

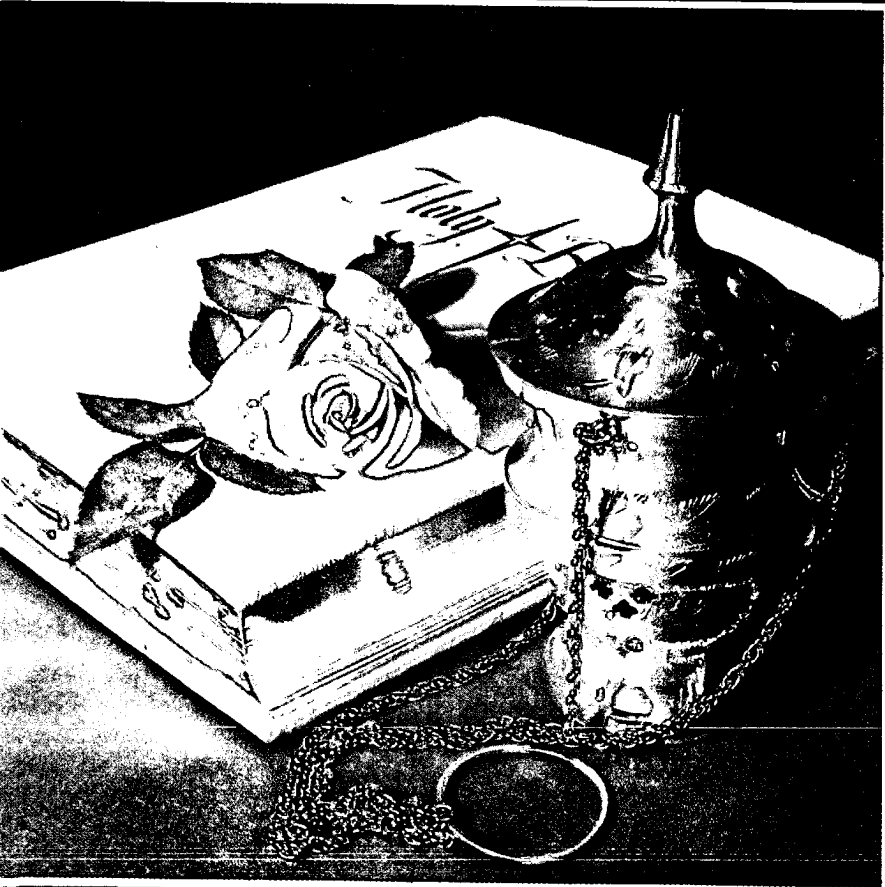
DAYBREAK SERIES



JULY - SEPT. /1976

# Adult Sabbath School Lessons

# Nurturing Faith in Jesus





THE *Seventh-day Adventist Church*

Headquarters  
800 Thomson Road  
Singapore, 11

Office of the Secretary

Dear Sabbath School Members,

These lines penned in 1975 may be even more significant when you read them in mid-1976 for everything taking place in the world today emphasizes the urgency of our mission. Open doors are gently swinging, and who knows where or when they may shut, and another area will be closed to the preaching of the gospel of Jesus' love.

The three projects in the Far Eastern Division to benefit from the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering overflow this quarter have been selected because they are urgent needs in areas of great growth potential.

1. Relocation of East Visayan Academy. This academy in the Central Philippine Union serves a large constituency, but is totally incapable of meeting the expanding needs of the heavily populated area and must be relocated. A new site has been chosen, and relocation of the school will solve some critical problems and provide more adequate facilities for the youth.
2. Jungle Airstrips. Travel by light plane cuts days and weeks down to minutes and hours and vastly enlarges the range of mission activity. The five planes now in operation rely heavily on jungle airstrips. New strips and improvement of the old ones are very urgently needed.
3. Entering New Territories. From among many, three have been chosen: The primitive tribes of the Central Celebes, including the tree dwellers who are just now awakening to the appeal of the gospel and calling for help; the tribal people of northeastern Mindanao, who through a series of events have learned of Seventh-day Adventists and want to know more; and the island of Lombok in Indonesia. Years ago our message penetrated the island, but did not take root. Now we must try again.

Thank you, friends, for your loyal support and sacrificial giving in the past and thank you, too, for your love which prompts you to give to a cause which will soon triumph because of your devotion to it.

Your brother in Christ,

W. T. Clark, Secretary  
Far Eastern Division

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# SABBATH SCHOOL MEMO

Use to check off for daily study, reminder for Mission  
Spotlight, etc. Jot memos above week-day dates.

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I pledge myself to the prayerful study of part of  
the Sabbath School lesson each day.

(Signed)

# NURTURING FAITH IN JESUS

## Studies in the Book of Hebrews

### Introduction

The book of Hebrews clearly sets forth the claim of Christianity as the perfect and final form of religious belief. Christianity is superior because it is embodied in Jesus Christ. He was superior to Moses, the prophets, and even the angels. The history and worship of the Old Testament find their meaning and fulfillment in Him. One of the book's distinctive teachings is that Christ is now our great High Priest. While other New Testament writers picture Christ as exalted at God's right hand, and even refer to His intercessory work (Rom. 8:34), nowhere else is Christ's work as a high priest in the heavenly sanctuary portrayed.

The book of Hebrews is usually called an epistle, but it lacks the features with which ancient letters began. It does, however, end like a letter with its personal notes, greetings, and benediction.

In Hebrews 13:22, RSV, the book is called "my word of exhortation." Among the Jews "word of exhortation" seems to have been a synagogue term for the homily that followed the reading of "the law and the prophets." So the book of Hebrews would then be a written sermon; and, since it was sent to a specific group of believers, it is understandable that it should close on a personal note. The emphasis in the book on speaking and hearing (see 2:1, 5; 5:11; 6:9; 11:32) suggests that it was designed to be read aloud to a Christian congregation assembled for worship.

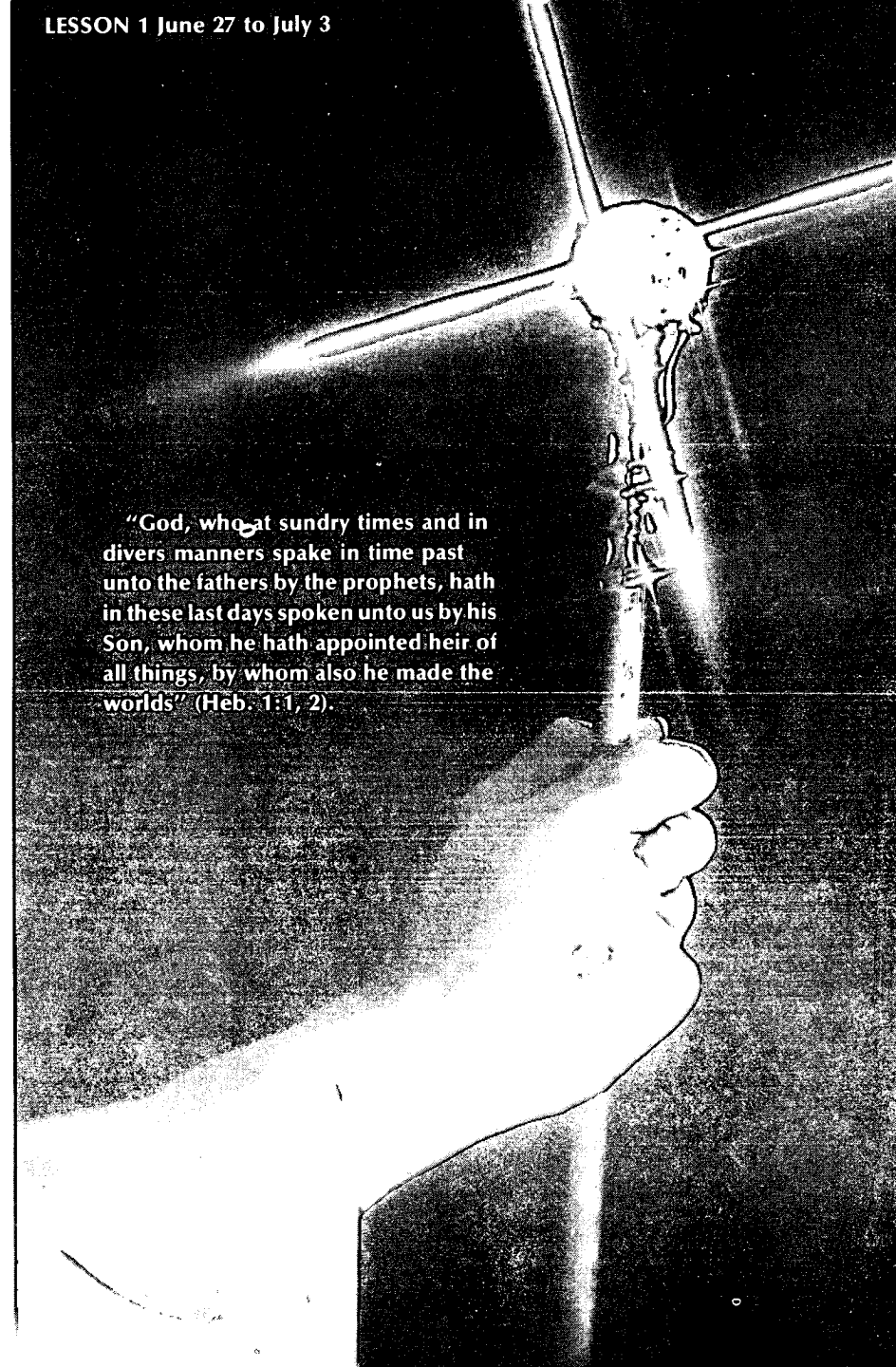
The original readers of the epistle were Hebrews. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 623.) The internal evidence of the document indicates that a particular group of Jewish Christians is being addressed. In "former days" they had endured abuse, affliction, and the plundering of their property for their faith. (See Heb. 10:32-34.) It is clear that the writer had previously visited their community (13:19) and hoped to revisit them soon (13:23).

Who was the author? The epistle does not give his name, but Paul has been traditionally regarded as the author. However, from early Christian times until the present there has been strong opposition to attributing the epistle to Paul. The literary differences between Hebrews and the books known to be written by Paul support this opposition. However, these differences could have resulted from Timothy, or another of Paul's collaborators doing the actual writing at Paul's direction or by writing down his sermon. Ellen G. White, in alluding to passages from Hebrews, repeatedly attributes them to Paul. For example, see *The Great Controversy*, pp. 411, 415, 420.

These believers were in grave danger of giving up their Christian faith and reverting to the Jewish beliefs. Evidently they did not yet fully understand the nature of true Christianity, but they had experienced ostracism from their former friends and relatives, and severe persecution. In spite of this it was difficult for them to make a complete break with their Jewish past. What they needed was to see clearly the incomparable superiority of Christianity as the climax and fulfillment of the Old Testament.

The book of Hebrews also has a vital message for the Christian today. It particularly challenges us to consider Christ's intercessory work in our behalf. It provides access to the throne of the universe. There are unlimited resources of grace and power available through our High Priest at God's right hand. The importance of this intercession is highlighted by the following paragraph:

"God's appointments and grants in our behalf are without limit. The throne of grace is itself the highest attraction because occupied by One who permits us to call Him Father. But God did not deem the principle of salvation complete while invested only with His own love. By His appointment He had placed at His altar an Advocate clothed with our nature. As our Intercessor, His office work is to introduce us to God as His sons and daughters."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 363.



**"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1, 2).**

# The Superiority of Christ

Titov, one of the Russian space explorers, is reported to have asserted, after encircling the earth far out in space, that he looked for God out there but did not find Him. Why did the Russian cosmonaut fail to see God out in space? One reason is that God is not an object that man can observe. God is transcendent. He is apart from and exalted above the universe He has made. God is "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" (Isa. 57:15) and cannot be found by man's search in space. The apostle Paul speaks of God as "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. 6:15, 16).

Suppose Titov had been able to cast his eyes on God, what would have been the result? Moses once asked to see God's glory; He wanted to see the visible radiance and majesty of God. To this request God's answer was, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name [which is the same as to say that He will disclose His character]. . . . But . . . you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live" (Ex. 33:19, 20, RSV).

If we cannot see God with the physical eye and have direct, immediate, and open communion with Him, how can we know Him?

God wants to communicate with man, but because of sin open fellowship is impossible. Fortunately God has taken the initiative in making Himself known to us, and it is only as He discloses Himself that we can know Him at all.

God has revealed Himself in various ways. In part His handiwork in the

external world of nature reveals Him. His eternal power and Godhead are made known by the things He has made. (See Rom. 1:20.) "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Ps. 19:1). But this revelation is partial; and, because of sin, it is also sometimes confusing. There is a sinister force at work distorting nature. Hence there are bloodshed, suffering, calamities, and catastrophes. Nature, to be understood as a revelation of God, is in need of an interpreter.

God has also revealed Himself in the movements of history. (See Ps. 103:7.) These, too, need to be explained if we are to understand God through them. So God has chosen men and women to whom He has given revelations by means of dreams, visions, angelic visitations, etc. These were to be spokesmen for God, interpreting His ways to mankind. The Bible is a record of God's saving acts in history, together with an inspired, authoritative interpretation of these acts.

But the opening words of the great book of Hebrews would have us realize that the supreme disclosure of God came through the incarnation, earthly life, and death of Jesus Christ.

## LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Over the Prophets** (Heb. 1:1, 2)
2. **His Nature and Work—I** (Heb. 1:2, 3)
3. **His Nature and Work—II** (Heb. 1:3)
4. **Over the Angels—I** (Heb. 1:4)
5. **Over the Angels—II** (Heb. 1:6)
6. **Over the Angels—III** (Heb. 1:7, 8)

**Part 1  
OVER THE  
PROPHETS**

**What contrasts are drawn in the epistle to the Hebrews at the very outset between God's past revelations and His revelation through Christ?**

**"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1, 2).**

Christianity is a revealed religion. It teaches that there is a God, and that He has communicated with mankind. God, in His grace, has not left sinful man to his fate. Rather He has taken the initiative in making His will and His redemptive plans known to sinful human beings. God has spoken. The epistle to the Hebrews begins with this profound truth.

The mouthpiece through whom God spoke in ancient times was the prophet (Amos 3:7), to whom the word of the Lord came. (See 1 Sam. 3:7; 2 Sam. 7:4; 1 Kings 17:1, 2, 8; Jer. 1:4, 11, etc.) There have been prophets in the world from the earliest times since the Fall. (See Luke 1:70; Acts 3:21.) God spoke "by [literally, *in*] the prophets" "at sundry times and in divers manners," literally, "in many portions and in different ways." "In many portions" suggests the progressive nature of revelation. It was given in progressive stages to such persons as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and other prophets. It came in fragmentary and incomplete forms. Furthermore the disclosure came in a variety of ways. But whatever method was employed, it is important to remember that it was God who spoke. God still speaks through His ancient prophets by their written messages in the Bible. "Every chapter and every verse of the Bible is a communication from God to men."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 504.

**What complete and final revelation has been given in Christian times? Heb. 1:2, first part. (Compare Matt. 11:27; John 1:18.)**

The phrase "in these last days" means "at the last of these days." The writers of the New Testament adopted this Old Testament phrase and applied it to the age of Messianic fulfillment which began with the coming of Jesus Christ to Bethlehem. It is the age of the Messiah. (Compare Heb. 9:26, RSV.) In this age, the writer says, God has spoken to us by His Son, His latest word of revelation.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

"Christ came to this world as the expression of the very heart and mind and nature and character of God."—*Medical Ministry*, p. 19.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 387-390, 394, 395.



**Part 2**  
**HIS NATURE**  
**AND WORK—I**

**What sublime assertions regarding the nature and work of Christ are then made?**

**“Whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory” (Heb. 1:2, 3).**

1. *“Appointed heir of all things.”* This refers to the promise to the Lord’s anointed in Psalm 2:8 that He would inherit the nations and the uttermost parts of the earth. The words of verse 7 in Psalm 2 are applied to Christ in Hebrews 1:5. All that Adam once possessed and lost Christ won back through His atonement. When His work was completed it could well be said: “He had won the kingdom. He had wrested it from Satan and had become heir of all things.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 29. The inheritance encompasses also “the world to come” (Heb. 2:5).

2. *“By whom also he made the worlds.”* Compare Col. 1:16; John 1:3. The work of creation was carried out by Jesus Christ. The Greek for “worlds” means primarily “ages,” but here as in Hebrews 11:3 it denotes the whole universe of space and time. Ellen G. White concludes: “If Christ made all things, He existed before all things. . . . Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed for evermore.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 247.

3. *“The brightness of his glory.”* “Brightness” is used in the active sense of radiance or outshining. The term “glory” suggests the visible force of God’s self-manifestation. But when Moses requested, “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory,” God responded by proclaiming the glorious attributes of His character. (See Ex. 33:18, 19.) This suggests that God’s “glory” also includes His character. It was this aspect of God that Jesus radiated while on earth. “The glory of the attributes of God is expressed in His [Christ’s] character.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 115. But since Christ’s exaltation at God’s right hand, the visible manifestation of the Son’s glory is not hidden, just as prior to the incarnation.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“No intangible principle, no impersonal essence or mere abstraction, can satisfy the needs and longings of human beings in this life of struggle with sin and sorrow and pain. It is not enough to believe in law and force, in things that have no pity, and never hear the cry for help. We need to know of an almighty arm that will hold us up, of an infinite Friend that pities us. We need to clasp a hand that is warm, to trust in a heart full of tenderness.”—*Education*, p. 133.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 1:2.

**Part 3**  
**HIS NATURE**  
**AND WORK—II**

What further sublime assertions about Christ are made?

**“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3).**

1. *“The express image of his person.”* Christ as the RSV renders it, “bears the very stamp of his [God’s] nature.” “He [Christ] represented God not as an essence that pervaded nature, but as a God who has a personality. Christ was the express image of His Father’s person; and He came to our world to restore in man God’s moral image, in order that man, . . . might through obedience to God’s commandments become stamped with the divine image and character—adorned with the beauty of divine loveliness.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 921.

2. *“Upholding all things.”* (Compare Col. 1:17.) “The word of his power” means His powerful word. “He upholds the universe not like Atlas supporting a dead weight on his shoulders, but as One who carries all things forward on their appointed course.”—F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews. The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970), p. 6. Used by permission.

“The same creative energy that brought the world into existence is still exerted in upholding the universe and continuing the operations of nature.”—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 185.

“The hand of infinite power is perpetually at work guiding this planet.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1062.

3. *“Purged our sins.”* It was Jesus who purged our sins by His atoning death on the cross. (See Heb. 9:22.) By virtue of this death He has forgiven the sins of all who accept Him by faith.

4. *Installation at God’s right hand.* Following His ascension, Christ was inaugurated as Priest-King at God’s right hand. “Majesty” is a name for God. (See Eph. 1:20-23; 1 Peter 3:22.)

“When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples. . . . The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven’s communication that the Redeemer’s inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, as priest and king, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 38, 39.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 1:3.

**Part 4  
OVER THE  
ANGELS—I**

**“Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they” (Heb. 1:4).**

The Son was originally superior to the angels, but at the incarnation He “for a little while was made lower than the angels” (Heb. 2:9, RSV). Now that He is exalted at God’s right hand, He has become much superior to the angels. Seven passages are now quoted to show a number of ways in which this is the case. The first, in Hebrews 1:5, deals with *Christ as God’s Son*.

“God has spoken words concerning Christ that are not to be applied to the angels.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 922. Although angels collectively may be called “sons of God” (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), no individual angel is ever singled out and given the status of God’s Son.

The first quotation in Hebrews 1:5 is taken from Psalm 2:7. The question readily comes to mind, What justification is there for applying the words of the second psalm to Jesus Christ? While the psalm doubtless had a historical application to Solomon or to another king descended from David, the greatness of its language can hardly have its meaning exhausted in any Jewish monarch. This song of the Lord’s anointed has been widely recognized, even by the Jews, as referring to the Messiah. It is quoted with reference to a supposed Messiah in falsely named “Psalms of Solomon,” indicating that some Jews regarded it as Messianic as early as the middle of the first century, BC. The angel Gabriel, in announcing to Mary that she was to be the mother of the Messiah, alludes to this text. (See Luke 1:32.) At the baptism of our Lord a voice from heaven exclaimed in similar language, “Thou art my beloved Son” (Mark 1:11). The two great apostles, Peter and Paul, applied this psalm to the Messiah. (See Acts 4:25, 27; 13:33.) Finally, words from the psalm are used of Jesus in the book of Revelation. (See Rev. 12:5; 19:15.)

The second quotation in Hebrews 1:5 is taken from Second Samuel 7:14. Later writers of the Old Testament recognized that the promise there given did not find its complete fulfillment in Solomon. Hence they looked forward to a greater son of David to come in whom the promise would find its complete fulfillment. (See Isa. 9:7; 11:1; Jer. 33:17, 20, 21.) Note Peter’s interpretation of Psalm 16:8-11 in Acts 2:29-33.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 1:4, 5.

**Part 5  
OVER THE  
ANGELS—II**

What command regarding Christ is now given?

“And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (Heb. 1:6).

A further contrast between Christ and the angels is now drawn. Angels are not proper objects of worship (Rev. 19:10; 22:9), but Christ is, and the angels are here commanded to worship Him. The word “again” is not a reference to the second advent, as some have thought, but simply introduces another quotation dealing with Christ’s preeminence. “He is called ‘the firstborn’ because He exists before all creation and because all creation is His heritage.”—F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 15. (See also Ps. 89:27.)

The last part of Hebrews 1:6, “And let all the angels of God worship him,” is quoted from Deuteronomy 32:43 in the Septuagint. There it reads: “Rejoice, ye heavens, with him, and let all the angels of God worship him; rejoice ye Gentiles, with his people, and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in him.”

The clause, “and let all the angels of God worship him,” is not in Deuteronomy 32:43 of the Hebrew Bible, and thus not in our Bibles that have been translated from Hebrew. The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Old Testament generally used by the New Testament writers. The Old Testament quotations in the book of Hebrews are from the Septuagint.

The time when this command to worship Christ was appropriately given was following His ascension and the acceptance of His atonement for man.

Ellen G. White observes that the angels were “eager to celebrate His triumph and to glorify their King.

“But He waves them back. Not yet; He cannot now receive the coronet of glory and the royal robe.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 834.

Not until Jesus is fully assured that His sacrifice has been accepted and the justice of God regarding repentant sinners is satisfied can He accept such honors. But then “the Father’s arms encircle His Son, and the word is given, ‘Let all the angels of God worship Him.’ ”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 834.

“The heavenly host prostrate themselves before Him, and raise their song of triumph and joy. Glory encircles the King of heaven, and was beheld by all the heavenly intelligences. No words can describe the scene which took place as the Son of God was publicly reinstated in the place of honor and glory which He voluntarily left when He became a man.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1146.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 1:6.

**Part 6  
OVER THE  
ANGELS—III**

**“And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom” (Heb. 1:7, 8).**

The Greek translation of Psalm 104:4 is quoted in Hebrews 1:7, 8 to show the place of the angels in God's government of the universe.

Ellen G. White wrote: “Angels are God's ministers, radiant with the light ever flowing from His presence and speeding on rapid wing to execute His will.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34.

The exalted nature of Christ is shown by contrast, using a quotation from the Greek translation of Psalm 45:6, 7. The apostle emphasizes that Christ is God, but the angels are servants. The “sceptre” indicates the legitimacy of His government. Since it is a “sceptre of righteousness,” His reign is just or righteous. (See Isa. 11:5.) The Messianic King adheres to a holy standard of divine righteousness, not merely as a policy, but as a matter of personal devotion. In recognition of this dedication, the Father has anointed Him with the “oil of gladness,” above His fellows (Heb. 1:9).

**What truths regarding Christ does the quotation from Psalm 102:25-27 in Hebrews 1:10-12 bring out?**

Inasmuch as Christ was the agent through whom the universe was created, the words of Psalm 102:25-27 are appropriately addressed to Him, who, in the Septuagint text quoted, is given the title “Lord.” The creative power and permanence of God the Father belong also to the Son. The Son, unlike the natural world, will not grow old or perish, but abide eternally.

**What words addressed to Christ are not appropriate for angels? Heb. 1:13, 14.**

The highest of the angels, Gabriel, stands in the presence of God (Luke 1:19), ready to do His bidding. No angel was ever invited to sit at God's right hand. But Christ occupies this position of honor and authority. To place under one's feet means to subjugate. (See Joshua 10:24; 2 Sam. 22:39; 1 Kings 5:3; Ps. 47:3.) It is a sign of the power of the one who overcomes all His foes. God is destined to be Ruler over all. Angels, on the other hand, have the function of service—service even to men who accept the salvation Jesus offers.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 1:7-14.

# The Pioneer of Our

**“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14, 15).**

After the stately prologue setting forth Christ as the ultimate revelation of God, chapter one contrasts His superior position with that of the angels. Because of this superior position, the gospel message given by Him and about Him is also superior to the Mosaic law mediated through angels. Hence chapter two begins with a warning of the period of indifference to that saving message. (See Heb. 2:1-4.)

Jesus is then set forth as being the representative man, the ideal of what God intended man to be. To demonstrate this it was necessary for Him to be made “for a little while lower than the angels” (Heb. 2:7, RSV). To recover man’s lost destiny Jesus became a human being.

God’s original intention for man is briefly sketched in Psalm 8:5-8. Man was made by God as a great and noble creature. He was made “little less than God” (verse 5, RSV). Here the psalmist is doubtless referring to the Genesis creation story where God says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). God also “crowned him with glory and honour” (Ps. 8:5) and gave him rulership over

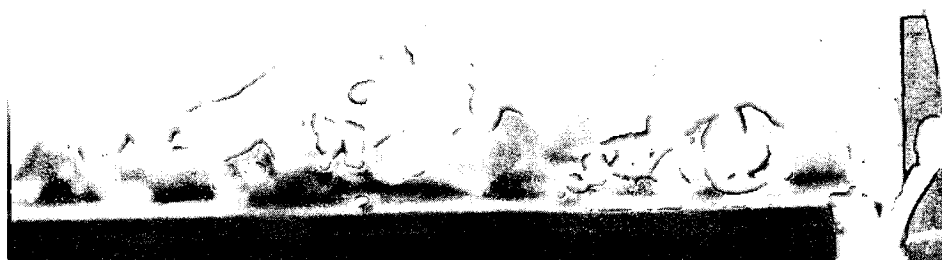
the earth and the animal creation. (See Ps. 8:6-8; Gen. 1:26, 28.)

But this ideal of what man should be was not realized. Man failed. The image of God in him was marred and almost obliterated. Frustration and defeat took the place of mastery and rulership.

Then Jesus came. “As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see Jesus who for a little while was made lower than the angels” (Heb. 2:8, 9, RSV). What purposes did this humiliation serve? Why did the Son of God take on human flesh and blood? Several reasons can be suggested:

1. *To reveal God the Father.* In order to reveal God to human beings the Son clothed His deity with humanity. “Only humanity could reach humanity. He lived out the character of God through the human body which God had prepared for Him. He blessed the world by living out in human flesh the life of God, thus showing that He had the power to unite humanity to divinity.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 924.

2. *To disclose Satan’s true character,*



# Salvation

which would lead to his ultimate destruction. (See Heb. 2:14, 15; 1 John 3:8.) The cross not only revealed God's love, but unmasked Satan.

3. *To demonstrate that it is possible for a human being to obey God's laws.* "As one of us He was to give an example of obedience. For this He took upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences. . . . He endured every trial to which we are subject. And He exercised in His own behalf no power that is not freely offered to us. As man, He met temptation, and overcame in the strength given Him from God. . . . His life testifies that it is possible for us also to obey the law of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 24.

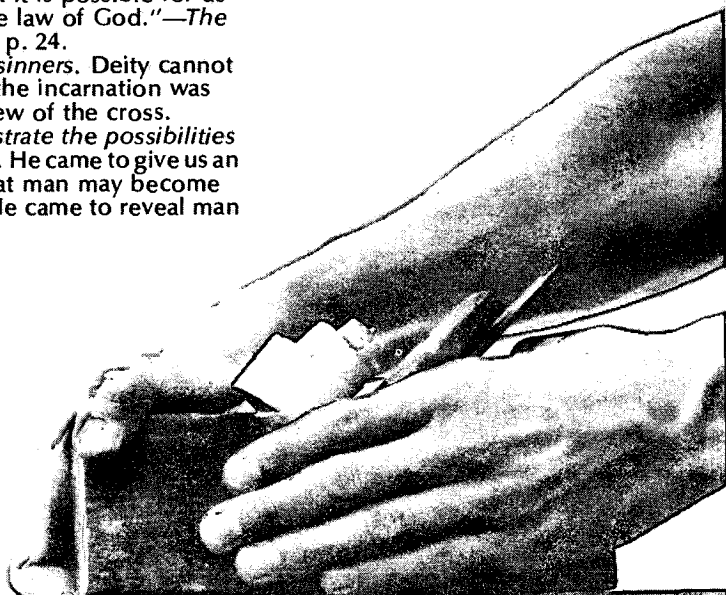
4. *To die for sinners.* Deity cannot die; therefore the incarnation was necessary in view of the cross.

5. *To demonstrate the possibilities in a human soul.* He came to give us an example of what man may become through Him. He came to reveal man

at his highest and best. "The character of Christ is the one perfect pattern which we are to copy."—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 50.

## LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Peril of Drifting** (Heb. 2:1-3)
2. **Destiny of Man** (Heb. 2:5)
3. **Jesus, the Ideal Man** (Heb. 2:8, 9)
4. **The Son and the Sons** (Heb. 2:10)
5. **The Incarnation of Christ** (Heb. 2:14)
6. **Our Sympathetic High Priest** (Heb. 2:17, 18)



**Part 1**  
**PERIL OF**  
**DRIFTING**

**What warning and exhortation regarding the peril of drifting is now given?**

**“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” (Heb. 2:1-3).**

Hebrews 2:1-4 is the first of five exhortations based on the particular truths presented. This one is a warning against indifference about the message of Christ. “Therefore,” that is, because God has given His perfect revelation to men in the person of His Son, take heed that you do not drift away from it.

“The word spoken by angels” refers to the Mosaic law. The Old Testament does not state that the angels participated in the giving of the law, although their presence at Sinai is suggested in Deuteronomy 33:2. In the Greek Old Testament the last line of this verse reads, “at his right hand were angels with him.” (See also Ps. 68:17. Compare *Patriarchs and Prophets*, top of page 364.) In the New Testament the angels are pictured as taking an active role in the giving of the law. (See Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19.)

The author argues from the lesser to the greater: from the previous revelation given by angels to the last one given through Christ. The revelation given in pre-Christian times by angels deserved and received reverent attention from God’s devout people and to disregard it brought punishment, for example, Numbers 15:30, 31. (See Joshua 1:8; Ps. 1:2; 119:4-6.) How much more certain is the doom of those who play fast and loose with the gospel of Christ!

**In what ways is the greatness of this salvation shown? Heb. 2:3, 4.**

In the epistle this greatness is emphasized first by its origin. It was brought to earth by the Son of God Himself. Second, this gospel message was transmitted in a trustworthy manner by the chosen witnesses who saw and heard our Lord. Third, God Himself endorsed its proclamation with miracles. Finally, God gave the Holy Spirit to living men and distributed spiritual gifts to hasten its proclamation.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“We are neglecting our salvation if we give authors who have but a confused idea of what religion means, the most conspicuous place and devoted respect, and make the Bible secondary.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 404.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 2:1-4.



**Part 2**  
**DESTINY**  
**OF MAN**

**“For unto angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak” (Heb. 2:5).**

In the translation of the Greek Old Testament, Deuteronomy 32:8 reads: “When the Most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God.”

Please note again that the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, was the Bible being used by the writer of Hebrews.

The verse suggests that the Lord has delegated some kind of authority over the nations to various angels. The prophet Daniel was given some insight into the work of angels in dealing with the governmental officials of the nations. (See Dan. 10:20, 21.)

Although various angels may have some functions in guiding the nations of this present world, Hebrews 2:5 plainly asserts that the world to come has not been subjected to them. Rater, the sovereignty of that world belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**At the time of his creation, what charge was man given in relation to the world and lower forms of life? Heb. 2:6-8. (Compare Ps. 8:4-6; Gen. 1:26-28.)**

At this point the author of Hebrews incorporates another quotation from the Greek Old Testament, this time from Psalm 8:4-6. The phrase, “a little lower” in verse 7 has been translated in the Revised Standard Version, “a little while lower.” This is a valid rendering of the Greek, both in Psalms and Hebrews, but not of the original Hebrew in the Psalms, which reads “a little lower.” The passage is applied in the book of Hebrews not so much to the first Adam, but to the last Adam, Jesus Christ. Hence, “a little while lower” is particularly appropriate. The first Adam failed and lost the original dominion. The last Adam came as a human being to regain the rulership. He came as the head and representative man, as the true ideal of what could have been and should be.

“Adam was crowned king in Eden. To him was given dominion over every living thing that God had created. The Lord blessed Adam and Eve with intelligence such as He had not given to any other creature. He made Adam the rightful sovereign over all the works of His hands. Man, made in the divine image, could contemplate and appreciate the glorious works of God in nature.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1082.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“The Son of the infinite God clothed His divinity with humanity, and submitted to the death of the cross, that He might become a steppingstone by which humanity might meet with divinity.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 291.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 2:5-8.

**Part 3**  
**JESUS, THE**  
**IDEAL MAN**

**“Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb. 2:8, 9).**

This language is very inclusive. Man was destined to have full sovereignty: “He left nothing that is not put under him.” In spite of tremendous technological achievements, man does not now exercise any such universal dominion. Man, for example, is subject to moral depravity, disease, and, ultimately, death. Sin has robbed him of the promised dominion. “Now, we see not yet all things put under him.”

“But we see Jesus.” Appropriately the human name is used, for the emphasis here is on His humanity. That which God promised has been fulfilled in Jesus, and that which we see in Jesus will be fulfilled in man. Jesus is the last Adam, the representative man. What He is and has done constitutes the pledge and assurance of humanity’s glorious future. He was made for a little while lower than the angels to accomplish through His redemption what God has purposed for human life.

Because of His sufferings and death, Jesus has been enthroned, “crowned with glory and honour.” As a preparation for this crowning He tasted death for every man. This was done “by the grace of God.” To taste of death, like the parallel, to see death, means not merely to die but to experience what death really is. It indicates an experiential knowledge of the awful meaning and consequences of death. This Jesus realized for every man.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“Through Christ had been communicated every ray of divine light that had ever reached our fallen world. It was He who had spoken through everyone that throughout the ages had declared God’s word to man. Of Him all the excellences manifest in the earth’s greatest and noblest souls were reflections. . . . The mental and spiritual power manifest in all these men, . . . were but gleams from the shining of His glory. In Him was found the perfect ideal.

“To reveal this ideal as the only true standard for attainment; to show what every human being might become; what, through the indwelling of humanity by divinity, all who received Him would become—for this, Christ came to the world.”—*Education*, pp. 73, 74.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 2:8, 9.

**Part 4**  
**THE SON AND**  
**THE SONS**

**What did God regard as fitting in perfecting the Son as our Saviour?**

**“For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb. 2:10).**

“For whom are all things, and by whom are all things,” as the context clearly indicates, is God the Father. The Father regarded it as fitting for the Son, the Pioneer in redemption, to become a perfect Saviour through suffering. He must blaze the trail His people are to follow by becoming one of them in nature. He must also endure the penalty for sin in their behalf.

His union with them, the epistle goes on to show (verses 11-13), makes them His brothers. “He that sanctifieth” is the Son of God; “they who are sanctified” are the believers, now sons of God. In this epistle “to sanctify someone” means to atone for his sins, to purge him by freeing him from his guilt. This is done by means of the atoning sacrifice and priestly ministry of Christ. (See Heb. 9:13, 14; 10:10; 13:12.) Through Christ they become adopted sons of God. They are not sons by nature but by grace. They are sons now (1 John 3:2), but He is the Son (spelled with a capital “S”—see John 20:31).

Nevertheless He and they “are all of one” origin (Heb. 2:11), literally, “are all out of one,” that is, have one Father. Thus He is not ashamed to acknowledge them as His brothers. As evidence of this, three Old Testament passages are cited (verses 12, 13).

The most significant one is taken from Psalm 22. In His hour of abandonment on the cross Jesus cried out the opening words of this psalm. (See Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34.) The Gospel writers saw other parts of Psalm 22 fulfilled in the crucifixion, and used language borrowed from it to portray that awful event. (See Matt. 27:39, 43; Luke 23:35; John 19:23, 24, 28.) But if the first part of the psalm can appropriately be put in the mouth of Christ, why cannot the second part, where thanksgiving for deliverance is offered, appropriately be the words of the exalted Son of God who proclaims:

“I will tell of thy name to my brethren;  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee”?  
Ps. 22:22, RSV.

There follow in Hebrews 2:13 quotations from Isaiah 8:17, 18 which are applied to Jesus.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 25, 26.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 2:10-13.

**Part 5**  
**THE INCARNATION**  
**OF CHRIST**

**What purposes for the incarnation of Christ does the epistle now suggest?**

**“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14).**

If Christ’s identification with human beings was to be real, He had to become a genuine flesh-and-blood man. “It was not a make-believe humanity that Christ took upon Himself. He took human nature and lived human nature.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1124.

“When Jesus took human nature, and became in fashion as a man, He possessed all the human organism. . . . He had bodily wants to be supplied, bodily weariness to be relieved.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1130.

“Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity. Only thus could He rescue man from the lowest depths of his degradation.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 117.

One of the purposes of the incarnation was His death, and by that very act He “decided the destiny of the rebel chief, and made forever sure the plan of salvation. In death He gained the victory over its power; in rising again, He opened the gates of the grave to all His followers.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 701, 702.

**Who are the objects of Christ's redemptive work? Verse 16.**

The English Revised Version gives a literal translation of this verse: “For verily not of angels doth he take hold, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham.” Christ died for man, not angels. When the fallen angels were cast out of heaven, there was nothing more Christ could do for them.

“There were no new and more wonderful exhibitions of God’s exalted power that could ever impress them as deeply as those they had already experienced. If they could rebel in the very presence of the weight of glory inexpressible, they could not be placed in any more favorable condition to be proved. There was no reserve force of power, nor were there any greater heights and depths of infinite glory to overpower their jealous doubts and rebellious murmuring. Their guilt and their punishment must be in proportion to their exalted privileges in the heavenly courts.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Feb. 24, 1874.

Jesus, however, could reach out and rescue human beings. “The seed of Abraham” include all believers, for it is men of faith who are the true children of Abraham.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 2:14-16 and Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 7, pp. 924, 925.

**Part 6**  
**OUR SYMPATHETIC**  
**HIGH PRIEST**

**What change in Christ's status was necessary for this mission to succeed?**

**"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:17, 18).**

Our Lord voluntarily gave Himself to undertake the work of man's redemption. If He were to succeed, He must become a true man in every respect, apart from sinning.

"Christ bore the sins and infirmities of the race as they existed when He came to the earth to help man. In behalf of the race, with the weaknesses of fallen man upon Him, He was to stand the temptations of Satan upon all points wherewith man would be assailed."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1081.

He was God. He had to be made man. This qualified Him to be man's High Priest. Thus the author introduces one of the central themes of Hebrews—the high-priestly office of our Lord. Hebrews is the only book in the New Testament that speaks of Jesus as either a priest or a high priest. A priest was the people's representative before God; a prophet was God's spokesman to the people. In order for Jesus to serve as a true representative of man, He needed to become human and to suffer with and for him. He who undertakes to help sinful man must have a sympathy for him born of experiencing his kind of life. His sufferings would enable Him to sympathize fully with man and thus be merciful in His attitude toward him.

We can have confidence in approaching God through Jesus because He was severely tempted and yet is the sinless One. God has accepted Him as the holy Substitute to stand in the place of the repentant sinner.

"Although Jesus Christ has passed into the heavens, there is still a living chain binding His believing ones to His own heart of infinite love. The most lowly and weak are bound by a chain of sympathy closely to His heart. He never forgets that He is our representative, that He bears our nature."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 19.

In giving Himself for us He was strongly tempted to use His divine power to save Himself (see *The Desire of Ages*, p. 700). "It was a part of His mission to bear, in His humanity, all the taunts and abuse that men could heap upon Him."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 703. He felt the full force of temptation. Therefore He is especially qualified to help tempted human beings.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 2:17, 18 and Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 7, pp. 925-927.

# The Peril



"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God: partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:12-14).

# of Disobedience

After having shown that Jesus Christ is the full revelation of God to men, and that He is far superior to the angels, the book of Hebrews now asserts that our Lord was also superior to Moses. To appreciate the argument we need to understand the greatness of Moses.

"Moses was the greatest man who ever stood as leader of the people of God."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1113.

"His [Moses'] intellectual greatness distinguishes him above the great men of all ages. As historian, poet, philosopher, general of armies, and legislator, he stands without a peer."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 246.

"Moses became great because he used his talents to do the work of God, and an increase of talents was then given him. He became eloquent, patient, self-reliant, and competent to do the greatest work ever entrusted to mortal man."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 612, 613.

It is therefore not surprising that the Jews regarded him the most highly of all the Old Testament characters. He was the servant of God par excellence in the Old Testament. (See Ex. 14:31; Num. 12:7, 8; Deut. 34:5, etc.) He was "the man of God" (1 Chron. 23:14; 2 Chron. 30:16; Ezra 3:2), who saw God's glory, heard God's voice, and became the mediator of divine revelation to Israel. He was more than a prophet, for God did not communicate with him by means of visions and dreams, but face-to-face. (See Num. 12:7, 8; Deut. 34:10-12.) He thoroughly identified his interests with his people and became their faithful shepherd. (See Isa. 63:11; Ps. 77:20.) He was a great man of prayer, who on more than one occasion successfully interceded for them. (See Ps. 106:23; Jer. 15:1.)

In the New Testament he is

mentioned some 80 times, more than any other Old Testament figure. Predominantly he was regarded as the great lawgiver. (See John 1:17; 7:19.) Because this is so, some passages, instead of using the phrase "the law of Moses," simply say "Moses" (for example, Matt. 8:4; 19:7; John 5:45). "Moses is read" in the synagogue on Sabbaths, and has "in every city them that preach him" (2 Cor. 3:15; Acts 15:21). The Jews called themselves "Moses' disciples" (John 9:28); the scribes and Pharisees were said to "sit in Moses' seat" (Matt. 23:2).

But Jesus, the book of Hebrews asserts, is far superior to Moses, and therefore obedience and complete trust are due to Him. Great man that Moses was, the Israelites at times disobeyed him and repudiated his leadership. Stephen, in his defense before the Sanhedrin, charged, "To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt" (Acts 7:39). The results were dire—only two of the non-Levite adults who left Egypt entered the Land of Canaan. But how much more serious it would be to repudiate the leadership of Jesus and become apostates from the faith! The record of Israel's past is fraught with warning and instruction for Christians. (See 1 Cor. 10:6 and *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 293.)

## LESSON OUTLINE

1. Christ's Superiority Over Moses (Heb. 3:1, 2)
2. Example of Israel's Failure (Heb. 3:7-9)
3. A Warning to the Church (Heb. 3:12, 13)
4. Validity of the Promise (Heb. 4:1-3)
5. The Rest That Remains (Heb. 4:6-10)
6. Exhortation to Diligence (Heb. 4:11-13)

**Part 1**  
**CHRIST'S**  
**SUPERIORITY**  
**OVER MOSES**

**“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house” (Heb. 3:1, 2).**

Because Jesus took human nature, experienced temptation, and consequently can help us when we are tempted, Christians are admonished to fix their attention upon Him as their High Priest. They already believed in Jesus as their High Priest. Perhaps from baptism they were committed to a belief in this doctrine, but a full understanding and appreciation of its import was lacking. Hence, now they are urged to direct their whole mind to its significance.

It is noteworthy that the epistle uses the human name Jesus. This emphasizes the humanness of the Saviour. He is not only a high priest, but also an apostle. This is the only passage in the New Testament in which Jesus is called the “Apostle” (one sent). The Gospel of John, however, repeatedly emphasizes the truth that Jesus was the One sent by the Father. He came into the world as the Father’s envoy to man. Now, as a high priest, He is man’s envoy to the Father.

In both functions, as an apostle and as a high priest, Jesus has proved faithful to the Father who appointed Him. His faithfulness is compared to that of Moses. (See Num. 12:7.) Moses was an apostle of God to ancient Israel as well as their most effective intercessor with God. Moses was the most significant figure in the history of the Jews. He was the mediator of the divine word, a humble and patient servant of God, but our Lord is much greater.

**In what ways is the position of Jesus superior to that of Moses? Heb. 3:3-6.**

The Greek word translated “house” can also mean “household” or “family,” which seems to be the meaning here. Moses was faithful as a servant in God’s family, but Christ is faithful as the Son and appointed Heir over all the Father’s property. He was in fact, the Founder and Builder of the Old Testament community as the family of God. How much more the New Testament community which consisted of the faithful believers.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“The approval of the Master is not given because of the greatness of the work performed, but because of fidelity in all that has been done. It is not the results we attain, but the motives from which we act, that weigh with God. He prizes goodness and faithfulness above all else.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 267.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 3:1-6.



**Part 2**  
**EXAMPLE OF**  
**ISRAEL'S FAILURE**

**What warning example for Christians has the Holy Spirit caused to be recorded?**

**“As the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years” (Heb. 3:7-9).**

The words attributed to the Holy Spirit are taken from the second part of Psalm 95. Verse 7 of that psalm is correctly translated in the Revised Standard Version as, “O, that today you would hearken to his voice!” Unfortunately the Israelites in the wilderness did not. Moses was faithful, but the people proved to be faithless. Jesus was faithful, but will the new Israel avoid the mistakes of the past?

Ancient Israel heard God's voice at Sinai, and through Moses God spoke to them throughout their wilderness wanderings, but they failed to hearken. Now Jesus as the Apostle and High Priest of God, too, has spoken. Will the new Israel harden their hearts?

“As in the provocation” in Hebrews 3:8 corresponds to “as at Meribah” in Psalm 95:8, RSV. “Meribah” means “contention” or “strife” and was a name given to one of the places where the children of Israel, in need of water, murmured against God. (See Ex. 17:1-7; Num. 20:2-13.) Similarly, “in the day of temptation” in Hebrews 3:8 corresponds to “on the day at Massah” in Psalm 95:8, RSV. These are not the only instances where their lack of faith and rebellious spirit manifested itself. Rather, God accused them of putting Him to the test and not hearkening to His voice “ten times” (Num. 14:22).

**Because of their faithlessness, murmuring, and obstinacy, what oath did God take against them? Heb. 3:10, 11.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“God did not design that His people, Israel, should wander forty years in the wilderness. He promised to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there a holy, healthy, happy people. . . .

“For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 68, 69.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 3:7-11.

**Part 3**  
**A WARNING TO**  
**THE CHURCH**

In view of these sad experiences of Israel, what warning and exhortation are given to the church?

**“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:12, 13).**

The rebellious Israelites “would not obey” Moses (Acts 7:39). As the result, “the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not” (Jude 5). The loss in rejecting the One greater than Moses is not an earthly Canaan, but the greater blessings of the heavenly Canaan. It was basically a lack of faith and trust resulting in disloyalty and disobedience that proved the doom of the Israelites in the wilderness. A similar unbelief and distrust can lead Christians today to become apostates.

Hence the appeal, “Take heed.” One of the best ways to avoid falling away is for Christians constantly and persistently to exhort and encourage one another. Often in helping others an individual helps himself. It is especially important for all to be on the alert because of the deceptive and enticing character of sin. In a fellowship of watchfulness its specious and beguiling character can be more easily detected than in isolation. And encouragement to resist the encroachments of evil is fostered by group fellowship. “In view of all that God has wrought for us, our faith should be strong, active, and enduring.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 294.

**Upon what condition does true partnership with Christ depend? Heb. 3:14, 15.**

In verses 16 through 18, a series of questions is raised to bring home the lessons to be drawn from Israel’s tragic failure. Who were these rebels in the wilderness? They were the very people who had seen God’s power manifested through Moses in great redeeming acts. It is not enough to make a good beginning. There remains the awful possibility of backsliding. The root trouble was unbelief and distrust of God (verse 19). They would not take God at His word.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“The Lord manifests His grace and His power over and over again, and this should teach us that it is always profitable under all circumstances to cherish faith, to talk faith, to act faith. We are not to have our hearts and hands weakened by allowing the suggestions of suspicious minds to plant in our hearts the seeds of doubt and distrust.”—Ellen G. White *Comments, SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 928.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 3:12-19.

**Part 4**  
**VALIDITY OF**  
**THE PROMISE**

**What promise remains for Christians, and what should they fear?**

**“Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world” (Heb. 4:1-3).**

The failure of the ancient Hebrews to enter into God's rest has not invalidated the promise. That promise remains; it is still open and valid for those who will appropriate it by faith. But there is real danger that Christians may follow Israel's example of unbelief and thus fail of entering God's rest. The epistle attributes Israel's failure primarily to their lack of faith in appropriating what God had promised. Faith is the spiritual hand that reaches up to grasp God's never-failing promises. God's rest is open to the one who will appropriate it by faith.

What is God's rest which this passage promises? The term “rest” in the Old Testament is used in several ways. God promised Moses as the leader of Israel, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest” (Ex. 33:14). This meant that God would bring them to the Promised Land of Canaan. They would no longer be a nomadic people without a homeland. (See Deut. 3:20; 12:9, 10.) “Rest” also meant relief from the attacks of enemies in the land. (See Deut. 25:19; Joshua 21:44, 45; 23:1.) The first generation of wandering Israelites did not experience this rest. Their bodies were strewn in the wilderness. (See Heb. 3:17.) But under Joshua the second generation did enter the promised Canaan.

It seems evident, however, that God had far more in mind for Israel than merely an earthly Canaan. Our epistle holds out the hope of “a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb. 11:16). Abraham “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (verse 10). So, as Christians today, we are wandering pilgrims seeking a heavenly rest. “We are homeward bound. He who loved us so much as to die for us hath builded for us a city. The New Jerusalem is our place of rest.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 287. But as we shall see, the promise of entering God's rest is not merely for the future. It is also for the present. “We which have believed do enter into rest” (Heb. 4:3).

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 4:1-5.

**Part 5**  
**THE REST THAT**  
**REMAINS**

**“Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: again, he limiteth a certain day. . . . There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his” (Heb. 4:6-10).**

The name “Jesus” in Hebrews 4:8, KJV, is the Greek word for Joshua.

Although Joshua led the second generation of Israelites into the Land of Canaan, they did not enter into God’s rest (verse 8). This is shown by the fact that Psalm 95, written many years after the conquest of the Promised Land, speaks of the rest as unattained. This rest, verse 10 indicates, is something God’s people can enter now. One of the outstanding features of New Testament teaching is that in Jesus Christ many of the blessings which belong to the age to come are already available to the Christian. He may even now taste “the heavenly gift,” “the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come” (Heb. 6:4, 5). Hence God’s rest both is and is to be. It is, and yet remains, a promise for the future.

That rest is analogous to God’s rest after Creation. (See Heb. 4:4; Gen. 2:2.) To enter God’s rest means to enjoy the refreshment He Himself experienced when He looked with satisfaction upon the completed creation. (See Ex. 31:17.)

Jewish rabbis have noted that in the Genesis account of each of the first six days of Creation Week the statement is made that there was evening and there was morning—each day had a beginning and an end. But curiously, no such mention is made of the seventh day. From this fact it was argued that the day of God’s rest had no ending. The rest of God has not ended. It is everlasting and eternal rest.

The rest into which we are invited to enter “is the rest of grace.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 928. It is the “true rest of faith.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 1. Whoever enters it ceases to try to earn salvation by his own works.

“We enter into God’s ‘rest’ when we ‘consider’ Jesus (ch 3:1) and listen to His voice (chs 3:7, 15; 4:7), when we exercise faith in Him (ch 4:2, 3), when we cease from our own efforts to earn salvation (v. 10), when we ‘hold fast our profession’ (v. 14), and when we draw near to the throne of grace (v. 16).”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 4:9.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“As the Sabbath was the sign that distinguished Israel when they came out of Egypt, . . . so it is the sign that now distinguishes God’s people as they come out from the world to enter the heavenly rest.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 349.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 4:7-10.

**Part 6**  
**EXHORTATION TO**  
**DILIGENCE**

**“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:11-13).**

The basic meaning of the word translated “labour” is “to make haste” hence, “to bend every effort.” No halfheartedness will do. Much of our unrest of spirit is due to our divided loyalties. We are trying to serve more than one master. To avoid the pitfall of unbelieving disobedience we need to completely surrender. “The surrender of all our powers to God greatly simplifies the problem of life. It weakens and cuts short a thousand struggles with the passions of the natural heart.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 30.

“Entire surrender of your ways, which seem so very wise, and taking Christ’s ways, is the secret of perfect rest in His love.”—*My Life Today*, p. 176.

**What characteristics does the word of God have? Verses 12, 13.**

The “word of God” includes whatever God has said. Hebrews begins with the assertion that God has spoken, anciently through the prophets, but now in the person of His Son. (See Heb. 1:1, 2.) The “word of God” in the present context is the message about God’s rest which the Holy Spirit speaks through the psalmist. (See Heb. 3:7.) But whatever God has said, no matter how or when, is alive. It speaks to us today in words of power. God’s word is not only active but efficacious, particularly in the lives of believers. (See 1 Thess. 2:13; Isa. 55:11.)

That word transforms the inward man and reveals motives.

“The truth is the truth. It is not to be wrapped up in beautiful adornings, that the outside appearance may be admired. The teacher is to make the truth clear and forcible to the understanding and to the conscience. The word is a two-edged sword, that cuts both ways. It does not tread as with soft, slippered feet.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1147.

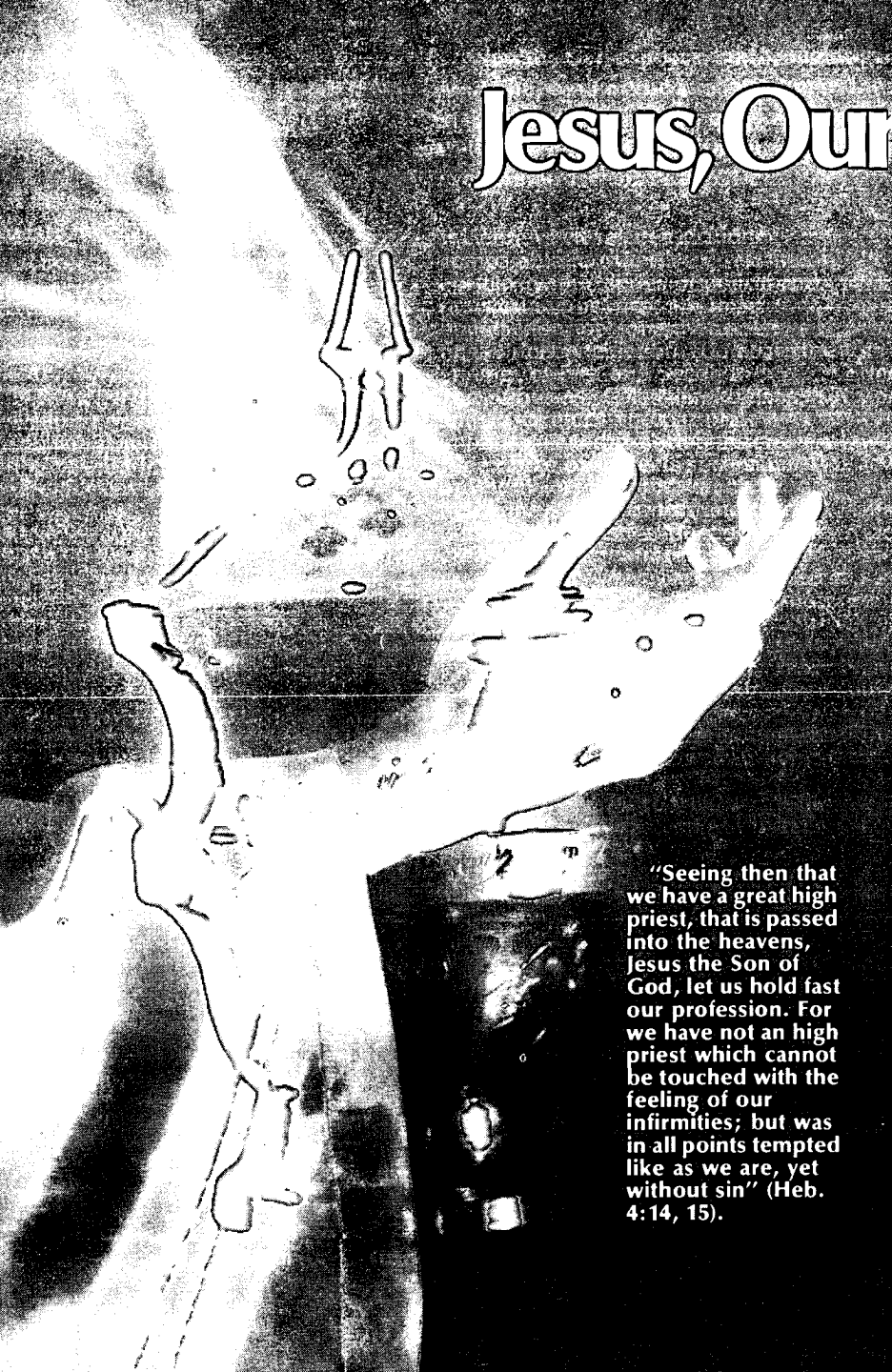
**THINK IT THROUGH**

“The Word makes the proud humble, the perverse meek and contrite, the disobedient obedient. The sinful habits natural to man are interwoven with the daily practice. But the Word cuts away the fleshly lusts.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 928.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 4:11-13.

# Jesus, Our



"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:14, 15).

# Great High Priest

The high-priestly office of Jesus is the central theme of Hebrews. The first specific reference to Him as a high priest is in chapter 2, verse 17. In that passage emphasis is placed on our Lord's humanity as an essential prerequisite for becoming a high priest. "He had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God" (Heb. 2:17, RSV). As a human being He was sorely tempted and endured suffering to enable Him to help tempted and suffering men and women. Chapter 3:2 stresses his faithfulness "to him that appointed him" as a high priest.

In chapter 4:14-16 the theme of His priestly office is resumed, not in a theoretical way, but with emphasis on the spiritual benefits to be derived from His priestly ministry. Note that He is not only called "an high priest," but "a great high priest." It would be well as you study this lesson to ponder the way in which He is a great high priest, seeking to see what His greatness consists of.

Remember that the author of this epistle did not divide his book into chapters and verses. Our present chapter divisions were made in the thirteenth century by Stephen Langton. The verse divisions were made by Robert Stephanus in the sixteenth century. Chapters and verses are useful reference tools, but they should not blind the Bible reader to the connection between the verses and the succeeding chapters. Some divisions were made in unfortunate places. Since chapter 5 is a continuation of the discussion of the high-priestly theme, perhaps it would have been better to have the chapter division at the end of Hebrews 4:13. This was actually done by such translators as Martin Luther, William

Tyndale, and Miles Coverdale.

Chapter 5 sets forth the qualifications that a man must have if he is to be a high priest. You should note what these qualifications are and why they are important. Having outlined these qualifications, the writer then proceeds to show how Jesus met them and how He became a high priest.

Emphasis is also laid in the chapter on the humanity of our High Priest. We do well to consider how He suffered and overcame. Particularly think through the meaning of the words, "Yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8), and became perfect. Was He not always perfect?

In verses 11 through 14 of the chapter the author deplores the spiritual dullness and immaturity of his readers. Not only does He have a difficult theme to present to them in all its fullness, but the scope of his presentation is limited by the undeveloped spiritual understanding of his readers.

As you study this lesson, may your grasp of the meaning of Christ's high-priestly service be sharply quickened, and may you avail yourself of the spiritual benefits available to you from that ministry.

## LESSON OUTLINE

1. **His Sympathy With Us (Heb. 4:14-16)**
2. **What Is a High Priest? (Heb. 5:1, 2, 4)**
3. **His Appointment as High Priest (Heb. 5:5, 6)**
4. **His Sympathy for Humans (Heb. 5:7)**
5. **Human Discipline of Our Lord (Heb. 5:8-10)**
6. **Consequences of Spiritual Immaturity (Heb. 5:11, 12)**

**Part 1**  
**HIS SYMPATHY**  
**WITH US**

**“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:14-16).**

The original readers of this epistle were in danger of letting go their faith and falling away from Christianity. A consciousness of having a High Priest who has ascended to the very presence of God should bring to them staying power. Note that this High Priest is called “Jesus the Son of God.” The use of the human name “Jesus” suggests His nearness to them, whereas “Son of God” suggests the power of His deity. The two are combined in Him. Because the Hebrew believers have such a sympathetic and powerful representative with God they are admonished to hold fast their confession—their faith. The Greek for “hold fast” is a strong word suggesting the idea of clinging tenaciously to something.

**Why may Christians be confident that their High Priest sympathetically understands them? Verse 15.**

“Christ alone had experience in all the sorrows and temptations that befall human beings. Never another of woman born was so fiercely beset by temptation; never another bore so heavy a burden of the world’s sin and pain. Never was there another whose sympathies were so broad or so tender. A sharer in all the experiences of humanity, He could feel not only for, but with, every burdened and tempted and struggling one.”—*Education*, p. 78.

As a human being, Jesus suffered the full force of every kind of temptation to which men are subject, but He never sinned.

“There was not a trace of imperfection in His life or character. He maintained spotless purity under circumstances the most trying.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 929.

**Where and how are we to come for mercy and grace? Verse 16.**

Because of past sins and present weakness we need mercy and grace. William Tyndale translated “mercy seat” as “seat of grace.” The throne of grace is the throne where Christ reigns as our Priest-King. To it we may continually go with confidence. “We are to come in faith, believing that we shall obtain the very things we ask of Him.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1078.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 4:14-16.



**Part 2**  
**WHAT IS A**  
**HIGH PRIEST?**

**“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.”**

**“And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron” (Heb. 5:1, 2, 4).**

A priest is “a person duly authorized to minister in sacred things as a mediator between man and God, and to offer sacrifices for the sins of men.”—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 875.

In order to represent human beings in that which pertains to God he must himself be human. As such he must be able to “deal gently” (RSV) with sinners. The original word means to hold one’s emotions in restraint. He must not be either too severe or too tolerant. While opposing sin, He must have sympathy for the sinner. “The thought of his own weakness and sin makes him [a human high priest] moderate in his (justifiable) displeasure and anger at the sins of the people.”—Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1967), vol. 5, p. 938. Used by permission.

“The ignorant” could mean the wayward through ignorance. In any case, it is worthy of note that in Israel’s sacrificial system no sin offering could be brought for presumptuous sins. Sacrifices were, however, prescribed for sins committed “unwittingly” (RSV), or “through ignorance.” (See Lev. 4:2, 13; Num. 15:22-30; Deut. 17:12.) Sins done unwittingly probably included those done ignorantly, and those done in a moment of impulse. Sins of presumption were open-eyed, deliberate violations of God’s law. For these no sin offering was prescribed.

**Because the ordinary high priest was “beset with weakness” (RSV), what was it necessary for him to do? Heb. 5:3.**

It is at this point that Jesus as our High Priest differs from other priests, for He never sinned. Here one may raise the question, Can one who has never sinned sympathize with a sinner? On the contrary, it is only the person who has withstood temptation who really knows the power of the temptation. The one who yields has not experienced its utmost force.

**How is the high-priestly office obtained? Verse 4.**

“Christ was appointed to the office of Mediator from the creation of God, set up from everlasting to be our substitute and surety.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 250.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 5:1-4.

**Part 3**  
**HIS APPOINTMENT**  
**AS HIGH PRIEST**

**How did Jesus become our High Priest?**

**“So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb. 5:5, 6).**

After briefly showing the qualifications for the office of high priest, our epistle shows how Jesus met them. He begins with the last qualification mentioned—divine appointment. Our Lord did not assume the honor of the high-priestly office on His own initiative. His whole life was an enunciation of the principle He uttered: “If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me” (John 8:54).

Jesus was appointed as a high priest by Him who said to Him, “Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.” These words are from Psalm 2:7. “To day” in the quotation probably refers to the time when Jesus, after the ascension, was exalted and invested with His royal dignity as the Son of God. It was then that God announced that Jesus was “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). In addition, the epistle asserts, He was made a high priest.

The second quotation is taken from Psalm 110:4, a psalm which the New Testament uniformly applies to Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus Himself used the opening words of the psalm when He asked the Jews: “How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? . . . David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and where is he then his son?” (Mark 12:35-37). The same God who acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah also acclaimed Him as High Priest.

Jesus is declared to be “a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” Melchisedec is introduced in Genesis 14:18 as “king of Salem” (probably Jerusalem) and “priest of the most high God.” The nature of his priesthood, therefore, differed widely from that of Aaron. He was a priest-king. Jesus in like manner is Priest-King.

The epistle develops further this likeness to Melchisedec in chapter 7. Our Lord’s priesthood, it will be shown, is not dependent on any fleshly descent, or limited by conditions of time. Christ is a priest forever because He has no successor, or any need for a successor.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“God gave Him His appointment to the priesthood. He was to be an example to all the human family. He qualified Himself to be, not only the representative of the race, but their Advocate, so that every soul if he will may say, I have a Friend at court.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 930.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 5:5, 6.

**Part 4**  
**HIS SYMPATHY**  
**FOR HUMANS**

**How is Jesus' total identity with human beings vividly shown?**

**"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb. 5:7).**

The second qualification Jesus has as a priest is His ability to sympathize with human weaknesses because He has experienced our temptations, our sorrows, and our woes. He voluntarily made Himself just as dependent upon God the Father as we are. Hence prayer was a necessity for Him.

"Our Saviour identified Himself with our needs and weakness, in that He became a suppliant, a petitioner, seeking from His Father fresh supplies of strength, that He might come forth braced for duty and trial. He is our example in all things. He is a brother in our infirmities, 'in all points tempted like as we are;' but as the sinless one His nature recoiled from evil; He endured struggles and torture of soul in a world of sin. His humanity made prayer a necessity, and a privilege."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 93, 94.

Our epistle shows how intensely Jesus shared our human lot. "In the days of his flesh" means during the period of His earthly life. There must have been many times when our Lord struggled with great intensity in prayer. But the language here used with its vividness, pathos, and solemnity applies especially to Gethsemane. The loud cries and tears speak eloquently of His desperate need at that crucial hour.

**For what did Jesus pray in Gethsemane? Mark 14:32-36.**

"The cup which he prayed should be removed from him, that looked so bitter to his soul, was the cup of separation from God in consequence of the sin of the world. He who was perfectly innocent and unblamable, became as one guilty before God, in order that the guilty might be pardoned and stand as innocent before God."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Nov. 19, 1895.

Our Lord prayed "unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard." How can it be said that He was heard when the cup was not removed from Him and He was not delivered from death? The text does not say that Jesus prayed to Him who *would deliver* Him from death, but who *was able* to deliver Him from death. Our Lord prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). Jesus thereby pledged Himself to accept the Father's decision.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 5:7.

**Part 5**  
**HUMAN DISCI-**  
**PLINE OF OUR LORD**

**What did the incarnate Christ need to learn and how did He learn it?**

**"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. 5:8-10).**

Jesus was the eternal Son of God in a unique sense. As such "He was independent and above all law."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 120, and therefore owed obedience to no one. He voluntarily assumed the nature of humanity and learned by experience what obedience means.

"In order to elevate fallen man, Christ must reach him where he was. He took human nature, and bore the infirmities and degeneracy of the race."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 268.

This brought suffering to Him. "While He was free from the taint of sin, the refined sensibilities of His holy nature rendered contact with evil unspeakably painful to Him."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 927.

More than this, as a human being, He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). "His soul was made an offering for sin."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 924.

**Through a life of obedience and suffering, what did Jesus become? to whom? Heb. 5:9.**

Through a life of self-denial, temptation, and sacrifice He became a perfect Saviour, the source or cause of eternal salvation.

**What was Christ now designated? by whom? Heb. 5:10.**

The word translated "called" "expresses the formal and solemn ascription of the title to Him to whom it belongs (addressed as, 'styled')."—B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1950), p. 130. Used by permission.

The ignorance of those who crucified Christ "did not remove their guilt; for it was their privilege to know and accept Jesus as their Saviour. Some of them would yet see their sin, and repent, and be converted. Some by their impenitence would make it an impossibility for the prayer of Christ to be answered for them. Yet, just the same, God's purpose was reaching its fulfillment. Jesus was earning the right to become the advocate of men in the Father's presence."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 744, 745.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 5:8-10.

**Part 6**  
**CONSEQUENCES OF**  
**SPIRITUAL IMMATUREITY**

**“Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for a time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat” (Heb. 5:11, 12).**

The author finds it difficult to unfold the truth of Christ's high priesthood after the order of Melchizedek in part because it is a hard subject, but primarily because of the dull and sluggish spiritual understanding of his readers. Unfortunately they have not grown with the passing years; in spiritual comprehension they are still infants. Though they have been Christians for a considerable time, they are capable of comprehending only the elementary principles of God's word. "A little babe is wonderful, but a sixty-year-old babe is not."—M. L. Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), p. 206.

**What food is appropriate for babes? for the mature? Heb. 5:13, 14. Compare 1 Cor. 3:1, 2.**

By "milk" we are to understand the very ABCs of divine revelation suitable for new converts. (See 1 Peter 2:2.) These are important, but there is much more to learn, referred to in the Revised Standard Version as "solid food." Solid food is for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil: This suggests that the ability to discriminate is developed by careful study, meditation, and practice.

"Were Jesus with us today, He would say to us as He did to His disciples, 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now' (John 16:12). . . . Their earthliness, their clouded, deficient comprehension made it impossible. They could not be benefited with great, glorious, solemn truths. The want of spiritual growth closes the door to the rich rays of light that shine from Christ. We shall never reach a period when there is no increased light for us."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 403, 404.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

"Many an honest, well-meaning person makes no advancement in the Christian life because he does not see the necessity of constantly learning more of Jesus. . . . The new convert is happy and joyous; but trials come; the perplexities of life are to be met; sinful traits of character that have not been controlled, strive for the mastery, and too frequently obtain it. Then come a loss of confidence and peace, neglect of prayer and the reading of the Scriptures. For want of the knowledge and experience which they should have, many are overcome by Satan."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 89.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 5:11-14.



# An Anchor Against Apostasy

**“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb. 6:19, 20).**

Hebrews 6 begins with the challenge, “Therefore let us . . . go on to maturity” (verse 1, RSV). This is a surprising conclusion to draw after telling the readers in Hebrews 5:12, RSV, “You need milk, not solid food.” The author has lamented the difficulty of unfolding the truth of Jesus’ high-priestly office. Difficult, not only because of the subject, but because his hearers have become “dull of hearing.” Consequently we might have expected that he would say, “Therefore, I must wait until you are ready; or, therefore, I must continue to feed you with milk. Rather, he challenges, “Therefore let us . . . go on to maturity.” The context makes it quite evident that their problem is not a lack of intellectual competence, but of spiritual inertia and indifference. They had not put their faith into practice or grown in spiritual experience. The Greek for “dull” literally means “no push,” hence, sluggish, indifferent, lazy. To grasp the meaning of Jesus’ intercessory work it would be necessary for them to recognize that the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices had been done away with once and for all.

He therefore lays emphasis on the necessity of progress in their Christian lives (6:1-3). There can be no standstill in Christian experience. There is either progress or relapse. Christians must either grow or die. The Christian life is like riding a bicycle; one must either move on or get off. If these believers fall back, they are in acute danger of the temptation to complete apostasy (6:4-6). But if they forsake Christ, they are doomed. There is no other hope of salvation but in Him; there is no other path but the path He opened through His cross, no other priest who can intercede in their behalf.

From exhortation and warning the author turns to encouragement and hope. He is confident that He who has begun a good work in them will carry it to completion. But they must throw off their spiritual sluggishness and stupor and manifest again “diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end” (Heb. 6:11).

For their encouragement he assures them of the certainty of the Christian hope which is based on the unfailing promises of God. God stands back of every promise He has made (6:13-17). Hope is not just expectation and desire, but it includes trust and confidence in God. Such a hope is an anchor that will hold them safe in the storms of life. But that hope must be in Jesus, who is now their intercessor at God’s right hand. That same hope is for Christians today.

“He walked once a man on earth, His divinity clothed with humanity, a suffering, tempted man, beset with Satan’s devices. He was tempted in all points like as we are, and He knows how to succor those that are tempted. Now He is at the right hand of God, He is in heaven as our advocate, to make intercession for us. . . . When tempted, just say, . . . He loves me, He has died for me. I will give myself unreservedly to Him. We grieve the heart of Christ when we go mourning over ourselves as though we were our own savior. No; we must commit the keeping of our souls to God as unto a faithful Creator. He ever lives to make intercession for the tried, tempted ones.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 391.

## LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Christian Progress (Heb. 6:1-3)**
2. **The Peril of Relapse (Heb. 6:4-6)**
3. **An Analogy From Nature (Heb. 6:7, 8)**
4. **Words of Hope (Heb. 6:9-12)**
5. **Certainty of God’s Promise (Heb. 6:13-15)**
6. **The Anchor of the Soul (Heb. 6:17, 18)**

**Part 1**  
**CHRISTIAN**  
**PROGRESS**

**“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit” (Heb. 6:1-3).**

This is a challenge to leave behind elementary religious instruction and move on to a more advanced stage of spiritual understanding. But what are “the principles of the doctrine of Christ” (literally, “the word of the beginning of Christ”)? They are the basic, elementary Christian doctrines which constitute the “alphabet” of becoming a Christian. The readers of the epistle are urged to leave these elementary teachings, not in the sense of forsaking them or denying their validity, but in the same sense in which a carpenter leaves the foundation of a new house and proceeds to build the rest of the structure. The message here is, Let us move on toward full growth.

The first foundational doctrine mentioned is “repentance from dead works.” This evidently means, as the New International Version puts it, “repentance from acts that lead to death.” It is from such works that the conscience needs to be purified. (See Heb. 9:14.) Jews as well as Christians insisted on repentance from evil works. (Compare Mark 1:14, 15; Acts 3:19.) But along with repentance there is need for faith—“Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

Then follows “the doctrine of baptisms.” The author does not use *baptisma*, the usual word for baptism, but *baptismoi*, the plural. See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 433 for a discussion of the significance of this usage.

See *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 162, for the practice of the laying on of hands among Jews and early Christians. Among Christians the laying on of hands accompanied the healing of the sick, ordination, and prayer for the reception of the Spirit.

**What other two important doctrines are then named? Heb. 6:2. (See Acts 1:22; 4:2; 17:18; 24:15.)**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“If we would study the Bible diligently and prayerfully every day, we should every day see some beautiful truth in a new, clear, and forcible light.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 511.

“The Word is to be respected and obeyed. That Book which contains the record of Christ’s life, His work, His doctrines, His sufferings, and final triumphs, is to be the source of our strength. We are granted the privileges of school life in this world that we may obtain a fitness for the higher life.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 245.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 6:1-3.



**Part 2**  
**THE PERIL**  
**OF RELAPSE**

**What five privileges have those had who cannot be restored again to repentance?**

**"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:4-6).**

Willful apostasy by Christians who have had such high privileges is a very serious matter. While God may be willing to receive such, are they capable of once again manifesting saving faith?

Enlightenment comes when the God who created light in the beginning shines "in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). Enlightenment apparently takes place at the beginning of Christian life. In the Syriac New Testament, Murdock's translation, Hebrews 6:4 reads, "who have once descended to baptism."

Unfortunately, some in the early church interpreted the passage as meaning there could be no repentance for any sin committed after baptism and therefore postponed the ceremony until near the end of life. But the passage speaks of deliberate apostasy, not a stumbling after baptism.

"And have tasted of the heavenly gift" reminds us of Psalm 34:8: "O taste and see that the Lord is good." The heavenly gift is the gift of salvation including the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. "Tasted" describes vividly the personal experience of salvation. Furthermore, those mentioned have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, heard the good news of the gospel, and experienced the power of the future age already operative now.

**By willfully apostatizing after having had such privileges, what do they do? Verse 6.**

The margin of the RV reads, "*the while* they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." The clause suggests an active, continuous hostility to Christ. Our author is viewing the matter from the viewpoint of the Christian teacher. The teacher cannot bring complete apostates to a new beginning leading to conversion, but we must not limit what God can do. (See Matt. 19:26.)

**FURTHER STUDY**

SDA Bible Commentary, on Heb. 6:4-6.

**Part 3**  
**AN ANALOGY**  
**FROM NATURE**

**“For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh off upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned” (Heb. 6:7, 8).**

Men till the land for the purpose of making it produce crops that will be useful for man and beast. The tiller of the land, however, is dependent upon the sun and rain which only God can supply. In Egypt, where practically no rain fell, the Israelites watered their crops by irrigation. Canaan, Moses promised, would be different. It “is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year” (Deut. 11:11, 12). Such a land forms a fitting symbol of Christians. In the analogy drawn here the frequent and abundant rains represent the free and repeated bestowal of such spiritual blessings as were described in verses 4 through 6. A piece of cultivated land that has absorbed repeated rains is expected to produce a crop—a crop suitable for the owners of the field or those on whose account the crop is planted. Productivity of useful crops is the measure of a field’s value. So the Master of the Christian has a right to expect a suitable crop as the result of the abundant spiritual blessings bestowed. The field that produces some suitable crops is blessed with the capacity to produce an even greater harvest.

On the other hand, if the land does not produce any suitable crops, but produces only weeds and thorns, the mark of the curse (Gen. 3:17, 18), then doom looms over it. So it is with Christians who produce useless and noxious fruits. There are three steps in the doom of the land. First, it is recognized as “rejected.” The original word means “not standing the test,” hence reprobate, that is worthless. Second, it is near to being cursed, exposed to the peril of abandonment to perpetual barrenness. And the final end for it is burning. What else can be done with a field covered with thorns and thistles?

The same lesson was taught by Isaiah’s song of the vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7) and our Lord’s parable of the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9).

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“Are you, O careless heart, a fruitless tree in the Lord’s vineyard? Shall the words of doom ere long be spoken of you? How long have you received His gifts? How long has He watched and waited for a return of love?”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 216.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Christ’s Object Lessons*, “Spare It This Year Also,” pp. 212-218.

**Part 4**      **What strong confidence does the apostle have in his**  
**WORDS OF HOPE**      **readers? What eager desire does he have for them?**

**“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. . . . And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:9-12).**

Following the severe warning against apostasy, the apostle turns to encouragement. This is the only time in Hebrews that he refers to his readers as “beloved,” or “dear friends,” indicating a close attachment to them. The construction of the sentence including the verb translated “we are persuaded” “implies that the writer had felt misgivings and had overcome them.”—B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 154. He is fully confident that in their case apostasy is not to be expected.

**What was there about his readers that encouraged the apostle in this confidence? Verse 10.**

Near the close of His earthly life, our Lord declared, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). Acts of kindness done even to the lowliest are acts done to Christ Himself. (See Matt. 25:40). The original readers of Hebrews had not only served God’s people in the past, but were still doing so. In this the apostle saw hope, for by doing this they were showing love to God. What was needed now was a complete throwing off of all spiritual indolence and inertia and pressing on persistently to complete the final hope. “Hope” in the New Testament always bears “reference to the return of the Lord Jesus at the end of the age.”—Alan Richardson, ed., *A Theological Word Book of the Bible* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1957), p. 109. (Compare 1 Peter 1:13.) Note that the apostle longs that “every one” of his readers have this full confidence. By doing so they would become “followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:12). Perhaps the greatest example of such confidence is Abraham, whose experience is then cited.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“Christians who are constantly growing in earnestness, in zeal, in fervor, in love—such Christians never backslide. . . . They are ready to engage in the most stirring enterprises, and they have no room for slothfulness; they cannot find a place for stagnation.”—*My Life Today*, p. 103.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 6:9-12.

**Part 5**  
**CERTAINTY OF**  
**GOD'S PROMISE**

**“For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise” (Heb. 6:13-15).**

**Why do human beings follow the practice of taking oaths? Verse 16.**

A formal oath is a solemn appeal to God as a witness that a statement is true or a promise binding. Taking oaths is both ancient and universal as a means of impressing on a person the sacred obligation of telling the truth or keeping a promise.

**Why does God condescend to put Himself under oath? Verse 17.**

“Adapting His dealings with man to human understanding and to customs of the day, the Lord bound Himself by an oath to fulfill His promises.”—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 780. He did this to make very clear the unchanging nature of His purpose.

God made a number of promises to Abraham. The first came when he was called to leave the society of Ur in Mesopotamia to become a nomad. (See Gen. 12:1-3.) On arrival in Canaan, he was promised that land as an inheritance (verse 7).

“There was given to Abraham the promise, especially dear to the people of that age, of a numerous posterity and of national greatness. . . . And to this was added the assurance, precious above every other to the inheritor of faith, that of his line the Redeemer of the world should come.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 125. (For further promises see Genesis 15; 17; 22.)

But the promise reinforced by an oath was given Abraham after the test of his faith on Mount Moriah. (See Gen. 22:16.)

“God had called Abraham to be the father of the faithful, and his life was to stand as an example of faith to succeeding generations. But his faith had not been perfect. . . . That he might reach the highest standard, God subjected him to another test, the closest which man was ever called to endure. In a vision of the night he was directed to repair to the land of Moriah, and there offer up his son as a burnt offering upon a mountain that should be shown him.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 147.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“In every command and in every promise of the word of God is the power, the very life of God, by which the command may be fulfilled and the promise realized. He who by faith receives the word is receiving the very life and character of God.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 38.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 6:13-17.

**Part 6**  
**THE ANCHOR OF**  
**THE SOUL**

**“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:17, 18).**

“Heirs,” plural, indicates that God guaranteed His promise by taking an oath not only for the sake of Abraham, but also for all of Abraham’s spiritual heirs. (See Gal. 3:29.) God’s promises have not failed and cannot fail, for His very integrity as a God of truth is involved. Nevertheless, to confirm the certainty of His promise further, God has taken a solemn oath. Thus we can cling not only to His promise but also to His oath—“two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false” (RSV).

“Fled for refuge” reminds us of the appointed cities of refuge of ancient times (Ex. 21:13, 14; Num. 35:12, 25; Deut. 4:41, 42), a type of Jesus Christ, who by the shedding of His blood has provided a sure retreat for the sinner. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 516.) It also reminds us of the right of asylum which men tried to find by fleeing to the sanctuary and laying hold of the horns of the altar. (See 1 Kings 1:50; 2:28-35; compare Ex. 21:14.) So Christians are to flee to God and lay hold of the assurance of His covenant promises.

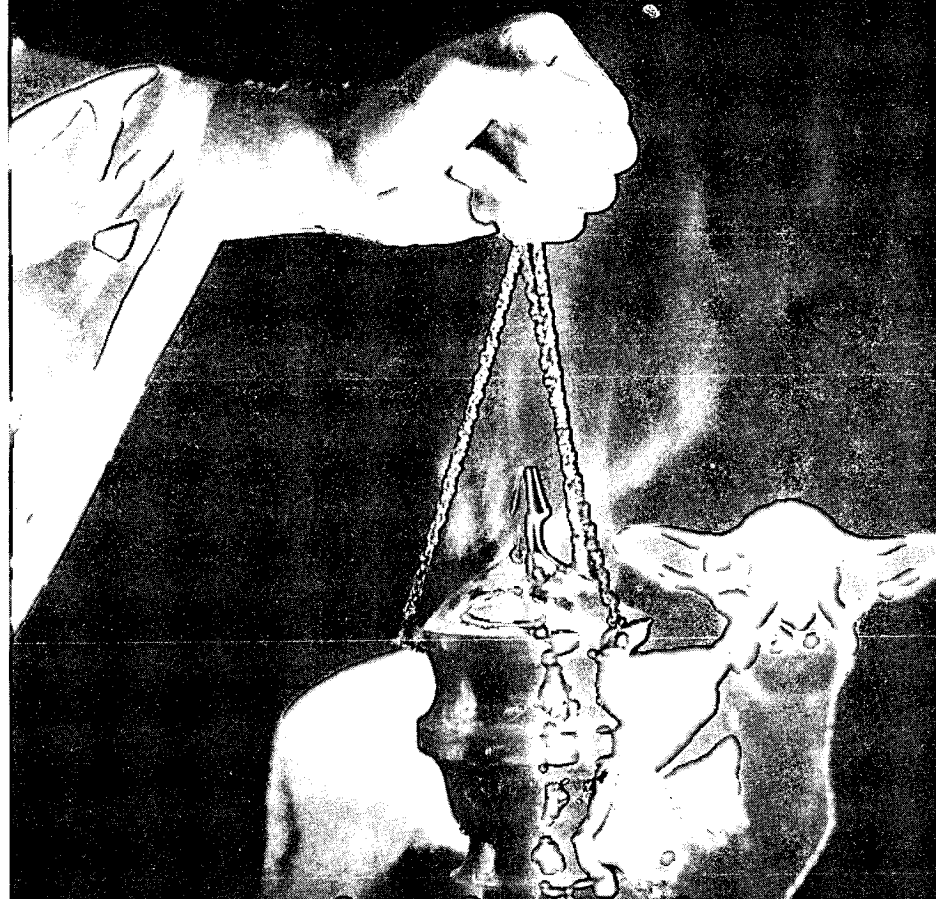
**To what is the Christian’s hope likened, and where does it enter? Heb. 6:19, 20.**

The anchor of hope in Christ, which is sure and steadfast, will keep believers from making a shipwreck of their lives. The only hope of the Christian is to be securely anchored in Christ and His righteousness. Christ has entered the heavenly sanctuary and, as their High Priest, ministers to them forgiveness for the past and grace and power for the present.

Whether “within the veil,” (“behind the curtain,” RSV) means within the sanctuary as a whole, without specifying which apartment, or in the most holy place, opinions differ, for the sanctuary had two veils. Even if the second is correct, it need not mean that Christ began His work in the second apartment upon His ascension, but could rather mean that He entered there to dedicate it along with the rest of the sanctuary when He assumed His high-priestly office. Compare the anointing of the earthly sanctuary in Exodus 40. (See also Dan. 9:24.)

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 6:17-20 and Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 7, p. 930; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 420, 489; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 38, 39.



# Superiority of Christ's Priesthood

*"But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:24, 25).*

The concept that Jesus Christ is our High Priest is one of the central teachings of Hebrews. It was first introduced in Hebrews 2:17 with stress on Jesus' humanness as essential for a "merciful and faithful high priest." Christ's faithfulness as the "High Priest of our profession" is further emphasized in chapter 3:1. Then chapter 4:14-16 stresses Christ's ability as a high priest to sympathize with human weaknesses because He "was in all points tempted like as we are." Therefore He extends to those who draw near the throne of grace, mercy for past failures, and grace to meet future tests successfully. In chapter 5 the author deals with two outstanding qualifications for high-priesthood and shows how Jesus met them. Now in chapter 7 he shows that Jesus belongs to a new and higher order of priesthood than the Aaronic; namely, the order of Melchizedek. He has already prepared the way for this by quoting Psalm 110:4 in Hebrews 5:6, referring to it again in verse 10 and in chapter 6:20.

It is important to bear in mind in the study of Hebrews 7 that the discussion is not primarily about Melchizedek, but about Jesus Christ and His priesthood. The author's concern is to establish the legitimacy and dignity of our Lord's office. He applies to Jesus the words of Psalm 110:4, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." In Hebrews 1:3 he had already applied Psalm 110:1 to Jesus. Psalm 110 was one of the most frequently used and alluded to passages of the Old Testament by early Christians. Verse 1 is directly quoted, not only in Hebrews 1:3, but also in Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42, 43; and Acts 2:34, 35. Besides, there are frequent allusions to it elsewhere. Based on this passage, together with the historical account in Genesis 14:18-20, the author uses Melchizedek to establish the validity of Christ's priesthood. These passages indicate that there was another priesthood which was older and superior to the Aaronic. It was a royal,

universal, and perpetual priesthood.

Since Melchizedek was superior to Aaron, and Christ's priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek, His priesthood is superior to the Aaronic order. Note how Hebrews establishes the superiority of Melchizedek to Aaron. Note also how the priesthood of Aaron and the laws governing it are regarded as temporary. The Aaronic priests failed to achieve the goal of doing away with sin.

In contrast to the transitory nature of the Levitical priests, Christ's priesthood is permanent and changeless. It is efficacious, absolute, and final. Because it "continueth ever," the way of access to God is always open.

"By His spotless life, His obedience, His death on the cross of Calvary, Christ interceded for the lost race. And now not as a mere petitioner does the Captain of our salvation intercede for us, but as a conqueror claiming His victory. His offering is complete, and as our intercessor He executes His self-appointed work, holding before God the censer containing His own spotless merits and the prayers, confessions, and thanksgiving of His people. Perfumed with the fragrance of His righteousness, the incense ascends to God as a sweet savor. The offering is wholly acceptable, and pardon covers all transgression. To the true believer Christ is indeed the minister of the sanctuary, officiating for him in the sanctuary, and speaking through God's appointed agencies."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 930, 931.

## LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Melchizedek the Priest-king** (Heb. 7:1, 2)
2. **Greatness of Melchizedek** (Heb. 7:4-7)
3. **Imperfection of the Aaronic Priesthood** (Heb. 7:11, 12)
4. **Superiority of the New Priesthood** (Heb. 7:15, 16)
5. **Christ's Priesthood Ratified by an Oath** (Heb. 7:20-22)
6. **Permanence of Christ's Priesthood** (Heb. 7:23-25)

**Part 1**  
**MELCHIZEDEK THE**  
**PRIEST-KING**

**What do the Scriptures reveal regarding Melchizedek?**

**"For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually" (Heb. 7:1-3).**

Compare Genesis 14:18-20.

Melchizedek is used to illustrate the superiority of Christ's priesthood over that of the Levites. Historically, he was king of Salem (Jerusalem) and priest of God Most High, a bestower of blessing on Abraham, a monotheist, and a receiver of tithes. His identity is otherwise unknown. Prophetically, he was the pattern of the Messianic Priest-King (Ps. 110:4). The book of Hebrews builds on this history and prophecy to exalt Jesus Christ as our great High Priest.

Melchizedek is a type of Christ in several ways:

1. *Office.* He was a priest-king as is Christ.

2. *Character.* Although we know practically nothing regarding the personal character of Melchizedek, our author sees meaning in his name and titles. Melchizedek means "my king is righteousness," or "king of righteousness." God has made Christ, says Paul, "our righteousness" (1 Cor. 1:30, RSV). Melchizedek was also king of Salem, a variant form of *shalom*, meaning "peace." The Messiah is the "prince of peace" of Old Testament prophecy (Isa. 9:6, 7), and in the New Testament Christ our peace (Eph. 2:14).

3. *Nature of his person.* Here the author of Hebrews argues from silence. "To him the silences of Scripture were as much due to divine inspiration as were its statements."—F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews, The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 137. The fact that the Scripture has no record of the beginning or close of his life makes him a fitting type of Christ who has no beginning or end of days.

4. *No genealogy.* Melchizedek is devoid of any genealogy. The most essential qualification for a man to serve as a Levitical priest was a genealogy which could be traced back in an unbroken line to Aaron. Lacking this, men could be excluded from the priesthood. (See Ezra 2:61-63; Neh. 7:63-65.) But the Bible says nothing about either his parents or children.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

"The peace of Christ, the peace of Christ—money cannot buy it, brilliant talent cannot command it, intellect cannot secure it; it is the gift of God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 559.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Gen. 14:18, and on Heb. 7:1-3.



**Part 2**  
**THE GREATNESS**  
**OF MELCHIZEDEK**

**To whom did Abraham pay tithes and what did he receive in return? What does this imply regarding his status?**

**"See how great he is! Abraham the patriarch gave him a tithe of the spoils. And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brethren, though these also are descended from Abraham. But this man who has not their genealogy received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior" (Heb. 7:4-7, RSV).**

Why is the author concerned about the greatness of Melchizedek? Because he sees in that ancient priest-king a type of Christ; and Christ must be recognized as far superior to any priest descended from Aaron. Hence he argues here that Melchizedek is superior to Abraham. Abraham was one of the noblest and most heroic figures of Old Testament times. He was not only an impressive figure personally, but was one of the most important Old Testament characters in the development of redemptive history. He became known as the friend of God. (See Isa. 41:8; 2 Chron. 20:7; James 2:23.) He was chosen to be "the father of the people who for centuries were to be the guardians and preservers of the truth of God to the world, the people through whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed in the advent of the promised Messiah."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 15. As the father of the Jewish people, he was the most highly regarded of all the ancients. Yet Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek and was blessed by him, thus showing Melchizedek's superiority over Abraham.

**What commandment about tithing did the Levites have? From whom did they take tithes? Heb. 7:5.**

The story of Abraham and Melchizedek shows that tithing did not originate with the Hebrews. It was, however, made an integral part of the Mosaic law. (See Lev. 27:30-32.) The tithe was to be given to the Levites for their service in the sanctuary and religious teaching. They were given no allotment in the Land of Canaan and were to devote their whole time to their sacred work. The Levites as mortal men received tithes from their fellow Jews. By contrast Melchizedek, a non-Jew and type of our eternal High Priest, accepted tithes from the founder of the Jewish nation and "blessed him who had the promises." On the assumption that an ancestor represents all his descendants "one might even say" (RSV) that the Levites paid tithes to Melchizedek in the person of their progenitor.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 7:4-7.

**Part 3**  
**IMPERFECTION OF**  
**THE AARONIC**  
**PRIESTHOOD**

**Why was there a need for a change in the order of the priesthood?**

**"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:11, 12).**

The very fact that Psalm 110 predicted the coming of a priest "after the order of Melchisedec" is evidence that the Aaronic priesthood was temporary. That priesthood was to be replaced because it failed to bring men to perfection. There was no inherent virtue in the sacrifices or priestly ministry of the tabernacle. These had meaning and efficacy only as they symbolized Christ and directed men's faith to Him and His atoning death and ministry.

**But if the priesthood was to be changed, what other change was necessary? Heb. 7:12-14.**

"The law provided that only the Levites could serve at the tabernacle, and that only the sons of Aaron could be priests."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 7:12. But neither Melchizedek nor our Lord belonged to the Aaronic line of priests. Melchizedek was not even a Jew, and Jesus traced His human ancestry through the royal tribe of Judah, not the priestly tribe of Levi. (See Matt. 1:1.) Therefore if the new priest is to be after a different order, there must be also a change of the regulations regarding priesthood.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

"Our Saviour, in His life and death, fulfilled all the prophecies pointing to Himself, and was the substance of all the types and shadows signified. He kept the moral law, and exalted it by answering its claims as man's representative. Those of Israel who turned to the Lord, and accepted Christ as the reality shadowed forth by the typical sacrifices, discerned the end of that which was to be abolished. The obscurity covering the Jewish system as a veil, was to them as the veil which covered the glory upon the face of Moses. The glory upon the face of Moses was the reflection of that light which Christ came into the world to bring for the benefit of man."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 231.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 7:11-14.

**Part 4**  
**SUPERIORITY OF**  
**THE NEW PRIESTHOOD**

**"And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7:15, 16).**

What is it that becomes more evident or clear? Apparently the need for a change in the law regarding priesthood as stated in verse 12. The Greek word for "another" indicates that the need is not for just another person as priest, but for a priest of a different kind, one "in the likeness of Melchizedek" (RSV). The basis on which this new priest serves is "not after the law of a carnal commandment," that is, a regulation having to do with fleshly descent from Levitical ancestors. Rather he serves on the basis of the power of an indestructible, and therefore endless, life. Note the contrasts here drawn: "law," an outward restraint, on the one hand; "power" an inward force, on the other; "carnal" with "endless"; "commandment" with "life."

In verse 17 the author cites again Psalm 110:4, "Thou art a priest for ever." "For ever" means continuance and permanence. As applied to Jesus we must think primarily of the risen Christ. "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9).

**What is set aside? Why? What is introduced? Heb. 7:18, 19.**

The ceremonial system consisted of symbols of great gospel truths. Religious symbols point to realities beyond themselves. If the realities are neglected, the symbols are meaningless. "Since the whole ritual economy was symbolical of Christ, it had no value apart from Him."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 165.

"The ceremonial law was to answer a particular purpose in Christ's plan for the salvation of the race. The typical system of sacrifices and offerings was established that through these services sinners might discern the great offering, Christ."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1094, 1095.

The failure to see Christ in these rituals made them empty and useless. "When the Jews sealed their rejection of Christ by delivering Him to death, they rejected all that gave significance to the temple and its services. Its sacredness had departed. It was doomed to destruction. From that day sacrificial offerings and the service connected with them were meaningless."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 165. But in Christ Christians have "a better hope," through which "we draw nigh unto God" (Heb. 7:19).

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 7:15-19.

**Part 5**  
**CHRIST'S PRIEST-**  
**HOOD RATIFIED BY**  
**AN OATH**

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

**'The Lord has sworn  
and will not change his mind,  
'Thou art a priest for ever.''**

**"This makes Jesus the surety of a better covenant" (Heb. 7:20-22, RSV).**

Inasmuch as the office of high priest was hereditary, the Aaronic priests were born and not made. They became priests by virtue of a descent prescribed by the law. By contrast our Lord was appointed as a high priest by an oath. Again the author quotes from Psalm 110:4: "The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever."

God is the God of truth (Ps. 31:5) and can be relied on to be faithful to His word. But to emphasize His truthfulness and reliability to human beings God has at times condescended to confirm His statements with an oath. "He swore to Abraham (Genesis 26:3), to Isaac (Psalm 105:9; Jeremiah 11:5), and to David (Psalm 132:11; Acts 2:30)."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 203. Note also the frequent use in Ezekiel of the formula, "As I live, saith the Lord God" (Eze. 5:11; 14:16, 18, 20; 16:48, etc.).

"When God swears, He makes His own person the pledge of the truth of His Word."—Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, p. 629. He cannot, then, go back on His promises.

**Of what, then, does this make Jesus the surety?**

The Greek word for "surety" means a "guarantor," one who accepts legal obligations in a bond. Jesus is made the guarantor of a better covenant. This is the first occurrence of the word translated "covenant" (RSV) in the epistle of Hebrews. More will be said about it later, particularly in chapters 8 and 9. It is a "better covenant" than the one God made with Israel at Sinai, in that it is based on Christ's eternal promise to die for the sinner and grant him forgiveness.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

"In partaking with His disciples of the bread and wine, Christ pledged Himself to them as their Redeemer. He committed to them the new covenant, by which all who receive Him become children of God, and joint heirs with Christ. By this covenant every blessing that heaven could bestow for this life and the life to come was theirs. This covenant deed was to be ratified with the blood of Christ. And the administration of the Sacrament was to keep before the disciples the infinite sacrifice made for each of them individually as a part of the great whole of fallen humanity."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 656-659.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 7:20-22.

**Part 6**  
**PERMANENCE OF**  
**CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD**

**What final contrast is drawn between the Aaronic priests and Christ?**

**"They truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:23-25).**

The author contrasts "the many" with the one. Because these high priests were subject to death, there was a succession of replacements, with the people questioning, What will the new priest be like? This One will be understanding and sympathetic, and, because He is "alive for evermore," unchanging (Rev. 1:18). "He holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever" (RSV).

**Because this is so, what is Christ able to do? For what does He live? Heb. 7:25.**

This permanency means that the way of access to God is always open. The phrase "for all time" in the RSV was understood in this sense by the ancient Vulgate, Syriac, and Coptic versions. Other ancient and modern interpreters understand it as meaning "completely," "fully" or "wholly," as in the KJV, "to the uttermost."

"Commentators are divided as to which meaning applies here. Both are true, for Christ saves both completely and for all time."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 7:25.

"He ever liveth to make intercession." But we shall see as we examine Hebrews 9:24 that His intercessory work consists not so much in verbal petitions, as suggested by "intercession," but in mighty and significant acts.

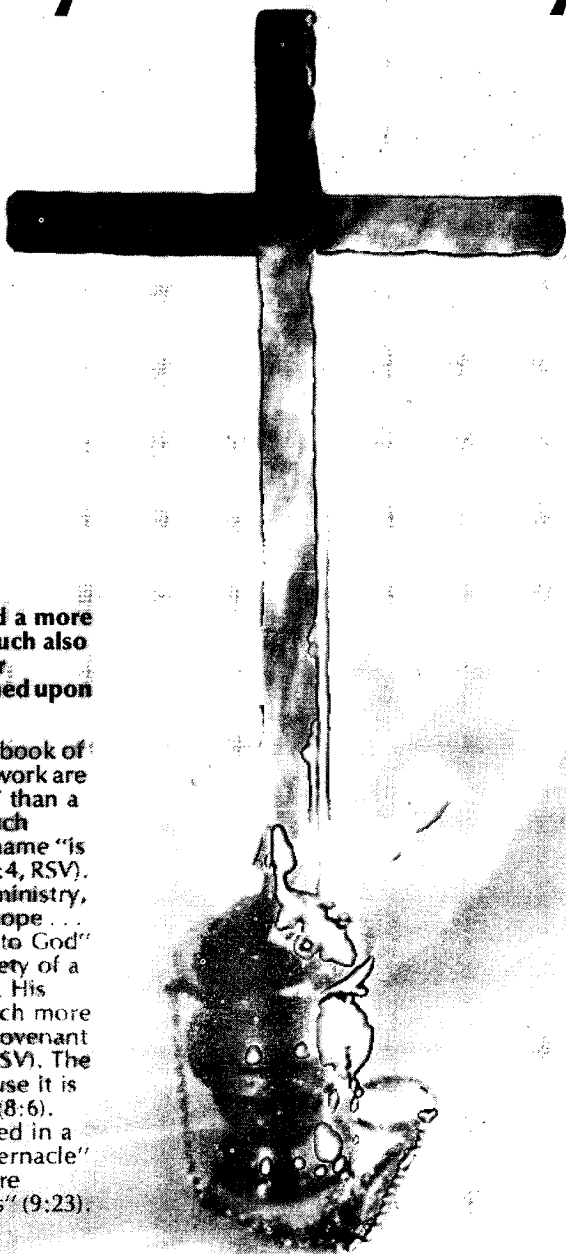
"All who come to Christ today are to remember that His merit is the incense that mingles with the prayers of those who repent of their sins and receive pardon and mercy and grace. Our need of Christ's intercession is constant."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1078.

"Everyone who will break from the slavery and service of Satan, and will stand under the blood-stained banner of Prince Immanuel will be kept by Christ's intercessions. Christ, as our Mediator, . . . ever keeps us in view, for it is as necessary that He should keep us by His intercessions as that He should redeem us with His blood. If He lets go His hold of us for one moment, Satan stands ready to destroy. Those purchased by His blood, He now keeps by His intercession."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1078.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 7:23-25.

# Heavenly Sanctuary



**"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Heb. 8:6).**

One of the key ideas of the book of Hebrews is that Jesus and His work are "better" or "more excellent" than a stated object. Christ is as much superior to the angels as His name "is more excellent than theirs" (1:4, RSV). Through our Lord's priestly ministry, He has introduced "a better hope . . . through which we draw near to God" (7:19, RSV). Jesus is "the surety of a better covenant" (7:22, RSV). His ministry as a priest "is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better" (8:6, RSV). The new covenant is better because it is based on "better promises" (8:6). Christ's priestly work is carried in a "greater and more perfect tabernacle" (9:11). The heavenly things are purified "with better sacrifices" (9:23).

# and New Covenant

Though the readers of the epistle had suffered the plundering of their property, they were certain of "a better possession and an abiding one" (10:34, RSV). The patriarchs died in faith of receiving "a better country" than Canaan, "that is, an heavenly" (11:16). We shall join the heroes of faith in obtaining something better that God has foreseen for us (11:40). Christianity offers far greater things than Judaism.

After having shown that Jesus qualified as a high priest, and that His priesthood has validity, the epistle begins to deal with His actual work as a priest. In this lesson three new things are emphasized. The first is the place where Jesus' superior ministry is carried on, which is the true sanctuary, which is not on earth but in heaven (8:1-5). It was not pitched by Moses, but by God Himself. The Mosaic tabernacle was but a copy and shadow of the reality in heaven. Jesus serves in a place of supreme power as Priest and King at God's right hand.

The second is our Lord's sacrificial offering. "It is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer" (8:3, RSV). What He offered is Himself once for all (7:27). This truth will be further stressed in 9:23-26.

In the third place, chapter 8 stresses that our Lord's priestly ministry is superior because it is based on a better covenant than the one made at Sinai. This new covenant, which was foreshadowed by Jeremiah, makes the old covenant obsolete (8:7-13). The covenants of the Old Testament include more than one type of legal relationship. One is a two-sided covenant between equal human parties, both of which voluntarily accept mutual obligations (for example, 1 Sam. 18:3, 4; Mal. 2:14). But the parties to a divine-human covenant are not equals. Rather, God determines the conditions and man

voluntarily accepts them. It is no doubt for this reason that the translators of the Old Testament into Greek did not use the word *syntheke* to translate the Hebrew word for "covenant." *Syntheke* ("contract," "compact") implies equality on the part of the contracting parties. Hence they preferred *diatheke* ("disposition").

The writer of Hebrews refers to the covenant with ancient Israel as the "first," or "old," covenant, and that with Christian believers as the "second," or "new" (ch. 8:7, 13). Essentially, the provisions, conditions, and objectives of the two covenants are identical. The chief difference is that the "old" covenant was made with Israel as a nation, whereas the "new" is made with individual believers in Christ. The "new" covenant is also called an "everlasting" covenant (Gen. 17:13; Heb. 13:20). It became operative in Eden when man sinned, but was not ratified until the blood of Christ was shed on the cross. The "old" covenant was ratified at Sinai (Ex. 24:3-8). The "old" covenant was, in fact, a temporary arrangement designed to enable those bound by its provisions to enter into the privileges and responsibilities of the "new," or "everlasting," covenant. (See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1103; vol. 4, pp. 632, 633.)

## LESSON OUTLINE

1. **The Ideal High Priest (Heb. 7:26, 27)**
2. **Our Priest in the Heavenly Sanctuary (Heb. 8:1, 2)**
3. **A Shadow of the Heavenly Sanctuary (Heb. 8:5)**
4. **Mediator of a Better Covenant (Heb. 8:6)**
5. **The Fault of the First Covenant (Heb. 8:7-9)**
6. **Promises of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:10-12)**

**Part 1**  
**THE IDEAL**  
**HIGH PRIEST**

**What important characteristics does our High Priest have?**

**"For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself" (Heb. 7:26, 27).**

The epistle has set forth Christ, the Melchizedek priest, as superior to the Aaronic priests. Now it deals specifically with Christ as our High Priest. It was fitting for Christians (us), because of their needs, to have the kind of high priest previously described; particularly one who has power to save for all time, and one who is eternal in being. Three personal characteristics of our Lord are then named. The Greek word used in verse 26 for "holy" "denotes His oneness with God."—*The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. 4, p. 318. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament it often represents the Hebrew word translated "loving kindness." "Harmless" indicates His innocency; He has never done any evil. And though He shared the lot of human beings on earth and associated with sinners, He was "undefiled." His life was never stained by sin. In this respect He is marked off from human beings, which is suggested by the phrase, "separate from sinners." Finally, He has been "made higher than the heavens," that is, raised to a sphere of celestial purity and glory and a position of universal power.

**What does our High Priest not need? What sacrifice did He offer? How often? Verse 27.**

Although there is no record of a prescribed daily offering that high priests offered for their own sins, the Levitical law did prescribe sin offerings to be offered by "the anointed priest who sins" (Lev. 4:3, RSV). On the Day of Atonement only the high priest could officiate, and on that day he specifically offered a sin offering to make atonement "for himself, and for his house" (Lev. 16:6, 11). But Christ had no sin, and hence needed no atonement for Himself, but for the people He made atonement "once, when he offered up himself." Thus He "took the form of a servant, and offered the sacrifice, himself the priest, himself the victim."—Ellen G. White, *The Southern Watchman*, Aug. 6, 1903.

**What contrast is drawn between men appointed priests by the law and the Son made a priest by the word of an oath? Heb. 7:28.**

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 7:26-28.



**Part 2**  
**OUR PRIEST IN**  
**THE HEAVENLY**  
**SANCTUARY**

**"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8:1, 2).**

The author now gives the gist of what he has in mind. We as Christians not only have a high priest, but "such an high priest," a high priest with the character portrayed in chapter 7, particularly verses 26 and 27. He is not only a priest but a priest "who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty [God] in the heavens." He is the Priest-King to whom "angels and authorities and powers" have been made subject (1 Peter 3:22).

**What is the scene of Christ's priesthood? Heb. 8:2.**

"Sanctuary" here is literally, "holy places." Various explanations for the use of the plural have been suggested. (See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 444.) That sanctuary is the "true tent" or "real tabernacle" in heaven.

"Here is revealed the sanctuary of the new covenant. The sanctuary of the first covenant was pitched by man, built by Moses; this is pitched by the Lord, not by man. In that sanctuary the earthly priests performed their service; in this, Christ, our great High Priest, ministers at God's right hand. One sanctuary was on earth, the other is in heaven."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 413.

**What else did Christ's ministry as a priest necessitate? Verses 3, 4.**

As Hebrews 5:1 states, "every high priest . . . is ordained . . . that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." Therefore Christ must also have something to offer. What He offers is not mentioned here, but in Hebrews 9:14 it is plainly declared to be His own blood. But He could not minister His blood until it was shed. Thus we have a clue regarding the time when His priestly service in heaven began. As further evidence that Jesus' ministry is in heaven, the epistle shows that Christ could not have been a priest on earth according to the law.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

"The heart belongs to Jesus. He has paid an infinite price for the soul; and He intercedes before the Father as our Mediator, pleading not as a petitioner, but as conqueror who would claim that which is His own. He is able to save to the uttermost, for He ever lives to make intercession for us."—*Messages to Young People*, p. 407.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 8:1-4.

**Part 3**  
**A SHADOW OF**  
**THE HEAVENLY**  
**SANCTUARY**

**Of what was the earthly sanctuary example and shadow?**

**“Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount” (Heb. 8:5).**

Hebrews contains several figures to show the relation between the Mosaic tabernacle and the heavenly sanctuary. Here the author refers to it as an example and a shadow.

“The matchless splendor of the earthly tabernacle reflected to human vision the glories of that heavenly temple where Christ our forerunner ministers for us before the throne of God. The abiding place of the King of kings, where thousand thousands minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him (Daniel 7:10); that temple, filled with the glory of the eternal throne, where seraphim, its shining guardians, veil their faces in adoration, could find, in the most magnificent structure ever reared by human hands, but a faint reflection of its vastness and glory. Yet important truths concerning the heavenly sanctuary and the great work there carried forward for man's redemption were taught by the earthly sanctuary and its service.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 414.

**In addition to verbal instruction, how was Moses informed about the construction of the ancient tabernacle? Heb. 8:5. (Compare Ex. 25:8, 9, 40; Num. 8:4.)**

The word translated “pattern” in Exodus 25:9 means literally “construction,” which suggests that Moses was shown a scale model of the structure he was to build and given verbal explanations concerning it. Following this came the injunction: “See that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain” (Ex. 25:40, RSV).

“The tabernacle was made according to the commandment of God. The Lord raised up men and qualified them with more than natural abilities to perform the most ingenious work. Neither Moses nor those workmen were left to plan the form and workmanship of the building. God Himself devised the plan and gave it to Moses, with particular directions as to its size and form and the materials to be used, and specified every article of furniture which was to be in it. He presented before Moses a miniature model of the heavenly sanctuary and commanded him to make all things according to the pattern showed him in the mount. Moses wrote all the directions in a book and read them to the most influential people.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 151.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 8:5.

**Part 4**  
**MEDIATOR OF A**  
**BETTER COVENANT**

**What has Christ obtained and what has He mediated?**

**“But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb. 8:6).**

“Ministry” is here a term for priestly service. The place where our Lord’s priestly service is performed is the heavenly sanctuary of which the tabernacle built by Moses was only a type and shadow (verses 1 and 2). Christ’s priestly service “of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched” (verse 2), surpasses that of the Aaronic priests as a substance surpasses a shadow, or a reality a type. It is “a more excellent ministry” because it is effective. Furthermore its excellency is shown by the new covenant under which its service is performed.

Christ is the “mediator” of this “better covenant.” He thus transcends and replaces Moses who was the mediator of the old covenant. “Mediates,” literally, “is a mediator.” A mediator is one who stands in the middle between two parties and brings them together. He is one whom both parties can trust as, for example, an umpire or an arbitrator. But the term also came to have the additional meaning of one who is a guarantor of the carrying out of an agreement. It is evident that this further meaning is included when Jesus is called the Mediator of the new covenant. In chapter 7:22 Jesus is called “the surety of a better testament.” Our Lord mediates the new covenant and guarantees the salvation it brings, for it includes His vicarious death.

**In what respect is the covenant that Christ mediates better than the old? Heb. 8:6.**

Of the “old covenant” Ellen G. White wrote: “God brought them to Sinai; He manifested His glory; He gave them His law, with the promise of great blessings on condition of obedience.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 371.

But the “‘new covenant’ was established on ‘better promises’—the promise of forgiveness of sins and of the grace of God to renew the heart and bring it into harmony with the principles of God’s law.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 372.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“Christ has pledged Himself to be our substitute and surety, and He neglects no one. He who could not see human beings exposed to eternal ruin without pouring out His soul unto death in their behalf, will look with pity and compassion upon every soul who realizes that he cannot save himself.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 157.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 370-373.

**Part 5**  
**THE FAULT OF**  
**THE FIRST COVENANT**

**In what respect was the first covenant faulty?**

**“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord” (Heb. 8:7-9).**

There was nothing inherently wrong with the first covenant or with the promises God made to those who would keep it. God always requires obedience. As for the people's promise, we have been told: “This is the pledge that God's people are to make in these last days.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1103.

“True victory is gained only when the repentant sinner pledges himself . . . to honor God in every word, every business transaction, every act of his life.”—Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, Jan. 17, 1911.

What, then, was the fault of the first covenant? The fault was not with the promises, but with the promisers—the people. They failed to recognize their own inability to keep the pledges they were making.

“Living in the midst of idolatry and corruption, they had no true conception of the holiness of God, of the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts, their utter inability, in themselves, to render obedience to God's law, and their need of a Saviour. All this they must be taught. . . .

“The people did not realize the sinfulness of their own hearts, and that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God's law; and they readily entered into covenant with God. Feeling that they were able to establish their own righteousness, they declared, ‘All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.’”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 371, 372.

Even before they left Sinai, they erected the golden calf while awaiting the return of Moses with the tables of the Decalogue. The epistle quotes from Jeremiah 31:31, 32 in showing the need for a better covenant.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, “Bearing the Divine Credentials,” pp. 363, 364; *SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 8:7-9.

**Part 6**  
**PROMISES OF**  
**THE NEW COVENANT**

**What promises does God make under the new covenant?**

**“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. . . . For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 8:10-12).**

The new covenant embodies three promises of God: 1. “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.” This means more than committing them to memory. Memorization does not necessarily include conformity of life to what is memorized. In the Bible the heart is the center of the whole inner being of man—the feelings, understanding, thought, reflection, will, and the religious and moral life. To have God’s laws written on the heart denotes a change in this inner center of being. Ezekiel described it as the gift of a new heart of flesh and a new spirit, “that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them” (Eze. 11:20). God says, “I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments” (Eze. 36:27).

2. A direct, personal knowledge of God. “And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. . . . All shall know me, from the least to the greatest” (Heb. 8:10, 11). This means that there will be a direct access to God, without the need of human mediators such as the Aaronic priests.

3. God promises to forgive and forget their sins. It is thus a covenant of grace promising pardon, full and free.

**What does the very fact that God speaks of a new covenant imply concerning the old? Heb. 8:13.**

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 668.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 8:10-13.

# Christ's High- priestly Service



“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb. 9:11, 12).

Chapter 9 begins with a brief description of the earthly tabernacle and its services. That they were of great significance is indicated by the amount of space devoted to them in the Scriptures. In the Pentateuch 13 chapters of Exodus (25 to 31; 35 to 40), 12 chapters of Leviticus (1-9, 16, 17, 23), 6 chapters of Numbers (7 to 9, 15, 18, 19), and several chapters in Deuteronomy (12, 16, 17, 26, etc.) are all concerned with the subject. It is on these scriptures that the Christian interpretation of the meaning of the tabernacle and its services is largely based. What truths of abiding value did the tabernacle teach? The Scriptures suggest a number which include the following:

1. *It provided a visible center for the worship of the one true God.* It symbolized the reality of God's presence with His people. This truth was emphasized in the instruction: "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8). "I will set my tabernacle among you. . . . And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people" (Lev. 26:11, 12).

2. *It and its services constituted a revelation of the plan of redemption.* It provided a system of object lessons to teach mankind the way of salvation.

"Christ was the foundation and life of the temple. Its services were typical of the sacrifice of the Son of God. The priesthood was established to represent the mediatorial character and work of Christ. The entire plan of sacrificial worship was a foreshadowing of the Saviour's death to redeem the world."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 165.

3. *It was itself a symbol of the incarnate Christ.* By means of the tabernacle God fulfilled the promise: "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God" (Ex. 29:45). The evangelist John evidently had this in mind when he wrote: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt [or tabernacled] among us" (John 1:14). He became Emmanuel, "God

with us" (Matt. 1:23). Hence the tabernacle is a fitting symbol of Him who "pitched His tent by the side of the tents of men, that He might dwell among us, and make us familiar with His divine character and life."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 23.

4. *It was a miniature representation of the great heavenly temple* where Christ as our High Priest ministers in behalf of believing sinners. It is to this significance that the book of Hebrews gives primary emphasis. (See Heb. 8:1-5; 9:11, 12, 24, etc.)

5. *It was also typical of the Christian church.* (See Eph. 2:18-22; 1 Peter 2:4, 5.) "The Jewish tabernacle was a type of the Christian church. . . . The church on earth, composed of those who are faithful and loyal to God, is the 'true tabernacle,' whereof the Redeemer is the minister. God, and not man, pitched this tabernacle on a high, and elevated platform.

"This tabernacle is Christ's body, and from north, south, east, and west He gathers those who shall help to compose it. . . . A holy tabernacle is built up of those who receive Christ as their personal Saviour. . . . Christ is the minister of the true tabernacle, the high priest of all who believe in Him as a personal Saviour."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 931.

6. *As a dwelling place for God, it is a symbol, ideally, of what every person is to be.* (See 1 Cor. 3: 16, 17; 6:19, 20; 10:31.) (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 161.)

## LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Tabernacle and Furniture** (Heb. 9:1, 2)
2. **Services of the Sanctuary** (Heb. 9:6, 7)
3. **A High Priest of Good Things** (Heb. 9:11, 12)
4. **Inaugurator of a New Covenant** (Heb. 9:15)
5. **Cleansing of the Sanctuary** (Heb. 9:23)
6. **Return of Our High Priest** (Heb. 9:27, 28)

**Part 1**  
**TABERNACLE AND**  
**FURNITURE****What does Hebrews say that the first covenant had?**

**"Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary" (Heb. 9:1, 2).**

To assert that even the first covenant had regulations for worship and a sanctuary is to imply that the second or new covenant likewise has them. The ancient tabernacle is here designated as an earthly as opposed to a heavenly sanctuary. It partook of the nature of the world, which in itself implies its transitory nature. It consisted of two parts: the first called the holy place, and the second the holy of holies. Inasmuch as the first apartment was used every day in the year, while the second was used only on the Day of Atonement, they are practically regarded as separate institutions.

Two articles of furniture are mentioned as located in the first apartment. On the south was the golden lampstand, or menorah, which "consisted of an upright shaft, from each side of which three branches extended upward, in pairs . . . , to the same level."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Ex. 25:31. On the north side stood the table with "the bread of the Presence" (Heb. 9:2, RSV).

**What articles of furniture belonged to the holy of holies? Describe the second article and its contents. Heb. 9:3-5.**

The apartment behind the second veil was called "the Holy of Holies" (RSV) because God was regarded as enthroned there on or above the cherubim. (See 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; Ps. 80: 1; 99:1.) Above the mercy seat, between the two cherubims, God revealed Himself to Moses (Ex. 25:22; Num. 7:89). The ark primarily contained the tables of the covenant on which the Ten Commandments were written. (See Ex. 25:16; 32:15, 16; 34:28, 29; Deut. 9:9, 10; 10:1-5.)

It is to be noted that Hebrews associates the altar of incense with the holy of holies. Actually it was located in the first apartment before the veil (Ex. 30:6; 40:5). But because of its close association with the second apartment in the tabernacle ritual, it is mentioned with it: "The Altar of incense bore the same relation to the Holy of Holies as the Altar of burnt offering to the Holy place. It furnished in some sense the means of approach to it."—B. J. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 247. (Compare 1 Kings 6:22.)

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 9:1-5.



**Part 2**  
**SERVICES OF**  
**THE SANCTUARY**

**What sharp contrast is drawn between the access of the priests to the two apartments respectively?**

**"Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people" (Heb. 9:6, 7).**

"The ministration of the sanctuary consisted of two divisions, a daily and a yearly service. The daily service was performed at the altar of burnt offering in the court of the tabernacle and in the holy place; while the yearly service was in the most holy."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 352.

The daily service was performed every day throughout the year continually. (See Heb. 10:11.) It consisted of the "continual" (Ex. 29:38-42; Num. 28:3-8); the perpetual offering of incense on the golden altar morning and evening (Ex. 30:7-9); the offering of shewbread or "bread of the Presence" on the table before the Lord "alway" (Ex. 25:30); and the continually burning olive oil lamps (Ex. 27:20, 21; 30:7, 8; Lev. 24:2-4). On Sabbaths, new moons, and special feasts there were additional offerings. Besides these regular offerings there were special burnt, cereal, peace, and sin offerings for individuals, the last of which was the most important.

Sharply to be distinguished from this continual daily service was the special ritual on the Day of Atonement, centering in the holy of holies. Only the high priest could enter this sacred place, and he only once a year, on the tenth day of the seventh month, and even he only by means of atoning blood. With that blood he made atonement for his own sins as well as for the errors of the people.

**What estimate of the efficacy of this ritual system does the epistle now give? Heb. 9:8-10.**

Access to the heavenly sanctuary was not available while the earthly sanctuary had validity. As long as that was the case, the service in the heavenly sanctuary could not begin. The efficacy of the earthly sanctuary however was very restricted. It was "symbolic for the present age" (RSV) and could not purify the conscience of the worshiper. Its services were not only inadequate but temporary.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 9:6-10.

**Part 3**  
**A HIGH PRIEST**  
**OF GOOD THINGS**

**What contrasts are drawn between the heavenly sanctuary with its offering and the earthly sanctuary with its offerings?**

**"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:11, 12).**

"But Christ being come an high priest" evidently indicates the time when He was inaugurated High Priest of the heavenly sanctuary. He ministers "the good things that have come" (RSV).

These gospel blessings have come in and through Christ in whom "the shadows have given way to the perfect and abiding reality."—F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 199.

Instead of using a man-made tabernacle for His service, Christ employed a "greater and more perfect tabernacle."

"That sanctuary, in which Jesus ministers in our behalf, is the great original, of which the sanctuary built by Moses was a copy.

"The heavenly temple, the abiding place of the King of kings . . . —no earthly structure could represent its vastness and its glory."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 357.

The superiority of Christ's priestly ministry rests not only in its once-for-all nature but also in the superior offering He presents—His own blood.

**In contrast to that which was accomplished by the blood of goats and bulls, what efficacy does the blood of Jesus have? Verses 13, 14.**

On the Day of Atonement the blood of goats and bulls was carried into the most holy place by the high priest. (See Lev. 16:5-9, 11-16.) These animal sacrifices had a typical significance and removed external ceremonial pollution; but Christ's unblemished sacrificial death atones for all sin, and hence can bring inward and spiritual cleansing.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

"Christ's priestly intercession is now going on in the sanctuary above in our behalf. But how few have a real understanding that our great High Priest presents before the Father His own blood, claiming for the sinner who receives Him as his personal Saviour all the graces which His covenant embraces as the reward of His sacrifice."—Ellen G. White *Comments*, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 932.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 9:11-14.

**Part 4**  
**INAUGURATOR OF**  
**A NEW COVENANT**

**"Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant" (Heb. 9:15, RSV).**

"Therefore," that is, because Christ's sacrificial death removed sin and leads to serving God, Jesus is the inaugurator and guarantor of a new covenant. He provides the very elements promised by the covenant. Jesus indicated that this new covenant was to be based on His death, for at the Last Supper He said concerning the wine, "this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28, RSV).

**When only does a will or testament become effective? Heb. 9:16, 17.**

The Greek word for "covenant" can also be used for a will, and in Hebrews 9:16, 17 a play is made on the double meaning of the term. A will, as distinguished from a covenant, does not take effect until the death of the one who made it. In this respect the new covenant is like a will, for its provisions are based on the death of Christ. On no other basis could grace and forgiveness be extended to the guilty.

**How was the first covenant inaugurated? Heb. 9:18-20; Ex. 24:3-8.**

A covenant is based on promises. God promised to make Israel His special people, "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). In response to God's proposed covenant Israel promised to be loyal and obedient to God (Ex. 19:7, 8; 24:3, 7). Hebrews gives the detail not mentioned in Exodus that the blood was sprinkled on the book and on the people along with the statement, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you" (Heb. 9:20, RSV). The vessels of the earthly sanctuary were also dedicated with blood (verse 21). The general principle is then laid down: "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (verse 22, RSV).

**THINK IT THROUGH**

"The atonement of Christ sealed forever the everlasting covenant of grace. It was the fulfilling of every condition upon which God suspended the free communication of grace to the human family. Every barrier was then broken down which intercepted the freest exercise of grace, mercy, peace, and love to the most guilty of Adam's race."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 933.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 932, 933.

**Part 5**  
**CLEANSING OF**  
**THE SANCTUARY**

**How does the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary differ from that of the earthly?**

**"If, then, these sacrifices cleanse the copies of heavenly things, those heavenly things themselves require better sacrifices to cleanse them" (Heb. 9:23, NEB).**

"The patterns of things in the heavens," that is, the earthly sanctuary and its furnishings, were purified with the blood of goats and bulls, but "the heavenly things themselves" with the sacrifice of Christ.

"As anciently the sins of the people were by faith placed upon the sin offering and through its blood transferred, in figure, to the earthly sanctuary, so in the new covenant the sins of the repentant are by faith placed upon Christ and transferred, in fact, to the heavenly sanctuary. And as the typical cleansing of the earthly was accomplished by the removal of the sins by which it had been polluted, so the actual cleansing of the heavenly is to be accomplished by the removal, or blotting out, of the sins which are there recorded."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 421, 422.

**Where has Christ entered, and what is He doing there? Verse 24.**

Christ has entered the heavenly sanctuary "now to appear in the presence of God for us." "Now" emphasized the truth, not only that He was there in the days when Hebrews was written, but is continuously there in the presence of the Father. Christ appears there as the believers' representative. His acceptance is their acceptance. In Christ they become the objects of God's regard. Both the sacrifice of Jesus and His entrance into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary are once-for-all acts. "Now in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (verse 26). Jesus thus occupies the dual position of offering and priest.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

"Jesus stands in the holy of holies, now to appear in the presence of God for us. There He ceases not to present His people moment by moment, complete in Himself. But because we are thus represented before the Father, we are not to imagine that we are to presume upon His mercy, and become careless, indifferent, and self-indulgent. Christ is not the minister of sin. We are complete in Him, accepted in the Beloved, only as we abide in Him by faith."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 933.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 9:23-27; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 418-422.

**Part 6**  
**RETURN OF OUR**  
**HIGH PRIEST**

**For what purpose was Christ once offered, and how will He appear the second time?**

**"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:27, 28).**

Unlike the round of sacrificial services of the earthly sanctuary which were repeated year after year, Jesus' single sacrifice is effective for all time. To further emphasize this repeatedly stated truth (Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 26) an analogy is drawn. It is the lot of every man to die because sin that brought death is the lot of all men (Rom. 5:12). But this side of the judgment man's death is a once-for-all thing, not repeated or followed by a return to earth. But after death they must still face the judgment. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and . . . shall . . . appear the second time."

This appearance is the last of three manifestations of Christ in Hebrews 9:23 through 28, all of which are vital in man's redemption:

1. He has appeared "once in the end of the world . . . to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (verse 26).

2. Christ has entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (verse 24).

3. "Christ . . . shall . . . appear the second time" (verse 28).

After finishing His work as our High Priest, He will be manifested again "not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (RSV).

"In the typical service the high priest, having made the atonement for Israel, came forth and blessed the congregation. So Christ, at the close of His work as mediator, will appear . . . to bless His waiting people with eternal life."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 485.

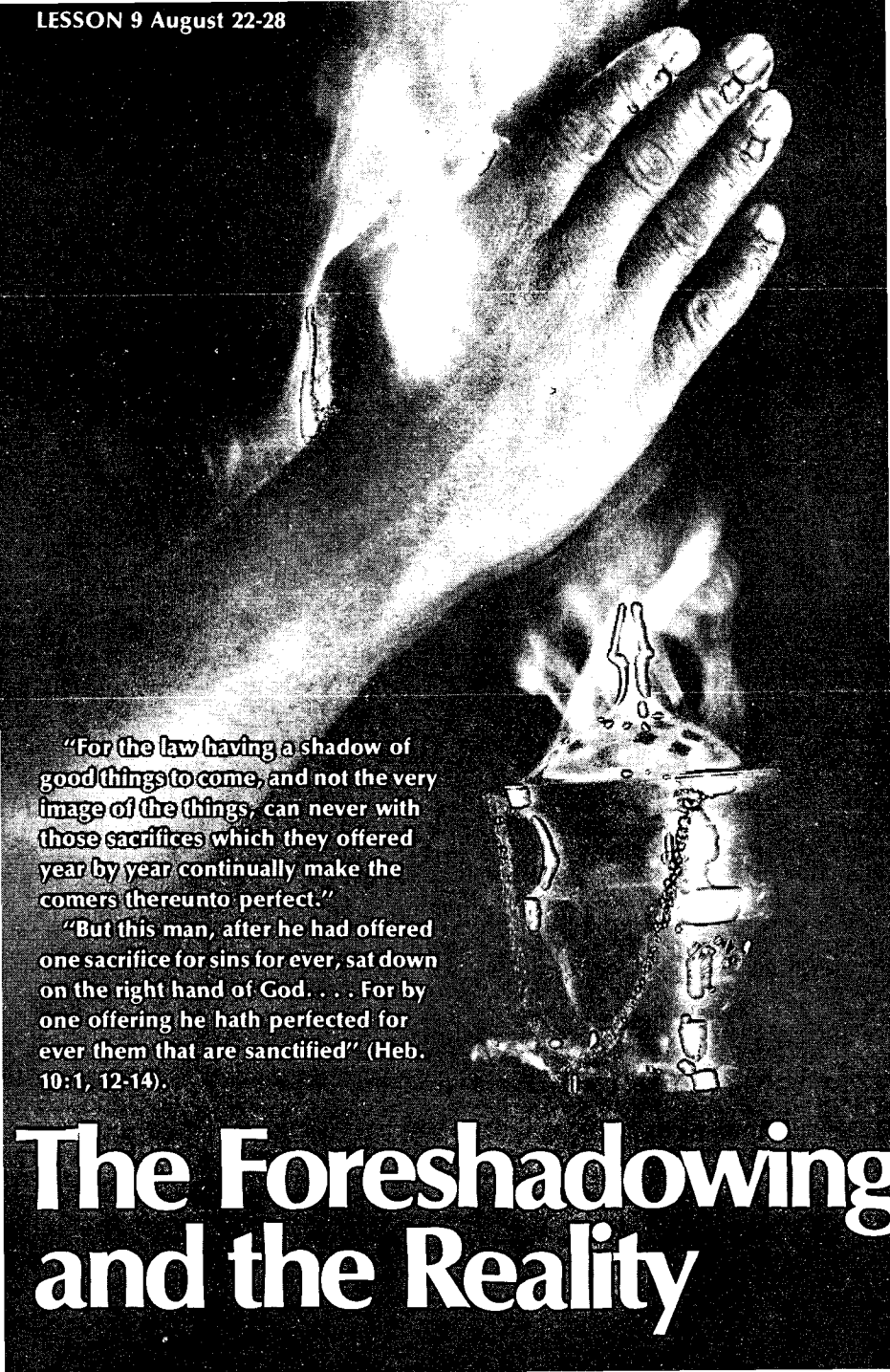
"Our present position . . . is like that of the Israelites, standing in the outer court, waiting and looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 913.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

"As the high priest, after performing his service in the holy of holies, came forth to the waiting congregation in his pontifical robes; so Christ will come the second time, clothed in garments of whitest white, 'so as no fuller on earth can white them.' Mark 9:3. He will come in His own glory, and in the glory of His Father, and all the angelic host will escort Him on His way."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 33.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 9:27, 28.



**"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect."**

**"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God. . . . For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:1, 12-14).**

# **The Foreshadowing and the Reality**

The Mosaic ritual is here described as a shadow of "good things to come." Hebrews 9:11 declares that Christ has "come an high priest of good things to come." Many Greek manuscripts of Hebrews have "good things that have come," and the weight of evidence favors this reading. These two verses, then, suggest a prominent feature of New Testament teaching: there is a tension between the "already" and the "not yet." Good things have come through the historical life and death of Jesus Christ. Through Him Christians have already "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come" (Heb. 6:5). In Christ the perfect and abiding realities have already dispelled the shadows. Nevertheless, the consummation is still future. Our Lord is seated at the right hand of God "expecting till his enemies be made his footstool" (Heb. 10:13). He will "appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28). Hence it is appropriate to speak of the "good things to come" as well as the "good things that have come."

At least three words are used in Hebrews 10 and elsewhere to describe the achievements of Christ as our high priest in His work for men: purification, sanctification, and perfection.

1. The Mosaic ritual served to purify the flesh, but it was incapable of cleansing from sin. (See Heb. 10:1, 2.) But the blood of Christ was effective in cleansing the "conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14). Christ appeared "once in the end of the world . . . to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (verse 26). The new covenant provides forgiveness. "God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114. Because of what

Christ has done and is now doing, the appeal is made: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:22).

2. "Sanctification" is another term to picture what Christ has done. The Old Testament sacrifices brought about ceremonial holiness and dedication to God, but only the sacrifice of Christ can really sanctify. (See Heb. 9:13, 14.) "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10). The central thought of sanctification is dedication or consecration to God.

3. Finally, much is said about perfection. This perfection could not be attained through the Levitical sacrifices and priesthood. (See Heb. 9:9; 7:11, 19; 10:1.) But Christ, "by one offering . . . hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). "Perfection" as used here means that those for whom Jesus intercedes in the heavenly sanctuary are qualified to come directly to God, for their sin has been expiated. "This goes far beyond what took place in the OT . . . , which allowed a direct approach to God in the inner temple only for the priest and not the whole people."—Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 8, p. 83.

## LESSON OUTLINE

1. Ineffectiveness of Levitical Sacrifices (Heb. 10:1, 2)
2. The Effective Sacrifice (Heb. 10:5-7)
3. Our Enthroned High Priest (Heb. 10:12-14)
4. Confident Access Through Christ (Heb. 10:19-22)
5. Danger of Willful Sinning (Heb. 10:26, 27)
6. The Call of Perseverance (Heb. 10:35-37)

**Part 1**  
**INEFFECTIVENESS**  
**OF LEVITICAL**  
**SACRIFICES**

“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins” (Heb. 10:1, 2).

This text gives a concise summary of the argument presented in chapters 7 through 9. “The law” is the Levitical law of sacrifices and priesthood. This sacrificial and priestly system was in and of itself ineffective in solving the sin problem. It was not an exact replica, but only a pale shadow, or better, a foreshadowing of the reality—the atoning sacrifice and priestly ministry of Jesus Christ.

The ineffectiveness of the Levitical system is shown by its constant repetition. It had to be done again and again, year in and year out. That this had to be done “continually” shows that it could not cure the disease of sin. “Continually” or “continual” are used frequently in connection with the ritual service of the earthly tabernacle. There was in them no ultimate remedy for sin. Had there been, their constant repetition would have ceased, for men would have been cured of their sinful ways. They would have been once for all cleansed and cured.

**Of what were the sacrifices a reminder? What could they not do? Heb. 10:3, 4.**

The value of the Levitical system was in its foreshadowing of the good things to “come”—the salvation itself in the person and work of Christ. “Justice demands that sin be not merely pardoned, but the death penalty must be executed. God, in the gift of His only-begotten Son, met both these requirements. By dying in man’s stead, Christ exhausted the penalty and provided a pardon.”—Ellen G. White *Comments, SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1099.

“The forgiveness of sins is not the sole result of the death of Jesus. He made the infinite sacrifice, not only that sin might be removed, but that human nature might be restored, re-beautified, reconstructed from its ruins, and made fit for the presence of God.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 537.

“He died that He might wash away our sins, clothe us with His righteousness, and fit us for the society of heaven, where we may dwell in light forever.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 317.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 10:1-4.



**Part 2**  
**THE EFFECTIVE**  
**SACRIFICE**

**What statement is represented as being on Christ's lips while He was on earth?**

**"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:5-7).**

"Wherefore," that is, because of the ineffectiveness of the Levitical sacrifices, when our Lord was incarnated in human flesh, He is represented as having uttered the words of Psalm 40:6-8. The four terms used, sacrifices, offerings, burnt offerings, and sin offerings suggest the whole sacrificial system. Although God instituted this system, these sacrifices were not for God's pleasure, but for the spiritual instruction of man.

"The sacrificial offerings were ordained by God to be to man a perpetual reminder and a penitential acknowledgment of his sin and a confession of his faith in the promised Redeemer. They were intended to impress upon the fallen race the solemn truth that it was sin that caused death."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 68.

"The sacrificial offerings were in themselves of no value in the sight of God. They were designed to express on the part of the offerer penitence for sin and faith in Christ and to pledge future obedience to the law of God. But without penitence, faith, and an obedient heart, the offerings were worthless."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 634.

Instead of following the Hebrew of Psalm 40:6 which reads, "mine ears hast thou opened," the epistle quotes the reading of the Septuagint, "but a body hast thou prepared for me." An "open ear" (compare Isa. 50:4, 5) suggests wholehearted obedience. The ultimate meaning of the Septuagint text is not much different, for in this human body He came to carry out God's will. It is this that made Christ's sacrifice effectual, for He carried His obedience to God's will so far as to die even on a cross. (See Phil. 2:8.)

**What did Christ abolish? establish? By what have we been sanctified? Heb. 10:9, 10.**

"Entire conformity to the will of our Father which is in heaven is alone sanctification, and the will of God is expressed in His holy law. The keeping of all the commandments of God is sanctification. Proving yourselves obedient children to God's word is sanctification."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, March 25, 1902.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 10:5-7.

**Part 3**  
**OUR ENTHRONED**  
**HIGH PRIEST**

**“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:12-14).**

The Aaronic priest “standeth daily ministering” (verse 11), which suggests that his task is never finished. Rather, he offers “oftentimes the same sacrifices.” By contrast, Christ, after offering Himself as a single sacrifice, sat down at the right hand of God, indicating the finality of that sacrifice. While the Aaronic offerings were ineffective in actually taking away sins, Christ’s single offering has perpetual validity in perfecting “for ever them that are sanctified,” or, “are being sanctified.” At God’s right hand Christ waits “till his enemies be made his footstool.” This quotes in part Psalm 110:1, which contains “a reference to an Oriental custom according to which the victor placed his foot on the neck of enemies as a sign of their submission.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 1:13. While Christ waits, He actively carries on His priestly function.

**With what is the “perfection” of which the epistle speaks bound up? Heb. 10:15-17. (See RSV.)**

The old covenant and its sacrificial system could not provide the “perfection” that is needed. Once again the epistle reverts to the prophecy of a new covenant, which contains two essential provisions: (1) an implanting of God’s law in human hearts, that is, moral and spiritual renewal and (2) a full and final pardon of sins. Note that these inspired words from Jeremiah 31:33 are quoted as the witness of the Holy Spirit to the truthfulness of the conclusions previously drawn.

**When a complete cancellation of sin has taken place, what would naturally cease? Heb. 10:18.**

By the Day of Atonement in Israel’s sacrificial system there was “a remembrance again made of sins every year” (verse 3). But with the complete atonement provided by the sacrifice of Christ and His priestly work the believer will never be reminded of his sins again. Hence the acceptance of the one perfect sacrifice would make further offerings superfluous.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“Our sanctification is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the fulfillment of the covenant that God has made with those who bind themselves up with Him, to stand with Him, His Son, and His Spirit in holy fellowship.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 908.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 10:12-18.

**Part 4**  
**CONFIDENT ACCESS**  
**THROUGH CHRIST**

**“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Heb. 10:19-22).**

Verse 19 marks the transition from doctrine to application and exhortation in the epistle. Because of what Christ has done, the readers are urged to accept the privileges and responsibilities involved. “By the blood of Jesus,” that is, by His atoning death, they may have not only permission, but confidence to enter the very presence of God freely. This was symbolized by the rending of the temple veil at the crucifixion.

**What three admonitions are then given in verses 22-25?**

1. Because we have a representative with the Father, clothed in human nature, yet holy and undefiled, “let us draw near” (verse 22) to avail ourselves of the opportunities and blessings so graciously provided. We are to come “with a true heart,” that is, with sincerity and wholeheartedness, and “in full assurance of faith,” based on a personal appropriation of the atoning and mediatorial work of Jesus, and with “our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

2. The second admonition is to continue holding fast the (public) confession of our hope in God’s promises and salvation without wavering. In the trying days ahead the act of confessing will strengthen our hold on hope. “God is behind the promises He makes. He is ever mindful of His covenant, and His truth endureth to all generations.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 943.

3. Finally, we are to note carefully the spiritual welfare of one another and “consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.” “Christian faith and witness will flourish the more vigorously in an atmosphere of Christian fellowship.”—F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 253. Hence the need for Christian gatherings which are all the more important as *the day* (of Christ’s coming) draws near (Heb. 10:25).

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“The Lord has determined that every soul who obeys his word shall have his joy, his peace, his continual keeping power. Such men and women are brought near him always, not only when they kneel before him in prayer, but when they take up the duties of life.”—Ellen G. White, *Southern Watchman*, Feb. 23, 1904, p. 116.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 10:19-25; and Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 7, p. 934.

**Part 5**  
**DAANGER OF WILLFUL**  
**SINNING**

**“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Heb. 10:26, 27).**

The present tense of the Greek text means “if we choose to go on sinning” (Goodspeed). A willful persistence in sin for an enlightened Christian is fatal. To know the way of salvation, but to reject it, is to close the door to all hope of eternal life.

“There will be no excuse for those who choose to go in error when they might understand what is truth. In His sufferings and death Jesus has made atonement for all sins of ignorance, but there is no provision made for willful blindness.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1145.

To bring home to readers the seriousness of spurning Christ and His salvation, the epistle urges the readers to consider the severity with which willful sinners were punished under the leadership of Moses. As examples, study the case of the blasphemer (Lev. 24:10-16) and the case of the deliberate Sabbath breaker (Num. 15:32-36). (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 409.)

“A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses” (Heb. 10:28, RSV). (See also Deut. 13:8; 17:2-6; 19:13, 15.) The author then appeals to the sense of justice of his readers: “How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?” (Heb. 10:29, RSV).

“To spurn the Son of God, to trample Him underfoot (as the word literally means), ‘denotes contempt of the most flagrant kind’; to treat the covenant-blood of Christ, by which alone His people are sanctified, cleansed and brought to God, as no better than the most common death, is to repudiate decisively both His sacrifice and all the blessings which flow from it; to outrage the Spirit of grace is, in the words of Jesus, to be ‘guilty of an eternal sin’ (Mark 3:29).”—F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, pp. 259, 260.

**To drive home this warning, what quotations from the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32 are given? Heb. 10:30. (See Deut. 32:35, 36.)**

This should give us a sense of the awesome holiness of God and warn us against regarding Him or His cause with carelessness or contempt.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 10:26-30.

**Part 6**  
**THE CALL TO**  
**PERSEVERANCE**

**“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:35-37).**

**To what victorious experiences of former days does “therefore” refer? Verses 32-34.**

The epistle now turns to encouragement and assurance. The readers are urged to remember how they triumphed in former days of affliction and trial. They had stood firm in the face of public exposure to insult and persecutions. (See Luke 6:22, 23.) They had also voluntarily suffered the unpopularity of being linked with their partners who were imprisoned and persecuted as disreputable criminals.

“Prisoners who had no means of their own were liable to starve unless their friends brought them food and whatever other form of help they required; throughout the whole age of imperial persecution of the Church the visiting of their friends who were in prison was a regular, though dangerous, duty of Christian charity.”—F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews, The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 270.

They had also joyfully endured under economic pressure when their property was confiscated. They were able to do this because they were sure that there awaited them in the future a better possession which no one could take from them.

With all these victories in their past, should they now throw away their confidence as a worthless thing? Continue to hold it fast, for it will bring a great reward when God fulfills His promises.

This exhortation is supported by the assurance: “For yet a little while [literally, ‘for yet a little, how very, how very’], and the coming one shall come, and shall not tarry” (RSV). This passage is a quotation from the Greek translation of Habakkuk 2:3. This assurance of the nearness of the advent should encourage them to hold on to their confidence. Meanwhile they are, like Habakkuk, to live by faith and not give up.

**With what group does the author of the epistle identify himself? Heb. 10:39.**

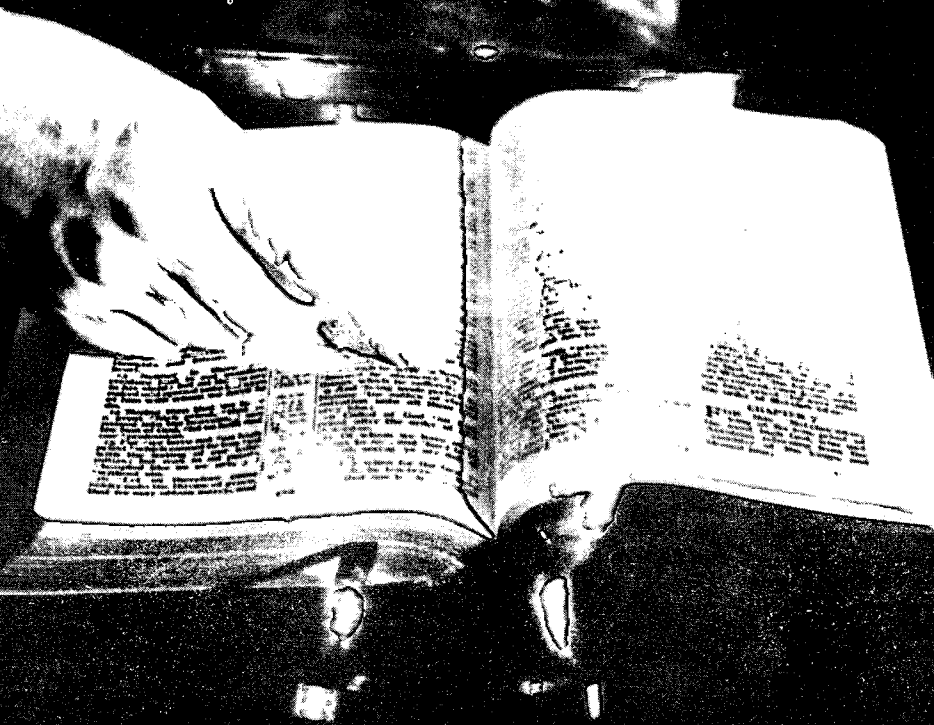
The Christian life begins with a wholehearted trust in God's assurances of love and grace to a sinner. If one is to lay hold of eternal life, he must continue to cling to God's promises. The author expresses his confidence that his readers will do just that, and in that determination he joins them.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 10:32-39.

LESSON 10 August 29 to September 4

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report" (Heb. 11:1, 2):



# The Faith of the Patriarchs

One of the great words in the religious vocabulary of the New Testament is "faith." "Faith" is a prominent word in Hebrews, for it occurs more than 30 times in the book, mostly in the eleventh chapter. In addition one finds the corresponding verb "to believe" twice, and the adjective "faithful" five times. "Faith" has a rich variety of meanings in the Scriptures. In Hebrews the word "faith" includes, for one thing, the idea of trust in God—trust that God will fulfill His promises (Heb. 11:11), trust also in His miraculous power to do the seemingly impossible (Heb. 11:12, 19, 29, 30). To have faith in God also means to obey Him. This concept of faithfulness as obedience is in the background in Hebrews 11:4, 6-8, 27, 28, 30. But in Hebrews "faith" has in it as well the concept of hope. We are saved, not only by faith, but by hope. (See Eph. 2:8; Rom. 8:24.) In Romans, Paul writes of Abraham: "In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, 'So shall your descendants be'" (Rom. 4:18, RSV). This sense of faith as hope predominates in Hebrews 11.

Faith as hope is introduced in the closing verses of Hebrews 10. The Christians to whom the book is addressed had "endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated" (verses 32, 33, RSV). For the sake of being Christians they had endured persecution and abuse in the past. "Therefore" the epistle urges, "do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the

will of God and receive what is promised" (verses 35, 36, RSV).

The author then notes that "he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." The reference is to the second advent. Thus the forward-looking aspect of faith is emphasized, and this emphasis is prominent in Hebrews 11.

Verse 1 describes faith as "the substance of things hoped for." For what did the heroes of faith in this chapter hope? Abraham is one of the greatest examples of faith of all time. He was given the promise of the Land of Canaan several times, but he never inherited any of it. Did he set his hope on this earthly land? The author says No. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (verse 10). In fact all of the examples cited were men and women who had a forward-looking faith.

Faith, then, as set forth in Hebrews 11, embodies also the concept of hope. It is the "substance of things hoped for." A consideration of the second clause of verse 1, "the evidence of things not seen," must be considered further in next week's lesson.

## LESSON OUTLINE

1. **The Nature of Faith (Heb. 11:1, 2)**
2. **The Faith of Three Antediluvians (Heb. 11:4)**
3. **The Faith of Abraham (Heb. 11:8)**
4. **The Homeland of the Faithful (Heb. 11:13, 14)**
5. **The Testing of Abraham's Faith (Heb. 11:17-19)**
6. **The Faith of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph (Heb. 11:20-22)**

**Part 1**  
**THE NATURE**  
**OF FAITH**

**"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report" (Heb. 11:1, 2).**

The term "faith" has more than one meaning in the New Testament, and it is doubtful that the author intends to give a general comprehensive definition of it. Rather he presents two aspects of faith as illustrated in the lives of the examples given in Hebrews 11. Faith makes real two realms that are important to the Christian: (1) the realm of the future kingdom of God, and (2) the invisible realm above where God now rules. Faith is a confident assurance in the reality of the future life and all that the hereafter means. The man of faith realizes that the present age with its evils and sufferings is but temporal. He is fully persuaded that there is an eternity of righteousness, peace, and joy beyond. He has an inner conviction that this life is only the beginning of a greater, more abundant life hereafter.

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for." But faith is also a conviction about a present unseen realm of spiritual realities. Because of such faith, a Christian does not look "at the things which are seen . . . : for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). Hence, the Christian walks "by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). He not only looks to the future, but he has a confident trust in the unseen reality of God's present help.

Since the term translated "substance" is found in ancient sources as a name for documents bearing on the ownership of property, Moulton and Milligan have suggested the following translation of the first clause: "Faith is the *title-deed* of things hoped for."—*The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 1952), p. 660. This bold rendering challenges one to contemplate the real meaning of faith. "As surely as the oak is in the acorn, so surely is the gift of God in His promise. If we receive the promise, we have the gift."—*Education* p. 253.

**How can the doctrine of creation be apprehended? Heb. 11:3.**

"The work of creation cannot be explained by science. What science can explain the mystery of life?"—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 414. Belief in creation rests upon an acceptance of the revelation that "all things, material or spiritual, stood up before the Lord Jehovah at His voice and were created for His own purpose."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 414.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 11:1-3.



**Part 2**  
**THE FAITH**  
**OF THREE**  
**ANTEDILUVIANS**

**“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh” (Heb. 11:4).**

As the most prominent representatives of the man of old, who by their faith received divine approval, the author selects from the earliest period Abel, Enoch, and Noah. The story of Abel and Cain (Gen. 4:3-15) illustrates the fact that an acceptable worshiper must approach God in faith, which includes a loving and obedient heart. While “Cain cherished feelings of rebellion and murmured against God,” Abel came with “a spirit of loyalty” and of total dependence upon God for pardon.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 71. “He saw himself a sinner, and he saw sin and its penalty, death, standing between his soul and communion with God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 72. By his sacrifice he acknowledged the claims of the law and expressed his faith in a coming atonement. His offering was therefore accepted, and he received approval as righteous in God’s sight.

**What unique experience did Enoch have? What testimony regarding him preceded this glorious event? Heb. 11:5.**

The brief record of Enoch’s life in Genesis 5:21-24, climaxes with the statement: “Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” The RSV of Hebrews 11:5 declares, “By faith Enoch was taken up,” that is, “translated” (KJV). This means that his body was transformed and he was removed from the earthly to the heavenly realm without experiencing death. This was possible because he walked so closely with God that he came to reflect the divine image. This could only be done by faith. Enoch’s godly walk represents the preparation we should make today for translation. Just as he was removed from the earth before its destruction by the Deluge, so the righteous living at the advent will be taken up from the earth before its destruction by fire. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 88, 89.)

**What example of taking God at His word is found in Noah? What results followed from acting on that faith? Heb. 11:7.**

God announced to Noah that the world was to be destroyed by a deluge. Though no such catastrophe had ever happened before, Noah took Him at His word and demonstrated his faith by warning men and by building an ark. “He gave the world an example of believing just what God says. All that He possessed, he invested in the ark. . . . Every blow struck upon the ark was a witness to the people.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 95.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 71-79, 84-89, 95-98.

**Part 3**  
**THE FAITH**  
**OF ABRAHAM**

**“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb. 11:8).**

Compare Genesis 12:1-3.

“Abraham’s unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith to be found in all the Bible. . . . Relying upon the divine promise, without the least outward assurance of its fulfillment, he abandoned home and kindred and native land, and went forth, he knew not whither, to follow where God should lead.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 126.

Abraham’s hometown of Ur was one of the great centers of culture and civilization of his time. To abandon all this and separate from his loved ones and become a homeless nomad must have seemed like madness to those he loved. Only because of his great faith in God’s word was he able to do this.

**How was Abraham’s faith further shown when he arrived in the Promised Land? Verse 9.**

God commanded Abraham to go “unto a land that I will shew thee” (Gen. 12:1). This was the Land of Canaan which was promised to him and his descendants (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:18; 17:8). Although the patriarch sojourned in this land, the only part of it he ever owned was the field and cave of Machpelah which he bought as a family burial place. Yet he never grew impatient or gave up his confidence in God’s promises. This was because the commonwealth on which he had set his hope was not an earthly, temporal one. “He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10).

**In spite of the advanced age of both Abraham and Sarah when Isaac was born, how numerous are his descendants declared to be? Heb. 11:11, 12.**

At the birth of Isaac, Sarah and Abraham were far beyond the normal age of parenthood. Regarding Abraham, Romans 4:20, 21, RSV, declares: “No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.”

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“Faith is trusting in God,—believing that He loves us, and knows what is for our best good. Thus, instead of our own way, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 259.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 125-131.

**Part 4**  
**HOMELAND OF**  
**THE FAITHFUL**

**Though the patriarchs did not themselves receive what God had promised, what attitude did they take toward God's promises?**

**"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country" (Heb. 11:13, 14).**

Abraham (Gen. 13:14-17), Isaac (Gen. 26:2-4), and Jacob (Gen. 28:13-15) were all promised the Land of Canaan. Yet none of these men of faith ever received the Promised Land. They were sojourners all their lives, moving around like nomads. They lived in faith. Even in the hour of death they continued to look forward to the fulfillment of God's promises. They had staked everything on these promises and were sure of them.

Was their heart really set on an earthly Canaan? The epistle says No. What they were actually seeking was something better than the Canaan of their day could offer. And while they were sojourning in Canaan, they never thought of Mesopotamia, the country from which they came, as their true home. Otherwise they could have gone back there. (See Heb. 11:15.) When Abraham's servant was sent to find a wife for Isaac, he suggested the possibility that the young woman he chose might not be willing to live in Canaan. "Must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?" Abraham's answer was immediate and firm: "See to it that you do not take my son back there" (Gen. 24:5, 6, RSV).

**Where was the true fatherland they were seeking? Why was God not ashamed to be called their God? Heb. 11:16.**

On earth the patriarchs were but "strangers and pilgrims" (1 Peter 2:11). Their real citizenship was in heaven. (See Phil. 3:20, RSV). These men, though they had their faults, were willing to stake everything on God's word. Their lives of faith honored God in the world, and God honored them by calling Himself "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex. 3:6). What greater honor could be bestowed on sinful human beings?

**THINK IT THROUGH**

"Faith in God's love and overruling providence lightens the burdens of anxiety and care. It fills the heart with joy and contentment in the highest or the lowliest lot. Religion tends directly to promote health, to lengthen life, and to heighten our enjoyment of all its blessings. It opens to the soul a never-failing fountain of happiness."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 600.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 11:13-16.

**Part 5**  
**THE TESTING OF**  
**ABRAHAM'S FAITH**

**"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son . . . : accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 11:17-19).**

No more severe test could ever come to a man than the one given Abraham as described in Genesis 22. We may well wonder why God should bring such torture of soul to the patriarch in order to test him. Certainly the purpose of it was not to obtain information regarding his ability to endure, for God can read the heart, and He knew what Abraham would do. Why then the test? Abraham's faith needed to be perfected that it might serve as the great example to all succeeding generations. His inspiring example of undeviating obedience and trust teaches the great lesson of confidence in God and His requirements, no matter how close and cutting they may be.

But there is a deeper reason. God desired to impress upon Abraham and the whole universe the reality of the gospel. Through this terrible experience something of the greatness of the sacrifice of God in giving His only Son to redeem sinners was revealed. As Abraham in his trust and obedience did not withhold his son, his only son (Gen. 22:12, 16), so God "did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all" (Rom. 8:32, RSV).

**What made the binding of Isaac on the altar so difficult? How did Abraham expect God to solve the problem? Heb. 11:18, 19.**

Isaac was not only Abraham's son, but he was the son through whom the promises made were to be realized. He was therefore irreplaceable. Abraham trusted in God's ability to find a way out of this dilemma. He believed in God's ability to raise Isaac from the dead. This faith he revealed to the two young servants who were not to witness the scene: "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you" (Gen. 22:5). Abraham and Isaac would both return! He considered "that God was able" if need be to resurrect him to life. Figuratively speaking he did receive Isaac back from death. "So far as Abraham was concerned, his son Isaac was dead. And when God halted the test and restored Isaac to his father, it was even as if Isaac had indeed returned from death."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 11:19.

In all of this Isaac was a figure of the Son of God. But when Jesus went from Gethsemane to Golgotha, there was no voice to cry, "It is enough." "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?" (Rom. 8:32, RSV).

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 145-155.

**Part 6**  
**THE FAITH OF**  
**ISAAC, JACOB, AND**  
**JOSEPH**

**“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph. . . . By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones” (Heb. 11:20-22).**

When Isaac learned that he had been tricked into giving his primary blessing to Jacob as recorded in Genesis 27, he made no attempt to revoke it. Although he was disturbed and disappointed, “the conviction flashed upon him that it was God’s providence which had defeated his purpose and brought about the very thing he had determined to prevent.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 181.

Coupled with a remembrance of the prophecy given Jacob’s mother concerning him at the time of his birth, there came a recognition that Jacob was better fitted to accomplish God’s purpose than Esau. Furthermore, Isaac had felt inspired when he altered the prophetic blessing; hence he felt unable to retract it. The next morning he further confirmed the blessing (Gen. 28:1-4).

Thus his faith was revealed. Furthermore, for one who had no inheritance of land in Canaan to predict that Jacob should have great prosperity and rule over his brother, and other nations as well, called for trust in God’s promises.

**What led Jacob to give the primary blessing to Joseph’s younger son, Ephraim, rather than to the older, Manasseh? Heb. 11:21; Gen. 48:8-22.**

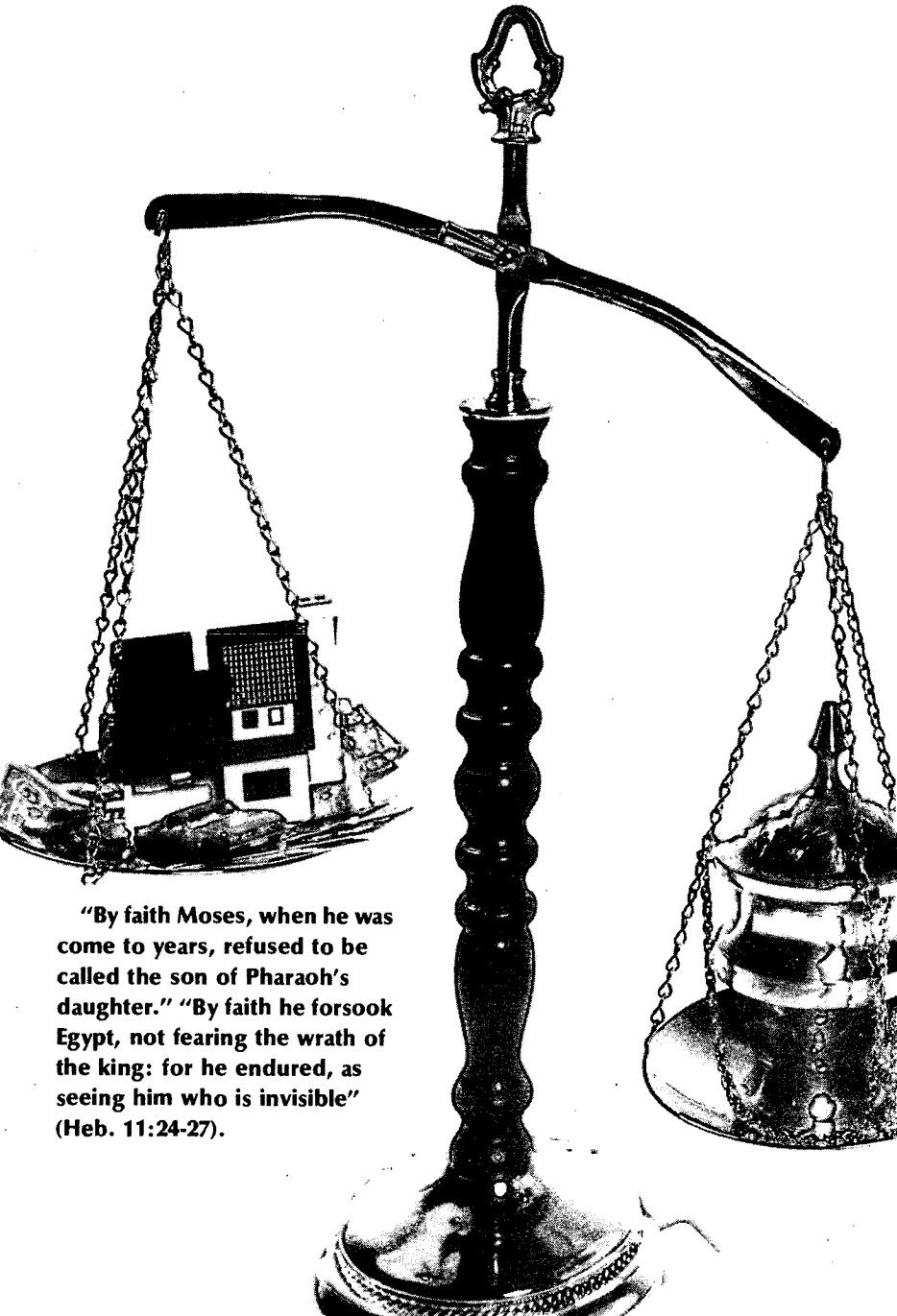
“These youths were connected, through their mother, with the highest order of the Egyptian priesthood; and the position of their father opened to them the avenues to wealth and distinction. . . . It was Joseph’s desire, however, that they should unite with their own people, . . . among the despised shepherd tribes.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 234.

**How did Joseph show his faith in God’s promise of bringing Israel to Canaan? Heb. 11:22; Gen. 50:24, 25.**

Joseph’s last act was an expression of faith in God’s promise to Jacob. (See Gen. 46:4.) “Honored as he had been in the land of the Pharaohs, Egypt was to him but the place of his exile; his last act was to signify that his lot was cast with Israel. . . . And through the centuries of toil which followed, that coffin, a reminder of the dying words of Joseph, testified to Israel that they were only sojourners in Egypt, and bade them keep their hopes fixed upon the Land of Promise, for the time of deliverance would surely come.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 240.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 11:17-22.



**“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:24-27).**

# Heroes of Faith

In the introduction of last week's lesson emphasis was given to the forward-looking aspect of faith, illustrated in the lives of the heroes of faith of Hebrews 11. It was faith that enabled them to grasp the reality of a new age beyond the present. But in addition to helping a Christian look beyond the present to the glories of the hereafter, faith also makes real to him the present unseen realm of God and spiritual realities. In addition to the forward look, faith brings an upward look, a belief in a world above. The secret of Moses' devotion and perseverance was his lifelong vision of God. He regarded the invisible order as the real and the permanent one. He endured "as seeing him who is invisible."

Faith is the faculty that perceives the reality of the invisible order, but it also enables one to make that order the primary object of life. Faith is "the conviction of things not seen" (RSV). God is not an object to be seen by physical eyes. He is "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God" (1 Tim. 1:17). He "dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see" (1 Tim. 6:16, RSV). But to please God we must believe not only that He exists, but that "he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). The Great Unseen is visible to the eye of faith.

Enoch, the great antediluvian man of faith, walked with God. "The men of that generation mocked the folly of him who sought not to gather gold or silver, or to build up possessions here. But Enoch's heart was upon eternal treasures. He had looked upon the celestial city. He had seen the King in His glory in the midst of Zion. The

greater the existing iniquity, the more earnest was his longing for the home of God. While still on earth, he dwelt by faith in the realms of light."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 53.

He who through faith can catch a glimpse of the unseen will not consider the visible world of human experience as the world of ultimate values. Faith enables him to estimate at their true value things seen and unseen.

The unseen realm of spiritual realities is also a source of encouragement and help in times of crisis. This is beautifully illustrated in the story of Elisha and his servant. The king of Syria sent an army with horses and chariots to surround Dothan and take the prophet captive. The prophet's servant was terrified and exclaimed, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" Elisha reassured him with the words, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Then Elisha prayed that his young servant's eyes might be opened to see this unseen realm. As the result "he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:15-17).

"These things were not written merely that we might read and wonder, but that the same faith which wrought in God's servants of old might work in us. In no less marked a manner than He wrought then will He work now wherever there are hearts of faith to be channels of His power."—*Education*, p. 256.

## LESSON OUTLINE

1. Faith in Moses' Early Life (Heb. 11:24-26)
2. The Secret of Moses' Faith (Heb. 11:27, 28)
3. The Faith of Israel (Heb. 11:29, 30)
4. A Great Cloud of Witnesses (Heb. 11:32, 33)
5. The Sufferings of the Faithful (Heb. 11:35, 36)
6. Jesus, the Supreme Example (Heb. 12:1, 2)

**Part 1**  
**FAITH IN MOSES'**  
**EARLY LIFE**

**"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward" (Heb. 11:24-26).**

After referring to the faith of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph—the epistle turns to Moses and the Exodus. Five acts of faith are presented from this period.

**What did their faith lead the parents of Moses to do? Heb. 11:23; Acts 7:17-22; Ex. 2:1-10.**

Amram and Jochebed were godly parents who believed that the time of Israel's deliverance from Egyptian slavery was near. When they saw their "goodly child," they believed that God had a future for him and determined to spare his life. They therefore defied the edict of Pharaoh and kept the baby in their home for three months. Then they exposed him in a way which they believed would result in his rescue. Their faith was rewarded, and Moses became a man of destiny, due largely to the godly home in which he spent the first twelve years of his life.

**What momentous decision did Moses make when he was of age? Heb. 11:24-26.**

"In the schools of Egypt, Moses received the highest civil and military training. Of great personal attractions, noble in form and stature, of cultivated mind and princely bearing, and renowned as a military leader, he became the nation's pride. . . . Egypt at this time being still the most powerful and most highly civilized of nations, Moses, as its prospective sovereign, was heir to the highest honors this world could bestow. But his was a nobler choice. For the honor of God and the deliverance of His downtrodden people, Moses sacrificed the honors of Egypt."—*Education*, p. 62.

He renounced his right to the throne of Egypt because he regarded suffering reproach for God's cause as a greater privilege than all the wealth and power of being a Pharaoh. "He counted it so because it was so. . . .

"Instead of linking himself with the greatness of Egypt, he chose to bind up his life with God's purpose. Instead of giving laws to Egypt, he by divine direction enacted laws for the world.

"The greatness of Egypt is in the dust. Its power and civilization have passed away. But the work of Moses can never perish."—*Education*, pp. 68, 69.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 242-246.



**Part 2**  
**THE SECRET OF**  
**MOSES' FAITH**

**“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them” (Heb. 11:27, 28).**

Was the departure of Moses from Egypt here referred to as the Exodus, or Moses' flight to Midian? Commentators differ. The natural order of events would favor the latter. However, that flight is difficult to harmonize with the phrase, “not fearing the wrath of the king.”

F. F. Bruce explains: “Our author, who follows the biblical record so closely, certainly does not intend to contradict it, but rather to interpret it. . . . He was afraid, admittedly, but that was not why he left Egypt; his leaving Egypt was an act of faith.”—*The Epistle to the Hebrews. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, pp. 321, 322.

**What was the secret of Moses' faith and perseverance? Verse 27.**

The strength and stay of Moses' life was his sense of the personal presence of God.

“To Moses faith was no guesswork; it was a reality. He believed that God ruled his life in particular; and in all its details he acknowledged Him.”—*Education*, p. 63.

“The faith of Moses led him to look at the things which are unseen, which are eternal.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 345.

**What feast was an expression of the faith of Moses and the Hebrews? Verse 28.**

The author of the epistle does not dwell on the call of Moses to deliver Israel, or on the controversy he had with Pharaoh involving the plagues. But he speaks of the night when Israel's faith found expression in the sprinkling of blood on the doorposts which turned aside the angel of death. The promise was, “The Lord will pass through to slay the Egyptians; and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to slay you” (Ex. 12:23, RSV). God Himself stood guard to keep the destroyer from entering homes where faith was manifested in obedience. God, through Moses, instituted the Passover as a perpetual memorial of that night of deliverance. “In commemoration of this great deliverance a feast was to be observed yearly by the people of Israel in all future generations.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 274.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 273-280.

**Part 3**  
**THE FAITH**  
**OF ISRAEL**

**“By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days” (Heb. 11:29, 30).**

The miraculous crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14) reveals not only the faith of Moses, but the faith he was able to inspire in the people. They were at first terrified by the sight of the Egyptian military forces behind them and the seemingly impassable sea before them, and gave vent to murmuring. But Moses calmed and reassured them with the words: “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom you have seen to day, ye shall see them no more for ever again. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace” (Ex. 14:13, 14). By accepting this promise at face value they saw “their path opened through the waters and their enemies overwhelmed in the moment of expected triumph. Jehovah alone had brought them deliverance, and to Him their hearts were turned in gratitude and faith.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 288.

**In what way was the city of Jericho captured 40 years later? Heb. 11:30; Joshua 6:1-21.**

Joshua, the new leader of Israel, took the promise of God at His word: “See, I have given into thine hand Jericho” (Joshua 6:2). He showed his faith by following to the letter the instructions God gave for its capture. Though the people had not heard the promise of the city’s fall directly from the “captain of the Lord’s host” as had Joshua, they nevertheless grasped it by faith and followed Joshua’s orders explicitly. They did this, even though it appeared to be a strange method of capturing a fortified city.

“The very plan of continuing this ceremony through so long a time prior to the final overthrow of the walls afforded opportunity for the development of faith among the Israelites. It was to be impressed upon their minds that their strength was not in the wisdom of man, nor in his might, but only in the God of their salvation.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 493.

**Who was spared in the destruction of the city? Why? Heb. 11:31; Joshua 6:22-25.**

Rahab’s faith in the God of Israel is revealed by her statement to the spies: “The Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath” (Joshua 2:11). It was this faith which led her to hide the spies and later to save her household by tying the scarlet cord in the window of her home.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 281-290, 487-493.

**Part 4**  
**A GREAT CLOUD**  
**OF WITNESSES**

**“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions” (Heb. 11:32, 33).**

The six men mentioned span the interval between the death of Joshua and the early monarchy.

**Gideon** was Israel's champion against the bedouin horde of Midianites, Amalekites, and "the people of the East" (RSV) who harassed the land of Palestine for seven years (Judges 6 through 8). By divine direction he first declared war on idolatry within Israel by tearing down his own father's altar of Baal. After "the Spirit of the Lord came upon" him, he was ready to deal with the invaders. (See Judges 6:34.) With only 300 men equipped with torches, earthen jars, and trumpets, he routed those bedouin hosts and broke their power.

**Barak**, under the guidance of the prophetess Deborah, commanded 10,000 young men against a confederate Canaanite force with 900 chariots of iron under the generalship of Sisera and won an almost incredible victory (Judges 4 and 5).

**Jephthah** led a battle against the Ammonites and delivered Israel.

**Samson** waged a single-handed war with the Philistines and repeatedly triumphed (Judges 13 through 16).

**David**, the second king of Israel, although displaying many faults, lived by faith in God's providence and care.

**Samuel**, priest, judge, and prophet, provided inspiring leadership under God during the transition period of the later judges and the early monarchy.

**What achievements are to be credited to men and women of faith? Heb. 11:33, 34.**

Each of these affirmations calls to mind an episode in Israel's history involving a hero of faith. Kingdoms were conquered from the time the Israelites in the wilderness overthrew Sihon and Og (Num. 21:21-25), through the conquest of Canaan under Joshua, to the time of David. (See 2 Sam. 8:1-13.) The latter, the Scripture declares, "administered justice and equity to all his people" (2 Sam. 8:15, RSV). He, like Abraham, "received promises," particularly the promise of a coming Messiah (2 Sam. 7:11-17; Acts 13:23). "Stopped the mouths of lions" particularly recalls Daniel in the lions' den (Dan. 6:22). "Quenched the violence of fire" could refer to the three Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace. "Escaped the edge of the sword" suggests the flight of David from Saul, or the rescue of Elijah (1 Kings 19) and Elisha (2 Kings 6 and 7).

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 11:24-34.

**Part 5  
THE SUFFERINGS  
OF THE FAITHFUL**

**“Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment” (Heb. 11:35, 36).**

Through the prophet Elijah's prayer of faith the son of the poor widow of Zarephath was restored to life (1 Kings 17:17-24). Similarly the son of the wealthy woman of Shunem was raised by Elisha (2 Kings 4:18-37). But faith in God did not bring to God's servants a guarantee of immunity from trials. Rather it enabled them to endure suffering and torture for the truth's sake. The Greek verb rendered “torture” in verse 35 means to be beaten to death after being stretched on the rack. There were noble martyrs in the Old Testament period and those who suffered for their faith. The sons raised to life by Elijah and Elisha were merely called forth to a temporal life, but the martyrs who gave their lives rather than surrender their faith looked forward to “a better resurrection,” the life of the age to come.

**What persecution did heroes of faith endure? Heb. 11:36-38.**

The prophets stand out among those who suffered persecution. Verse 35 could well be illustrated by the experience of Jeremiah who was beaten (Jer. 20:2; 37:15), imprisoned (Jer. 37:15), and cast into a dungeon (Jer. 38:6), and who exclaimed, “I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me” (Jer. 20:7, RSV). More than one prophet was stoned, among them the priest-prophet Zechariah (2 Chron. 24:20, 21; Luke 11:51), and Jeremiah, according to tradition, by the Jews in Egypt. Isaiah, says tradition, was placed in a hollow log and sawed in two during the reign of Manasseh. Not all “escaped the edge of the sword,” for many were slain by the sword of Jezebel (1 Kings 19:10). Uriah in the days of Jeremiah was extradited from Egypt by Jehoiakim “who slew him with the sword and cast his dead body into the burial place of the common people” (Jer. 26:23, RSV). Apparently Elijah and Elisha were among those who “wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented.” God's great heroes “were treated as though not deserving to live in this world, whereas really the world was not worthy of their presence.”—Charles R. Erdman, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Phila.: The Westminster Press, 1934), p. 121.

The lesson to the Hebrews is clear: When God's people suffer persecution, they are in good company. “In all ages God's appointed witnesses have exposed themselves to reproach and persecution for the truth's sake.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 575.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 11:35-38.

**Part 6**  
**JESUS, THE**  
**SUPREME EXAMPLE**

**“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1, 2).**

The author now draws his conclusion from the experiences of past heroes. They have not yet received the promised inheritance (Heb. 11:39, 40). “In His infinite wisdom He [God] ordained that the faithful of all ages should enter upon the eternal inheritance together.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 11:40.

The witnesses who surround us are the faithful of the past—“those who have breasted the evils and difficulties in their way, and who in the name of the Lord have braced themselves successfully against the opposing forces of evil.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 934. They are “witnesses” not in the sense of spectators, but as those who have testified of the power of faith and of God’s trustworthiness.

The example of an athletic race indicates the kind of effort and discipline the Christian life demands. All such superfluous weights and shackles as evil habits and sinful practices must be cast aside if the Christian runner is to win in the race of life.

**Upon whom must the eye of the runner be fixed? Heb. 12:2.**

Jesus is set forth “as the one who has blazed the trail of faith and as the one who Himself ran the race of faith to its triumphant finish.”—F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 351.

He is not only the pioneer of our faith, but the one in whom faith reached its perfection. Jesus’ whole life was one of unquestioning trust and obedience to the Father’s will. He carried that obedience to the point of dying on the cross (Phil. 2:8). Crucifixion was the most terrible, the most degrading form of execution known to the Romans. It was reserved for the worst criminals and revolting slaves. Cicero said of it, “Let the very mention of the cross be far removed not only from a Roman citizen’s body, but from his mind, his eyes, his ears.” But our Lord ignored its shame. He conquered and is now “seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (RSV).

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“It is the work of faith to rest in God in the darkest hour, to feel, however sorely tried and tempest-tossed, that our Father is at the helm. The eye of faith alone can look beyond the things of time to estimate aright the worth of the eternal riches.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 575, 576.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 12:1, 2.

# Exhortations and Warnings

"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven" (Heb. 12:25, 26).



Although at first reading there appears to be no central theme followed in Hebrews 12, the exhortations and warnings all emphasize the need of standing valiantly and loyally for Christ, regardless of opposition. The original readers of this word of exhortation were in danger of becoming weary and fainthearted because of the sufferings their faith had brought to them. They are, therefore, urged to consider the abuse and opposition Jesus endured. By comparison, what they have suffered will seem small. It should also help them to realize that their suffering will be overruled for good. In standing for their faith against abuse and persecution they have not yet been called to be martyrs. They have struggled against the temptation to the sin of disbelief and denial of Christ, but they have not yet endured to the point of shedding their blood.

To encourage them further they are admonished to look upon their sufferings as discipline from a loving heavenly Father. These sufferings are, in fact, a concrete evidence that they have been wholeheartedly accepted as sons of God. They honored and respected their erring earthly fathers and accepted the discipline that came from them. Should they not much more accept the discipline of the unerring heavenly Father?

They are, therefore, urged to brace themselves with courage and mutual helpfulness. They are to seek peace with their fellowmen, but not by way of compromise. They are to be aware of the peril of secularism and sensualism. These perils are well illustrated in the case of Esau.

The rest of the chapter is devoted to a contrast between the message of God at Sinai and the message He now gives through the Lord Jesus Christ. It would be sheer folly for them to barter the blessings of the new covenant by clinging to the old; or to refuse to

obey Christ on the grounds of clinging to Moses; or to linger in old Jerusalem and all that it stands for, while rejecting citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem. The argument of the epistle climaxes in the fifth warning of the book: "See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven" (Heb. 12:25, RSV). This is the fifth and last major warning of the book. The first was in Hebrews 2:1-4, a warning against indifference, apathy, and careless drifting from the message of Christ.

The second, based on the experience of Israel, Hebrews 3:7 to 4:13, was a warning of the peril of unbelief resulting in disobedience. The example of the doom of those who rejected Moses should be a warning not to trifle with the message of One far greater than Moses.

The third warning was against willful apostasy from Christ—Hebrews 5:11 to 6:8. Such a course would be serious indeed!

The fourth, in Hebrews 10:26-31, is a warning against willful and deliberate sin. Now comes the climax in Hebrews 12:25-29. God grant that this lesson may inspire you to cling to what is eternal because it cannot be shaken!

## LESSON OUTLINE

1. **The Prince of Sufferers**  
(Heb. 12:3, 4)
2. **Suffering as Divine Discipline** (Heb. 12:5, 6)
3. **Peace Without Compromise**  
(Heb. 12:12, 13)
4. **The Terrors at Sinai** (Heb. 12:18, 19)
5. **Glories of the Heavenly Zion** (Heb. 12:22, 23)
6. **Warning Against Spurning the Gospel** (Heb. 12:25)

**Part 1**  
**THE PRINCE**  
**OF SUFFERERS**

**“For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Heb. 12:3, 4).**

With the insight of a faithful shepherd the author seeks to prepare his flock for possible future persecution and martyrdom. They had already been exposed to affliction (Heb. 10:32, 33). Were they tempted to lose heart and wonder whether they were not having more than their share of suffering? Then let them consider what their Lord had endured to bring them such a great salvation. How could the noblest and best the world has ever seen suffer such dreadful hostility from the very men He came to save?

“He who came to redeem the lost world was opposed by the united forces of the adversaries of God and man. In an unpitied confederacy, evil men and angels arrayed themselves against the Prince of Peace. Though His every word and act breathed of divine compassion, His unlikeness to the world provoked the bitterest hostility. Because He would give no license for the exercise of the evil passions of our nature, He aroused the fiercest opposition and enmity.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 29. As a sufferer, as in every other way, our Lord has left us an example. “When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:23, RSV).

**What sacrifice had the Christian community to whom the epistle is addressed not yet been called upon to make? Heb. 12:4.**

Christ's life of sorrow and suffering had ended in the shameful death of the cross. Many of the heroes of faith mentioned in chapter 11 had been martyred. But the Hebrews had thus far been spared martyrdom.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“Reproach and persecution have separated many from earthly friends, but never from the love of Christ. Never is the tempest-tryed soul more dearly loved by His Saviour than when he is suffering reproach for the truth's sake. . . . When for the truth's sake the believer stands at the bar of earthly tribunals, Christ stands by his side. When he is confined within prison walls, Christ manifests Himself to him and cheers his heart with His love. When he suffers death for Christ's sake, the Saviour says to him, They may kill the body, but they cannot hurt the soul.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 85.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 12:3, 4.



**Part 2**  
**SUFFERING AS**  
**DIVINE DISCIPLINE**

**“Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb. 12:5, 6).**

Another reason is now added for enduring persecution and suffering for the truth's sake. The faith and courage of the saints of the past amid trials and tribulations had previously been set forth as one reason for bearing up. A second is the fact that their sufferings were small in comparison with those Jesus Christ endured. But now they are invited to consider their tribulations as a fatherly discipline used by God for the development of character. As evidence of this point of view the words of Proverbs 3:11, 12 are quoted. The term “chastening” denotes the upbringing of a growing child to maturity and includes instruction, direction, encouragement, and discipline when necessary.

**Of what should the believers regard the discipline of suffering as a sure sign? Heb. 12:7, 8. (Compare Deut. 8:5.)**

They should take courage as they consider that their tribulations for the truth's sake are a guarantee of sonship to God, and consequently are an evidence of God's grace and forgiveness. They are a sign that the individual Christian is the Father's child, loved by Him and received by Him as a son. On the other hand, one who is not disciplined may well regard this as an indication of the illegitimacy of his claim to sonship. Let him then receive discipline with gratitude as a seal of his status as a true son.

**What attitude in general do children have to the discipline of their fathers? How imperative is it that we accept God's discipline? Heb. 12:9-11.**

If we respected erring earthly fathers who imposed discipline upon us, how much more should we gratefully receive the discipline of One who is the perfection of wisdom and love. In contrast to the fathers of our flesh, God is the Father of our spirits. He is our spiritual Father who “disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness” (verse 10, RSV).

Discipline, particularly when it requires chastisement, is never pleasant, and is never given for its own sake, “but in the end it yields for those who have been trained by it the peaceful harvest of an honest life” (verse 11, NEB).

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 12:5-11.

**Part 3**  
**PEACE WITHOUT**  
**COMPROMISE**

**"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Heb. 12:12, 13).**

"Wherefore," that is, because of the disciplinary benefits that can come from enduring adversity, the readers are admonished to brace themselves for renewed conflict by casting aside faintheartedness and fear. The Greek has simply "*the* drooping hands" and "*the* feeble knees." While the definite article could indicate possession—"your"—the writer probably means not only their own, but those of others who may be disheartened.

"Make straight paths for your feet" could also be rendered "make straight *with* your feet." The reference would then be to actual walking, not to the preparation of a path in which to walk. Christians are thus urged to pursue a consistent, straightforward path to the goal.

**What two objectives are they then admonished earnestly to pursue? Heb. 12:14. (Compare Ps. 34:14; 1 Peter 3:11.)**

The whole community and every Christian in it must be on guard against the inroads of any element of impurity (Heb. 12:15, 16). Compare Deut. 29:18, RSV: "Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God . . . ; lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit."

**Of what kind of person is Esau held forth as an example not to be followed? Heb. 12:16, 17.**

Esau was irreligious. He was profane in the sense that he lacked a sense of spiritual values. He lived only for the present and had no concern for the future. "For one morsel of meat," for a momentary gratification of appetite that had never been restrained, Esau sold his inheritance; but when he saw his folly, it was too late to recover the blessing. "He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Hebrews 12:16, 17. Esau was not shut out from the privilege of seeking God's favor by repentance; but he could find no means of recovering the birthright. His grief did not spring from conviction of sin; he did not desire to be reconciled to God. He sorrowed because of the results of his sin, but not for the sin itself. . . .

"He represents those who lightly value the redemption purchased for them by Christ, and are ready to sacrifice their heirship to heaven for the perishable things of earth."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 181.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 177-182.

**Part 4**  
**THE TERRORS**  
**AT SINAI**

**“For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more” (Heb. 12:18, 19).**

These words are reminiscent of the descriptions of the terrifying manifestation of God at Sinai given in Exodus 19:11-13, 16, 18, 19; 20:18-20; Deuteronomy 4:11; 5:22. Note also in Psalm 68:8 the natural phenomena that accompanied God's presence.

Seven elements in this awe-inspiring description set forth the majesty, the unapproachability, and the terror of God: (1) “That might be touched” refers to Mount Sinai. “And ye came near and stood under the mountain” (Deut. 4:11). (2) “Burned with fire,” represents the unapproachable sanctity and overpowering glory of the Lord. (3) Blackness and (4) darkness add to the mystery of the divine presence, as does (5) the tempest. Then came the audible manifestations: (6) the trumpet blast, and (7) the voice: God speaking out of the midst of the fire.

“Never since man was created had there been witnessed such a manifestation of divine power as when the law was proclaimed from Sinai. ‘The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.’ Psalm 68:8. Amid the most terrific convulsions of nature the voice of God, like a trumpet, was heard from the cloud. The mountain was shaken from base to summit, and the hosts of Israel, pale and trembling with terror, lay upon their faces upon the earth.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 340.

**How did these terrifying manifestations affect the Israelites? Moses? Heb. 12:20, 21. (Compare Ex. 19:12, 13; Deut. 9:19.)**

“God purposed to make the occasion of speaking His law a scene of awful grandeur, in keeping with its exalted character. The people were to be impressed that everything connected with the service of God must be regarded with the greatest reverence.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 303.

“The people of Israel were overwhelmed with terror. The awful power of God's utterances seemed more than their trembling hearts could bear. For as God's rule of right was presented before them, they realized as never before the offensive character of sin, and their own guilt in the sight of the holy God. They shrank away from the mountain in fear and awe. The multitude cried out to Moses, ‘Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.’”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 309, 310.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 303-305, 339-341.

**Part 5  
GLORIES OF THE  
HEAVENLY ZION**

**“But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:22, 23).**

In contrast to ancient Israel who came to Mount Sinai with its terrors, Christians have come to Mount Zion with its glories. Zion was originally the name of the Jebusite stronghold located on the southeastern hill of Jerusalem. The name was later extended to include the temple area, and finally the whole city, and perhaps even all of Palestine. It also came to designate the ideal society, and is used symbolically in the New Testament for heaven. In Hebrews Mount Zion is associated with “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” Christians have not yet come to this heavenly Zion literally, but in a spiritual sense they have access to it, and by faith enjoy the privileges of citizenship in it. “As the earthly Zion was the meeting point for the tribes of the old Israel, so the heavenly Zion is the meeting point for the new Israel.”—F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 373.

Among those who are pictured as gathered there are innumerable angels in festal gatherings. They are there not only to serve (see *The Great Controversy*, p. 512), but to rejoice over the redemption of human souls (Luke 15:10). Christians also have fellowship with the “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.” Most probably this is a designation for the whole community of the redeemed. They are not yet in heaven in person (Heb. 11:39, 40), but they are inscribed there as citizens of the heavenly commonwealth, with all the privileges this involves. They are called “firstborn” because of their close connection with Him who is indeed the first firstborn and who is not ashamed to call them brethren, with whom they are joint heirs. (See Rom. 8:17, 29; Heb. 1:6; Col. 1:15, 18.)

**What is Jesus again called? What is said of the sprinkling of His blood? Heb. 12:24.**

The blood of Abel spoke of the guilt of sin and cried for vengeance (Gen. 4:10). The atoning blood of Jesus cries for mercy, pardon, and reconciliation. It achieves not merely forgiveness, but cleansing.

“He died that we might be forgiven,  
He died to make us good,  
That we might go at last to heaven,  
Saved by His precious blood.”

—Cecil F. Alexander.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 12:22-25.

**Part 6**  
**WARNING AGAINST**  
**SPURNING THE GOSPEL**

**“See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven” (Heb. 12:25).**

Although Israel heard God’s voice amid the fearful physical manifestations of Sinai, they thereafter repeatedly failed to obey the commandments given them. (See Heb. 3:7-11.) As the result of this disobedience their bodies were strewn in the wilderness (Heb. 3:17, 18), and only two non-Levites ever entered the Land of Canaan. How much more serious it would be to fail to heed the message of the gospel proclaimed from His unseen throne in the heavenly Zion.

**What effect did God’s voice at Sinai have? How severe will be the future shaking, and what does it indicate? Heb. 12:26, 27.**

At the coming day of God, the present world order will be brought to an end amid terrible cosmic convulsions. (Compare Isa. 2:19, 21; 13:9-13; Joel 3:16.) The sky will roll up like a split scroll, “and every mountain and island” will be “moved out of their place” (Rev. 6:14). God declares, “I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place” (Isa. 13:13).

The phrase “yet once more” indicates “for the last time.” The shaking here described is a final unrepeatable event resulting in the separation and removal of the sinful and temporal from that which is worthy to abide forever. The world will thereby be transformed as the eternal home of holy human beings. The kingdom of God belongs to the unshakable order, and in that kingdom Christian believers have a share.

**Since Christians have a share in eternal things, what proper responses should be expected? Heb. 12:28.**

“We are daily recipients of the bounties of heaven and should have loving gratitude springing up in our hearts to God. . . . Thoughts and meditations upon the goodness of God to us would close the avenues of the soul to Satan’s suggestions.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 222.

“Nothing that is sacred, nothing that pertains to the worship of God, should be treated with carelessness and indifference.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 266.

Reverential awe before the majesty and holiness of God is not incompatible with love and trust. God is near, but He must not become familiar. He is still the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, and whose name is holy. “Our God is a consuming fire” (verse 29).

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 12:25-29.

# Final Injunctions



**“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:20, 21).**

Hebrews closes in a manner comparable to other New Testament epistles, with a series of ethical and practical injunctions, a formal benediction, personal notes, and a final, brief benediction. (Compare the endings of First and Second Thessalonians, Galatians, Romans, and First Peter.) The pastoral imperatives and exhortations cover a wide range of subjects such as brotherly love, hospitality, helpfulness to prisoners and the persecuted, chastity, freedom from greed, and contentment. In several cases the imperatives are reinforced by a reason: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (verse 2, RSV). “Remember . . . those who are ill-treated, since you also are in the body” (verse 3, RSV). “Let the marriage bed be undefiled; for God will judge the immoral and adulterous” (verse 4, RSV). “Be content with what you have; for he has said, ‘I will never fail you nor forsake you’ ” (verse 5, RSV).

These moral and social injunctions are followed by an admonition to keep in memory their past spiritual leaders who proclaimed to them the gospel. The readers of the epistle are urged to consider the course of the lives of these spiritual giants and to imitate their faith. Great as these leaders were, they died, and are no longer available for guidance. But there is a greater spiritual leader who is not subject to death, and who is always available: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (verse 8). “He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25), and as their Intercessor He is able to sympathize with their weaknesses because in every respect He was tempted as they are (Heb. 4:15).

The author then warns against “diverse and strange doctrines” (Heb. 13:9, RSV) which evidently had something to do with rules about food. Since they are “diverse and strange,” they must not have been derived from the Old Testament. He goes on to speak of acceptable Christian sacrifices. Our Lord suffered without the gate of Jerusalem, and Jewish Christians are urged to bear abuse for Him “without the camp,” that is, outside Judaism. The kind of sacrifices that are acceptable are sacrifices of praise to God, and the sacrifice of doing good and sharing one’s possessions.

The readers are then admonished to submit to their present leaders who are watching over their souls. They are urged to pray for the apostle particularly that he may be restored to them. Then follows an impressive and stately benediction, which, apart from some personal notes, brings the epistle to a close. The personal notes consist of an appeal to listen attentively to the message of the epistle, followed by news regarding Timothy, and greetings. The great epistle closes with the final brief benediction: “Grace be with you all. Amen.”

## **LESSON OUTLINE**

- 1. Five Christian Virtues (Heb. 13:1-3)**
- 2. The Leaders and the Leader (Heb. 13:7, 8)**
- 3. Going With Jesus “Outside the Camp” (Heb. 13:10-12)**
- 4. Acceptable Christian Sacrifices (Heb. 13:15, 16)**
- 5. Prayer and Doxology (Heb. 13:20, 21)**
- 6. Personal Notes (Heb. 13:22-25)**

**Part 1**  
**FIVE CHRISTIAN**  
**VIRTUES**

**“Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body” (Heb. 13:1-3).**

The closing chapter of Hebrews begins with a series of admonitions which show an awareness of the ethical implications of Christian doctrines. Verses 1 through 3 contain exhortations to brotherly love, hospitality, and helpfulness to those in need. One of the social hallmarks of early Christians was their love for one another as Jesus declared it would be (John 13:35). Like the epistles to the Romans (12:10) and Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4:9, 10), this epistle urges that solicitous care and consideration for the welfare of other Christians be continued.

**By practicing hospitality, whom have some unconsciously entertained? Heb. 13:2.**

Hospitality is especially to be shown to Christian brethren (Rom. 12:13; 16:1, 2; 1 Peter 4:9). Ancient inns were notoriously filthy and infested with prostitutes and bandits. Hence the practice of hospitality was urgent. Among Old Testament characters who unconsciously entertained angels one thinks of Abraham (Gen. 18:1-8); Lot (Gen. 19:1-3); Gideon (Judges 6:11-20); and Manoah (Judges 13:1-4, 9-21).

Christians are also admonished to have a sympathetic care for their brethren who are in prison or who suffer ill treatment. These were often dependent upon friends for the bare necessities of life.

**How is marriage to be treated? How will God deal with those who violate its vows? Heb. 13:4.**

In the original, the verbs in the first two clauses are not expressed, but are left for the reader to supply. It is possible to read them as simple statements or as imperatives. Most likely they are admonitions—“Let marriage be held in honor . . . , let the marriage bed be undefiled”—to safeguard the sanctity of marriage. Such counsel is much needed today.

The final Christian virtue mentioned in this section is contentment (verse 5). Life is to be kept free from covetousness—selfishness. (See *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 223.) The admonition is enforced by the promises of Joshua 1:5: “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” (Compare Deut. 31:6, 8. See also Ps. 118:6.) These are indeed precious promises which should help us to be content with what we have.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 13:1-4.



**Part 2  
THE LEADERS  
AND THE LEADER**

**“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb. 13:7, 8).**

This is the first of three references to Christian leaders in this chapter. In verses 17 and 24 the reference is to leaders of the time of the writing of the epistle; but this one evidently speaks of previous leaders who have died. It was through the instrumentality of these spiritual leaders that the original readers of this epistle received the good news of the gospel. There are allusions to them in chapter 2, verse 3, and chapter 4, verse 2. The readers are admonished to consider the outcome of the lives of these godly men and to imitate their faith. “The whole course of their lives, from start to finish, now lies before their disciples and followers for review and imitation.”—F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 395.

These past leaders are no longer available for counsel and guidance. They have laid down their lives and exist now only in memory. By contrast there is a greater leader who is always available, and who is the supreme example of faithfulness and constancy. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” He is the great High Priest over the household of faith.

The unswerving loyalty and steadfastness of their leader, Jesus Christ, should keep them from being led astray by “divers and strange doctrines” at variance with the basic gospel message. The teaching referred to is difficult to identify, but it concerned rules and practices about food “which have not benefited their adherents” (Heb. 13:9, RSV). These could not be the Jewish laws concerning clean and unclean foods. The laws on food could hardly be described as diverse and strange, for they were consistent and well known. These “strange doctrines” may possibly belong to some ascetic sect who expected their abstinence from certain foods to contribute to their spirituality. (Compare Col. 2:16, 21; 1 Tim. 4:3.) Or, the apostle could be opposing the mystery cult belief that by devouring special foods they were actually partaking of their god, and so achieving immortality.

Today we may well think of food faddists who go to extremes in advocating unusual diets. While the Christian should glorify God in his body by his eating, he should remember that diet is a matter of healthful living, and not a method of earning merit with God. (See Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 8:8.) The spiritual life is ultimately established by faith, which results in works to the glory of God.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 13:7, 8.

**Part 3**  
**GOING WITH JESUS**  
**“OUTSIDE THE CAMP”**

**“We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood” (Heb. 13:10-12, RSV).**

Christians have an altar referring to the sacrifice of Christ. The “tent,” or, “tabernacle” (KJV), refers to the earthly tabernacle. Therefore “those who serve the tent” means the priests of the earthly tabernacle. Christians have a sacrifice from which these priests have no right to partake. But the benefits of Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:10) are available to those who accept them.

Christ’s sacrifice was a sin offering, and even in the earthly sanctuary the bodies of the bull and goat offered as a sin offering on the Day of Atonement were not eaten. Rather, after their blood had been carried into the sanctuary to make atonement, their bodies were burned outside the camp. (See Lev. 16:27.)

**What parallel may be seen in the death of Jesus? Heb. 13:12.**

In ancient times those who were accursed under the law were taken outside the camp to be executed. (See Lev. 24:14, 23; Num. 15:35.) Similarly, “Christ, our substitute, was to suffer without the boundaries of Jerusalem. He died outside the gate, where felons and murderers were executed.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 741. (See John 19:20.) “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13).

**What are His followers therefore urged to do? Heb. 13:13.**

The authorities of Jerusalem officially rejected our Lord, and executed Him outside the city. The epistle urges its readers to join their Lord “outside the camp, bearing the stigma that he bore” (NEB). This exhortation suggests that they are to make a complete break with the old Jewish order of worship and life. They must give their total loyalty to Jesus Christ, even though this will bring them reproach and abuse. Judaism and its sacrificial system must now be forsaken, for “the old securities to which their hearts clung were themselves insecure; the old order was about to crash.”—F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews. The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 404.

Old Jerusalem is doomed to be shaken along with every other earthly institution, but Christians can look forward to the eternal City of God.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 13:10-14.

**Part 4  
ACCEPTABLE  
CHRISTIAN  
SACRIFICES**

**“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb. 13:15, 16).**

The animal sacrifices and human priesthood of the Old Testament pointed forward to, and found their fulfillment in, Jesus Christ. He is the one true and adequate sacrifice offered once for all for the sins of the world. He is also the one true priest. Hence we as Christians have no animal sacrifices and no place for any priesthood except that of Jesus. The only sacrifices acceptable to God are spiritual ones offered through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5). Two such sacrifices are mentioned.

The first is a sacrifice of praise to God offered by “lips giving thanks to his name.” The psalmist admonished, “Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving” (Ps. 50:14, RSV), or, “make thanksgiving your sacrifice to God” (footnote). “He who brings thanksgiving as his sacrifice honors me” (verse 23, RSV). The offering of such a sacrifice is a continual obligation. God not only created us, but He redeemed us by giving His Son as a sin offering in our behalf and appointing Him as our personal representative in heaven. Surely this calls for gratitude and praise. But even this can be acceptable to God only as it is presented through Jesus Christ.

To the sacrifice of praise to God there is to be added the sacrifices of benevolence and generosity. These are sacrifices of deeds, not of words. They are offered to fellow human beings, not to God. However, Jesus reckons kind deeds done to the least of His followers as done to Him (Matt. 25:40).

**To whom are Christians admonished to submit? In what spirit is their work to be done? Heb. 13:17.**

Verse 7 urged that former leaders, now deceased, should be remembered. Verse 17 admonishes obedience and submission to present leaders. These leaders carry a weighty responsibility. They are like wakeful shepherds who must one day render an account for the manner in which they have discharged their responsibility to the Great Shepherd (verse 20). Nevertheless, these leaders must not regard their care of the sheep as a thankless task or painful burden. Rather, love for the sheep must make it a work of joy.

**THINK IT THROUGH**

“The heart of the true minister is filled with an intense longing to save souls. Time and strength are spent, toilsome effort is not shunned; for others must hear the truths that brought to his own soul such gladness and peace and joy.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 371.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 13:15-17.

**Part 5**  
**PRAYER AND**  
**DOXOLOGY**

**“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:20, 21).**

**What request in his behalf does the author make? Why? Verses 18, 19.**

“Us” in verse 18 is probably to be taken as a literary plural meaning “me.” Note as evidence the transition to the singular in verse 19. Requests for prayer are common in the epistles. (See 2 Thess. 3:1; Rom. 15:30; Col. 4:3.) It seems probable that the protestation of innocence on the author’s part and his expression of a determination always to conduct himself properly is indicative of some suspicions on the part of some people regarding him. He needs the prayers of people who know and love him. He hopes to be restored soon to them.

There follows one of the finest benedictions in all the epistles. It closes with a doxology. It is rich in spiritual meaning and deserves careful study. God is spoken of first as “the God of peace.” (See Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23.) “Peace” in the Bible means more than the mere absence of strife. The Greek word for “peace” has taken on much of the connotation of the Hebrew word *shalom* denoting “wholeness,” “completeness,” and total “well-being.” But Christian peace also includes the final salvation of the whole man, a salvation that comes through Jesus Christ. The God who is the ultimate source of this peace resurrected Jesus Christ from the dead. This is the only specific reference to Jesus’ resurrection in the epistle of Hebrews. He was brought up from the dead “through the blood of the everlasting covenant,” that is, by virtue of the acceptance of His sacrifice by God as the basis of the new covenant. Our Lord is then designated “that great shepherd of the sheep,” the only place in the epistle where such a title is given Him. It seems to be derived from the Greek translation of Isaiah 63:11: “Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock?”

What is God to do for the believers? He is to furnish them with everything they need to carry out His will. How are they to carry out His will? By having this God working within them (compare Phil. 2:13), through Jesus Christ. Man works, but his work must be the result of the activity of the Lord Jesus within him. The prayer closes with the ascription of praise: “to whom be glory for ever and ever.”

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 13:18-21.

**Part 6**  
**PERSONAL NOTES**

**“And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words. Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you. Grace be with you all. Amen” (Heb. 13:22-25).**

In conclusion the author of the Hebrews now attaches a few personal notes. The first is an appeal to the Christian community addressed to listen patiently to the reading of the message. “Word of exhortation” correctly and aptly describes the contents and main purpose of the book. It is in the nature of a homily written with a practical purpose in mind. The author is not entirely certain that it will be favorably received, but he appeals for a willing listening. It is after all, he writes, not a lengthy homily when one considers the importance of the themes dealt with. In terms of length it ranks ninth in the books of the New Testament. Listed in order of length, the New Testament documents that are longer are Acts, Luke, Matthew, John, Mark, Revelation, Romans, and First Corinthians. Hebrews can be read aloud within one hour.

**What news is communicated concerning Timothy? What hope does the author express? Verse 23.**

Unfortunately we know nothing further about Timothy’s apparent imprisonment or release. The author assumes that the requested prayer of verse 19 will be granted, and that he and Timothy may visit the readers together.

**Who are the recipients of the document to greet? From whom does the author send greetings? Verses 24, 25.**

In the apostolic age the Christian believers met in homes—house-churches—for worship. The charge to convey the author’s greetings to all the leaders and all the saints may perhaps mean the leaders and members of other house-churches than their own. “Those who come from Italy” (RSV) may refer to Italians who are with the author outside of Italy who wish to be remembered to the recipients of the homily. But this is uncertain, for the Greek could mean, “they of Italy” as it appears in the King James Version.

The final benediction is identical with that given at the end of Titus (3:15): “Grace be with you all.” It calls down upon them all the abundant and sufficient favor of God, which is the basis of their salvation. “The only power that can create or perpetuate true peace is the grace of Christ.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 305.

**FURTHER STUDY**

*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Heb. 13:22-25.

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3. *The Beginning of Public Worship (Gen. 4:26).*
4. *The Altar Beside the Ark (Gen. 8:20-22).*
5. *Abraham, the Altar Builder (Gen. 12:7).*
6. *Jacob Meets His Lord (Gen.28:16-19).*

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3. *The Portable Church (Ex. 25:8).*
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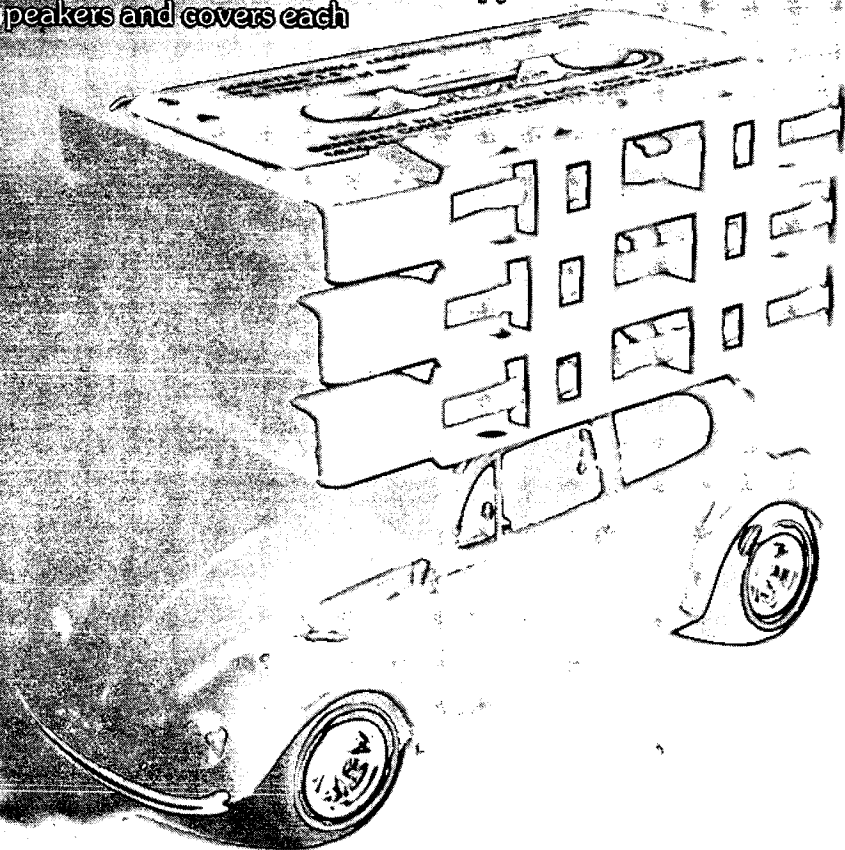
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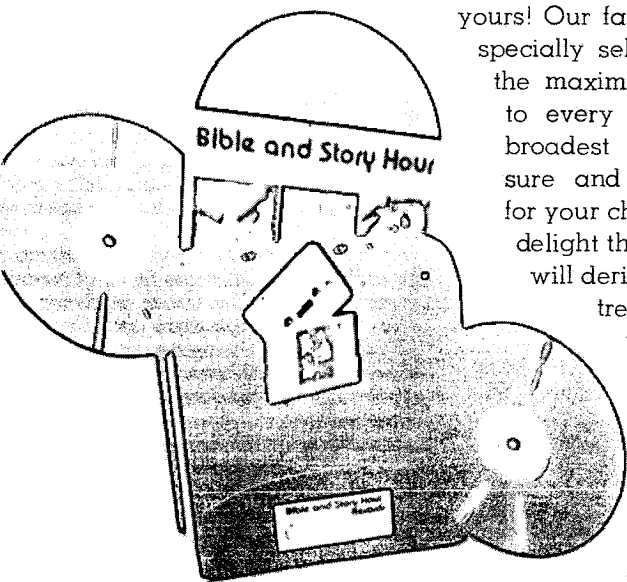
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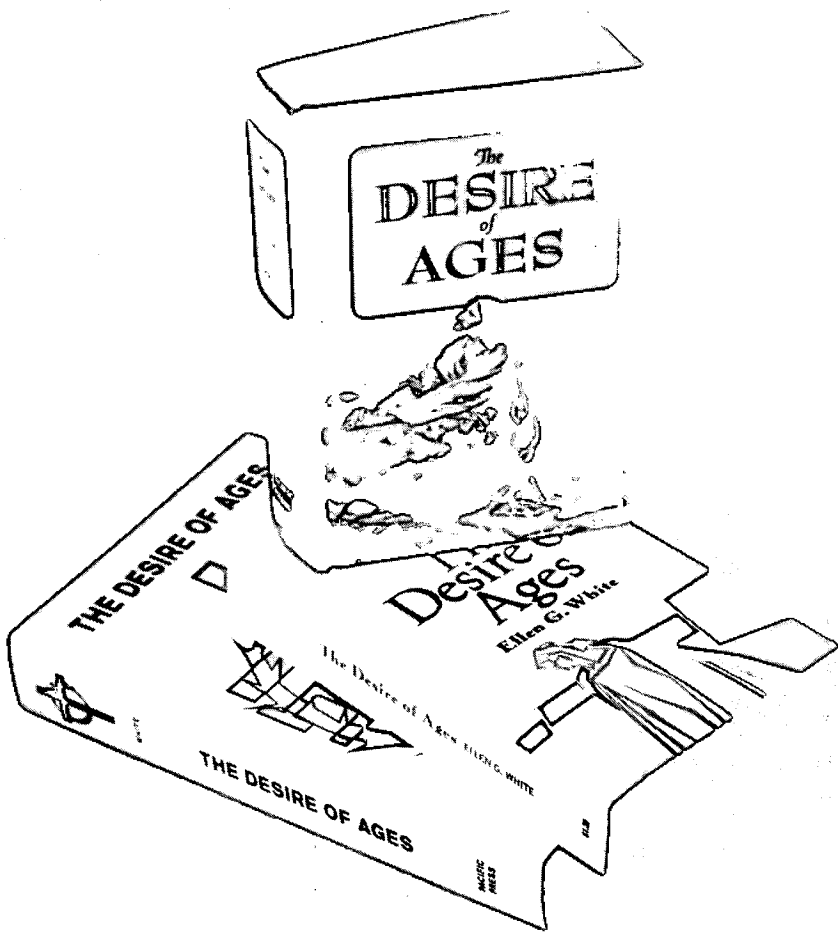
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Japan	104,665,171	81	8,124	7,412
Korean	31,777,527	268	28,891	32,205
North Philippine	25,205,640	632	58,033	72,921
South China Island	20,375,355	41	7,887	8,420
South Philippine	9,994,242	357	63,378	80,133
Southeast Asia	78,822,328	152	20,357	23,614
West Indonesia	111,900,000	280	25,618	32,544
Guam-Micronesia M.	200,000	8	944	902
<b>Division Totals</b>	<b>407,623,164</b>	<b>2,435</b>	<b>285,989</b>	<b>341,103</b>

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