? (6:19)*

### **Hebrews 6:19, 20**

A curtain hung across the entrance from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place, the two innermost rooms of the Temple. This curtain prevented anyone from entering, gazing into, or even getting a fleeting glimpse of the interior of the Most Holy Place (see also 9:1-8). The high priest could enter there only once a year to stand in God's presence and atone for the sins of the entire nation. But Christ is in God's presence at all times, not just once a year, as the High Priest who can continually intercede for us.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 6:20—Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 4:14; 5:6

*How was Christ able to "enter the inner sanctuary behind the curtain"? (6:19-20)*

*What did Christ do on our behalf? (6:20)*

### **Hebrews 7:1-2**

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 7:1-2—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Genesis 14:17-20

*Who was Melchizedek? (7:1)*

*How was Melchizedek associated with Abraham? (7:1)*

*What did Abraham give to Melchizedek? (7:2)*

*What does the name Melchizedek mean? (7:2)*

*What is significant about the title, "king of Salem"? (7:2)*

### **Hebrews 7:2ff**

The writer of Hebrews uses this story from Genesis 14:18-20 to show that Christ is even greater than Abraham, father of the Jewish nation, and Levi (Abraham's descendant). Therefore, the Jewish priesthood (made up of Levi's descendants) was inferior to Melchizedek's priesthood (a type of Christ's priesthood).

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 7:21—Hebrews 5:6; 6:20; 7:17. This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Psalm 110:4

### **Hebrews 7:3-10**

Melchizedek was a priest of God Most High (see the note on Genesis 14:18 and his Profile in Genesis 14). He is said to remain a priest forever (see also Psalm 110:4), because his priesthood has no record of beginning or ending. He was a priest of God in Salem (Jerusalem) long before the nation of Israel and the regular priesthood began.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 7:3—Psalm 110:4  
Hebrews 7:4—Genesis 14:20  
Hebrews 7:5—Numbers 18:21, 26  
Hebrews 7:6—Romans 4:13  
Hebrews 7:7—Genesis 14:19  
Hebrews 7:8—Hebrews 5:6; 6:20

*What about the Genesis record of Melchizedek's life foreshadowed or anticipated the priesthood of Christ? (7:3)*

*How do we know that Melchizedek was "great"? (7:4)*

*How did the Mosaic law ensure that the Levitical priests were provided for? (7:5)*

*Why was it unusual for Melchizedek to receive a tithe from Abraham? (7:6)*

*What did the ancient practice of one person blessing another say about the two parties involved? (7:7)*

*How did the tithe collected by Melchizedek differ from the tithes collected by the Levites? (7:8)*

*How did Levi--the yet-unborn collector of tithes--pay tithes to Melchizedek? (7:9-10)*

## **Hebrews 7:11-17**

Jesus' high-priestly role was superior to that of any priest of Levi, because the Messiah was a priest of a higher order (Psalm 110:4). If the Jewish priests and their laws had been able to save people, why would God need to send Christ as a priest, who came not from the tribe of Levi (the priestly tribe) but from the tribe of Judah? The animal sacrifices had to be repeated, and they offered only temporary forgiveness; but Christ's sacrifice was offered once, and it offers total and permanent forgiveness. Under the new covenant, the Levitical priesthood was canceled in favor of Christ's role as High Priest. Because Christ is our High Priest, we need to pay attention to him. No minister, leader, or Christian friend can substitute for Christ's work and for his role in our salvation.

### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 7:11—Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6; 7:17

Hebrews 7:14—Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 11:1; Matthew 1:3; 2:6; Luke 3:33; Romans 1:3; Revelation 5:5

Hebrews 7:17—Hebrews 5:6; 6:20. This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Psalm 110:4

*Why did a new priest from the order of Melchizedek come along to replace the order of Aaron? (7:11)*

*What does a new priesthood require? (7:12)*

*What made Jesus unique as a member of His tribe? (7:13-14)*

*From what tribe did Jesus Christ come? (7:13-14) How is this significant?*

*What connection did Jesus' tribe have to the Jewish priesthood? (7:14)*

*On what basis did Christ become a priest? (7:15-16)*

## **Hebrews 7:18, 19**

The law was not intended to save people but to point out sin (see Romans 3:20; 5:20) and to point toward Christ (see Galatians 3:24, 25). Salvation comes through Christ, whose sacrifice brings forgiveness for our sins. Being ethical, working diligently to help others, and giving to charitable causes are all commendable, but all of our good deeds cannot save us or make us right with God. There is a "better hope."

### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 7:18—Romans 8:3

Hebrews 7:19—Romans 3:20; Hebrews 9:9; 10:19-22

*Why is the new covenant superior to the old covenant of law? (7:18-19)*

# LESSON SEVEN

## “A BETTER COVENANT”

### Hebrews 7:20-8:13

(20) And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, (21) but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever.'" (22) Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

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

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

(28) For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law,

### INTRODUCTION

We are not familiar with covenants except for the marriage covenant. And, unfortunately, most don't understand its significance. Covenant is how God relates to His people. In Jesus, God has established a new and better covenant with His people.

### Hebrews 7:22-24

This “better covenant” is also called the new covenant or testament. It is new and better because it allows us to go directly to God through Christ. We no longer need to rely on sacrificed animals and mediating priests to obtain God's forgiveness. This new covenant is better because, while all human priests die, Christ lives forever. Priests and sacrifices could not save people, but Christ truly saves. You have access to Christ.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 7:22—Hebrews 8:6; 12:24

Hebrews 7:24—Isaiah 9:6-7; Revelation 1:18

*How is Jesus unique among the priests who represented Israel before God? (7:23-25)*

### Hebrews 7:25

No one can add to what Jesus did to save us. If you are a Christian, remember that Christ has paid the price for your sins once and for all (see also 9:24-28).

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 7:25—Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1

### Hebrews 7:25

As our High Priest, Christ is our Advocate, the mediator between us and God. He looks after our interests and intercedes for us with God. The Old

appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

## CHAPTER 8

(1) The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, (2) and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.

(3) Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. (4) If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. (5) They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." (6) But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

(7) For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. (8) But God found fault with the people and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. (9) It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned

Testament high priest went before God once a year to plead for the forgiveness of the nation's sins; Christ makes perpetual intercession before God for us. Christ's continuous presence in heaven with the Father assures us that our sins have been paid for and forgiven (see Romans 8:33, 34; Hebrews 2:17, 18; 4:15, 16; 9:24). This wonderful assurance frees us from guilt and from fear of failure.

### Hebrews 7:26

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 7:26—2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:14

### Hebrews 7:27

In Old Testament times when animals were sacrificed, they were cut into pieces, the parts were washed, the fat was burned, the blood was sprinkled, and the meat was boiled. Blood was demanded as atonement for sin, and God accepted animal blood to cover the people's sin (Leviticus 17:11). Because of the sacrificial system, the Israelites were generally aware that sin costs someone something and that they themselves were sinful. Many people take Christ's work on the cross for granted. They don't realize how costly it was for Jesus to secure our forgiveness—it cost him his life and painful, temporary separation from his Father (Matthew 27:46; 1 Peter 1:18, 19).

Because Jesus died *once for all*, he brought the sacrificial system to an end. He forgave sins—past, present, and future. The Jews did not need to go back to the old system because Christ, the perfect sacrifice, completed the work of redemption. You don't have to look for another way to have your sins forgiven—Christ was the final sacrifice for you.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 7:27—Leviticus 9:7; 16:6, 11, 15; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 9:12

*What is Jesus, our high priest, like? (7:26-27)*

*What did the Levitical priests have to do before they offered sacrifices for the sins of the people? (7:27)*

away from them, declares the Lord. (10) This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. (11) No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. (12) For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (13) By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 8:3—Hebrews 5:1

*Where is Christ right now? (8:1)*

*With what title is God described? (8:1)*

*What is Christ doing presently in heaven? (8:2)*

*What is the "job description" for a high priest? (8:3)*

**Hebrews 8:4**

Under the old Jewish system, priests were chosen only from the tribe of Levi, and sacrifices were offered daily on the altar for forgiveness of sins (see 7:12-14). This system would not have allowed Jesus to be a priest, because he was from the tribe of Judah. But his perfect sacrifice ended all need for further priests and sacrifices.

The use of the present tense, "there already are priests who offer the gifts," indicates that this book was written before A.D. 70 when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, ending the sacrifices.

*Why would Jesus not be a priest on earth? (8:4)*

**Hebrews 8:5**

The pattern for the Tabernacle built by Moses was given by God. It was a pattern of the spiritual reality of Christ's sacrifice, and thus it looked forward to the future reality. There is no Tabernacle

*How did Jesus perform his function as high priest when he was on earth? (7:27)*

**Hebrews 7:28**

As we better understand the Jewish sacrificial system, we see that Jesus' death served as the perfect atonement for our sins. His death brings us eternal life. How callous, how cold, how stubborn it would be to refuse God's greatest gift.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 7:28—Hebrews 2:10; 5:1-2

**Hebrews 8:1-3**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 8:1—Hebrews 1:3; 2:17; 4:14; 6:20; 7:26; 9:11

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 8:2—Numbers 24:6; Hebrews 9:11

in heaven of which the earthly one is a copy, but rather the earthly Tabernacle was an expression of eternal, theological principles. Because the Temple at Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed, using the worship system there as an example would have had a great impact on this original audience.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 8:5—Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 9:23. This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Exodus 25:40; 26:30

*What do the terms "copy," "shadow," and "pattern" indicate about the Levitical priesthood? (8:5)*

### **Hebrews 8:6-7**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 8:6—Hebrews 7:22; 9:15; 12:24

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 8:7—Hebrews 7:11

*In what ways is the new covenant superior to the old? (8:6)*

### **Hebrews 8:8-12**

This passage is a quotation of Jeremiah 31:31-34, which compares the new covenant with the old. The old covenant was the covenant of law between God and Israel. The new and better way is the covenant of grace—Christ's offer to forgive our sins and bring us to God through his sacrificial death. This covenant is new in extent—it goes beyond Israel and Judah to include all the Gentile nations. It is new in application because it is written on our heart and in our mind. It offers a new way to forgiveness, not through animal sacrifice but through faith. Have you entered into this new covenant and begun walking in the better way?

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 8:8-12—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Jeremiah 31:31-34

*Why did God decide to initiate a new covenant? (8:7-12)*

### **Hebrews 8:10-13**

If our heart is not changed, following God's rules will be unpleasant and difficult. We will rebel against being told how to live. The Holy Spirit, however, gives us new desires, helping us *want* to obey God (see Philippians 2:12, 13). With a new heart, we find that serving God is our greatest joy.

Under God's new covenant, God's law is inside us. It is no longer an external set of rules and principles. The Holy Spirit reminds us of Christ's words, activates our conscience, influences our motives and desires, and makes us want to obey. Now doing God's will is something we desire with all our heart and mind.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 8:10—Hebrews 10:16

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 8:11—John 6:45

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 8:12—Hebrews 10:17

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 8:13—Hebrews 12:24

*How did God say the new covenant would be different from the old one? (8:10)*

*What is God's response to sin under the new covenant? (8:12)*

*What became of the old covenant when the new was introduced? (8:13)*

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What comfort can we find in Jesus' role as our high priest?
2. In what way can Christ's priesthood give us confidence to draw near to God?
3. How does it make you feel to realize that under the new covenant, you can have an intimate relationship with God?
4. What do we learn about God from the fact that He set aside the old covenant in favor of the new?
5. What three words best describe how you feel knowing that Jesus Christ is in the presence of God representing you before your Creator?

# LESSON EIGHT

## “SANCTUARIES AND SACRIFICES”

### Hebrews 9:1-28

(1) Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. (2) A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. (3) Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, (4) which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. (5) Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

(6) When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. (7) But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. (8) The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still

### INTRODUCTION

Christians often gather to worship in a auditorium. Many in the religious world refer to this part of the church building as the sanctuary—a holy place dedicated to the worship of God. While the church auditorium may be dedicated to the worship of the Lord, it is the worshipers who are God's sanctuary, not the physical facilities. Today, God's Spirit dwells in the body of Christ, the Church (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

In today's lesson, the Hebrew author takes us back to the Old Testament Temple with its shadow of a better sanctuary and a “once for all” sacrifice.

### Hebrews 9:1-4

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:1—Exodus 25:8

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:2—Exodus 25:23-40; 26:1-30; Leviticus 24:5

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:3—Exodus 26:31-33

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:4—Exodus 16:33; 25:10-16; 30:1-6; Numbers 17:8-10; Deuteronomy 10:3-5

*What aspect of the old and new covenants is compared in this passage? (9:1)*

*What was in the first room of the earthly tabernacle? (9:2)*

*What was the first room called? (9:2)*

*What was behind the second curtain in the tabernacle? (9:3)*

standing. (9) This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. (10) They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings-- external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

(11) When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. (12) He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. (13) The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. (14) How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

(15) For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance-- now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

(16) In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, (17) because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes

*What two objects were in the room behind the second curtain? (9:4)*

*What was inside in the ark of the covenant? (9:4)*

### **Hebrews 9:5**

“Cherubim” are mighty angels.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:5—Exodus 25:17-22

### **Hebrews 9:6-8**

The high priest could enter the Most Holy Place (9:3), the innermost room of the Tabernacle, one day each year to atone for the nation’s sins. The Most Holy Place was a small room that contained the Ark of the Covenant (a gold-covered chest containing the original stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written, a jar of manna, and Aaron’s staff). The top of the chest served as the “atonement cover” (the altar) on which the blood would be sprinkled by the high priest on the Day of Atonement. The Most Holy Place was the most sacred spot on earth for the Jews and only the high priest could enter it. The other priests and the common people were forbidden to come into the room. Their only access to God was through the high priest, who would offer a sacrifice and use the animal’s blood to atone first for his own sins and then for the people’s sins (see also 10:19).

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:6—Numbers 18:2-6

Hebrews 9:7—Exodus 30:10; Leviticus 16:2, 14-15; Hebrews

5:2-3

Hebrews 9:8—John 14:6; Hebrews 10:19-20

*During the year, who typically ministered at the tabernacle, and in which part did this ministry take place? (9:6)*

*What three severe restrictions were placed upon entrance to the inner room of the temple? (9:7)*

*For whom was blood offered on the Day of Atonement? (9:7)*

effect while the one who made it is living. **(18)** This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. **(19)** When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. **(20)** He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep." **(21)** In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. **(22)** In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

**(23)** It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. **(24)** For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

**(25)** Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. **(26)** Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. **(27)** Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, **(28)** so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

*What truth was the Holy Spirit teaching through the once-a-year offering for sin under the old covenant? (9:8)*

### **Hebrews 9:9-10**

The people had to keep the Old Testament laws, including such things as dietary laws and ceremonial cleansing laws, until Christ came with God's new and better way.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:9—Hebrews 5:1; 10:1-2

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:10—Leviticus 11:2, 25; 15:8; Numbers 6:3; 19:13

*What symbolic truth did the Mosaic tabernacle teach about sin? (9:9-10)*

### **Hebrews 9:11**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:11—Hebrews 8:2; 10:1

### **Hebrews 9:12-14**

This imagery comes from the Day of Atonement rituals described in Leviticus 16. Through his own death, Christ freed us from the slavery of sin forever.

Though you know Christ, you may believe that you have to work hard to make yourself good enough for God. But rules and rituals have never cleansed people's hearts. By Jesus' blood alone (1) we have our conscience cleansed, (2) we are freed from death's sting and can live to serve God, and (3) we are freed from sin's power. If you are carrying a load of guilt because you are finding that you can't be good enough for God, take another look at Jesus' death and what it means for you. Christ can heal your conscience and deliver you from the frustration of trying to earn God's favor.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:12—Hebrews 7:27

*By what means did Christ enter the Most Holy Place? (9:12)*

How many times did Christ enter the Most Holy Place? (9:12)

*What ritual cleansing ceremony did a high priest typically complete before he entered the Most Holy Place? (9:13)*

*To what degree was a high priest considered clean? (9:13)*

*How was Christ's sacrifice on our behalf different from the usual sacrifice for sin on the Day of Atonement? (9:14)*

*What benefits do believers in Christ derive from the sacrifice Christ made on their behalf? (9:14)*

### **Hebrews 9:13, 14**

When the people sacrificed animals, God considered the people's faith and obedience, cleansed them from sin, and made them *ceremonially* acceptable according to Old Testament law. But Christ's sacrifice transforms our life and heart and makes us clean on the inside. His sacrifice is infinitely more effective than animal sacrifices. No barrier of sin or weakness on our part can stifle his forgiveness.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:13—Leviticus 16:3, 14-15; Numbers 19:9, 17

Hebrews 9:14—Hebrews 6:1; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 1:7

### **Hebrews 9:15**

People in Old Testament times were saved through Christ's sacrifice, although that sacrifice had not yet happened. In offering unblemished animal sacrifices, they were anticipating Christ's coming and his death for sin. There was no point in returning to the sacrificial system now that Christ had come and had become the final, perfect sacrifice.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:15—1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:22

### **Hebrews 9:18-19**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:18-19—Exodus 24:6-8; Leviticus 14:4; Numbers 19:6

### **Hebrews 9:20**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:20—Matthew 26:28. This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Exodus 24:8

### **Hebrews 9:21**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:21—Leviticus 8:15, 19

### **Hebrews 9:22**

Why does forgiveness require the shedding of blood? This is no arbitrary decree on the part of a bloodthirsty God, as some have suggested. There is no greater symbol of life than blood; blood keeps us alive. Jesus shed his blood—gave his life—for our sins so that we wouldn't have to experience spiritual death, eternal separation from God. Jesus is the source of life, not death. He gave his own life to pay our penalty for us so that we might live. After shedding his blood for us, Christ rose from the grave and proclaimed victory over sin and death.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:22—Leviticus 17:11

### **Hebrews 9:23**

In a way that we don't fully understand, the earthly Tabernacle was a copy and symbol of heavenly realities. This purification of the heavenly things can best be understood as referring to Christ's spiritual work for us in heaven (see the note on 8:5).

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:23—Hebrews 8:5

### **Hebrews 9:24**

Among references to priests, Tabernacles, sacrifices, and other ideas unfamiliar to us, we come to this description of Christ as our Advocate, appearing in God's presence on our behalf. We can relate to this role and be encouraged by it. Christ is on our side at God's side. He is our Lord and Savior. He is not there to convince or remind God that our sins are forgiven but to present both our needs and our service for him as an offering (see 7:25).

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:24—Romans 8:34; Hebrews 8:2; 9:12; 1 John 2:1

### **Hebrews 9:24-28**

All people die physically, but Christ died so that we would not have to die spiritually. We can have wonderful confidence in his saving work for us, doing away with sin—past, present, and future. He has forgiven our past sin—when he died on the cross, he sacrificed himself once for all (9:26); he has given us the Holy Spirit to help us deal with present sin; he appears for us now in heaven as our Advocate (9:24); and he promises to return (9:28) and raise us to eternal life in a world where sin will be banished.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:25—Hebrews 9:7; 10:19

Hebrews 9:27—Genesis 3:19

Hebrews 9:28—Isaiah 53:12; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 7:27; 1 Peter 2:24

## **Hebrews 9:26**

The “end of the age” refers to the time of Christ’s coming to earth in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. Christ ushered in the new era of grace and forgiveness. We are still living in the “end of the age.” The day of the Lord has begun and will be completed at Christ’s return.

HEBREWS 10:1

### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:1—Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 7:19; 8:5; 9:11

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How does Abraham's patience in waiting for God's promise encourage you?
2. What does it mean to you personally that God gives every believer an eternal inheritance secure in heaven?
3. How does it help us to know that it is impossible for God to lie?
4. What truths in this passage give you security in your relationship with God?
5. What new insights does this passage give you about the character of God?
6. In what ways is Jesus like Melchizedek?
7. What point is there in seeing that the historical Melchizedek was greater than Abraham and Levi?
8. What does it mean to you that Christ, like Melchizedek, is both a great king and priest?
9. In what ways has Christ blessed you?
10. Why is it important to give to God?

# LESSON NINE

## “LET US ...”

### Hebrews 10:1-39

(1) The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming-- not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. (2) If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. (3) But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, (4) because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

(5) Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; (6) with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. (7) Then I said, 'Here I am-- it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'" (8) First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). (9) Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. (10) And by that will, we have been made holy

### INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew author argues in this chapter the difference between the sacrifices of the old covenant and that made by Jesus to establish the new covenant. Whereas under the old covenant, only the High Priest could enter into the Most Holy Place, today through the blood of Jesus Christ all Christians have access to the Most Holy Place in the real tabernacle in heaven.

This access to God prompts us to draw near to Him and to encourage one another. Once again, a serious warning is given to those who would abandon their faith.

### Hebrews 10:3

When people gathered for the offering of sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, they were reminded of their sins, and they undoubtedly felt guilty all over again. What they needed most was forgiveness—the permanent, powerful, sin-destroying forgiveness we have from Christ. When we confess a sin to him, we need never think of it again. Christ has forgiven us, and the sin no longer exists. See 1 John 1:9.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:3—Leviticus 16:34; Hebrews 9:7

### Hebrews 10:4

Animal sacrifices could not take away sins; they provided only a temporary way to deal with sin until Jesus came to deal with sin permanently. How, then, were people forgiven in Old Testament times? Because Old Testament believers were following God's command to offer sacrifices, he graciously forgave them when, by faith, they made their sacrifices. But that practice looked forward to Christ's

perfect sacrifice. Christ's way was superior to the Old Testament way because the old way only pointed to what Christ would do to take away sins.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:4—Leviticus 16:15, 21; Hebrews 9:13

through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

(11) Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. (12) But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. (13) Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, (14) because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. (15) The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: (16) "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." (17) Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." (18) And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

(19) Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, (20) by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, (21) and since we have a great priest over the house of God, (22) let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (23) Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. (24) And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. (25) Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

**Hebrews 10:5-10**

This quotation is not cited in any other New Testament book. However, it is a central teaching of the Old Testament that God desires obedience and a right heart, not empty compliance to the sacrifice system (see the chart "Obedience Versus Sacrifice"). The writer of Hebrews applies to Christ the words of the psalmist in Psalm 40:6-8. Christ came to offer his body on the cross for us as a sacrifice that is completely acceptable to God. God's new and living way for us to please him is not by keeping laws or even by abstaining from sin. It is by coming to him in faith to be forgiven, and then following him in loving obedience.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:5-7—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Psalm 40:6-8

Hebrews 10:8—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Psalm 40:6

1 Hebrews 10:10—Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 7:27; 9:12, 28; Peter 2:24

(26) If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, (27) but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. (28) Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. (29) How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? (30) For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." (31) It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

(32) Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. (33) Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. (34) You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

(35) So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. (36) You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. (37) For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. (38) But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." (39) But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

### **Hebrews 10:9**

Canceling the first covenant in order to establish a far better one meant doing away with the system of sacrifices contained in the ceremonial law. It didn't mean eliminating God's *moral* law (the Ten Commandments). The ceremonial law prepared people for Christ's coming. With Christ's death and resurrection, that system was no longer needed. And through Christ we can fulfill the moral law as we let him live in us.

### **Hebrews 10:11, 12**

Christ's work is contrasted with the work of the Jewish priests. The priests' work was never finished, so they had to stand day after day and offer sacrifices; Christ's sacrifice (dying in our place) is finished, so he is seated. The priests repeated the sacrifices often; Christ sacrificed once for all. The sacrifice system couldn't completely remove sin; Christ's sacrifice effectively cleansed us.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:11—Hebrews 5:1

### **Hebrews 10:12**

If the Jewish readers of this book were to return to the old Jewish system, they would be implying that Christ's sacrifice wasn't enough to forgive their sins. Adding anything to his sacrifice or taking anything from it denies its validity. Any system to gain salvation through good deeds is essentially rejecting the significance of Christ's death and spurning the Holy Spirit's work. Beware of anyone who tells you that Christ's sacrifice still leaves you incomplete or that something else is needed to make you acceptable to God. When we believe in Christ, he makes us completely right with God. Our loving relationship leads us to follow him in willing obedience and service. He is pleased with our service, but we cannot be saved by our good deeds.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:12—Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:44; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3

### **Hebrews 10:13**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:13—Psalm 110:1

### **Hebrews 10:14**

We have been made perfect, yet we are being made holy. Through his death and resurrection, Christ, once for all, made his believers perfect in God's sight. At the same time, he is making them holy (progressively cleansed and set apart for his special use) in their daily pilgrimage here. We should not be surprised, ashamed, or shocked that we still need to grow. God is not finished with us. We can encourage this growth process by deliberately applying Scripture to all areas of our life, by accepting the discipline and guidance Christ provides, and by giving him control of our desires and goals.

### **Hebrews 10:15**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:15—Hebrews 3:7

### **Hebrews 10:16-17**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:16-17—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Jeremiah 31:33-34

### **Hebrews 10:17**

The writer concludes his argument with this powerful statement that God will remember our sins no more. Christ forgives completely, so there is no need to confess our past sins repeatedly. As believers, we can be confident that the sins we confess and renounce are forgiven and forgotten.

### **Hebrews 10:19**

The Most Holy Place in the Temple was sealed from view by a curtain (10:20). Only the high priest could enter this holy room, and he did so only once a year on the Day of Atonement when he offered the sacrifice for the nation's sins. But Jesus' death removed the curtain, and all believers may walk into God's presence at any time (see also 6:19, 20).

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:19—Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 4:16; 9:25

### **Hebrews 10:20**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:20—John 4:6; Hebrews 6:19; 9:8

## **Hebrews 10:21**

### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:21—Hebrews 2:17; 3:6

## **Hebrews 10:22-25**

We have significant privileges associated with our new life in Christ: (1) We have personal access to God through Christ and can draw near to him without an elaborate system (10:22); (2) we may grow in faith, overcome doubts and questions, and deepen our relationship with God (10:23); (3) we may enjoy encouragement from one another (10:24); (4) we may worship together (10:25).

### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:22—Ezekiel 36:25; Ephesians 5:26

Hebrews 10:23—1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:13; Hebrews 3:6

## **Hebrews 10:25**

To neglect Christian meetings is to give up the encouragement and help of other Christians. We gather together to share our faith and to strengthen one another in the Lord. As we get closer to the day when Christ will return, we will face many spiritual struggles, and even times of persecution. Anti-Christian forces will grow in strength. Difficulties should never be excuses for missing church services. Rather, as difficulties arise, we should make an even greater effort to be faithful in attendance.

### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:25—Acts 2:42; Hebrews 3:13

## **Hebrews 10:26**

When people deliberately reject Christ's offer of salvation, they reject God's most precious gift. They ignore the leading of the Holy Spirit, the one who communicates to us God's saving love. This warning was given to Jewish Christians who were tempted to reject Christ for Judaism, but it applies to anyone who rejects Christ for another religion or, having understood Christ's atoning work, deliberately turns away from it (see also Numbers 15:30, 31 and Mark 3:28-30). The point is that there is no other acceptable sacrifice for sin than the death of Christ on the cross. If someone deliberately rejects the sacrifice of Christ after clearly understanding the Good News teaching about it, then there is no way for that person to be saved, because God has not provided any other name in all of heaven for people to call on to save them (see Acts 4:12).

### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:26—1 Timothy 2:4; Hebrews 6:4-8; 2 Peter 2:20

## **Hebrews 10:27**

### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:27—Isaiah 26:11

### **Hebrews 10:28**

patience. During times of great stress, we may feel God's presence more clearly and find help from Christians we never thought would care. Knowing that Jesus is with us in our suffering and that he will return one day to put an end to all pain helps us grow in our faith and our relationship with him (see Romans 5:3-5).

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:33—1 Corinthians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:14

Hebrews 10:34—Hebrews 13:3

Hebrews 10:36—Hebrews 9:15

### **Hebrews 10:35-38**

The writer encourages his readers not to abandon their faith in times of persecution but to show by their endurance that their faith is real. Faith means resting in what Christ has done for us in the past, but it also means trusting him for what he will do for us in the present and in the future (see Romans 8:12-25; Galatians 3:10-13).

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 10:37-38—Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11. This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Habakkuk 2:3-4

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 9:26—1 Corinthians 10:11; Hebrews 7:27; 1 Peter 3:18

# LESSON TEN

## “THE FAMILY OF FAITH”

### Hebrews 11:1-12:3

*(1) Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (2) This is what the ancients were commended for.*

*(3) By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*

*(4) By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.*

*(5) By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. (6) And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

*(7) By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned*

### Hebrews 11:1

Do you remember how you felt when you were very young and your birthday approached? You were excited and anxious. You knew you would certainly receive gifts and other special treats. But some things would be a surprise. Birthdays combine assurance and anticipation, and so does faith! Faith is the conviction based on past experience that God's new and fresh surprises will surely be ours.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:1—Romans 8:24; Hebrews 3:6, 14

### Hebrews 11:1

The beginning point of faith is believing in God's character: He *is* who he says. The end point is believing in God's promises: He will *do* what he says. When we believe that God will fulfill his promises even though we don't see those promises materializing yet, we demonstrate true faith (see John 20:24-31).

### Hebrews 11:3

God called the universe into existence out of nothing; he declared that it was to be, and it was. Our faith is in the God who created the entire universe by his word. God's word has awesome power. When he speaks, do you listen and respond? How can you better prepare yourself to respond to God's word?

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:3—Genesis 1:1-31; Psalm 33:6, 9; John 1:3; Romans 1:19-20; Hebrews 1:2

### Hebrews 11:4

Cain and Abel were Adam and Eve's first two sons. Abel offered a sacrifice that pleased God, while Cain's

*the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*

*(8) By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. (9) By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. (10) For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

*(11) By faith Abraham, even though he was past age-- and Sarah herself was barren-- was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. (12) And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.*

*(13) All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. (14) People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. (15) If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. (16) Instead, they were longing for a better country-- a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

*(17) By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac*

sacrifice was unacceptable. Abel's Profile is found in Genesis 4. Cain's Profile is in Genesis 4. Abel's sacrifice (an animal substitute) was more acceptable to God, both because it was a blood sacrifice and, most important, because of Abel's attitude when he offered it.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:4—Genesis 4:3-10

**Hebrews 11:5**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:5—Genesis 5:22-24

**Hebrews 11:6**

Believing that God exists is only the beginning; even the demons believe that much (James 2:19, 20). God will not settle for mere acknowledgment of his existence. He wants a personal, dynamic relationship with you that will transform your life. Those who seek God will find that they are rewarded with his intimate presence.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:6—Hebrews 7:19

**Hebrews 11:6**

Sometimes we wonder about the fate of those who haven't heard of Christ and have not even had a Bible to read. God assures us that all who honestly seek him—who act in faith on the knowledge of God that they possess—will be rewarded. When you tell others the Good News, encourage them to be honest and diligent in their search for truth. Those who hear the Good News are responsible for what they have heard (see 2 Corinthians 6:1, 2).

**Hebrews 11:7**

Noah experienced rejection because he was different from his neighbors. God commanded him to build a huge boat in the middle of dry land, and although God's command seemed foolish, Noah obeyed. Noah's obedience made him appear strange to his neighbors, just as the new beliefs of Jewish Christians undoubtedly made them stand out. As you obey God, don't be surprised if others regard you as "different." Your obedience makes their disobedience stand out. Remember, if God asks you

*as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, (18) even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." (19) Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.*

*(20) By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.*

*(21) By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.*

*(22) By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.*

*(23) By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.*

*(24) By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. (25) He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time.*

*(26) He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.*

*(27) By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. (28) By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.*

to do something, he will give you the necessary strength to carry out that task. For more information on Noah, see his Profile in Genesis 6.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:7—Genesis 6:13-22; Romans 3:22; 1 Peter 3:20

**Hebrews 11:8-10**

Abraham's life was filled with faith. At God's command, he left home and went to another land—obeying without question (Genesis 12:1ff). He believed the covenant that God made with him (Genesis 12:2, 3; 13:14-16; 15:1-6). In obedience to God, Abraham was even willing to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19). Do not be surprised if God asks you to give up secure, familiar surroundings in order to carry out his will. For further information on Abraham, see his Profile.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:8—Genesis 12:1-5; Acts 7:2-4

Hebrews 11:9—Genesis 12:8

Hebrews 11:10—Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 21:2

**Hebrews 11:11, 12**

Sarah was Abraham's wife. They were unable to have children through many years of their marriage. God promised Abraham a son, but Sarah doubted that she could become pregnant in her old age. At first she laughed, but afterward, she believed (Genesis 18). For more information on Sarah, see her Profile.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:11—Genesis 17:19; 21:1-3

Hebrews 11:12—Genesis 15:5-6; 22:17; Romans 4:19

**Hebrews 11:13**

That we are "foreigners and nomads" may be an awareness forced on us by circumstances. It may come late in life or as the result of difficult times. But this world is not our home. We cannot live here forever (see also 1 Peter 1:1). It is best for us not to be so attached to this world's desires and possessions that we can't move out at God's command.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:13—Genesis 23:4; Matthew 13:17; Hebrews 11:39

*(29) By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.*

*(30) By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.*

*(31) By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.*

*(32) And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, (33) who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, (34) quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. (35) Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. (36) Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. (37) They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—(38) the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.*

*(39) These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. (40) God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made*

### **Hebrews 11:13-16**

These people of faith died without receiving all that God had promised, but they never lost their vision of heaven (“a better place, a heavenly homeland”). Many Christians become frustrated and defeated because their needs, wants, expectations, and demands are not immediately met when they accept Christ as Savior. They become impatient and want to quit. Are you discouraged because the achievement of your goal seems far away? Take courage from these heroes of faith, who lived and died without seeing the fruit of their faith on earth and yet continued to believe (see 11:36-39).

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:14—Hebrews 13:14

Hebrews 11:15—Genesis 24:6-8

Hebrews 11:16—Genesis 26:24; Exodus 3:6, 15

### **Hebrews 11:17-19**

Abraham was willing to give up his son when God commanded him to do so (Genesis 22:1-19). God did not let Abraham take Isaac’s life, because God had given the command in order to test Abraham’s faith. Instead of taking Abraham’s son, God gave Abraham a whole nation of descendants through Isaac. If you are afraid to trust God with the possession, dream, or person you treasure most, pay attention to Abraham’s example. Because Abraham was willing to give up everything for God, he received back more than he could have imagined. What we receive, however, is not always immediate or in the form of material possessions. Material things should be among the least satisfying of rewards. Our best and greatest rewards await us in eternity.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:17—Genesis 22:1-10; James 2:21

Hebrews 11:18—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Genesis 21:12

Hebrews 11:19—Romans 4:21

### **Hebrews 11:20**

Isaac was the son who had been promised to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. It was through Isaac that God fulfilled his promise to eventually give Abraham countless descendants. Isaac had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. God chose the younger son, Jacob, through whom to continue the fulfillment of his promise to Abraham. For more information on Isaac, see his Profile.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:20—Genesis 27:27-29

### **Hebrews 11:21**

Jacob was Isaac's son and Abraham's grandson. Jacob's sons became the fathers of Israel's 12 tribes. Even when Jacob (also called "Israel") was dying in a strange land, he believed the promise that Abraham's descendants would be like the sand on the seashore and that Israel would become a great nation (Genesis 48:1-22). True faith helps us see beyond the grave. For more information on Jacob and Esau, see their Profiles in Genesis 26 and 25.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:21—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Genesis 47:31; 48:15-16

### **Hebrews 11:22**

Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers (Genesis 37). Eventually, Joseph was sold again, this time to an official of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Because of Joseph's faithfulness to God, however, he was given a top-ranking position in Egypt. Although Joseph could have used that position to build a personal empire, he remembered God's promise to Abraham. After he had been reconciled to his brothers, Joseph brought his family to be near him and requested that his bones be taken to the Promised Land when the Jews eventually left Egypt (Genesis 50:24, 25). Faith means trusting in God and doing what he wants, regardless of the circumstances or consequences. For more information on Joseph, see his Profile.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:22—Genesis 50:24-25; Exodus 13:19

### **Hebrews 11:23**

Moses' parents trusted God to protect their son's life. They were not merely proud parents; they were believers who had faith that God would care for him. As a parent, have you trusted God enough to take care of your children? God has a plan for every person, and your important task is to pray for your children and prepare them to do the work God has planned for them to do. Faith allows us to entrust even our children to God.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:23—Exodus 1:16, 22; 2:2

### **Hebrews 11:24-28**

Moses became one of Israel's greatest leaders, a prophet and a lawgiver. But when he was born, his people were slaves in Egypt, and the Egyptian officials had ordered that all Hebrew baby boys

were to be killed. Moses was spared, however, and Pharaoh's daughter raised Moses in Pharaoh's own household (Exodus 1–2)! It took faith for Moses to give up his place in the palace, but he could do it because he saw the fleeting nature of great wealth and prestige. It is easy to be deceived by the temporary benefits of wealth, popularity, status, and achievement, and to be blind to the long-range benefits of God's Kingdom. Faith helps us look beyond the world's value system to see the eternal values of God's Kingdom. For more information on Moses, see his Profile.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:24—Exodus 2:10-12  
Hebrews 11:26—Hebrews 13:13  
Hebrews 11:27—Exodus 12:50-51  
Hebrews 11:28—Exodus 12:21-30

### **Hebrews 11:29**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:29—Exodus 14:21-31

### **Hebrews 11:30**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:30—Joshua 6:12-21

### **Hebrews 11:31**

When Joshua planned the conquest of Jericho, he sent spies to investigate the fortifications of the city. The spies met Rahab, who had two strikes against her—she was a Gentile and a prostitute. But she showed that she had faith in God by welcoming the spies and by trusting God to spare her and her family when the city was destroyed. Faith helps us turn around and do what is right regardless of our past or the disapproval of others. For more information on Rahab, see her Profile.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:31—Joshua 2:11-12; 6:21-25; James 2:25

### **Hebrews 11:32-35**

The Old Testament records the lives of the various people who experienced these great victories. Joshua and Deborah overthrew kingdoms (the book of Joshua; Judges 4–5). Nehemiah ruled with justice (the book of Nehemiah). Daniel was saved from the mouths of lions (Daniel 6). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were kept from harm in the flames of a blazing furnace (Daniel 3). Elijah escaped the edge of the swords of evil Queen Jezebel's henchmen (1 Kings 19:2ff). Hezekiah regained strength after sickness (2 Kings 20). Gideon was strong in battle (Judges 7). A widow's son was brought back to life by the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 4:8-37).

We, too, can experience victory through faith in Christ. Our victories over oppressors may be like those of the Old Testament saints, but more likely, our victories will be directly related to the role God wants us to play. Even though our body deteriorates and dies, we will live forever because

of Christ. In the promised resurrection, even death will be defeated, and Christ's victory will be made complete.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:32—Judges 4–13; 1 Samuel 1:20; 16:1, 13

Hebrews 11:33—1 Samuel 17:34-36; Daniel 6:1-27

Hebrews 11:34—2 Kings 20:7; Daniel 3:19-27

Hebrews 11:35—1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:25-37

### **Hebrews 11:32-40**

These verses summarize the lives of other great men and women of faith. Some experienced outstanding victories, even over the threat of death. But others were severely mistreated, tortured, and even killed. Having a steadfast faith in God does not guarantee a happy, carefree life. On the contrary, our faith almost guarantees us some form of abuse from the world. While we are on earth, we may never see the purpose of our suffering. But we know that God will keep his promises to us. Do you believe that God will keep his promises to you?

### **Hebrews 11:35-39**

Many think that pain is the exception in the Christian life. When suffering occurs, they say, "Why me?" They feel as though God deserted them, or perhaps they accuse him of not being as dependable as they thought. In reality, however, we live in an evil world filled with suffering, even for believers. But God is still in control. He allows some Christians to become martyrs for the faith, and he allows others to survive persecution. Rather than asking, "Why me?" it is much more helpful to ask, "Why not me?" Our faith and the values of this world are on a collision course. If we expect pain and suffering to come, we will not be shocked when they hit. But we can also take comfort in knowing that Jesus also suffered. He understands our fears, our weaknesses, and our disappointments (see 2:16-18; 4:14-16). He promised never to leave us (Matthew 28:18-20), and he intercedes on our behalf (7:24, 25). In times of pain, persecution, or suffering, we should trust confidently in Christ.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:36—Genesis 39:20; Jeremiah 20:2; 37:15

Hebrews 11:37—1 Kings 19:10; 2 Chronicles 24:20-22

Hebrews 11:38—1 Kings 18:4; 19:9

### **Hebrews 11:39, 40**

Hebrews 11 has been called faith's hall of fame. No doubt the author surprised his readers by this conclusion: These mighty Jewish heroes did not receive God's total reward, because they died before Christ came. In God's plan, they and the Christian believers (who were also enduring much testing) would be rewarded together. Once again Hebrews shows that Christianity offers a better way than Judaism.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 11:40—Romans 11:26; Revelation 6:11

### **Hebrews 11:40**

There is a solidarity among believers (see 12:23). Old and New Testament believers will be glorified together. Not only are we one in the body of Christ with all those alive, but we are also one with all those who ever lived. It takes all of us to be perfect in him.

### **Hebrews 12:1**

This “huge crowd of witnesses” is composed of the people described in chapter 11. Their faithfulness is a constant encouragement to us. We do not struggle alone, and we are not the first to struggle with the problems we face. Others have run the race and won, and their witness stirs us to run and win also. What an inspiring heritage we have!

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 12:1—1 Corinthians 9:24; Philippians 3:12-14

### **Hebrews 12:1-4**

The Christian life involves hard work. It requires us to give up whatever endangers our relationship with God, to run patiently, and to struggle against sin with the power of the Holy Spirit. To live effectively, we must keep our eyes on Jesus. We will stumble if we look away from him to stare at ourselves or at the circumstances surrounding us. We should be running for Christ, not ourselves, and we must always keep him in sight.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 12:2—Psalm 110:1; Philippians 2:8-9; Hebrews 2:9-10; 1 Peter 1:11

### **Hebrews 12:3**

When we face hardship and discouragement, it is easy to lose sight of the big picture. But we're not alone; there is help. Many have already made it through life, enduring far more difficult circumstances than we have experienced. Suffering is the training ground for Christian maturity. It develops our patience and makes our final victory sweet.

# LESSON ELEVEN

## *“ONE LAST WARNING”*

### Hebrews 12:4-29

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin.

16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

### CHAPTER 5

1 Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

2 He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness.

3 This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

4 No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God just as Aaron was

### Hebrews 12:4

These readers were facing difficult times of persecution, but none of them had yet died for their faith. Because they were still alive, the writer urged them to continue to run their race. Just as Christ did not give up, neither should they.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 12:4—Hebrews 10:32-34

### Hebrews 12:5-11

Who loves his child more—the father who allows the child to do what will harm him, or the one who corrects, trains, and even punishes the child to help him learn what is right? It’s never pleasant to be corrected and disciplined by God, but his discipline is a sign of his deep love for us. When God corrects you, see it as proof of his love, and ask him what he is trying to teach you.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 12:5-6—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Proverbs 3:11-12

Hebrews 12:6—Revelation 3:19

Hebrews 12:7—Deuteronomy 8:5; 2 Samuel 7:14

Hebrews 12:8—1 Peter 5:9

Hebrews 12:9—Numbers 16:22; 27:16; Isaiah 38:16

Hebrews 12:10—2 Peter 1:4

### Hebrews 12:11

We may respond to discipline in several ways: (1) We can accept it with resignation; (2) we can accept it with self-pity, thinking we really don’t deserve it; (3) we can be angry and resentful toward God; or (4) we can accept it gratefully, as the appropriate response we owe a loving Father.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 12:11—James 3:17-18

**Hebrews 12:12, 13**

God is not only a disciplining parent but also a demanding coach who pushes us to our limits and requires our lives to be disciplined. Although we may not feel strong enough to push on to victory, we will be able to accomplish it as we follow Christ and draw on his strength. Then we can use our growing strength to help those around us who are weak and struggling.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 12:12—Isaiah 35:3

Hebrews 12:13—Proverbs 4:26

**Hebrews 12:12, 13**

We must not live with only our own survival in mind. Others will follow our example, and we have a responsibility to them if we are living for Christ, as we claim to be. Does your example make it easier for others to believe in and follow Christ, and to mature in him? Or would those who follow you end up confused and misled?

**Hebrews 12:14**

The readers were familiar with the ceremonial cleansing ritual that prepared them for worship, and they knew that they had to be holy or clean in order to enter the Temple. Sin always blocks our vision of God; so if we want to see God, we must renounce sin and obey him (see Psalm 24:3, 4). Holiness is coupled with living in peace. A right relationship with God leads to right relationships with fellow believers. Although we will not always feel loving toward all other believers, we must pursue peace as we become more Christ-like.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 12:14—Romans 14:19

**Hebrews 12:15**

Like a small root that grows into a great tree, bitterness springs up in our hearts and overshadows even our deepest Christian relationships. A “bitter root” comes when we allow disappointment to grow into resentment, or when we nurse grudges over past hurts. Bitterness brings with it jealousy, dissension, and immorality. When the Holy Spirit fills us, however, he can heal the hurt that causes bitterness.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 12:15—Deuteronomy 29:17-18; Hebrews 4:1

**Hebrews 12:16, 17**

Esau’s story shows us that mistakes and sins sometimes have lasting consequences (Genesis 25:29-34; 27:36). Even repentance and forgiveness do not always eliminate sin’s consequences. How often do you make decisions based on what you want now, rather than on what you need in the long run? Evaluate the long-range effects of your decisions and actions.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 12:16—Genesis 25:29-34

Hebrews 12:17—Genesis 27:30-40

**Hebrews 12:18-24**

What a contrast between the people's terrified approach to God at Mount Sinai and their joyful approach at Mount Zion! What a difference Jesus has made! Before Jesus came, God seemed distant and threatening. After Jesus came, God welcomes us through Christ into his presence. Accept God's invitation!

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 12:18-19—Exodus 19:16-22; 20:18-21; Deuteronomy 4:11-12; 5:22-27

Hebrews 12:20—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Exodus 19:12-13

Hebrews 12:21—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Deuteronomy 9:19

Hebrews 12:23—Genesis 18:25; Philippians 3:12

Hebrews 12:24—Genesis 4:10; Hebrews 9:19; 10:22

**Hebrews 12:22**

As Christians, we are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem right now; because Christ rules our lives, the Holy Spirit is always with us, and we experience close fellowship with other believers. The full and ultimate rewards and reality of the heavenly Jerusalem are depicted in Revelation 21.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 12:22—Galatians 4:26; Revelation 5:11; 21:2

**Hebrews 12:25****Cross References:**

Hebrews 12:25—Hebrews 2:1-3; 10:28-29

**Hebrews 12:26****Cross References:**

Hebrews 12:26—Exodus 19:18. This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Haggai 2:6

**Hebrews 12:27-29**

Eventually the world will crumble, and only God's Kingdom will last. Those who follow Christ are part of this unshakable Kingdom, and they will withstand the shaking, sifting, and burning. When we feel unsure about the future, we can take confidence from these verses. No matter what happens here, our future is built on a solid foundation that cannot be destroyed. Don't put your confidence in what will be destroyed; instead, build your life on Christ and his unshakable Kingdom. (See Matthew 7:24-27 for the importance of building on a solid foundation.)

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 12:27—2 Peter 3:10

**Hebrews 12:29**

There is a big difference between the flame of a candle and the roaring blast of a forest fire. We cannot even stand near a raging fire. Even with sophisticated firefighting equipment, a consuming fire is often beyond human control. God is not within our control either. We cannot force him to do anything for us through our prayers. He cannot be contained. Yet, he is a God of compassion. He has saved us from sin, and he will save us from death. But everything that is worthless and sinful will be consumed by the fire of his wrath. Only what is good, dedicated to God, and righteous will remain.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 12:29—Exodus 24:17; Deuteronomy 4:24; 9:3; Isaiah 33:14

# LESSON TWELVE

## *“FINAL THOUGHTS”*

### Hebrews 13:1-25

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin.

16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

### CHAPTER 5

1 Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

2 He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness.

3 This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

4 No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God just as Aaron was

### Hebrews 13:1-5

Real love for others produces tangible actions: (1) hospitality to strangers (13:2); (2) empathy for those who are in prison and those who have been mistreated (13:3); (3) respect for your marriage vows (13:4); and (4) contentment with what you have (13:5). Make sure that your love runs deep enough to affect your hospitality, empathy, fidelity, and contentment.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:1—Romans 12:10

Hebrews 13:4—1 Corinthians 7:38

### Hebrews 13:2

Three Old Testament people “entertained angels without realizing it”: (1) Abraham (Genesis 18:1ff), (2) Gideon (Judges 6:11ff), and (3) Manoah (Judges 13:2ff). Some people say they cannot be hospitable because their homes are not large enough or nice enough. But even if you have no more than a table and two chairs in a rented room, there are people who would be grateful to spend time in your home. Are there visitors to your church with whom you could share a meal? Do you know single people who would enjoy an evening of conversation? Is there any way your home could meet the needs of traveling missionaries? Hospitality simply means making other people feel comfortable and at home.

#### **Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:2—Genesis 18:1-8; 19:1-3

### Hebrews 13:3

We are to have empathy for those in prison, especially for (but not limited to) Christians imprisoned

for their faith. Jesus said that his true followers would represent him as they visit those in prison (Matthew 25:36).

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:3—Matthew 25:36; Colossians 4:18; Hebrews 10:34

### **Hebrews 13:5**

How can we learn to be satisfied with what we have? Strive to live with less rather than desiring more; give away out of your abundance rather than accumulating more; relish what you have rather than resent what you're missing. See God's love expressed in what he has provided, and remember that money and possessions will all pass away. (See Philippians 4:11 for more on contentment, and 1 John 2:17 for the futility of earthly desires.)

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:5—Genesis 28:15; Joshua 1:5. This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Deuteronomy 31:5

### **Hebrews 13:5, 6**

We become content when we realize God's sufficiency for our needs. Christians who become materialistic are saying by their actions that God can't take care of them—or at least that he won't take care of them the way they want. Insecurity can lead to the love of money, whether we are rich or poor. The only antidote is to trust God to meet all our needs.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:6—This verse quotes **or** is quoted in Psalm 118:6

### **Hebrews 13:7**

If you are a Christian, you owe much to others who have taught you and modeled for you what you needed to know about the Good News and Christian living. Continue following the good examples of those who have invested themselves in you by investing in your life through evangelism, service, and Christian education.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:7—Hebrews 6:12

### **Hebrews 13:8**

Though human leaders have much to offer, we must keep our eyes on Christ, our ultimate leader. Unlike any human leaders, he will never change. Christ has been and will be the same forever. In a changing world we can trust our unchanging Lord.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:8—Hebrews 1:12

### **Hebrews 13:9**

Apparently some were teaching that keeping the Old Testament ceremonial laws and rituals (such as not eating certain foods) was important for salvation. But these laws were useless for

conquering a person's evil thoughts and desires (Colossians 2:23). The laws could influence conduct, but they could not change the heart. Lasting changes in conduct begin when the Holy Spirit lives in each person.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:9—Ephesians 4:14; Colossians 2:7, 16

### **Hebrews 13:10**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:10—1 Corinthians 10:18

### **Hebrews 13:11**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:11—Leviticus 4:12, 21; 16:27

### **Hebrews 13:12**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:12—John 19:17; Hebrews 9:12

### **Hebrews 13:13**

The Jewish Christians were being ridiculed and persecuted by Jews who didn't believe in Jesus the Messiah. Most of the book of Hebrews tells them how Christ is greater than the sacrificial system. Here the writer drives home the point of his lengthy argument: It may be necessary to leave the "camp" and suffer with Christ. To be outside the camp meant to be unclean—in the days of the Exodus, those who were ceremonially unclean had to stay outside the camp. But Jesus suffered humiliation and uncleanness outside the Jerusalem gates on their behalf. The time had come for Jewish Christians to declare their loyalty to Christ above any other loyalty, to choose to follow the Messiah whatever suffering that might entail. They needed to move outside the safe confinement of their past, their traditions, and their ceremonies to live for Christ. What holds you back from complete loyalty to Jesus Christ?

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:13—Hebrews 11:26

### **Hebrews 13:14**

We should not be attached to this world, because all that we are and have here is temporary. Only our relationship with God and our service to him will last. Don't store up your treasures here; store them in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21).

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:14—Hebrews 11:10; 12:22

### **Hebrews 13:15, 16**

Since these Jewish Christians, because of their witness to the Messiah, no longer worshiped with other Jews, they should consider praise and acts of service their sacrifices—ones they could offer anywhere, anytime. This must have reminded them of the prophet Hosea’s words, “Forgive all our sins and graciously receive us, so that we may offer you the sacrifice of praise” (Hosea 14:2). A “sacrifice of praise” today would include thanking Christ for his sacrifice on the cross and telling others about it. Acts of kindness and sharing are particularly pleasing to God, even when they go unnoticed by others.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:15—Psalm 50:14; Hosea 14:2; 1 Peter 2:5

Hebrews 13:16—Philippians 4:18

### **Hebrews 13:17**

The task of church leaders is to help people mature in Christ. Cooperative followers greatly ease the burden of leadership. Does your conduct give your leaders reason to report joyfully about you?

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:17—Isaiah 62:6; Ezekiel 3:17; Acts 20:28

### **Hebrews 13:18, 19**

The writer recognizes the need for prayer. Christian leaders are especially vulnerable to criticism from others, pride (if they succeed), depression (if they fail), and Satan’s constant efforts to destroy their work for God. They desperately need our prayers! For whom should you regularly pray?

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:18—Acts 24:16

Hebrews 13:19—Philemon 1:22

### **Hebrews 13:20, 21**

These verses include two significant results of Christ’s death and resurrection. God works in us to make us the kind of people that would please him, and he equips us to do the kind of *work* that would please him. Let God change you from within and then use you to help others.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:20—Isaiah 55:3; Jeremiah 32:40; 50:5; Ezekiel 37:26; Zechariah 9:11; John 10:11

Hebrews 13:21—Romans 11:36; Philippians 2:13

### **Hebrews 13:22**

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:22—1 Peter 5:12

### **Hebrews 13:23**

We have no record of Timothy's imprisonment, but we know that he had been in prison because it states here that he had been released. For more about Timothy, see his Profile.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:23—Acts 16:1

### **Hebrews 13:24, 25**

Hebrews is a call to Christian maturity. It was addressed to first-century Jewish Christians, but it applies to Christians of any age or background. Christian maturity means making Christ the beginning and end of our faith. To grow in maturity, we must center our life on him, not depending on religious ritual, not falling back into sin, not trusting in ourselves, and not letting anything come between us and Christ. Christ is sufficient and superior.

**Cross References:**

Hebrews 13:24—Hebrews 13:7, 17

Hebrews 13:25—Colossians 4:18; Titus 3:15