

**Adult**

# **Sabbath School Lessons**

**"In Full Assurance"**



**APRIL, MAY, JUNE 1986**

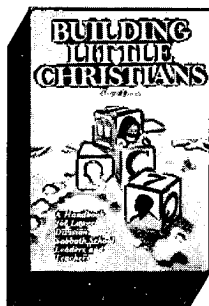
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# “Solusi

At first the seriousness of the young bride's disease was not apparent. Smith M'thini didn't realize that his young wife Ruth could not completely free herself from the drinking habit she had begun before their marriage.

In despair and discouragement he drifted away from Adventism. Though their struggles continued through the years, they always sent their children to church.

“Even though I'm a third generation Seventh-day Adventist,” says Jennifer Hawara, one of their children and a Zambian-born graduate of Solusi College,

“when I was growing up we weren't all that different from the typical non-Seventh-day Adventist family.”

Solusi College changed Jennifer's life. “For the first time I took the Bible seriously,” she explains. Jennifer learned more of Ellen White's teachings during a health course taught by missionary Ben Wheeler.



# changed my life!”

She realized the seriousness of her mother's drinking problem as she read *Ministry of Healing* for the class.

The girl then wrote to her mother from Solusi, offering hope and encouragement that eventually bore fruit. After much prayer Ruth M'thini confided her problem to the church pastor, who then rallied the church to visit and pray with the woman. She gave her heart to the Lord after nine months and became a strong, active church member.

Mother and daughter, with new found faith, prayed together for Mr. M'thini, urging him to trust God and look for new employment with Sabbaths off. He was baptized along with 628 others in September, 1984 during an evangelistic effort conducted in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

"Solusi made this change in our lives and influenced change in my parents," Jennifer says. "Please pray for my college this quarter."

The Eastern Africa Division thanks you for the support you will give through your weekly Sabbath School offering this quarter. Your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will

help build badly needed married student housing at Solusi College, Zimbabwe, and University of Eastern Africa, Kenya.

By systematically setting aside two to three percent of personal income for the World Budget Offering, you can help change lives like Jennifer's, not only at Solusi College, but around the world.



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**Thirteenth Sabbath Offering  
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## You can help change lives!



# Meet the Writer Of This Quarter's Lessons

William G. Johnsson serves as editor of the *Adventist Review*. Born in Adelaide, Australia, he holds a Ph.D. in biblical studies from Vanderbilt University. He spent 15 years at Spicer College in India as Bible teacher and dean of the School of Theology. He also taught New Testament and served as associate dean at the SDA Theological Seminary. The six books he has written include *In Absolute Confidence* and *Why Doesn't Anyone Care?*

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To accompany this quarter's Sabbath School lessons Dr. Johnsson authored *Blessed Assurance* in which he discusses the themes common to Habakkuk and Hebrews. He analyzes the insightful questions Habakkuk asked of God and discusses the practical advice and theological reasoning of the writer of Hebrews. He shows how Habakkuk and Hebrews apply to twentieth century Christians.

## Foreword

Combining the books of Habakkuk and Hebrews in a quarter's lessons might seem unusual. Habakkuk is centered in the Babylonian invasion of Judah; Hebrews is centered in Jesus Christ, our heavenly High Priest. Why should these books be studied as a unit?

Both books address questions of doubt and faith. Habakkuk wrestles personally with these questions while the writer of Hebrews is concerned with building up Christian believers whose confidence is beginning to waver. Both books underscore the truth that "The just shall live by faith."

The doubts that troubled Habakkuk and the Hebrew Christians are even more pressing today. As the forces of evil seem to reign unchecked the hearts of many are growing cold. We need the revival that studying these books can bring us.

We also need to avoid the errors of *denying* assurance and of developing *false* assurance. Some people are afraid to take hold of the assurance of God's love and acceptance because they feel that it opens the door to presumption and careless living. On the other hand, those who develop a false assurance seem ready to cast off concern for ethical living. As we follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we will find the true balance that He achieved—a joyful, confident faith that comes from the knowledge that we are doing God's will.

## Introduction to Habakkuk

# The Questionings of Faith

The book of Habakkuk was written during a time of apostasy in Judah. It deals with a question that is as troubling today as it was during the prophet's time: Why does God allow evil to continue, apparently unchecked? The book is unusual in its directness as Habakkuk lays out his questions frankly before God. God answers His questioning prophet, setting out what will happen to the nation of Judah and also to the invading Babylonians whom God intends to use against Judah as an instrument of judgment. God's answers are important today to everyone who seeks confidence and assurance in the midst of doubt. God not only answers Habakkuk but also seems to encourage a dialogue that leads Habakkuk to better understand God and His ways. Habakkuk at last determines that, no matter what happens, God is in ultimate control and the prophet can have full confidence that God's way is the best way for all concerned.

**A Diagram of the Book of Habakkuk**

Reference	Speaker(s)	Format	Content
1:1 - 2:4	God and Habakkuk	Dialogue	How to handle doubt
2:5-20	God	Instruction	God in control
3:1-19	Habakkuk	Prayer	Assurance

# How to Handle Doubt

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Habakkuk 1:1 through 2:4

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**MEMORY TEXT:** "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Doubts and questions may arise from both God's seeming inactivity and His activity. Nevertheless, His followers find assurance in a faith that grows as a result of the questionings of faith.

OVERVIEW—Habakkuk 1:1 - 2:4		
Reference	Speaker	Content
Hab. 1:1-4	Habakkuk	Why does God allow evil to go unchecked?
Hab. 1:5-11	God	The Babylonians will bring judgment on Judah.
Hab. 1:12 - 2:1	Habakkuk	How can God use the wicked Babylonians for such a purpose?
Hab. 2:2-4	God	Trust in Me!

**INTRODUCTION:** The most troubling question to the believer is, Why? Parents lose their daughter of six years to the ravages of leukemia and ask, Why did God take her from us? A husband or wife loses a spouse in an auto accident and wonders, Why did God let it happen?

These "why" questions about God are of two types, equally troubling.

First, why doesn't God *do* something? When a loved one is dying, or people feel desperate for some other reason when, after they have prayed, nothing seems to have changed—they may be torn by doubt. These kind of "why" questions grow out of God's apparent inactivity, His seeming lack of involvement. The other type of "why" questions spring from what God *does*, or seems to do. Not everything that happens is God's direct will, but at least God permits all that happens. When disaster strikes in the community or in an individual's personal life, the reaction is often: Why did God do this? In the book of Habakkuk both these types of "why" questions are raised by the prophet.

In these last days of earth's history, when, as the Saviour predicted, faith will be hard to find on the earth (Luke 18:8), it is unfortunate that so few Christians realize the value of this little book that is tucked away among the minor prophets Nahum and Zephaniah. The instruction it gives on how to deal with doubt and to find a dynamic, rejoicing life of Christian assurance addresses itself to our needs in a special way.

This week's lesson, based on Habakkuk 1:1 through 2:4, takes the form



of a dialogue between Habakkuk and God. Each speaks twice. Habakkuk raises the first “why” question—Why is God inactive in the face of the wickedness abounding in Judah? God replies that He is about to act: He will bring upon Judah the invading Babylonians who will punish His people for their sins. But, by God’s design, this reply presents Habakkuk with a new problem—the second type of “why” question. As bad as Judah is, it is still better than Babylon! How can God use an even more wicked nation to punish the wicked in Judah? The shocked prophet demands an answer. God replies again, pointing to the final solution to all questions of doubt—unwavering trust in God. This dialogue between Habakkuk and God can be a rewarding study. It analyzes the problem of doubt and its solution in a penetrating and most useful way.



## I. HABAKKUK’S FIRST QUESTION—GOD’S INACTIVITY (Hab. 1:1-4).

*Who was Habakkuk?* The name *Habakkuk* occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament. It is derived from the Hebrew verb *chabaq*, “to embrace.” All we know about the man comes from his book. That book simply designates him as “the prophet” (1:1). Another clue perhaps occurs in Habakkuk 3:1 where “Shigionoth,” a musical term, is found. Apparently chapter 3 is a psalm or hymn. (The entire book is written in poetic form.) Some see in this an indication that Habakkuk was connected with the temple singers. The book of Habakkuk reveals that the writer was honest with himself in facing up to religious questions. Habakkuk had honest questions—questions based on a developing faith. He did not try to pretend they did not exist or could simply be wished away. Instead, he dealt with them; taking them to the One best qualified to handle them—God Himself.

*The times:* “The Temple is mentioned as still existing (ch. 2:20), which shows that the book was written before Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Furthermore, the rise of the Chaldeans [Babylonians] and their invasion of the West is predicted, but this seemed at that time completely incredible (ch. 1:5-7). This situation fits best the time prior to the rise of the Chaldean [Babylonian] Empire under Nabopolassar, who began to reign in 626/25 B.C., and who, with the Medes, was responsible for the destruction of Assyria. A date, possibly about 630 B.C., but before the Chaldeans had become a power of some importance, would seem most appropriate for the period of Habakkuk’s prophetic activity.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 23.

**Habakkuk has been termed by some commentators as the “free-thinker” among the prophets. On what would they base such a conclusion?**

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Although Habakkuk raised questions, the questions were not those of a person who had no faith in God—Habakkuk’s were a *believer’s* questions—questions that led to the development of an even stronger faith in God. *Because* he did believe in God’s fairness and wisdom he could not understand why God seemed inactive in the face of evil.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** All Christians at times face questions about God that they find difficult to answer. But are *my* questions like Habakkuk's—a believer's questions? Do I wait eagerly for His answer?

What two evils in the land distressed the prophet? Hab. 1:2-4.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

**THINK IT THROUGH:** The same two evils that troubled Habakkuk are present in society today. Am I troubled by these evils and do I blame God for them?



## II. GOD'S FIRST ANSWER—HE IS ABOUT TO ACT (Hab. 1:5-11).

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Study God's answer to the prophet's first question to discover the details of the coming judgment on Habakkuk's people:

- Where the judgment will come from (verses 5-7).

\_\_\_\_\_

- The punishing nation identified (verse 6).

\_\_\_\_\_

- When the judgment will take place (verse 5).

\_\_\_\_\_

- How severe the punishment will be (verse 5).

\_\_\_\_\_

- God's response to the violence in Judah (verses 7-9).

\_\_\_\_\_

- The extent of the captivity (verse 9).

\_\_\_\_\_

- How the invaders capture strongholds (verse 10).

\_\_\_\_\_

God's response to Judah's sin will be sudden, swift, and soon. It will surprise everyone by its extent and severity. The "Chaldeans" of verse 6 are the Babylonians. "Heap dust" in verse 10 means to "build earthen ramps" (NIV).

How wrong had been Habakkuk's perception of God! Far from being indifferent to the evils of society in Judah, God knew about it and was grieved. Far from being inactive, He was acting according to His divine

timetable. Because judgment (or justice) was absent in Judah, God would send upon them the Babylonians—a law unto themselves (verses 4, 7). Because Judah was filled with violence, the land would be invaded by a violent enemy nation (verses 2, 3, 9).

**What will be the state of society just before Jesus comes a second time? 2 Tim. 3:1-7. What does the abounding evil of our times indicate to God's waiting people?**

As did God's prophets of old, Ellen White called men and women back to God and predicted His judgments upon a society filled with violence and wickedness. "While at Loma Linda, California, April 16, 1906, there passed before me a most wonderful representation. During a vision of the night, I stood on an eminence, from which I could see houses shaken like a reed in the wind. Buildings, great and small, were falling to the ground. Pleasure resorts, theaters, hotels, and the homes of the wealthy were shaken and shattered. Many lives were blotted out of existence, and the air was filled with the shrieks of the injured and the terrified.

"The destroying angels of God were at work. One touch, and buildings, so thoroughly constructed that men regarded them as secure against every danger, quickly became heaps of rubbish. . . . It seemed that the forbearance of God was exhausted and that the judgment day had come.

"The angel that stood by my side then instructed me that but few have any conception of the wickedness existing in our world today, and especially the wickedness in the large cities. He declared that the Lord has appointed a time when He will visit transgressors in wrath for persistent disregard of His law. . . .

"On April 18, two days after the scene of falling buildings had passed before me, I went to fill an appointment in the Carr Street Church, Los Angeles. As we neared the church we heard the newsboys crying: 'San Francisco destroyed by an earthquake!' With a heavy heart I read the first hastily printed news of the terrible disaster.

"Two weeks later, on our homeward journey, we passed through San Francisco and, hiring a carriage, spent an hour and a half in viewing the destruction wrought in that great city."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 92-95.



### III. HABAKKUK'S SECOND QUESTION—GOD'S ACTIVITY

(Hab. 1:12 - 2:1).

**How did God's plan to use the Babylonians as an instrument of punishment on wicked Judah affect Habakkuk? Hab. 1:12, 13.**

Now Habakkuk had a new problem! The answer he had received from God only raised a new set of "why" questions. Wicked as Judah undoubtedly was, the nation nevertheless seemed to Habakkuk to be far superior in moral and religious life to the Babylonians. God's activity in sending the Babylonians to punish His people seemed to be a contradiction of His holiness—it seemed to run counter to the very moral order of the universe.

**In what way is the question Habakkuk raised a universal one? Do people today still raise this kind of question?**

“Might is right” is the ruling philosophy of many people and nations. In business people often reach the top posts as a result of ruthless ambition. In the international arena, foreign policy is dictated by national self-interest and seeks a basis of power upon which to dictate terms with other nations. Contrariwise, good people often suffer harm at the hands of the ruthless and grasping.

**What characteristic of the Babylonians made them especially evil in the eyes of Habakkuk? Hab. 1:16.**

The Babylonians would have great military successes. But instead of realizing that God had given them the power to be victorious, they attributed their success to their own skill and power.

**Despite Habakkuk’s horror at God’s plan to use the Babylonians to punish Judah, how did he indicate confidence that God would not allow Judah to perish? Hab. 1:12.**

“Confident that even in this terrible judgment the purpose of God for His people would in some way be fulfilled, Habakkuk bowed in submission to the revealed will of Jehovah. ‘Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One?’ he exclaimed. And then, his faith reaching out beyond the forbidding prospect of the immediate future, and laying fast hold on the precious promises that reveal God’s love for His trusting children, the prophet added, ‘We shall not die.’ Verse 12. With this declaration of faith he rested his case, and that of every believing Israelite, in the hands of a compassionate God.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 386.



**Faced with the bewildering question about God’s activity, what did Habakkuk propose to do? Hab. 2:1.**

Habakkuk represents himself as taking a high place like a watchman who will have a clear view of what is coming. This stance is that of readiness, of expectancy. Here it represents the posture of faith. Just as Habakkuk in 1:12 expressed faith that the Everlasting One would preserve His people despite the Babylonian invasion, so in 2:1 he tells how he prepared himself to receive God’s answer.

**How do Habakkuk’s responses of faith in 1:12 and 2:1 help us in meeting questions that trouble us today?**

1. Habakkuk’s confidence expressed in the words “we shall not die” (1:12) shows us how our knowledge of God’s dealings in our past experi-

ence may bolster our hopes when doubts assail. This is a point made also by Ellen White in the chapter "What to Do With Doubt" in *Steps to Christ*: "Instead of questioning and caviling concerning that which you do not understand, give heed to the light that already shines upon you, and you will receive greater light. By the grace of Christ, perform every duty that has been made plain to your understanding, and you will be enabled to understand and perform those of which you are now in doubt.

"There is an evidence that is open to all,—the most highly educated, and the most illiterate,—the evidence of experience. God invites us to prove for ourselves the reality of His word, the truth of His promises. He bids us 'taste and see that the Lord is good.' Psalm 34:8."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 111, 112.

2. We must be open to hear God's answer to us. We do not have literal watchtowers that we can mount today to look for answers; but spiritual watchtowers exist—the watchtower of prayer, the watchtower of earnest Bible study, the watchtower of meditation.

"Disguise it as they may, the real cause of doubt and skepticism, in most cases, is the love of sin. The teachings and restrictions of God's word are not welcome to the proud, sin-loving heart, and those who are unwilling to obey its requirements are ready to doubt its authority."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 111.

#### IV. GOD'S SECOND ANSWER—TRUST IN ME (Hab. 2:2-4).

By what means was Habakkuk instructed to underscore the certainty of the prediction of the Babylonian invasion? Hab. 2:2, 3.

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Note that in verse 2 "tables" are "tablets," that is, stone or clay tablets used for permanent records in Habakkuk's time. The "running" means to read easily, smoothly. The prophesied Babylonian invasion would not take place immediately. The vision would appear to be false as the days passed and nothing happened (verse 3). But at God's "appointed time" it would come to pass. Meanwhile, Habakkuk was to write down the prediction, making it plain for all to read easily.



**APPLICATION TO THE LAST DAYS:** The words of Habakkuk 2:2, 3 were also significant to the early Adventists. Like Habakkuk, the preachers of the return of Jesus in 1844 saw the need to make the message plain so that all might understand. They developed prophetic charts to explain the time calculations of Daniel and Revelation. They first expected that Jesus would come in the spring of 1844, but were disappointed when He did not return. However, the words of Habakkuk 2:3 seemed to speak to their experience—although the vision seemed to tarry, it would surely come. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 52.)

**What basic answer did God give to Habakkuk's questions? Hab. 2:4.**

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The word commonly translated "faith" in this verse comes from the Hebrew word for "constancy," "reliability," or "faithfulness." It is "used

here to describe one's relation to God. Trust in God issues forth from the assurance that God will guide, protect, and bless those who do His will. Habakkuk here grandly affirms that he who lives by a simple faith and trust in the Lord will be saved, but the 'soul which is lifted up' through its own willful pride and perverseness in sin will perish."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1053.

Although God does go on to give Habakkuk some answers to his "why" questions, the truth stated in Habakkuk 2:4 is the essential point. Christianity basically has to do with a personal relationship. It is trusting God in the darkness as well as in the light. It is holding on to God even when He does not make clear to us everything that we would like to know.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Become familiar with the ways in which Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted in the New Testament by reading the texts given and inserting the correct alphabetic designation in the blanks below:

- Rom. 1:16, 17—used in relation to the \_\_\_\_\_ A. "works of the law"  
 Gal. 3:11—used in relation to the \_\_\_\_\_ B. second coming  
 Heb. 10:37, 38—used in relation to the \_\_\_\_\_ C. gospel

The first part of Habakkuk 2:4 is understood by some as applying to the Babylonians. In that case the words become a reproof of their pride in their own strength as they make conquests. Applying it to our time, we see in it a characterization of the wicked. Their attitude is contrasted with that of the righteous, whose ultimate success rests on faith.

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#### FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. What other writers of the Old Testament wrestled with the same sort of questions as Habakkuk? How did their answers compare with his?

Study the resolution of Job's similar question in Job 42:1-6.

See Psalm 73. Note particularly verses 2-4, 17.

2. How did Jesus answer the same sort of questions? Study Luke 13:1-5 and John 9:1-3.

3. Of whom did Jesus say, "Among them born of women there hath not risen a greater"? How, then, do you account for his tragic death? In what way does this lesson shed light on the question?

Read the entire chapter, "What to Do With Doubt" in *Steps to Christ*.

**SUMMARY:** Everyone, the believer and the non-believer alike, at times faces perplexing personal questions. But the questions of the believer are different from those of the non-believer. The believer waits upon God for answers and trusts Him even when he cannot understand clearly.

#### APPLICATION:

- Am I distressed by the abounding violence and lawlessness that surrounds me today?
- On what can we base a belief that God is still in control of events on earth?
- Do I have "watchtowers" of prayer and Bible study where I can wait upon God?

# God in Control

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Hab. 2:5-20.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:20).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Inherent in sin are the seeds of its own destruction. Despite the apparent success of human pride, injustice, and exploitation of others, the sinner cannot find happiness and peace. Only faith in the God who still is in charge brings peace and assurance.

## OVERVIEW: Hab. 2:5-20

### GOD'S WOES (JUDGMENTS) ON BABYLON (2:5-19)

Reference	Sin	Woe or Judgment
2:5-8	Pride, greed, and plunder	Will be plundered
2:9-11	Cheating, false security	Shame, disappointment
2:12-14	Injustice, cruelty	All in vain
2:15-17	Drunkenness, exploitation	Will be disgraced
2:18, 19	Idol worship	Unable to find help

### FAITH'S ASSURANCE: GOD IS IN CHARGE (2:20)

**INTRODUCTION:** God's reply to Habakkuk's second question which began with Habakkuk 2:2 is completed in the passage for today's lesson. Here we learn more about the meaning of faithfulness and living by faith (Hab. 2:4). It is living in confidence that God is faithful. He has not abdicated the throne of the universe. Instead He is working out His purpose according to His own timetable. The righteous need not be concerned by the apparent prosperity of the wicked, for inherent in sin itself are the seeds of its own destruction.

Habakkuk had complained to God (Hab. 1:12-17) about His plan to use the Babylonians as an instrument of judgment on unfaithful Judah. He pointed out that the Babylonians were even more wicked than were Habakkuk's people. Here God shows that He is altogether aware of Babylon's wickedness—His list is more complete than Habakkuk's! Five times God details the sins of Babylon, and each time He pronounces a crushing "Woe!" upon them. Babylon the proud, Babylon who builds to make itself secure, Babylon the unjust and violent, Babylon the drunkard and corruptor of others, Babylon the idolator—WOE on Babylon! But the woes are not arbitrary. They are the natural consequences of the sins involved.

So emerges the confident conclusion of Habakkuk 2:20—God is in con-

trol. The prophet's passage from doubt to faith, from questioning to calm assurance, is complete.

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## I. GOD'S JUDGMENTS ON BABYLON (Hab. 2:5-19).

**1. The First Woe: Summarize in your own words the first fault that God finds in Babylon. Hab. 2:5.**

The pride of Babylon was summarized in Nebuchadnezzar's boast: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" (Dan. 4:30). Babylon was "the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency" (Isa. 13:19), but the proud city and nation would meet with ultimate destruction.

### Why is the sin of pride so hateful to God?

Pride destroys the possibility of relationship with God because it raises self to a wrongful place. We were made by God and always remain dependent on Him: "In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). But pride diminishes the place of God, lifting the ego to an unwarranted role.

"He who feels whole, who thinks that he is reasonably good, and is contented with his condition, does not seek to become a partaker of the grace and righteousness of Christ. Pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give. There is no room for Jesus in the heart of such a person."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 7.

**What principle of retribution is shown by God's coming judgment on Babylon's pride and insatiable desire? Hab. 2:6-8. (Note especially verse 8; compare Gal. 6:7.)**

Jesus also referred to this principle of justice in the Garden of Gethsemane. When Peter began to defend Him, Jesus said, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. 26:52).

**THINK IT THROUGH:** The sins of pride and greed did not come to an end with Babylon's fall. They even insinuate themselves into the church. They threaten to take control of our lives. How can I be kept from these sins?

MON

**2. The Second Woe: Through what means did Babylon seek to ensure safety for itself? Hab. 2:9.**

An inscription of King Nebuchadnezzar, now in the Berlin Museum, reads in part: "I have made Babylon, the holy city, the glory of the great



gods, more prominent than before, and have promoted its rebuilding. I have caused the sanctuaries of gods and goddesses to lighten up like the day. No king among all kings has ever created, no earlier king has ever built, what I have magnificently built for Marduk.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 799.

### Through what selfish means do people seek for security today?

Note Jesus’ parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21) who thought that wealth and possessions could make the future safe for himself. Note also what Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21.

### Wherein does true security lie?

Ours is an age of great insecurity. It is characterized by economic difficulties, threats of war, and crime—many people are afraid. But the Bible shows the place of true security: “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deut. 33:27). (See also Psalm 91.)

**NOTE ON VERSE 10:** Babylon’s quest for security involved “cutting off many people” and led to these words of condemnation: “Thou hast sinned against thy soul.” (“You have worked your own ruin”—*The Jerusalem Bible*.) The idea is striking and tragically true. Sin destroys the self. Even though sin and selfishness appeal to the ego, even though they promise freedom or security, they attack the very being, bringing it to nothingness. Thus, in another context God said, “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself” (Hosea 13:9).



### 3. The Third Woe: What does it mean to “build a town with blood”? Hab. 2:12.

“Condemnation rests upon the Babylonians because their power was built up through slaughter and ‘iniquity.’ . . . Babylon was enlarged and embellished by the spoils seized from conquered nations. Although this verse primarily applies to Babylon, the truths herein stated are applicable at all times.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1054.

Increase in crime has become a major problem in almost all societies of the world. Apart from individual acts of crime, authorities also must deal with “organized crime”—a large network of activities based on drug traffic, prostitution, and gambling, and bringing in huge profits to its bosses. But the divine “woe” on all such illicit activities still stands. No society built on bloodshed and iniquity can long survive.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** How may I, a Christian, fall under the condemnation of this third “woe” against Babylon?

Seventh-day Adventists will not (usually) be caught in Satan’s trap of

murder, robbery, and other kinds of crime. But we should not therefore think that those words of Habakkuk have no meaning for us. From time to time the temptation comes to each of us to take a moral “short-cut”—to gain a personal advantage in some way by doing something which may not be illegal but which is not strictly honest.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** How honest, how moral, am I when I am alone or when I know that no one will catch me if I do wrong? Meditate on the answer you would give if God should ask you this question.

**How does Habakkuk 2:14 give God’s answer to the sin of bloodshed and iniquity in Babylon?**

These words (Hab. 2:14) have a twofold application. In their original setting they pointed to the fall of Babylon, which would show to people everywhere that God was on the throne of the universe, setting up kings and bringing down others. (See Dan. 2:21; 4:32.) But Habakkuk 2:14 also points forward to the time when spiritual Babylon will be no more and the glory of God will fill “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13).



**4. The Fourth Woe: What sin of Babylon is condemned under the fourth “woe”? Hab. 2:15.**

Alcoholism is a modern problem of staggering dimensions. It afflicts societies in both West and East; in developed countries as well as in developing countries. The Bible gives many warnings against alcohol. “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging,” counsels the wise man (Prov. 20:1); and further, “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder” (Prov. 23:31, 32).

But it is not the abuse of alcohol that is condemned in Habakkuk 2. As bad as is addiction to alcohol, how much worse to drag others down by entangling them in the same destructive habit for reasons of selfish gain! This particularly is the evil condemned in Habakkuk 2:15, and it symbolizes the Babylonians making their neighbors drink the cup of wrath, in order to gain their own ends.

**How does the divine judgment of Habakkuk 2:16 correspond with the sin condemned in verse 15?**

The Revised Standard Version makes the parallels clear; the punishment fits the crime. “Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink of the cup of his wrath, and makes them drunk, to gaze on their shame! You will be sated with contempt instead of glory. Drink, yourself, and stagger! The cup in the Lord’s right hand—will come around to you, and shame will come upon your glory!” (Hab. 2:15, 16, RSV). The Babylonians would suffer the same indignities and cruelties that they had brought upon their foes.

**Verse 15**

Babylon makes neighbors drink  
the cup of wrath  
Neighbors become drunk  
Neighbors covered with shame

**Verse 16**

God makes Babylon drink  
the Lord's cup  
Babylon staggers (is drunk)  
Receives shame instead of glory

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What parallels to Habakkuk 2:15, 16 are found in Revelation 14:8, 10; 17:2; 18:3 in reference to spiritual Babylon?

Just as spiritual Babylon made all nations drink of "the wine of the wrath of her fornication," so God will make her followers drink "the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation" (Rev. 14:10).

**Who or what is represented by spiritual Babylon?**

"Babylon, both literal and mystical, has thus long been recognized as the traditional enemy of God's truth and people. As used in the Revelation the name is symbolic of all apostate religious organizations and their leadership, from antiquity down to the close of time."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 830.



**5. The Fifth Woe: What sin of Babylon is condemned in the fifth and final "woe"? Hab. 2:18, 19.**

These verses point out the uselessness of idols and the foolishness of idolatry. An idol is wholly dependent on its maker; it is the creation of a workman. It is lifeless ("there is no breath at all in it," verse 19, RSV) and thus unable to give the worshiper a revelation.

The religion of the Bible is characterized by its rejection of all gods other than Yahweh and by the prohibition of attempts to portray Him. The second commandment expressly forbids making any idol or likeness of God if such likeness is to be worshiped.

At times the Bible writers pointed out the absurdity of worshipping idols. In Isaiah 40:18-20, the great God of the universe is contrasted with the idols made by human hands. In chapter 44 of the same book the stupidity of a person making an idol and then bowing down to the thing he has made is underscored. (See Isa. 44:9-17.) The idols of Babylon are given specific mention. (See Isa. 46:1, 2, RSV). The folly of the Babylonians in putting their trust in false gods is expressed in this "woe."

**Why is the second commandment of the Decalogue still important?**

Most Seventh-day Adventists probably will not be tempted to the worship of idols. The second command, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," however, remains vital for Christian life. We must remember that *anything* that takes the place of God—anything other than God

that assumes first place in our affections—is ruled out under the second commandment.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Am I a modern idolator?



## II. FAITH'S ASSURANCE—GOD IS IN CHARGE (Hab. 2:20).

In Habakkuk 2:20 God's answer to Habakkuk, which began in verse 2, reaches its climax. The two great verses in this passage are verse 4 ("the just shall live by his faith"), and verse 20 ("the Lord is in his holy temple"). Verse 20 gives the assurance on which verse 4 is based. *Because* God still is in charge, the child of God may live in perfect trust, knowing that God sees all that is going on and is working out His eternal purposes. No one should presume to question the wisdom of God.

Which doctrine distinctive of Seventh-day Adventists highlights the truth of Habakkuk 2:20—"the Lord is in his holy temple"?

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"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).

What does it mean to "keep silence" before God?

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This text does not primarily apply to showing reverence in the house of worship. Instead it calls for quietness of *spirit*, that is, for us to cease from questioning the ways of God. God is real, and God is in charge. Although we do not understand all that He allows to happen to others and to us we are to "keep silence"—to rest confidently in Him.

### FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. Study the fall of spiritual Babylon in Revelation 18, noting similarities with this lesson.

2. Meditate on the following: "Look up, you that are doubting and trembling; for Jesus lives to make intercession for us. Thank God for the gift of His dear Son and pray that He may not have died for you in vain. The Spirit invites you today. Come with your whole heart to Jesus, and you may claim His blessing."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 54, 55.

**SUMMARY:** Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, God was in control of events on earth in Habakkuk's day. We too may live by the faith that He is in His holy temple, no matter what may befall.

### APPLICATION:

- Am I becoming hardened to sin because of the abounding iniquity of the last days?
- What should I do to help my neighbor against the evils of alcohol?

# The Celebration of Faith

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hab. 3:1-19.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:18).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The assurance that the God who acted of old on behalf of His people still goes forth to bring salvation makes life a celebration of praise to God.

Hab. 3:1, 2 The Request	Hab. 3:3-15 The Answer	Hab. 3:16-19 The Rejoicing
"Renew thy work."	God acts! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• God comes (verses 3-5)</li> <li>• God acts against enemies (verses 7-12)</li> <li>• God brings salvation (verses 13-15)</li> </ul>	Quiet waiting (verse 16) Rejoicing despite circumstances (verses 17, 18) Renewed by God (verse 19)

**INTRODUCTION:** The third chapter of Habakkuk is a prayer that originally was set to music. The "Shigionoth" of verse one is a musical term, perhaps describing the manner in which this psalm was to be sung. In the final verse the words "to the chief singer" (choirmaster) "with stringed instruments" likewise indicate the musical setting of this chapter.

How we would like to know the original score for Habakkuk 3! Since the words were directed to the choirmaster, presumably they were to be sung with string accompaniment. But we have no knowledge of the melodies or form of the composition.

The psalm as sung in Habakkuk's day by the temple singers must have been a moving piece. Even the words translated into English show strong and sudden contrasts. They fall into three distinct sections, each with a markedly different feeling tone.

In the first section we hear a request, the prophet's plea for God to revive His work as in the days of old. Was this opening sung in a subdued, plaintive manner? Perhaps it was. Habakkuk's request is answered in the dramatic second section which fills the largest portion of the psalm. God is pictured coming in glory and power with lightning bolts and

pestilences. The mountains and the nations tremble, the rivers and the sea are parted, the sun and moon stand still. Most of all, God acts to bring salvation to His people as their enemies are crushed before Him. The words of this section are highly poetic and presumably the music was loud, forceful, and triumphant. The final section again is quiet, but with a different quality to that of the opening. The prophet's experience now breathes quiet waiting on the Lord, rejoicing in Him no matter what befalls, and personal strengthening from the Lord for all of life's challenges. The mood is one of confident assurance and calm rejoicing in the Lord.

Habakkuk 3 is one of the great chapters of Scripture. Unfortunately, like the book of Habakkuk itself, it is frequently overlooked by most Christians. The poetic words of this chapter recapitulate the ideas of the first two chapters but do so in a manner that deepens our understanding of those chapters and leads us to a richer grasp of Christian assurance. With Habakkuk 3 we reach the climax of the book, as we find the celebration of faith.



### I. THE REQUEST (Hab. 3:1, 2).

“**Shigionoth.** Shigionoth are thought to be impassioned songs of rapid emotional changes, expressed by rapid changes of rhythm.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1056. The abrupt changes of content and mood in this prayer of Habakkuk 3 certainly correspond with such poetic forms.

#### Precisely what was Habakkuk's prayer? Hab. 3:2.

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Notice other translations of Habakkuk 3:2:

“O Lord, I have heard the report of thee, and thy work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years renew it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy” (Hab. 3:2, RSV).

“Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy” (Hab. 3:2, NIV).

Habakkuk's prayer was that God would “revive” or “renew” His work. The prophet had heard of God's acts of deliverance for His people in past times. In God's answer to him in chapter 2 God had indicated that He was still in control of events on earth, noting the sins of the Babylonians, and planning to bring judgment upon them in due course. The prophet longs to see God's activity, to have Him intervene once more “in the midst of the years.”

**What is the significance of Habakkuk's prayer, “in wrath remember mercy”?** Hab. 3:2.

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Having heard of God's plan to bring the Babylonians against Judah as

instruments of His judgment, Habakkuk prayed that God would mingle mercy with His wrath. This response of the prophet is the natural cry of one who loves his people and sees them about to come under judgment. But was this part of Habakkuk's prayer necessary? Does not God *always* "remember mercy" in His judgments?

**What was the supreme demonstration of the mingling of divine wrath and divine mercy?**

"The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured—the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face—speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise. He who stilled the angry waves and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee, who opened blind eyes and called forth the dead to life,—offers Himself upon the cross as a sacrifice, and this from love to thee. He, the Sin Bearer, endures the wrath of divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 755, 756.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Do I also pray, "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years?" Do I long for revival and renewal of the church and try to bring it about? Or do I sit in the critic's bench putting all my energies into tearing down the work of the church?



## II. THE ANSWER (Hab. 3:3-15).

"Verses 3-16 present a sublime picture of the Lord coming in judgment and for the deliverance of His people. The picture is presented in the setting of the deliverance of literal Israel, but is descriptive also of the coming of Christ to usher in the reign of righteousness. . . . In striking figure he describes the effect of this coming upon nature and upon wicked men. Habakkuk uses some examples from God's past dealings with His people to illustrate these final events of history."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1057.

**Habakkuk had prayed for God to act as in the days of old. Describe in your own words the picture of divine activity that he was given. Hab. 3:3-6.**

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**SEARCH AND LEARN:** In order to better understand the five-fold poetic description given in Habakkuk 3:3-6 fill in the blanks that follow:

1. God came from \_\_\_\_\_ and from Mount \_\_\_\_\_ .

Teman is in the land of Edom (compare Isa. 63:1-4; Jer. 49:7) and Mount Paran refers to Sinai (Deut. 33:2). These places were associated

with the Lord's activity for His people in the past. Further, Edom is *east* of Judah. Because the earth turns toward the east, God's is pictured as coming from the east.

2. God's glory covered both \_\_\_\_\_ and earth (verse 3).
3. God's brightness was as the \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 4).
4. Before Him went \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 5).
5. The mountains were \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 6).

**THINK IT THROUGH:** How does this poetic description fit in with New Testament descriptions of the second coming of Christ? In particular, what parallels can you find to Christ's coming in glory, the destruction of the wicked, and what happens to the mountains at His coming?

What is the significance of "the hiding of his power" in verse 4?

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"His brightness was like the light, rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power" (Hab. 3:4, RSV).

"His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from his hand, where his power was hidden" (Hab. 3:4, NIV).

"One reminder alone remains: Our Redeemer will ever bear the marks of His crucifixion. Upon His wounded head, upon His side, His hands and feet, are the only traces of the cruel work that sin has wrought. Says the prophet, beholding Christ in His glory, 'He had bright beams coming out of His side: and there was the hiding of His power.' Habakkuk 3:4, margin. That pierced side whence flowed the crimson stream that reconciled man to God—there is the Saviour's glory, there 'the hiding of His power.' 'Mighty to save,' through the sacrifice of redemption, He was therefore strong to execute justice upon them that despised God's mercy. And the tokens of His humiliation are His highest honor; through the eternal ages the wounds of Calvary will show forth His praise and declare His power."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 674.



Explain the last phrase of Habakkuk 3:6—"his ways are everlasting."

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The Revised Standard Version translates: "His ways were as of old." That is, when Habakkuk sees God coming to deliver His people, it is just as God acted in times past. So the prayer of Habakkuk 3:2 for God to "renew" His work is being answered.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** How important is it for us to have the assurance that God, who acted in times past for His people, is still the same today?

Is the description of God's vengeance on the enemies of His people (verses 7-12) to be taken literally? Give reasons for your answer.



The third chapter of Habakkuk is filled with brilliant pictures of God in His saving activity. The language, however, is poetic: God is likened to a human being in a series of dynamic roles. In verses 7-12, for example, we see these poetic pictures:

1. He is a horseman (verse 8).
2. He is a charioteer (verse 8).
3. He is an archer (verses 9, 11).
4. He is a warrior carrying a glittering spear (verse 11).
5. He is a soldier, marching through the earth in fury (verse 12).

**REACT:** The images of God in this chapter are drawn from ancient methods of warfare and Eastern culture. If you were writing a poem of God's saving activity, what modern images (illustrations) would you use to show His glory, majesty, and power?

WED

What is the purpose of God's going forth in power and judgment? Hab. 3:13.

Notice how the Revised Standard Version helps us to understand Habakkuk 3:13 more clearly: "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, for the salvation of thy anointed. Thou didst crush the head of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck."

To what event in Israel's history does Habakkuk 3:15 allude? (Compare with Exodus 15:1-19; Ps. 77:19, 20.)

The striking picture of God's saving activity given in Habakkuk 3:3-15 contains several allusions to the Old Testament accounts of God's interventions on behalf of His people:

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 1. Verse 3  | The giving of the law at Sinai (Deut. 33:2). |
| 2. Verse 5  | The plagues on Egypt (Exodus 7 through 12).  |
| 3. Verse 7  | Perhaps Gideon's victory (Judges 7).         |
| 4. Verse 11 | The sun standing still (Joshua 10:11-14).    |
| 5. Verse 15 | Perhaps the Exodus.                          |

The New Testament underscores the basic idea here: Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8).

### III. THE REJOICING (Hab. 3:16-19).

How did Habakkuk react to the description of God's activity that is recorded in verses 3-15? Verse 16.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** The prophet's reaction was the same as that of other Bible characters who were given a glimpse of the glory and majesty of God. Compare with the following texts and fill in the missing information:

Job (42:6): "I \_\_\_\_\_ myself, and \_\_\_\_\_ ."

Isaiah (6:5): "\_\_\_\_\_ is me!"

Daniel (10:8): "I retained no \_\_\_\_\_ ."

**When Habakkuk found the assurance that God would act in judgment on the enemies of His people as He went forth for salvation, with what spirit did he face the troubles that lay ahead? Hab. 3:16.**

Notice how the Revised Standard Version translates this passage: "I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us."



**THINK IT THROUGH:** As I face the troubles that lie ahead for God's people, what is my attitude? Have I also found the peace that comes from the assurance of God's saving activity?

Unfortunately, some Seventh-day Adventists are preoccupied with the tribulations and trials through which God's people must pass before the second coming. It is true that the coming trouble will be unlike anything that has gone before. (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 622.) But we must never forget that God promises to bring us through it. Rather than being anxious about the future, we need to trust Jesus day by day. We have only one day to live—today! Jesus said: "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34).

**Although Habakkuk's country was to be devastated by the invading Babylonians, what was his attitude after His dialogue with God? Hab. 3:17, 18.**

The Christian can praise God *in all things*—in sickness or in health, in wealth or in poverty, in life or in death. Habakkuk 3:17, 18 is a marvelous portrayal of the life of celebration—celebration that continues *despite outward circumstances*. Worldlings celebrate when things are going well; but God's people celebrate *at all times!*

**Rewrite Habakkuk 3:17, 18 in your own words, using terms and figures of speech that have meaning to you in your modern setting and culture, wherever you live and wherever you work. Then reflect on the beauty of these verses.**

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**What is the significance of God's making the prophet's feet "like hinds' feet" (Hab. 3:19)?**

**"Like hinds' feet.** Among the rough crags and the treacherous trails of the mountains the feet of the hind were swift and sure (see 2 Sam. 22:34; Ps. 18:32, 33).

**"Make me to walk.** Here Habakkuk identifies himself with his people, as Moses (Ex. 32:30-32), Jeremiah (ch. 14:19-21), and Daniel (ch. 9:3-19) did. Israel's success (see Isa. 58:14) is his own success.

**"Upon mine high places.** God's people will triumph over all opposition, and will dwell securely upon the heights of salvation (see Deut. 32:13; 33:29; Isa. 58:13, 14; Amos 4:13). All the questions of the prophet are answered by faith in God, and Habakkuk rests content that ultimately right and truth will triumph forevermore."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1058.



#### FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. Read "Rejoicing in the Lord," *Steps to Christ*, pages 115-126.
2. Read *The Great Controversy*, pages 613-652.

**SUMMARY:** The psalm that we find in Habakkuk 3 provides the key to a life of celebration in these days. It provides us with the assurance that God, who acted of old for His people, is still the same today. So come what may, we may trust in Him and rejoice in His goodness.

#### APPLICATION:

- What can I do to help bring revival and renewal? Where should revival begin?
- What past experiences of God's saving activity in my life and the lives of others can I recall?
- Am I afraid as I face the uncertainties of life and the perils of the last days? How can I find calm and peace?
- How can I share the spirit of celebration with others?

#### NOTES:

## Introduction to the Book of Hebrews

### “In Full Assurance”

The book of Hebrews is more like a sermon than a letter. It is addressed to Christians who were becoming weary in the faith and who were tempted to return to the temple services and the religious practices of Judaism. The apostle endeavors to build their Christian life by showing them the magnificence of Jesus' work on earth below and in heaven above. He is truly God and truly man, heavenly High Priest, all-sufficient Sacrifice, and coming King. The key word of the book is *better*. Apparently Hebrews was written before the fall of Jerusalem. The apostle seems intent on preparing Jewish Christians for the destruction of the Jerusalem temple by focusing their attention on the “better” ministry of their “better” High Priest in the “better” sanctuary.

#### OUTLINE OF HEBREWS

The Better Revelation	1:1-4
The Better Name	1:5 - 2:18
The Better Leader	3:1 - 4:13
The Better Priest	4:14 - 6:20
The Better Priesthood	7:1-28
The Better Ministry	8:1-13
The Better Sacrifice	9:1 - 10:18
The Better Country	10:19-39
The Better Hope	11:1 - 12:2
The Better City	12:3 - 13:25

# “In Full Assurance”

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Overview of the book of Hebrews.

**SAB** **PM** **MEMORY TEXT:** “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).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Even though we may be tempted to spiritual slackness, by looking to Jesus we may find the full assurance of faith.

## OVERVIEW:

- I. Hebrews—A Written Sermon (Heb. 13:22).
- II. The Problems of the Hebrews—Spiritual Weariness.
  1. Neglecting the gospel message (2:1-4).
  2. Hardening of the heart (3:7-19).
  3. Lack of spiritual growth (5:11-14).
  4. The peril of rejecting Christ (6:4-8).
  5. Failing to attend church (10:23-25).
  6. Losing the hope of the second coming (10:35-39).
- III. The Solution: Assurance Through Christ (10:19-22).
- IV. The Challenge and Appeal (12:1 through 13:17).

**INTRODUCTION:** Hebrews is the great book of assurance in the New Testament. Although it is much longer than Habakkuk and approaches the topic in a totally different manner, we find that it has much in common with Habakkuk. Both books confront the doubts and discouragements that assail the child of God from time to time. In Habakkuk the doubts arise in the mind of the writer himself, Habakkuk the prophet. He was alarmed first by the apparent indifference of God to injustice and violence in the land, then by God's plan to use the Babylonians as an instrument of judgment on Judah. In Hebrews, the doubts are not those of the writer but of “the Hebrews.” Some of the Hebrews were drifting back to Judaism, gradually turning from the truths they once espoused. They were losing confidence in the second coming—it seemed to them that Jesus should have returned long before. They were losing confidence in Christianity and faced the possibility of totally rejecting the faith that they had held dear.

In both books the answer to doubt is found in faith. Habakkuk eventually climbed his watchtower to hear God answer: “The just shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4). Not only are those words quoted in Hebrews 10:38 but the famous eleventh chapter also describes faith and calls the roll of the outstanding men and women of faith of Old Testament times.

The book of Hebrews goes much farther than Habakkuk, however. It was written *after* the coming of Jesus, to whom the Old Testament points. It shows how the person of Jesus, who is fully God and fully man, enables

Him to be our High Priest in heaven above. It shows how His death on Calvary was an all-sufficient sacrifice for sins. Whereas Habakkuk merely affirms, "The Lord is in his holy temple" (Hab. 2:20), Hebrews elaborates on the role and work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary.

This week's lesson provides an overview of the book of Hebrews. Often this book is thought to be highly theological, but we will see that it is intensely practical, written to help Christians who were losing confidence and turning back.



## I. HEBREWS—A WRITTEN SERMON (Heb. 13:22).

How does the writer himself describe the book of Hebrews? Heb. 13:25.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** When we compare Hebrews with the letters of the New Testament we note several differences:

1. The writer does not identify himself.
2. The people addressed are not named.
3. The greeting with which the letters begin—usually "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"—is absent.
4. Personal details such as thanksgiving, greetings to individuals, and exhortations to specific situations are absent. Only in Hebrews 13:23 and 24 do any such personal elements appear. The ways in which the book of Hebrews departs from the letter form are best discovered by comparing the beginning of Hebrews with the New Testament letters. Compare Hebrews 1:1-4 with the following selections:

Rom. 1:1-5	Col. 1:1-8	James 1:1
1 Cor. 1:1-17	1 Thess. 1:1-10	2 Peter 1:1, 2
Gal. 1:1-6	1 Tim. 1:1-7	2 John 1-3

In view of these differences Hebrews is to be understood more as a written sermon than a letter.

*Who were "the Hebrews"?* At least four interpretations have been suggested: (1) the Jews in general, (2) spiritual Jews (compare 1 Peter 1:1; 2:4-9; 3:5, 6, 18-22), (3) Hebrews signifies "wanderers" based on the analogy of Deuteronomy 26:5, and (4) Jewish Christians.

Of these possibilities the first three may be set aside. The readers clearly are Christians (compare 2:1-4; 6:4, 5, 9, 10; 10:32-34), but Christians who apparently are attracted to the priesthood and sacrificial system of Judaism. They were facing the imminent loss of the temple to the Romans (A.D. 70). Understanding the readers to be Jewish Christians fits best the reasoning of the book of Hebrews.

"It was high time that the eyes of the Jewish Christians should be opened to heavenly realities. When their Temple should be destroyed, it would be needful for them to have their faith anchored to something sure and steadfast that would not fail. If their minds could be turned to the heavenly High Priest and sanctuary and to a better sacrifice than that of bulls and goats, they would not be dismayed when a mere earthly structure should pass away."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 389.

Who wrote the book? So far as the evidence of Hebrews itself is concerned, we not only find similarities with Paul's thought, but also dissimilarities of language and word usage. Ellen White speaks of the writer of the document as being Paul. Sometimes she simply refers to "the apostle" as the author. We will follow her lead in doing so.

The *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* states: "Though weighty arguments have been presented against the Pauline authorship of Hebrews, those arguments are not sufficient to offset the traditional belief that Paul is the author. . . ."

"It is generally agreed that Hebrews was written before the fall of Jerusalem. Now, the number of church leaders was very small in the years before A.D. 70. Which of those leaders might have set forth an argument as profound as that presented in the book of Hebrews? By all odds the most likely person is Paul."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 388, 389.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Have I read the book of Hebrews as a "word of exhortation" to my life? Am I now ready to listen to its words of warning and encouragement?



**II. THE PROBLEM OF THE HEBREWS—SPIRITUAL WEARINESS**  
(Heb. 2:1-3; 5:11-14; 10:23-39).

In its construction, the book of Hebrews follows a regular pattern. Exposition and exhortation alternate. Just as any effective sermon today will be based on theology but will continually make clear the application of the theology to the lives of the hearers, so the apostle from time to time interrupts his discussion of Jesus as High Priest and Sacrifice to show the meaning of his ideas to the situation of his readers.

The pattern is:

Exposition	1:1-14	Exposition	5:1-10
Exhortation	2:1-4	Exhortation	5:11 - 6:20
Exposition	2:5 - 3:6	Exposition	7:1 - 10:18
Exhortation	3:7 - 4:16	Exhortation	10:19 - 13:25

The change to exhortation usually can be discovered easily:

1. The apostle changes from the third person to the first or second person plural.
2. Usually he suggests, "Let us . . ."
3. Often he commences, "Therefore let us . . ."

For example, note how he changes at Hebrews 2:1 from exposition (chapter 1—Jesus the Son of God) to exhortation. By studying the exhortations of Hebrews we can arrive at a clear spiritual profile of "the Hebrews."

**What spiritual problem of the Hebrews is shown in the first exhortation?**  
**Heb. 2:1-4.**

The term translated "slip" in verse 1 is an interesting one. It is a nautical term used for flowing by, slipping away, being washed away, or drifting away. As night winds and currents may carry a ship, apparently safe at

anchor, out of the harbor, so Christians have to beware lest they drift from the harbor of salvation. Note how the Revised Standard Version translates this verse: "Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it."

**How is the spiritual problem of those to whom Hebrews was written outlined in the second exhortation? Heb. 3:8, 12, 13.**

The exhortation in Hebrews 3:7 through 4:16 goes beyond that in Hebrews 2:1-4. There the spiritual condition of the Hebrews was described in terms of "slipping" or "drifting," and neglecting so great salvation. Here the key word is *harden*. The heart hardens by the inroads of the deceitfulness (or "pleasures") of sin (Heb. 3:13). This in turn may lead to a "departing from the living God"—literally, to an apostasy.



**In the third exhortation, Hebrews 5:11 through 6:20, the apostle rebuked the Hebrews for another spiritual failure. What was it? (See 5:12, 13.)**

Babies are fascinating. They bring joy to our hearts as we see again the miracle of new life, new persons. But babies that never grow up bring sadness. Growth is built into the very nature of our being. In the same way we rejoice to see new Christians—men and women who have experienced the miracle of the "new birth." But Christians who remain babes are a tragedy. They frustrate the law of spiritual life, which is to grow up to the image of our wonderful Saviour.

**Against what terrible condition does the apostle warn? Heb. 6:4-8.**

Note the three key words in this portrayal of the denial of Jesus: falling away (literally, "apostasy," as in 3:12); crucifying the Son of God again (or, "crucifying on their own account," RSV, or with their own hands); and exposing Him to contempt (or, "making mock of his death," NEB). It is a sad, grim picture. Could it be possible that someone blessed of the Spirit and nurtured on the Word of God could one day come to the point of open, public repudiation of Christ and His cross? Yes, says the apostle.

**Does Christian assurance mean that we have the certainty that we will never be lost?**

Obviously, it does not. The book of Hebrews contains some of the greatest passages of assurance and confidence in Christ in the entire Bible. But it also presents three of the strongest warnings to be found in Scripture (6:4-6; 10:26-31; and 12:15-17) addressed to the same readers. *As long as we are joined to Christ*—that is, united with Him in a personal relationship—we have the assurance of His salvation. (See John 10:29.) But separated from Christ we can have no assurance of His presence or salvation.





The path of truth lies close to the path of error. Into what error might those who emphasize Christian assurance fall?

We need to avoid the twin errors of *denying* assurance and having *false* assurance. God wants us, His sons and daughters, to be confident of His love, acceptance, and forgiveness as we confess our sins and cast ourselves fully upon His grace. To deny assurance is to deny the truth of God's promises. But the opposite mistake is having a false assurance, sometimes expressed as "once saved, always saved." The fact that we *now* belong to Christ is not in itself a guarantee that we *always* will belong to Him. He will never forsake us, but we may forsake Him. Christianity involves a personal relationship; and, like all relationships, it must be fostered or it will die eventually.

Note how the following statements of Ellen White guard against both errors—denying assurance and false assurance.

"The acceptance of the Saviour brings a glow of perfect peace, perfect love, perfect assurance. The beauty and fragrance of the character of Christ revealed in the life testifies that God has indeed sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 420.

"There are two errors against which the children of God—particularly those who have just come to trust in His grace—especially need to guard. The first, already dwelt upon, is that of looking to their own works, trusting to anything they can do, to bring themselves into harmony with God. He who is trying to become holy by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, that can make us holy.

"The opposite and no less dangerous error is that belief in Christ releases men from keeping the law of God; that since by faith alone we become partakers of the grace of Christ, our works have nothing to do with our redemption."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 59, 60.

**What further symptom of spiritual sickness is shown in the fifth exhortation to the Hebrew Christians? Heb. 10:23-25.**

Although we may worship God in private, we miss much by absenting ourselves from Sabbath School, worship service, and prayer meeting. As Christians we are members of the body of Christ. Being members of His body involves both privileges and responsibilities.

**What other concern apparently lay behind the spiritual problem of some of "the Hebrews"? Heb. 10:35-39.**

New Testament Christianity is marked by a buoyant hope in the return of Jesus. But here and there we find indications that already in the first century of Christianity some of Jesus' followers were becoming discouraged because He had not come back as soon as they had hoped. (See also 2 Peter 3:3-10; 1 Thess. 4:14-18.) Although no one knows the day or the hour of Jesus' coming, he urges us always to watch and be ready (Matt. 24:42, 44).



**REVIEW** the spiritual characteristics of the Hebrews that we have found in this section.

**SUMMARIZE** in your own words the spiritual problem that comes to light. Is this problem present among modern Christians? Do *you* wrestle with it?

### III. THE SOLUTION—ASSURANCE THROUGH CHRIST (Heb. 10:19-22; 12:1, 2).

Through what means alone may confidence and assurance be found? Heb. 10:19-22.

This passage summarizes the theological argument of Hebrews. It points us to Jesus, our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, the Sacrifice for sins.

**On whom should the faltering Hebrews fix their gaze? Heb. 12:1, 2.**



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the third chapter of 1 John.

“Christendom, if ever it existed, collapsed with the onset of World War I. We have entered a new Dark Ages for the Christian Church, with enormous threats to a truly Christian way in the world. Its temptations are subtle, its allurements beguiling. The high drop-out rate among Christians should not surprise us, even if it does distress us.

“Drop out—or slowly dry up. That . . . danger [is] as real today as when the apostle penned his sermon. Worship becomes a form, prayer a lifeless ritual, church membership a ticket in the Christian “club.” One may choose to come and go, to leave and rejoin, almost willy-nilly.

“Our *need*, then, is to hear the same sort of message as the Hebrews. Someone must remind us of the *reality* of our religion, of its surpassing *worth*.”—William G. Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence* (Nashville, Southern Publishing Association, 1979), p. 30.

**SUMMARY:** The book of Hebrews points to a spiritual problem that is surprisingly contemporary—the problem of growing weary and discouraged in the Christian way. But it shows the way to vibrant Christian living—to full assurance—by keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus.

#### **APPLICATION:**

- Does my life show any of the symptoms of spiritual sickness detailed in the book of Hebrews?
- Can I recall anyone I personally know who, although once apparently a converted Christian, eventually fell away from Christ completely?
- How can I help others who may be discouraged?

# The Better Revelation

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Hebrews 1:1-4.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" (Heb. 2:3).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** God always has revealed Himself and His will to His earthly children, but His supreme revelation came through the incarnation of the second Person of the Godhead.

## OVERVIEW: Heb. 1:1-4

The God Who Speaks (Heb. 1:1, 2)	Christ, the Supreme Revelation of God (Heb. 1:2-4)
Revelation—"at sundry times and divers manners"	The greatness of His person (1:3) His work (1:2, 3) His superiority to angels (1:4)

**INTRODUCTION:** The opening verses of Hebrews are among the most sublime in the literature of humankind. They lift us to the very presence of God. We see God constantly working out the purposes of His will by communicating with lost humanity. And these sublime words direct our gaze fully to Jesus the Son in the glory of His being and work.

In the book *Father and Son*, Edmund Gosse describes the profound impression that the book of Hebrews made upon him as a boy when his father would read it to him:

"The extraordinary beauty of the language—for instance, the matchless cadences and images of the first chapter—made a certain impression upon my imagination, and were (I think) my earliest initiation into the magic of literature. I was incapable of defining what I felt, but I certainly had a grip in the throat, which was in its essence a purely aesthetic emotion."—Quoted in William Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, p. 33.

The majesty of Hebrews that captivated the mind of young Gosse is seen in the passage with which the book opens (1:1-4), and which is the focus of this week's lesson. Immediately we see God; and then we see Jesus, the supreme Revelation of God. This, after all, is the only way to Christian assurance.

People today are hungry for a knowledge of the true God. Vast numbers of modern men and women feel adrift on an alien sea, lost in a mindless universe. They need to hear the comforting words of the passage we are studying this week—that there is a God, that this God does not leave

us alone in our quest for meaning, and that in a supreme act of love and condescension this God has become one of us to bring us salvation.



## I. THE GOD WHO SPEAKS (Heb. 1:1, 2).

Hebrews 1:1-4 is a continuous sentence in the original (Greek) text. This long sentence is constructed carefully; its majestic language is in keeping with its elevated subject matter. In this sentence the subject undergoes an interesting shift. God the Father is the center of attention in verses 1 and 2. But the Son is introduced in verse 2 and, as it were, moves to center stage. This relationship continues throughout Hebrews. Although the book focuses on the glory of the person and work of Christ, our heavenly High Priest and Sacrifice, all that the Son does is done in fulfillment of the plan of God for the salvation of the world.

### What two ideas are assumed in verse 1?

The apostle does not attempt to *prove* that God is speaking here. Rather, he simply makes two specific statements—there is a God and He reveals Himself. After all, we cannot establish the fact that God exists by only using reason. God cannot be measured and weighed in the laboratory. No scientist, no mathematician, no philosopher, can come up with an argument and say, “Look! I’ve proved that there is a God.” God is too big to be encompassed by the human mind in this way. (Likewise, His existence cannot be disproved, despite what the atheist may attempt.)

It is all important that God is the God who speaks. Suppose God existed but chose to remain silent. We would have no way of finding out what He was like or even if He existed. The mystery of our own being would remain. But God has chosen to communicate with us. In doing so He both shows us Himself and reveals ourselves to us.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** What does Hebrews mean by saying that God “speaks”? Is God’s “speech” limited to the actual words of God, as when He thundered from Sinai?

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What ways in which God “speaks” are shown by the following passages?

Gen. 3:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Gen. 8:1, 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Ex. 3:1-6 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Sam. 28:6 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Kings 19:9-13 \_\_\_\_\_

Isa. 6:1-3 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Tim. 3:16, 17 \_\_\_\_\_

**THINK IT THROUGH:** How important to *me* is this idea—that God speaks, communicating His love and His will? Am I convinced that He has spoken to me also? Through what means does He make known Himself to me?

**MON**

**COMPLETE:** Hebrews 1:1, 2 is a carefully balanced construction. The following diagram will help you to become aware of this balance. Fill in the blanks to complete the diagram:

The God Who Speaks	
The Old Revelation	The New Revelation
Spoke	_____
In times past	_____
Unto _____	Unto us
By the _____	By His Son

**Which phrase of Hebrews 1:1 was not used in the diagram? What point is the apostle seeking to make in this phrase?**

In the original, the opening words are "At sundry times and in divers manners." By putting these words first Paul heightens the emphasis, which is on the *incomplete* nature of God's revelation of old. God's speaking came at many different times and in many different ways. This variety of ways in which God spoke stands in sharp contrast to the full, complete revelation of God through the incarnate Jesus Christ. The phrase "at sundry times and in divers manners" ("in many and various ways," RSV), implies that "the Son" of verse 2 signifies completeness of revelation.

**How do the words of Jesus and the writings of those used to author the Gospels attest to the fact that God "spoke" fully through Jesus Christ? John 1:14, 17, 18; 14:6-10; Matt. 11:27.**

"By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God,—God's thought made audible. In His prayer for His disciples He says, 'I have declared unto them Thy name,—'merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.'—'that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.'"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 19.

The relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament is a very important question that has been debated by Christians since at least the second century.

**Below are listed responses to this question given by Christians at various times. Evaluate them as True or False:**

- The Old is bad; the New is good. \_\_\_\_\_
- The Old is promise; the New is fulfillment. \_\_\_\_\_
- The Old is primitive and material; the New is spiritual. \_\_\_\_\_
- The Old is expectation; the New is reality. \_\_\_\_\_
- The Old deals in justice; the New deals in mercy. \_\_\_\_\_
- The Old centers in law; the New centers in love. \_\_\_\_\_
- The Old focuses on God the Father; the New focuses on Christ. \_\_\_\_\_
- Both Old and New focus on justice and mercy, law and love, and God and Christ. \_\_\_\_\_

Notice how this passage (Heb. 1:1, 2) sheds light on this question. On the one hand, the apostle does not disparage the Old Testament. Far from it; he says that the Old Testament is the record of the various ways God spoke. Because it *is* the revelation of God it has abiding value. But he also draws a contrast. The New Testament is not merely a continuation of the Old. While the one God stands behind both Old Testament and New Testament, in Jesus we find a *completeness* which goes beyond the ways God spoke in Old Testament times. So we find both continuity and discontinuity. Revelation reaches a climax in the Word made flesh.



## II. CHRIST, THE SUPREME REVELATION OF GOD (Heb. 1:2-4).

**What is signified by the occurrences of the term *Son* in Hebrews?**

- “Son” designates the completeness of revelation (1:2).
- “Son” indicates superiority to angels (1:5-14).
- “Son” designates the One who has become our Brother (2:10-18).
- “Son” is One qualified for Melchizedekian priesthood (5:5, 6; 7:28).
- Warnings are given against despising the “Son” (6:6; 10:29).

We may rightfully attach much importance to the term *Son*. As the basis of Christian assurance is in the God who speaks, so His climactic speech is through One who is Son.

“While the Son of a human being, He became the son of God in a new sense. Thus He stood in our world—the son of God, yet allied by birth to the human race.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 227.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** By the “person” of Jesus Christ we mean who and what He is, in distinction from His “work”—what He does. In the first part of Hebrews 1:3, find a threefold description of the *person* of Christ.

1. The text does *not* say that the Son *became* the divine Light and the divine stamp. Instead it says: “Who \_\_\_\_\_ . . .” The distinction is crucial. The original wording rules out as false those teachings, both ancient and modern, that suggest that the Son was not eternally God in the full sense.

2. The Son is called the \_\_\_\_\_ of God's glory. This word, also means "radiance" (NIV), "effulgence" (NEB), a "bright ray" or "a shining forth." By using this word the apostle describes the *glory* of the Son. He is "Light of light."

3. The Son is the \_\_\_\_\_ of God's being. The original word, which is the source of our English *character*, has the idea of a stamp, an impression made in wax, a coin that bears the image of a king or president. The idea goes beyond mere appearance. This word shows us that the Son has the very *being* of God—what God is, the Son is.

Hebrews 1:3 is one of the most sublime passages of the Bible in its description of the deity of the Son. But there are other passages that contain similar ideas. (See John 1:1-3; Col. 1:12-20; Rev. 1:4-18.)

**ILLUMINATION:** "The Son is all the fullness of the Godhead manifested. The Word of God declares Him to be 'the express image of His person.' . . .

"Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God. . . . In speaking of His pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God. He to whose voice the Jews were then listening had been with God as one brought up with Him. . . .

"He was equal with God, infinite and omnipotent. . . . He is the eternal, self-existent Son. . . .

"While God's Word speaks of the humanity of Christ when upon this earth, it also speaks decidedly regarding His pre-existence. The Word existed as a divine being, even as the eternal Son of God, in union and oneness with His Father."—*Evangelism*, pp. 614, 615.

"In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 530.

In Hebrews 1:1-4 the person and the work of Christ are interspersed. This also is the case throughout the New Testament. Christ's work is of supreme value because of *who He is*—no angel, for instance, could have provided salvation by dying in our stead. At the same time the work that He does for our salvation—His selfless life, His sacrificial death, and His heavenly ministry—redound to still greater glory to His person.



**SEARCH AND LEARN:** The work of Christ described in Hebrews 1:2, 3 may be viewed in terms of what He did before the incarnation, what He did while on earth, and what He did after He returned to heaven. Analyze these verses accordingly:

**Work before the incarnation:**

1. He made \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 2).
2. He \_\_\_\_\_ all things (verse 3). (Note that this is a continuing work.)

**Work while on earth:**

He purged \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 3).

**Work after He returned to heaven:**

1. He sat \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 3).

2. He is \_\_\_\_\_ of all things (verse 2).

**NOTE** how these ideas give us reassurance in these troubling and uncertain times. The work described before the incarnation points to Christ as both Creator and Provider. The universe is not the product of mindless chance; life is not the child of random groupings of chemicals in some primeval slime. Instead, the world and its beings are linked in origin to the mind of the Son. And He has not set the universe running like a clock that is wound up before He retires to a heavenly rest, leaving it gradually to run down. Rather, "He's got the whole world in His hands."

Further, the work He does after returning to heaven describes Him as reigning. He is Lord of space and time. He sits in exaltation, at the place of heavenly favor, superior to angelic beings. His reigning is the guarantee that in due time the universe will find its ultimate place in Him. Because He is the heir of all things, all things at last will come under His dominion.

The work Christ did while on earth is summed up in just a few words: "When he had by himself purged our sins." But these words will come to great prominence as the book of Hebrews develops. They describe the great sacrifice, Christ's once-for-all death on Calvary. The central theological argument of Hebrews 9:1 through 10:18 will elaborate the significance of these words.



**Theological studies often describe the work of Christ in terms of Prophet, Priest, and King. Study Hebrews 1:2-4 with these categories in mind. (Hints: Under "Prophet," consider verse 2; under "Priest," consider verse 3; under "King," look at verses 3 and 4.)**

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**THINK IT THROUGH:** Which of these three descriptions of Jesus—Prophet, Priest, and King—has most appeal to you in your spiritual life? Why?

None of these categories of Prophet, Priest, and King is familiar to many people today. Most of us have never seen or heard a prophet. There are not as many kings around as there used to be. And even priests are somewhat remote from the experience of many. If you do not have experience with any or all of these three categories, express *in terms of your culture* what Prophet and/or Priest and/or King would mean to you.

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**NOTE:** While in Hebrews 1:1-4 the Son is described in terms of Prophet, Priest, and King, it is the idea of *Priest* that predominates in the development of Hebrews. The "Prophet" idea is nowhere brought out after chapter 1:2, 3, while the "King" idea is given only slight attention later.

**In what connection is the term *better* first used in the book of Hebrews? Heb. 1:4.**



The idea of Hebrews 1:4—that Christ’s name is better than the angels—forms a conclusion to the long sentence with which Hebrews opens and also is a bridge to the next section. The “better name” is developed in Hebrews 1:5 through 2:18. But what is that better name? The presentation of chapter 1:1-4 and the verses that follow point to *Son*. That is, the apostle again points the reader to the superiority of Christ *in Himself* to all others. He is trying to get us to focus on the beauty and majesty of Jesus.



#### FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

- The name *God* occurs 67 times in Hebrews. Study the role of God in relation to the Son’s saving work as found in Hebrews 2:10; 3:2-5; 5:4-10; 11:25, 26; 12:3-11.
- Through whom was the Old Testament revelation of God given? Meditate on *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 1.
- “We have spent some time on the term ‘Son.’ Now we see that we should not press the designation too far in the direction of human analogies. When Scripture calls Jesus Son, it does *not* mean that He has had *origin* in God: that because God generated Him, He is His ‘Son.’ Sonship among human beings leads to such a conclusion—but the apostle specifically denies it. The Son *has* the divine being (or ‘nature’), just as our children share our nature, but the Son *always* had divinity.

“Nor is He ‘Son’ because of the Incarnation. It is the *Son* who is incarnated. At the birth He becomes ‘Son of God’ in a special sense, but He was eternally Son before.

“The ultimate meaning of *Son* here eludes us. And indeed it must. For we are dealing with the topic of God Himself, the one God who exists in trinitarian, personal distinctions. We may say that the ‘Son language,’ as elsewhere in the New Testament, points us to divine *functions* rather than to origins. As in the fourth Gospel, the ‘Father’ sends the Son, gives Him words, authority, and even life, so here the activity of God as seen by His creatures is that of the Son who creates, sustains, purifies, reigns, and inherits.”—William Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, p. 48.

**SUMMARY:** God does not leave us alone, ignorant of Himself and His will. Through a variety of means He has communicated a knowledge of Himself to mankind. The climax of this revelation, however, is in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son. Seeing Him, we see God.

#### APPLICATION:

- Am I making use of the means by which God seeks to speak to me?
- Am I as sure as the writer to the Hebrews of the glory and majesty of Jesus?
- What am I doing to communicate to others the good news about God the Son?

# The Better Name

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Hebrews 1:5 through 2:18.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tim. 3:16).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Through His incarnation the One who bears the "better name" won our salvation and revealed Heaven's love to us.

OVERVIEW: Heb. 1:5 - 2:18.			
1:5-14	2:1-4	2:5-9	2:10-18
The Son— higher than the angels	First exhortation— accept the salva- tion provided through Christ	The Son of man— lower than the angels	Assurance— through the incarnation

**INTRODUCTION:** In the late eighteenth century a man was born who would become famous for his sculpture—Johann Heinrich von Dannecker. As a young man, von Dannecker, sensing that he might not live to old age, determined to produce works in stone that would endure long after his death. Before long his works of art—statues of Greek and Roman gods and goddesses—were being placed in the capital cities of Europe and he had an international reputation.

But von Dannecker was not satisfied. His crowning work, he felt, still eluded him. But what would be its theme? He put aside all other work and meditated. At length he turned to the Scriptures and one day read 1 Timothy 3:16: "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Immediately he knew that he had found what he sought. To capture the mystery of the God-man—this was the subject for his best efforts. Von Dannecker set himself to the task. Effort after effort was produced and, although finely done, was destroyed because it did not capture the magnificent quality of the Christ of 1 Timothy 3:16. At last, after many months of work, von Dannecker was satisfied. He had produced the work he wanted, and his sculpture of Christ did become his crowning achievement. It remains today in von Dannecker's home city of Stuttgart.

Von Dannecker, then at the height of his fame, was summoned to Paris. Napoleon Bonaparte wanted him to sculpt a statue of Venus for the Louvre. But von Dannecker turned down the invitation. After his work

on the God-man he felt it would be blasphemy to produce a pagan god-dess. His art had been consecrated by his work.

This week's lesson, covering Hebrews 1:5 through 2:18, brings us face to face with Jesus Christ, the God-man. We cover statements that, first of all, show how much greater than any angel He is; statements that make clear that He is fully and eternally God. But then, in chapter 2, we find a sudden and drastic contrast. The Son became fully man, "a little lower than the angels" (verse 9). He suffered, was tempted, and died. No attempt is made in this scripture to explain this mystery—*how* the One fully God could become fully man. No speculation concerning the blending of divine and human in one person is entered into. Rather, the *fact* of full deity and the *fact* of full humanity are affirmed by faith.

Nor should we lose sight of the mystery with which we are dealing. As did Moses at the burning bush, we should take off our shoes and fall down in awe and worship.

In that "better name," that name above the name of any angel, is our hope. The certainty that Jesus Christ is God and yet man is for us the foundation on which Christian assurance is built.



### I. THE SON—HIGHER THAN THE ANGELS (Heb. 1:5-14).

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** In Hebrews 1:5-14 the apostle presents four lines of argument from Scripture itself to show that the Son is superior to an angel. Trace these four arguments. Then fill in the blanks below:

1. **The better name (verse 5).** Christ is called \_\_\_\_\_, a name not given to any angel.
2. **Worship (verse 6).** He is worshiped by \_\_\_\_\_.
3. **Nature (verses 7-12).** Angels are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 7). But the Son is addressed as \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 8). All else grows old and passes away, but the Son \_\_\_\_\_ (verses 10-12).
4. **Service (verses 13, 14).** The Son sits on the \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 13). The angels, however, are \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 14).

**In this presentation of the better name, showing that the Son is greater than any angel, what status of the Son emerges?**

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Hebrews 1:5-14 shows that Christ is God.

1. He is addressed as "God" (verse 8).
2. He is called "Lord" (verse 10). Study the Old Testament source, Psalm 102:25-27: Such study shows that "The Lord" is God Himself.
3. He is the eternal, unchanging One (verses 10-12).



Why is the book of Hebrews so concerned to show from the outset that Christ is greater than the angels?

"I suggest two reasons for his [the apostle's] concern. First, the point he makes in 1:5-14 is important for his exhortation at 2:1-4. Here he contrasts 'the message declared by angels' (2:2) with the salvation 'declared at first by the Lord' (2:3). The former refers to the giving of the law at Sinai, where as Galatians 3:19 puts it, angels acted as intermediaries (see also Deuteronomy 33:2). The latter refers to the giving of the gospel, spoken by the Lord Himself. That is, the apostle is showing *how much greater* is the privilege of Christians—and so, how much greater the peril of neglect. The argument is from the lesser to the greater. If the people who disobeyed at the time of Moses received punishment, how shall we think to escape if we ignore salvation so great—as greater as is the Lord than angels?

"This explanation, however, does not seem sufficient in itself. Granted that the apostle *employs* the point of the Son's superiority to angels in 2:1-4, its long development in 1:5-14 calls for further explanation. Obviously there is more behind Hebrews than first meets the eye. . . .

"We have strong evidence of great interest in angelology in the first century AD. The Christians in Colossae, we know from Paul's letter, dabbled with angel worship (see Colossians 2:18). Non-Biblical literature, especially Jewish, also indicates heightened angelic speculation and veneration. Often the concepts involved angel ministry in a heavenly sanctuary, sometimes including Melchizedek. When we consider the argument concerning Christ's high-priestly ministry (see chapter 6) we will have more to say about the subject.

"It seems likely, then, that the apostle is consciously opposing a false angelology. He wants his readers to get matters straight right from the beginning: it is the *Son*, not angels, who should engage their thought and worship. While angels may have an important role to play in the service of God, they are immeasurably inferior in name, person, dignity, and function to the Son."—William G. Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, pp. 49, 50.

## II. THE FIRST EXHORTATION—ACCEPT THE SALVATION PROVIDED THROUGH CHRIST (Heb. 2:1-4).

How is the point made in the previous section (1:5-14) related to this exhortation? Heb. 2:1-4.

Because of the supremacy of the Son over the angels, the revelation of God and the plan of salvation given through Christ is far greater than anything that was given by angels. Therefore, Christians should pay greater attention to the revelation through Christ. To neglect the great salvation He has brought is "a course . . . fraught with extreme danger and if persisted in will lead to eternal loss."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 403.

TUE

### III. THE SON OF MAN—LOWER THAN THE ANGELS (Heb. 2:5-9).

In verse 5 the apostle returns to theological reasoning. But the argument of verses 1-4 takes an abrupt turn as we leave behind the scenes of heavenly glory and majesty of chapter 1 to consider events on earth.

In Hebrews 2:6-8, Psalm 8:4-6 is quoted. In what way does the apostle view this psalm as pointing to the humanity of Jesus? (See Heb. 2:9.)

Hebrews chapter 1 argued for the full deity of Christ, a status far higher than that of an angel. But some readers might have objected to this reasoning. Remembering the sufferings and death of Jesus on the cross, they could have maintained that Jesus was lower than the angels. Here in chapter 2 the apostle shows that the Old Testament itself had indicated that “the son of man” would become “a little lower than the angels.”

**NOTE** that the wording of verse 9 in the original has the intent of Christ's becoming lower than the angels *for a little while*—that is, it was a temporary inferiority. The Revised Standard Version has captured this idea:

“But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one” (Heb. 2:9, RSV).

**What great reason for the incarnation is given in Hebrews 2:9?**

In this verse “death” is mentioned twice. The Son became for a little while lower than angels for the suffering of death—a death “for every man.” Here is the climax of the incarnation—Jesus would die for every person of all times and places. As Seventh-day Adventists with the everlasting gospel to proclaim to the world (Rev. 14:6, 7), we must never lose sight of this message or fail to make it central in our proclamation.

**ILLUMINATION:** “Look at the superscription written above the cross. The Lord arranged it. Written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, it is a call for all, Jew and Gentile, barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, hopeless, helpless, and perishing, to come. Christ has made of none effect the power of Satan. He laid hold of the pillars of Satan's kingdom, and passed through the conflict, destroying him that had the power of death. A way was now opened whereby mercy and truth could meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1107.

WED

**What did Jesus' “tasting” death (Heb. 2:9) signify? Compare Matt. 26:39; 27:46.**

While most manuscripts of the Greek text of Hebrews 2:9 read: “So

that by the grace of God He might taste death" (RSV), a few very early ones have: "so that, *apart from God*, he might taste death." The difference in the Greek involves a change of only two letters of the Greek alphabet. The two meanings, however, stand in strong contrast. It may be that the few early manuscripts that read "apart from God" are correct. If so, the expression "apart from God" gives a stark portrayal of the death of Jesus. He died *alone*, experiencing the bitterness and horror of the second death. (Compare Matt. 27:46; Heb. 5:7-10.)

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Have I claimed the biblical promise that the death of Jesus was *for me*, in *my place*? Do I grasp the truth that those who are born only once must die twice, but those born twice need die only once?

#### IV. ASSURANCE THROUGH THE INCARNATION (Heb. 2:10-18).

What terms used by the apostle in Hebrews 2:10-16 show the *closeness* of Christ to us because of His genuine humanity?

Note especially:

*Verse 10*—"the captain of their salvation." The Greek word used here means "leader," "pioneer," "pathfinder," or "author." It is the same word used in Hebrews 12:2 where Jesus is called the "author" of our faith. Jesus as the captain of our salvation is the One who, by becoming human, has shared in our sufferings and tests and has won the victory. He is the Pathfinder who has blazed the trail for us to the heavenly courts.

*Verses 11, 12, 17*—"brethren." What a marvelous term of endearment! Now the Son has become *our* Brother!

*Verses 13, 14*—"children." Another term that touches the deepest chords of human sentiment, "children" portrays the fact that the Eternal One, the Creator and Sustainer who is endless and changeless, became one with us in our humanity and dependence. As we are flesh and blood, so He became flesh and blood (verse 14).



In what way was Jesus made "perfect" through sufferings? Heb. 2:10. Compare 5:9; 7:28.

We should discount two possible interpretations:

1. That Jesus' being made perfect means that God raised Him to a divine status that He did not have before. In the early centuries of the Christian church some people taught this view (for instance, that at His baptism or at the ascension Jesus was elevated to a new place of dignity), but Hebrews 1:2, 3 already has shown that the Son *always* had equality with God.

2. That "perfecting" signifies a purifying of the Son's humanity. Hebrews 4:15 says that He was "without sin"; Hebrews 7:26 describes Him as "holy, blameless, unstained" (RSV). (Compare 7:27; 9:14.)

In each of the three places where Hebrews used "perfecting" of Jesus (2:10; 5:9; 7:28), the idea is associated with the *work* He had come to do.

“Perfecting” describes the experiences that led Him into new levels of dependence on God and so qualified Him to be our Saviour and High Priest. The Greek word for “perfect” used here has the idea of reaching a predetermined goal.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What three accomplishments of Christ, made possible through the incarnation, are portrayed in Hebrews 2:14-18? The outline that follows will help you see more clearly these three accomplishments. Complete the outline by filling in the blanks:

**1. The conquest of death (verses 14-16).**

a. He destroys the one who rules the kingdom of death, that is,

b. Those who believe in Him are no longer subject to the

\_\_\_\_\_ of the fear of death.

**2. High Priest and Sacrifice (verse 17).**

a. He had to become like “his brethren” in \_\_\_\_\_ .

b. Through the incarnation He was qualified to be a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ High Priest.

c. The incarnation also provided a sacrifice to make \_\_\_\_\_ .

**3. Timely help (verse 18).**

a. Christ has \_\_\_\_\_ being \_\_\_\_\_ .

b. Therefore He is able to \_\_\_\_\_ us in our tests.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:**

“The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study. Christ was a real man; He gave proof of His humility in becoming a man. Yet He was God in the flesh. When we approach this subject, we would do well to heed the words spoken by Christ to Moses at the burning bush, ‘Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground’ (Ex. 3:5). We should come to this study with the humility of a learner, with a contrite heart. And the study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, which will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 244.

Study the Old Testament passages quoted in this lesson. Look them up in their original contexts and compare with the use made of them in Hebrews.

Heb. 1:5	Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14
Heb. 1:6	Deut. 32:43 with elements of Ps. 97:7
Heb. 1:7	Ps. 104:4
Heb. 1:8, 9	Ps. 45:6, 7
Heb. 1:10-12	Ps. 102:25-27
Heb. 1:13	Ps. 110:1
Heb. 2:6-9	Ps. 8:4-6
Heb. 2:12	Ps. 22:22
Heb. 2:13	Isa. 8:17, 18

**SUMMARY:** He who bears the name that is above every name, the One eternally greater than any angel, became for a while lower than the angels. By so doing He provided a vicarious death, broke the power of the devil, and became our High Priest. Through the incarnation we have the assurance that He has won our salvation and cares supremely for us.

Test your understanding of this week's lesson by answering the following questions as True or False. All answers are to be based on Hebrews 1:5 through 2:18.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The Son was not eternally equal with God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The Son at every point in His career was higher than angels.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Christ was not High Priest before the incarnation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The climax of the incarnation was a vicarious death.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Christians are still in bondage to the fear of death.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The help that Christ gives is overcoming help.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Jesus' death on the cross was similar to the death of a martyr.

**APPLICATION:**

- How long is it since I spent a "thoughtful hour" in meditating on the life of Jesus, especially its closing scenes?
- Do I see Jesus during the incarnation as a sort of "Superman," or have I grasped the reality of His humanity?
- Which term used to describe Jesus' humanity in this lesson is most precious to me? What achievements are made possible by His humanity?
- What difference does this lesson make to my concept of God, and how will it affect my witness?

**NOTES:**



# The Better Leader

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Hebrews 3:1 through 4:13.

SAB  
PM

**MEMORY TEXT:** "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. 4:9, 10).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Like Israel of old, we are on the way to the Promised Land, so we must be faithful to Jesus, our Leader.

**OVERVIEW:** Hebrews 3:1 through 4:13.

## I. The Faithful Leader (Heb. 3:1-6).

Christ and Moses Compared		
Alike	Unlike	
	Moses	Christ
Faithful	Part of "house" Servant In the house Testified of Christ	Builder of the "house" Son Over the house Fulfillment

## II. Lessons from Israel's Unfaithfulness (Heb. 3:6-19).

- The warning (verses 6-12)
- The danger (verses 13-15)
- The problem (verses 16-19)

## III. Exhortations to Faithfulness (Heb. 4:1-13).

- Rest provided (verses 1-9)
- Entering rest (verses 10-13)

**INTRODUCTION:** The discussion of the first two chapters of Hebrews reaches its climax at Hebrews 2:17: "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." In this verse, the first time that Christ is called "high priest," two adjectives are used—*merciful* and *faithful*. Both these ideas are elaborated in the chapters that follow, but in reverse order: Christ's *faithfulness* is emphasized first in chapter 3 (this week's lesson) and His *mercifulness* is emphasized in chapter 4 (next week's lesson).

If we are to enjoy Christian assurance, it is vital that each of us be convinced that our Saviour and High Priest indeed be trustworthy. No matter how rough the way, no matter how much circumstances may im-

peril faith, Jesus is utterly constant. As Hebrews 13:8 puts it, He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is both Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith.

Ours is a world where trust often is betrayed. Every person, it often seems, has his price, if only it is high enough. But Christ our High Priest is the faithful one. His human experiences described in Hebrews 2:5-18 showed Him to be unwavering in steadfastness. So in a world of uncertainty and doubt we may be confident of His unswerving reliability. His faithfulness now and forever is guaranteed by His faithfulness during the earthly phase of His existence.

But Christ's faithfulness raises a question. He is faithful, but what about us? The children of Israel who came out of Egyptian bondage had great opportunities, but they fell short of the reward of the Promised Land. Will we who are on the way to the heavenly Canaan learn from their negative example?

We may be sure that our Leader will not fail us. By keeping with Him we will arrive safely at our eternal destination.



## I. THE FAITHFUL LEADER (Heb. 3:1-6).

What does it mean to “consider” Jesus as Apostle and High Priest? Heb. 3:1.

The book of Hebrews, like the entire New Testament, does not concern itself with speculation about the person of Jesus—*how* He was both divine and human. Instead, we are called to “consider” Jesus, that is, to look to Him in contemplation and adoration. We are to keep “our eyes fixed on Jesus” (12:2, NEB). Here the particular aspect of Jesus brought to view is His faithfulness.

**Jesus' being our High Priest is a familiar idea to Seventh-day Adventists. But why is He called an “Apostle”? Heb. 3:1. (Compare John 20:21.)**

This is the only place in the entire New Testament where Jesus is called an apostle. The word *apostolos* in Greek meant a delegate, envoy, or messenger in common usage, but in a Christian context it designated the original twelve disciples of Jesus and others among the leaders of the early church, such as Paul. Jesus is called Apostle because He was sent from the Father to bring salvation to a world without hope. In calling Jesus “Apostle” in Hebrews 3:1, the writer of Hebrews is reminding us of the discussion in chapter 2 wherein the Son became for a little while lower than the angels.

**Hebrews 3:2-6 compares and contrasts Christ and Moses. In what way were these leaders of God's people similar? Verse 2.**

**MULTIPLE CHOICE: Verses 3 through 6 show that Christ was *greater***



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# The Church

## Ministries Department

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D. A. Holbrook  
Director:

What in the Adventist world is a Church Ministries Department? Ever since the General Conference World Session in New Orleans voted to combine five departments into one, Adventists around the world have been wondering what is involved and how it is going to work.

The new Church Ministries Department amalgamates the work of Lay Activities, Sabbath School, Stewardship and Development, Youth, and Home and Family Services. However, these former departments will retain their identity on the local church level.

The objective of the Church Ministries Department is to streamline the system of publication, promotion, and training by eliminating duplication of materials and seminars. Doing so will conserve expenses and reduce the number of departmental personnel.

The General Conference Church Ministries department has a specific role to fill. According to the report of the Role and Functions Commission, which was voted at the General Conference session in New Orleans, the department will "develop concepts,

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### *Associates:*

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R. E. Barron



M. T. Bascom



G. J. Bertochini



C. L. Brooks



H. C. Craig

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provide expertise, produce resources and prepare materials and publications necessary to preserve the worldwide unity of the church.”\* The department will “coordinate, evaluate, and monitor the resources and materials produced by the division offices.” It will also “evaluate the functions and effectiveness of departmental projects on lower levels, counsel with directors of those departments, and advise administration on progress.”

Each associate director will familiarize himself with the functions of all five ministries, although he or she will work primarily in the specific ministry assigned. For example, the expert for the Sabbath School junior and earliteen divisions will also be able to represent the department in the general functions of Lay Activities, Youth, Stewardship, and Home and Family Services being carried on in the local church.

“Although a single Church Ministries Department is being provided for at the conference, union, and General Conference/division level, the plan also provides that on the local church level all former ministries are to continue to function.” The churches will continue to maintain the activities and identity of Sabbath School, Adventist Youth, Lay Activities, Home and Family Services, and Stewardship:

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**\*All quotations are from the *Adventist Review*, General Conference Bulletin, p. 9, July 5, 1985.**



E. Crane



K. M. Flowers



R. M. Flowers



R. E. Grady



B. Holbrook

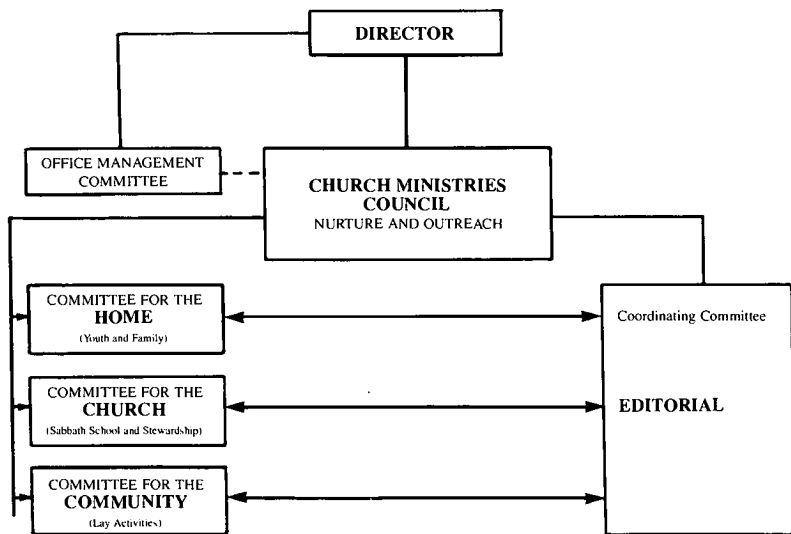


G. E. Knowles

**Sabbath School still remains Sabbath School. The churches continue to have a 9:30 program for all seven divisions: Cradle Roll, Kindergarten, Primary, Junior, Earliteen, Youth, and Adult. The Sabbath School classes operate as usual, and the lessons still are supplied each quarter.**

**Lay Activities carries on as lay activities. The churches continue to direct and train laymen in uniting their efforts with the pastor and church officers in the final proclamation of the gospel of salvation. The local church lay activities department aims to enlist every member into active soul-winning service.**

GENERAL CONFERENCE DEPARTMENT OF CHURCH MINISTRIES  
ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION



J. L. Martell



S. F. Monnier



P. F. Pedersen



L. S. Ranzolin



P. C. Smith

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***Youth continues to work junior and senior youth ages 10-30 inclusive. The church youth still are able to attend Adventist Youth camps, get involved in witnessing activities, and join volunteer service programs. The Pathfinder Club maintains its identity and activities. If anything, camporees, fairs, craft study, nature exploration, field trips, and other adventures become more meaningful. Youth from ages 10 to 15 are eligible to become members. The Pathfinder director is elected as usual.***

***The church Stewardship secretary continues to assist in the implementation of God's plan of systematic benevolence and encourages the church to maintain its work of planning and organizing church resources.***

***Home and Family Services carries on the program of developing, testing, and promoting family life. It continues to help members build a healthy atmosphere in their homes.***

It becomes clear then that the Church Ministries Department does not radically change any of the departments and activities of the local church. Its primary purpose is "the giving of optimum support to the local church pastor and leaders in those areas of activity that take place in the local church on a weekly basis." The General Conference in session voted that "on the local church level all former ministries are to continue to function."

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***Associates:***



M. H. Stevenson



L. R. Van Dolson

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***Assistants:***



L. B. Chiomenti



J. L. Joiner



L. M. Peterson

than Moses. Confining yourself to these verses, select the right answer(s) from the following choices:

Christ was greater than Moses because: (1) He never sinned; (2) Moses failed as a leader to bring his people into the Promised Land; (3) Christ in His own person was greater than Moses.

**NOTE** the meaning of “house” in Hebrews 3:1-6:

“Here Moses is compared with a steward placed in charge of the affairs of his master’s household (cf. Gen. 15:2; Luke 12:42; 16:1, 2). Joseph once served in this capacity in the house of Potiphar (Gen. 39:1-6). The steward was custodian of his master’s property and administrator of the household. The ‘house’ here referred to is God’s chosen people, through whom He purposed to work out the plan of salvation. In ancient times this house was the Hebrew nation, but now it is the Christian church.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 410.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Can people say of me: “He is faithful in all his house”? Many people start well, but comparatively few finish well. In the long haul, faithfulness is more important than superior talent because someone who cannot be relied upon—no matter how gifted that person may be—brings disappointment and frustration.



## II. LESSONS FROM ISRAEL’S UNFAITHFULNESS (Heb. 3:6-19).

What must we do in order to be part of God’s “house”? Heb. 3:6.

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What illustration from Israel’s history does the apostle use to drive home the need for faithfulness? Heb. 3:7-11. (Compare Ps. 95:7-11.)

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The privilege of membership among God’s people is not automatic or independent of human appreciation of it. It is to be enforced by a life of confident steadfastness. The story of the wandering tribes of the desert shows that mere membership in the chosen people is not sufficient to win the final goal. Membership must be accompanied by faith.

What does the “today” of Hebrews 3:7 signify? (Compare Heb. 3:13, 15; 4:7.)

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*Today* is God’s *now*. It is not to be shunted aside for “a more convenient season.” *Today* denotes urgency, a challenge to immediate consideration and response. Every day is that “today.” “Today” comes as both warning and invitation.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** We cannot claim Christian assurance without having a close and obedient relationship to Jesus. Moment by moment we must live in His presence, abiding in Him. Is my today—every today—filled with the beauty of communion with Him?



In Hebrews 3:12-15 the apostle lists the spiritual dangers that face God's people as they journey toward the heavenly rest. Note each of the dangers specified in the passage. Reflect on how each might manifest itself in your life.

1. "An evil, unbelieving heart" (verse 12, RSV).
2. A "heart that turns away from the living God" (verse 12, NIV).
3. Hardening (verse 13).
4. "The deceitfulness of sin" (verse 13).
5. Losing our first confidence (verse 14).
6. Rebellion (verse 16).

**Why did the wilderness generation of ancient Israel fail to reach its goal? Heb. 3:16-19.**

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The people of the wilderness generation did not fail:

1. *Because they did not start well.* What better start could they have had? God manifested mighty acts to deliver them from Egypt. However, in spite of this good start, most of them never attained the goal.
2. *Because they had a poor leader.* Although Moses did lapse at Meribah, his act was not the cause of Israel's failure. As we learned earlier, Hebrews describes Moses as "faithful in all his house" (Heb. 3:2).

Verse 19 locates the problem: *unbelief*. This point will come into sharper focus in chapter 4.

**What was "the rest" referred to in Hebrews 3:11-19? (Compare Deut. 12:9.)**

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### III. EXHORTATIONS TO FAITHFULNESS (Heb. 4:1-13).

In Hebrews 4 the writer turns from warning to invitation. Urging his readers to take heed from the failure of the wilderness generation to enter Canaan, he holds out before them the divine promise of rest. The people in view no longer are the children of Israel but the readers themselves. In the same way, as we read these words of invitation, we should apply them to *ourselves*: the "today" of their call is *this day*!



**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Study the way in which *rest* is used in Hebrews 4:1-11. (Note verses 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11.) Next, read the extended quotation from the *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* that follows:

"The line of reasoning in chs. 3 and 4, which centers in the word 'rest,' is essentially as follows:

"1. God originally intended that Moses should lead Israel into the Canaan 'rest,' but neither Moses nor the generation that left Egypt entered Canaan.

"2. Joshua, however, did lead the next generation into Canaan but because of their unbelief he could not lead them into God's spiritual 'rest.'

"3. In the days of David, God renewed the invitation to enter into His



spiritual 'rest.' . . . But it was obvious, by NT times, that Israel as a nation had not entered into God's 'rest.'

"4. Nevertheless, God's invitation and promise had not lapsed by default, for when God determines upon a certain objective He will, ultimately, achieve it despite human failures. . . .

"5. Accordingly, since God's people have not as yet entered into His 'rest,' it is certain that 'there remaineth . . . a rest to the people of God' (ch. 4:9).

"6. If Christians will 'come boldly unto the throne of grace' (ch. 4:16), where Christ ministers as 'the Apostle and High Priest of our profession' (ch. 3:1; cf. ch. 4:14, 15), they will find One who can 'be touched with the feeling of' their 'infirmities' (ch. 4:15), and will 'obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need' (v. 16). In so doing they will enter into God's spiritual 'rest,' the 'rest' of soul He has provided for repentant sinners. Thus, explains the writer, the experience into which Israel had failed to enter in centuries gone by becomes the privilege of the sincere Christian today (ch. 3:13, 15).

"7. '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. . . . Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief' (ch. 4:1, 11). Faith is the key to entering into God's 'rest' (ch. 4:2; cf. chs. 3:18, 19; 4:6; 11), and we should 'take heed' lest there be in us 'an evil heart of unbelief' (ch. 3:12)." —*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 414, 415.

**In the light of your study, what do you think the *rest* referred to in chapter 4 is?**



**What is the relationship of the Sabbath to the "rest" of Hebrews 4? (See especially verses 3, 4, 9.)**

From Hebrews 4:3-5 we learn that God's "rest," the rest of redemption, was available from the foundation of the world. Any failure to enter rest, therefore—whether that failure be ancient Israel's, the first-century Christians, or ours—is not God's fault. In verse 9 a new word for "rest" is used—*sabbatismos*. This word, found nowhere else in the New Testament or the literature of the first century, possibly was coined by the author. It signified a "Sabbath-rest" (NIV) or a "Sabbath-like rest."

**ILLUMINATION:** Notice how Ellen White indicates that the Sabbath has become a memorial of redemption as well as a memorial of Creation: "In the beginning the Father and the Son had rested upon the Sabbath after Their work of creation. . . . Now [on the Sabbath after the crucifixion] Jesus rested from the work of redemption; and though there was grief among those who loved Him on earth, yet there was joy in heaven. Glorious to the eyes of heavenly beings was the promise of the future. A restored creation, a redeemed race, that having conquered sin could never

fall,—this, the result to flow from Christ's completed work, God and angels saw. With this scene the day upon which Jesus rested is forever linked. . . . When there shall be a 'restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began' (Acts 3:21), the creation Sabbath, the day on which Jesus lay at rest in Joseph's tomb, will still be a day of rest and rejoicing."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 769, 770.

The "rest" to which we are invited in Hebrews 4 is *more than* Sabbath observance, but it is nonetheless *Sabbath-like*. As we on the Sabbath lay aside all cares, ceasing from daily toil, so God would have us know the bliss of unbroken communion with Him. Christ invites us to cast all our care, all our guilt upon Him and enter into His rest. The Sabbath, therefore, is part of our rest in Christ as well as an illustration of it.

Note that in Hebrews 4:3 and 10 the present tense is used—we *now* may enter God's rest. But we also are told that the promise remains for rest to be entered (verses 1, 6, 9), that we are to fear lest we fall short of it (verse 1), and that we must strive to enter it (verse 11). Those verses point to a *future* dimension of "rest" as well as a present one. Whereas we now may know the bliss of salvation in Christ, a joy already realized, we are nonetheless strangers and pilgrims. The best is yet to be—the future, eternal home will bring the fullness of that rest when we abide in His literal presence.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Have I entered Christ's rest? Is the Sabbath to me a day of delight and joy; a symbol of my rest in Jesus?

What spiritual quality is necessary for each of us to attain rest in Christ? Heb. 4:1, 2, 11.

The key word to emerge from Hebrews 3 and 4 is *faith*. Because this word is translated in English as either "faith" or "belief," we often fail to see the way in which this word in its various forms underlies the reasoning of these chapters. The same Greek root word underlies the uses that follow:

Faith	Heb. 4:2
Faithful	Heb. 3:2, 5
Unbelief ("un-faith")	Heb. 3:12-19
To have faith (or to believe)	Heb. 4:3

In our study of Hebrews 11 we will find this word, *faith* (or *faithfulness*), being given heavy emphasis as once again the idea of God's people as pilgrims comes into focus.



What is the "word of God" in Hebrews 4:12, 13? How do these verses fit the previous discussion about entering God's rest?

Notice how the "word of God" changes from the impersonal of verse 12 to the personal in verse 13: "him with whom we have to do." So the

“word of God” is more than simply the words of the Bible—God stands behind it. These verses describe the all-seeing eye of God, able to pierce to the innermost secrets and intentions, laying bare the deepest springs of action. Putting these verses in this particular context reminds us that we must be on guard against the sort of disobedience that was Israel’s downfall. God detects the hardening, evil, unbelieving heart, deceived by sin.

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:**

Meditate on *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 34, “The Invitation”; Matthew 11:28-30.

**SUMMARY:** Because Jesus is faithful as our heavenly High Priest, we may have confidence in His mediatorial work. But what about us? Will we also be faithful? We need to heed the lessons of Israel’s failure.

**APPLICATION:**

- Do I have the certainty of the faithfulness of Jesus, my High Priest?
- What does such certainty mean to me?
- Do I realize that, like Israel in the wilderness, I am on the way to the Promised Land? What *privileges* does this bring? What *responsibilities*? What *dangers*?
- How can I use the ideas brought out in this lesson to present Jesus and the Sabbath truth to others?

**NOTES:**

# The Better High Priest

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Hebrews 4:14 through 5:10; 7:1-28.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "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. 4:15).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Because Jesus Christ is our heavenly High Priest, we may have the assurance that heaven is a place of caring, understanding, and timely help.

<b>OVERVIEW: Hebrews 4:14 - 5:10; 7:1-28</b>	
<b>The Better Priest (Heb. 4:14 - 5:10)</b>	<b>The Better Priesthood (Heb. 7:1-28)</b>
The merciful high priest (4:14-16) Christ and Aaron (5:1-10)	Melchizedek and Levi (7:1-10) The new priesthood (7:11-19) Superiority of the new priesthood (7:20-28)

**INTRODUCTION:** The topic of this week's study is one that is among the most thrilling of all the Scriptures. It holds deep meaning for Seventh-day Adventists. While some other Christian denominations teach about Jesus as Priest, none has developed this teaching in the way we have. Our roots are found in the doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary and Jesus' ministry there.

It may come as a surprise to find that only in the book of Hebrews is Jesus explicitly called a priest. While other portions of Scripture describe His work in priestly terms—especially the book of Revelation—Hebrews gives extended treatment to the topic. Indeed, it is the central theological idea of Hebrews.

We shall work through this topic over three Sabbath School lessons—this week and the following two. This week we concentrate on the *person* of Jesus as our heavenly High Priest—the "who" of the topic—as found in Hebrews 4:14 through 5:10 and 7:1-28. Next week we will look at the *ministry* of Jesus as our High Priest—the "where" of the topic, noticing Hebrews 8:1 through 9:5 in particular. The following week we shall consider the *sacrifice* of Jesus on which His priestly work is based—the "what" of His high priesthood. That lesson will take up Hebrews 9:6 through 10:18.

These passages of the book of Hebrews are not the easiest passages of Scripture to understand. Yet, if we will but take the time to study them carefully and prayerfully, they will reveal a wealth of meaning to each of us. And this meaning is not only of doctrinal interest—we will find a new

understanding of Jesus, a new sense of heaven as a place of caring and understanding help, and a new appreciation of what the terrible suffering of Jesus and His death on Calvary means to us.

The first mention of the high priestly theme is found in Hebrews 2:17. In Hebrews 8:1, 2 we find: "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." In between Hebrews 2:17 and 8:1, 2 the theme of Jesus as High Priest is developed. Last week we learned how faithful He is; this week we study the passages dealing explicitly with His person as High Priest, as His "merciful" characteristic is developed by the apostle.



## I. THE BETTER PRIEST (Heb. 4:14 - 5:10).

What sort of high priest do Christians have? Heb. 4:14, 15.

Note the contrast between verse 14 and verse 15. Verse 14 points to His *greatness*—Jesus is the Son of God. It reminds us of chapter 1 of Hebrews with the arguments for the deity of Christ. But verse 15 reminds us of the *humanity* of our heavenly High Priest—He has been through the human experience and is able to sympathize with us in our struggles. This verse recalls Hebrews 2, which sets forth the sufferings and tests of Jesus during the time that He was for a little while lower than the angels.

**STUDY AND LEARN:** Hebrews 4:15 is one of the greatest verses of Scripture. Study it thoroughly, asking yourself the following questions:

- How does this verse show the *reality* of the human experiences of Jesus?

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- How does it show the *extent* of His tests or temptations?

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- How does it show the *nature* of those tests or temptations?

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- How does it show His *victory* in test or temptation?

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**ILLUMINATION:** "Those who claim that it was not possible for Christ to sin, cannot believe that He really took upon Himself human nature. But was not Christ actually tempted, not only by Satan in the wilderness, but all through His life, from childhood to manhood? In all points He was tempted as we are, and because He successfully resisted temptation under every form, He gave man the perfect example, and through the ample provision Christ has made, we may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust.

“Jesus says, ‘To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.’ Here is the beginning of our confidence which we must hold steadfast unto the end. If Jesus resisted Satan’s temptations, He will help us to resist. He came to bring divine power to combine with human effort.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 929.

**Because we have such a High Priest what attitude should characterize our requests? Heb. 4:16.**

The Greek word translated “boldly” in Hebrews 4:16 is the word for “confidence,” “assurance,” “fearlessness.” It occurs in three other places in this book—3:6; 10:19, 35. Because of its strong emphasis on Jesus as High Priest and Sacrifice, Hebrews rings with the note of Christian assurance.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** How do I look upon the heavenly sanctuary—as a place of punishment or a place of grace? Do I *now* have confidence that Jesus is my Saviour and my High Priest?

**MATCHING:** Hebrews 5:1-4 gives a brief description of the Old Testament high priests. Identify seven characteristics of the Aaronic priesthood by writing in the alphabetic designation that best fits the blanks below:

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Appointed by _____ (verses 1, 4).                          | A. Sin        |
| 2. Came from _____ (verse 1).                                 | B. Men        |
| 3. Acted on behalf of _____ (verse 1).                        | C. God        |
| 4. Offered _____ (verse 1).                                   | D. Compassion |
| 5. Their work dealt with the _____ problem (verse 1).         | E. Offering   |
| 6. They were to have _____ toward the erring (verse 2).       | F. Sacrifices |
| 7. They needed to make an _____ for their own sins (verse 3). | G. Among men  |



**REFLECT on Old Testament history.** How often were the characteristics listed above met in the high priests of old? (Compare 1 Sam. 3:10-13; Jer. 20:1-6.)

The general statement about Israel’s high priests found in Hebrews 5:1-4 is an idealized one—what God had intended. Unfortunately, the Old Testament high priests often were greedy for gain or opposed the word of God given through the prophets. In the period just prior to the time of this book, the high priests did not measure up to Hebrews 5:1-4. The Saddu-

cee priests of the Gospel accounts considered Jesus an enemy.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** In Hebrews 5:5-10 we find a description of Christ as High Priest. Study this passage carefully and answer the following:

1. What *two ways* is Christ's priesthood similar to that of the Old Testament high priests? Heb. 5:5, 10; 5:7, 8.
2. What *ways* in which His priesthood is different are emphasized? Heb. 5:5, 6, 8, 10.

In verse 4 the apostle has remarked that the priesthood is not conferred on the priest by the priest himself. The same is true with Christ. The Father appointed Him, as the apostle attempts to show, starting with verse 5. We would *expect* the apostle to say, "So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, . . . 'Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.'" But we find another element added. God said to him, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee; as he says also in another place, 'Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek'" (RSV).

"The apostle sees divine Sonship (Psalm 2:7) to be as vital to Christ's priesthood as the declaration of Psalm 110:4. Indeed, the order of citing the passages indicates that the fact of Sonship is logically prior to the appointment as priest. That is, it is because Christ is *Son* that He may be designated Melchizedekian priest."—William G. Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, p. 81.

How does the Old Testament predict the rise of a priest who would be God's Son and would belong to a new order of priesthood? Heb. 5:6; Ps. 2:7; 110:4.



To which experiences of the earthly life of Christ does the graphic description in Hebrews 5:7, 8 particularly refer? Compare Matt. 26:36-42; Luke 22:39-46.

**ILLUMINATION:** "The awful moment had come—that moment which was to decide the destiny of the world. The fate of humanity trembled in the balance. Christ might even now refuse to drink the cup apportioned to guilty man. It was not yet too late. He might wipe the bloody sweat from His brow, and leave man to perish in his iniquity. He might say, Let the transgressor receive the penalty of his sin, and I will go back to My Father. Will the Son of God drink the bitter cup of humiliation and agony? Will the innocent suffer the consequences of the curse of sin, to save the guilty? The words fall tremblingly from the pale lips of Jesus, 'O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.'"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 690.

**CONSIDER** again the seven characteristics of the Old Testament high priests summarized in Hebrews 5:1-4. Which of them do or do not apply to Jesus? Mark them below as either Yes (apply) or No (do not apply). (Do not speculate: base your response on Hebrews 5:6-10; 2:17, 18; 4:14-16; 7:25-28; 8:3.)

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| 1. He was appointed by God                       | Yes / No |
| 2. He was taken from "among men"                 | Yes / No |
| 3. He acts on behalf of humanity                 | Yes / No |
| 4. He offers gifts and sacrifices                | Yes / No |
| 5. His work deals with the sin problem           | Yes / No |
| 6. He is compassionate toward the erring         | Yes / No |
| 7. He needed to offer sacrifice for His own sins | Yes / No |
| 8. He belongs to the Aaronic order               | Yes / No |

The Old Testament high priests who were of God's appointment were but faint representations or illustrations of the greater High Priest who was to come. Christ alone is the true High Priest—the only one of all time—because in Himself He is both God and man. In His own person He bridges the gulf; He is the true Mediator.



## II. THE BETTER PRIESTHOOD (Heb. 7:1-28).

Chapter 7 is often considered among the most obscure portions of the Bible. The shadowy figure of Melchizedek, the mysterious description "without father, without mother . . . having neither beginning nor end of days," and the intricacy of the reasoning cause many Christians to pass over this chapter quickly or to neglect it entirely.

This is unfortunate, because chapter 7 plays an important role in the carefully constructed argument concerning the high priestly office of Christ. The chapter is meant to establish two main points:

1. That Jesus, who did not qualify to be an earthly priest because He was not born of the tribe of Levi, nonetheless is priest of a new order.
2. His order of priesthood is superior to the Levitical (Aaronic) one.

In seeking to follow the reasoning of Hebrews 7 we need also to keep two matters in perspective:

1. The interest is in Christ, not Melchizedek. Although some have spent much time in speculation about Melchizedek, such efforts are misdirected. Melchizedek is introduced only as a way of pointing out the superiority of Jesus' priestly office.

2. Psalm 110:4 provides the basis for the discussion. This Old Testament prediction of the rise of a new priest is either referred to directly or alluded to throughout the chapter.

To aid in your understanding of this difficult passage, we will show the flow of thought by breaking down Hebrews 7 into the following outline:

### A Better Type:

- *Verses 1-3:* A description of Melchizedek, who is likened to Christ.
- *Verses 4-10:* Melchizedek shown to be greater than Levi by the fact that Abraham paid tithe to him and was blessed by him.

### A Better Law of the Priesthood:

- *Verses 11-14:* The prediction of a change in the law of the priesthood.



- *Verses 15-19*: The new priesthood of Christ based on indestructible life and the bringing in of full access to God.
- *Verses 20-22*: The new priesthood confirmed by an oath.

**A Better Service:**

- *Verses 23-25*: The new priesthood confined to only one Priest.
- *Verses 26-28*: The new priesthood has a sinless Son as priest.

At times Christians have reasoned from Hebrews 7:3 that Melchizedek was either Christ or the Holy Spirit. Such claims are false. Because Melchizedek is *likened* to Christ, he could not *be* Christ or the Holy Spirit.

**ILLUSTRATION:** "As in so many other instances, the archaeologist's spade has uncovered remains that shed light on the problem. In an ancient inscription Abdu-heba, a king of Jerusalem in the 14th century BC, writes to the Egyptian Pharaoh: 'Behold this land of Jerusalem. (It was) not my father (and) not my mother (who) gave (it) to me, (but) the arm of the mighty king (which) gave (it) to me.'

"That is, the ancients considered the founder of a dynasty to be without father or mother, without genealogy. Here we possibly have the explanation of the Melchizedek description of [Hebrews] 7:3."—William G. Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, p. 87.



**What two actions demonstrated Melchizedek's superiority to Abraham and to the entire Levitical order? Heb. 7:4-10.**

The Jews looked to Abraham as the father of their nation. But by blessing Abraham and receiving tithe from him Melchizedek showed himself to be even greater than Abraham.

**To what does the "change of the law" in Hebrews 7:12 refer?**

The context—Hebrews 7:12-19—makes clear that "the law" being spoken of is the law of the priesthood. The point is that Psalm 110:4, by predicting the rise of a new priesthood, shows that the Levitical order is to be superseded. Under the Levitical order the priestly office was determined by birth—only members of the tribe of Levi could be priests. This "law" excluded Jesus who was of Judah's line (see verses 13, 14). But the new order—the priesthood of Jesus—is of the order of Melchizedek and no longer tied to Levitical descent.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** List the points of superiority of the new (Melchizedekian) order of priesthood mentioned in Hebrews 7:20-28 by filling in the blanks that follow:

1. In the new order Christ becomes priest by an \_\_\_\_\_ (verses 20, 21).
2. He is priest of a better \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 22).

3. The Levitical order had a line of priests but the new order has \_\_\_\_\_ only \_\_\_\_\_ priest (verses 23, 24).
4. Under the new order Christ continues \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 24).
5. Under this order Christ is able to \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 25).
6. As priest of the new order Christ is \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 26).
7. Christ has no need to offer \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 27).
8. Mortals served as priests under the Levitical system but Christ is consecrated \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 28).



#### FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

Read *Early Writings*, pages 250-256.

“The record tells us nothing about his [Melchizedek’s] pedigree, his birth, or death. So far as the record goes, no beginning nor end of life is given; and it was the custom, therefore, among the Jews, to speak of such as having no genealogy, no mother, no father, no beginning of days, nor end of life. And considering that all these expressions are used simply from the standpoint of the record, there is no difficulty. Melchizedek suddenly appears upon the scene of action, an eminent servant of God, combining, in his own person the double office of king and priest. All before him is blank; all following him is blank. Neither birth nor death appearing in the scene, he becomes a fitting prototype of Christ in his position of priest-king in this dispensation.”—Uriah Smith, *Review and Herald*, Nov. 5, 1895.

**SUMMARY:** The knowledge that we have a merciful, compassionate High Priest in heaven gives us strong confidence. He is the one and only true Priest; His priesthood is superior to every other priesthood, the Levitical order included. We need no other mediator, no human priest.

#### APPLICATION:

- What difference does it make to me to know that I have “such an high priest”? Consider, for example, does it make a difference: when I feel discouraged? in my concept of heaven? in my hour of test?
- Sometimes we feel lonely and wonder if anyone cares. Do the ideas presented in this lesson suggest where I can find help?
- How can I make the marvelous truths of this lesson real to others?

#### NOTES:

# The Better Ministry

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Hebrews 8:1 through 9:5.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "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. 7:25).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Christ our High Priest is a minister of the true sanctuary, which is the heavenly, and mediator of the new covenant.

## OVERVIEW: Hebrews 8:1 - 9:5

The Better Sanctuary—the Heavenly (Heb. 8:1-5; 9:1-5)	The Better Covenant (Heb. 8:6-13)
The true sanctuary: the heavenly (8:1-5) The earthly sanctuary a shadow (9:1-5)	A better ministry (8:6) Better promises (8:6-12) End of the old covenant (8:13)

**INTRODUCTION:** During the past 200 years the achievements of science have been breathtaking. Ancient scourges such as smallpox have been vanquished; men have left footprints in the lunar dust; the secrets of the atom have been unlocked. The technology accompanying scientific advances has profoundly affected modern life—lighting and heating, the telephone, the automobile, the airplane, radio, television, the computer. The list goes on and on, touching almost every area of life.

Because of these successes, many people today put their trust in the "scientific method." They confine reality to what can be observed by the senses—what can be seen or felt, heard or weighed. They question whether anything that cannot be measured by the scientific yardstick actually exists.

The book of Hebrews presents a strong alternative to this way of thinking. Unlike some ancient schools of thought that taught that the world was inherently evil or merely illusion, the apostle tells us that the world is real and was made "by the word of God" (Heb. 11:3). But he also argues that this world is not the ultimate reality—the realm of heaven, where Christ is our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, has an eternal quality that this world does not have.

To the early Jewish Christians, no doubt still attracted to the beauty of the Jerusalem temple and its impressive rituals, his words would bring a message of assurance after the Jerusalem temple was destroyed. The *real* sanctuary is in heaven, he was telling them, and the *genuine* high priest is our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

That message can comfort our hearts also. We need to look beyond the

temporal, to raise our sights heavenward, to enter by faith into the heavenly sanctuary where Jesus makes intercession for us. By seeing Him "within the veil" we will have an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast (Heb. 6:19), and find a life of full assurance.



## I. THE BETTER SANCTUARY (Heb. 8:1-5; 9:1-5).

What is the chief point of the first seven chapters of the book of Hebrews? Heb. 8:1.

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"Now this is my main point: just such a high priest we have, and he has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of Majesty in the heavens" (Heb. 8:1, NEB).

"We have such a high priest"—this central affirmation echoes throughout Hebrews:

- "He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18).
- "We have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens" (Heb. 4:14).
- "He is able to save them to the uttermost" (Heb. 7:25).
- "Having . . . boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19).
- "We have an altar" (Heb. 13:10).

The book of Hebrews rings with certainty, with confidence in the heavenly realities made sure by Jesus Christ.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Can I say with assurance, "I have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens"?

Why is the sanctuary where Jesus ministers better than the earthly temple? Heb. 8:2.

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**ILLUMINATION:** *"The sanctuary. . . .* Scholars quite uniformly hold that the Greek form [for the word translated "sanctuary"] is a neuter plural. . . . The fact that [a plural is used] . . . does not of itself prove that there are two apartments in the heavenly sanctuary. However, that Christ's work in the heavenly sanctuary is conducted in two apartments, or 'two great divisions,' is transparently evident from a comparison of the earthly with the heavenly, for the earthly was 'a copy of the true one' (ch. 9:24, RSV) in heaven."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 444.

How much detail does the apostle give us about the heavenly sanctuary itself? Heb. 8:5. (Compare 9:24.)

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Beyond calling the earthly sanctuary an "example" (Greek *hupodeigma*, which means "copy," "imitation," "sketch," "tracing," or

“representation”), a “shadow” (or “foreshadowing”), or “figure” (Greek *antitupa*, meaning “copies,” “representations”) of the heavenly, the apostle gives no details of the actual heavenly sanctuary. We may be sure of its reality, however, and that it was far more glorious than the earthly temple.

**ILLUMINATION:** “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 (Dan. 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 services.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 414.

MON

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Study glimpses into the heavenly sanctuary given in vision to some biblical prophets (Isa. 6:1-4; Eze. 1:4-28; Rev. 4:1-11). What impression do you take from these accounts? Is the description to be understood literally?

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In reading these biblical accounts and in studying Ellen White’s descriptions of heavenly things, we sense the inadequacy of human language to portray the glories of heaven. Word pictures drawn from earthly experience are pressed into service but fall far short. Some details clearly cannot be taken literally in these descriptions. Yet we may be quite sure that, while the heavenly realities transcend our imagination and present understanding, they are nonetheless real.

What was “the pattern” referred to in Hebrews 8:5? Compare Ex. 25:1-40 (especially verses 9, 40); Num. 8:4; Acts 7:44.

“After the pattern. This shows that though the workmanship was man’s, the plan was God’s. God has ever counted upon human agencies to cooperate in the building of His house. In this work every individual may have the satisfaction of taking part.

“In the mount Moses saw ‘a miniature representation’ of the heavenly sanctuary (PP 343; Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5), the ‘true tabernacle’ (Heb. 8:2). The one on earth is said to be a ‘pattern’ of ‘heavenly things’ (Heb. 9:23, 24) because it was made ‘according to the pattern’ shown to Moses (Heb.

8:5). It was a 'copy' of the 'great original' in heaven (GC 414). In vision John was ushered into the heavenly sanctuary (Rev. 15:5), where he saw the ark (Rev. 11:19), the altar of incense (Rev. 8:3-5), and possibly the candlestick (Rev. 1:12; 11:4). There is, thus, 'indisputable proof of the existence of a sanctuary in heaven,' where the Ruler of the universe sits enthroned (GC 415) and where Christ ministers as our great high priest (Heb. 8:1, 2).

"It is futile, however, to speculate as to the dimensions, exact appearance, or precise arrangement of the heavenly sanctuary, for 'no earthly structure could represent its vastness and its glory' (PP 357). Man is 'in the image of God' (Gen. 1:27), yet only Christ is 'the express image of his person' (Heb. 1:3). Anything finite can at best but dimly resemble that which is infinite. Moses was shown not the heavenly sanctuary itself, but a representation of it. The earthly sanctuary was patterned after that in heaven to the extent that it was a vivid representation of the various aspects of Christ's ministry on behalf of fallen man (PP 357). We should focus our attention on what He is doing for us there, as Paul does in Hebrews (Heb. 3:1; 10:12, 19-22; etc.)."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 636.



**Hebrews 9:1-5 gives a brief description of the earthly sanctuary, with its two apartments and furniture. How much interest does the apostle indicate in the details of the earthly sanctuary? Heb. 9:5.**

Bible students often have drawn attention to the various items of the earthly sanctuary and showed how they were types of Christ. In the book of Hebrews, however, that line of thought is not followed. Apart from the brief description of the earthly sanctuary in 9:1-5 no reference is made to the details of the sanctuary. The interest in Hebrews is on the *ministry* of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.

**In order for Christ to serve as high priest in the heavenly sanctuary, what did He need? Heb. 8:3, 4. (Compare 5:1.)**

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The high priestly work of Christ required:

1. That He be *qualified* to serve as high priest (that is, in His own person).
2. That He have a *sacrifice* to offer.

In order for Christ to fulfill each of these requirements the incarnation was necessary. Notice how Hebrews 2:17, which comes at the conclusion of the discussion of Christ's humanity, contains both these ideas: "Therefore 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, to make expiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17, RSV).

**SEARCH AND LEARN: In what kinds of activities is Christ involved in His "more excellent ministry" in heaven above? Heb. 7:25; John 16:7; Rev. 1:12-20; 5:11-14; 19:11-16; Dan. 7:9-14.**

The picture of the heavenly sanctuary given in Scripture is far from passive. The heavenly sanctuary is the throne-room of the universe, the divine headquarters in the great controversy between good and evil. As our Mediator, Christ continually applies the benefits of His sacrifice. He also directs the affairs of the church, sending forth the Holy Spirit and receiving the worship of heaven. Since 1844 He has been involved in the second phase of His high priestly ministry, the work of investigative judgment.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** The doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary is a unique part of Seventh-day Adventist heritage. What does this doctrine mean to me in my daily living as a Christian? What does it tell me about the present? about the future? Does it lead me to fear or to a holy assurance in Christ?



## II. THE BETTER COVENANT (Heb. 8:6-13).

Hebrews 8:6 mentions three aspects in which Christ's work is superior to that of the Old Testament dispensation. What are they?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What is meant by the "first covenant"? Heb. 8:7.

In Hebrews 7:19-22 and 9:1 the first covenant is linked with the Old Testament sacrificial system. From this it is clear that by the first covenant the author means more than the promise which the Israelites made at Sinai and which they broke almost immediately (Ex. 19:3-9; 32:1-8).

"First covenant. By this expression the author designates the system in force in OT times since Sinai, of which the Levitical priesthood was an integral part."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 445.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Summarize the blessings of the new covenant. Heb. 8:8-12. (Compare Jer. 31:31-34.) The list below will direct you as you fill in the blanks:

1. The law is now put in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 10).
2. A personal knowledge of \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 10).
3. No need for any \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 11).
4. Sins will be \_\_\_\_\_ no more (verse 12).

**THINK IT THROUGH:** The words of the new covenant are filled with hope and grace. Which part of the new covenant has greatest appeal to you? Why?

In light of the statement of the new covenant in Hebrews 8:8-12, what are the “better promises” of verse 6?



What is it that has become “old” and “ready to vanish away”? Heb. 8:13. (Compare 10:16-18.)

Under the Old Testament system sacrifices and offerings were continually brought before God as the way of dealing with sin. But these animal sacrifices, no matter how often they were presented, could not in themselves remove sins, “for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). But Christ, by offering Himself, made a perfect, once-for-all sacrifice. This is the sacrifice which is the basis of His heavenly work as High Priest. His sacrifice and work, however, have made obsolete all other sacrifices and human priesthoods. In light of the heavenly sanctuary and its ministry, all human temples and systems have no more value.

In Hebrews 13:20 Christ’s death is connected with “the everlasting covenant.” What is the relationship of the everlasting covenant to the new covenant of chapter 8?

“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 2 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. . . . It became operative in Eden when man sinned, but was not ratified until the blood of Christ was shed on the cross (Heb. 13:20). 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.”—*S.D.A. Bible Dictionary*, article, “Covenant.”

**THINK IT THROUGH:** By the “covenant” theme of Scripture God expresses His desire to have fellowship with men and women. He uses an idea common in human dealings to show how closely He wants us to be tied to Him. Do I appreciate the marvel of the everlasting covenant—that the eternal God wishes to be my Friend, and has made provision to deal with my sin problem?



#### FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

Read *The Great Controversy*, pages 409-422. Note particularly the following from pages 421 and 422: “As the typical cleansing of the earthly was accomplished by the removal of the sins by which it had been pol-



luted, so the actual cleansing of the heavenly is to be accomplished by the removal, or blotting out, of the sins which are there recorded. But before this can be accomplished, there must be an examination of the books of record to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ, are entitled to the benefits of His atonement. The cleansing of the sanctuary therefore involves a work of investigation—a work of judgment. This work must be performed prior to the coming of Christ to redeem His people.”

Use a concordance to study the biblical idea of “covenant.”

“The apostle discusses two periods of history, two economies of the plan of God. The first, which he calls ‘the first covenant,’ centers in the Levitical priesthood and the Old Testament sanctuary and rituals. It cannot finally handle the sin problem *in itself*—that is its deficiency. Only the death of Christ can offer decisive removal of the sins committed under that covenant (see 9:15). Because He is high priest of a totally new order, ministering His own sacrifice in a heavenly tabernacle, he inaugurates a new covenant.

“The second idea—access to God—he has hinted at before. Already the apostle had exhorted his Christian readers that, ‘since then we have a great high priest, . . . let us with confidence draw near to the throne of grace’ (4:14-16). Again, he had mentioned that the Melchizedekian priesthood of Jesus brings in ‘a better hope . . . through which we draw near to God’ (7:19).

“In the ninth and tenth chapters, however, he amplifies the ideas. The old cultus, he brings out, provided only partial, limited access to God, but the new (in Jesus) has opened the way for all to the presence of God.”—William G. Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, p. 106.

**SUMMARY:** As glorious as the earthly sanctuary was, the heavenly is greater. Christ, our High Priest, is superior to any human priest and His is a “more excellent” ministry. He is priest of the new covenant under which an all-sufficient sacrifice for sins is provided and which makes obsolete all other sacrifices and priestly systems.

#### APPLICATION:

- Am I aware that I live in the time of the investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary, just before the second coming of Christ?
- Does the doctrine of the heavenly ministry of Christ give me strength for today and hope for tomorrow?
- Have I entered into the “everlasting covenant” provisions? Do I claim the promises of Hebrews 8:8-12?
- What approaches can I suggest in telling others of the good news of this lesson?

#### NOTES:

# The Better Sacrifice

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Hebrews 9:6 through 10:18.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "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. 9:28).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** By His death on the cross Christ provided an all-sufficient sacrifice for sin. That opens the way for unhindered access to God and solves the age-old problem of sin.

**OUTLINE:** Hebrews 9:6 - 10:18.

- I. The Need of Sacrifice (9:15-22).
- II. Limitations of the Old Testament Sacrifices (9:6-10; 10:1-4).
- III. Christ's Death—A Better Sacrifice (9:11-14, 23-28; 10:5-18).

**INTRODUCTION:** Can Jesus deal with the problem of guilt? That is the ultimate question. No matter how magnificent His person, no matter how close and sympathetic He is to us as a result of His own sufferings, the question that counts is Can He solve the dilemma of human sin? Every high priest is ordained to "offer both gifts and sacrifices *for sins*" (Heb. 5:1). How, then, does our heavenly High Priest remove sin?

For much of the twentieth century people have been taught to set aside guilt feelings. The vocabulary of "sin" and "guilt" has been swept under the rug. But a change of words has not changed people. Dr. Karl Menninger, famous psychiatrist, has shown in his book *Whatever Became of Sin?* that the dilemma of human guilt is as real today as it was before Sigmund Freud came on the scene. The concern of the book of Hebrews to show how Christ as High Priest deals with the sin problem is as up to date as it was in the first century A. D.

In Hebrews 1:3 we read that Christ "by himself purged our sins." In chapter 2:17 we are told that the incarnation and human experiences of the Son enabled Him to "become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people" (RSV). Chapters 9 and 10 of the book of Hebrews elaborate these ideas. They portray the death of Christ on Calvary as an all-sufficient sacrifice for sin.

The work of Christ as Sacrifice is explained in Hebrews 9:5 through 10:18. In this passage three intertwining aspects are covered: (1) the teaching about sacrifice in general, (2) the Old Testament sacrifices, and, most emphasized, (3) the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. In order to provide the clearest explanation of the passage we will not follow it through in strict order of the verses but instead will trace each of these three aspects in turn.

## OVERVIEW: SACRIFICES COMPARED

References	All Sacrifices	Old Testament Sacrifices	Christ's Sacrifice
9:6-10		Limitations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of access</li> <li>● Ceremonial efficacy only</li> </ul>	
9:11-14			Full access to God Able to purify from sin
9:15-22	Covenant requires the shedding of blood for the remission of sins		
9:23-28			A perfect, once-for-all sacrifice
10:1-4		Repetition, no finality	
10:5-18		Brought to an end	A completed sacrifice



## I. THE NEED OF SACRIFICE (Heb. 9:15-22).

What spiritual "law" underlies the sacrificial system? Heb. 9:22.

"Almost all things. There were certain exceptions. Some things were cleansed with fire or water, without any use of blood (Num. 19; 31:23, 24)."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 455.

**CONSIDER carefully the idea that forgiveness of sins requires shedding of blood. Evaluate each of the following ideas that have been suggested to explain it:**

1. God is a "bloodthirsty" deity—He demands blood before He forgives.
2. God is cruel and exacting, reluctant to forgive.
3. God's justice demands death, despite the readiness of His mercy to grant forgiveness.
4. Sin is a terrible reality, not cheaply forgiven; the law of Hebrews 9:22 shows the *cost* of forgiveness.
5. Since "the wages of sin is death," the sacrifice that is substituted for the sinner has to die.
6. Because the plan of salvation centers in Jesus, who was "the Lamb

slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), the Old Testament system of types had to involve the sacrifice of animals.

To some people the entire idea of animal sacrifices is abhorrent. The slaughter of defenseless animals in religious ritual seems to involve a gross misconception of morality and true religion. But we must never forget that the Old Testament sacrificial system was given by God Himself to demonstrate, among other things, how abhorrent sin is. It was the way that faith in the plan of salvation was shown in Old Testament times. By following it a person demonstrated belief in the way provided by God for the forgiveness of sins. Beyond its importance as a teaching vehicle for God's people of old, it dimly foreshadowed the marvel and mystery of Calvary, where God Himself would provide the answer to the terrible dilemma of human sin.



**THINK IT THROUGH:** Does the fact that "without shedding of blood is no remission" give me a heightened awareness of the sinfulness of sin? Of the price paid for my redemption?

**What position is Christ enabled to fill because of His death? Heb. 9:15.**

Remembering that our English words *covenant* and *testament* are translations of the same Greek word, the Revised Standard Version of Hebrews 9:15 will help you to see more clearly the reasoning:

"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."

The expressions for "new covenant" and "first covenant" here are identical with those in Hebrews 8:7, 8, 13. It is obvious that Hebrews 9:15 is picking up the discussion of chapter 8 and that "covenant" is to be preferred to "testament."

**Study Hebrews 9:16, 17. Is the passage talking about "covenant" or "testament" (that is, a will)? What is the point of the discussion?**

The overall meaning of verses 16 and 17 is clear. The point is the fulfillment of the promises of the new covenant, quoted in chapter 8 from Jeremiah 31:31-34. The new covenant is now in force because the death of Christ has ratified it.

**How was the "first covenant" inaugurated? Heb. 9:18-21. (Compare Ex. 24:6-8.)**

**ILLUMINATION:** "The blood of the Son of God was symbolized by the blood of the slain victim, and God would have clear and definite ideas

preserved between the sacred and the common. Blood was sacred, inasmuch as through the shedding of the blood of the Son of God alone could there be atonement for sin (ST July 15, 1880).”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1112.

**II. LIMITATIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SACRIFICES (Heb. 9:6-10; 10:1-4).**

**Under the Old Testament sanctuary system, who alone had access to the presence of God? Heb. 9:6, 7.**

While the Old Testament sanctuary was impressive and the knowledge that God Himself was manifested in the Shekinah glory over the mercy seat was thrilling, the entire system was one of limited access to the presence of God. Only the priests could enter the holy place, and only the high priest could go into the most holy place—and that but once a year, on the Day of Atonement. The vast majority of the people were excluded, entirely dependent on priestly mediation.

**How does the earthly sanctuary relate to the heavenly? Heb. 9:8, 9.**

The earthly sanctuary is called a “figure” (Greek *parabole*, parable) of the heavenly. The apostle reasons here that while the earthly sanctuary was “standing,” that is, served its valid function, the way into the heavenly sanctuary was not yet revealed.

“Christ’s high-priestly ministry in the ‘more perfect tabernacle’ (v. 11) could not begin until the earthly tabernacle service ended.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 450, 451.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Sometimes we marvel at the privileges granted to ancient Israel of having God’s presence manifested among them in the sanctuary. Do I grasp the fact that Christ has opened to me the heavenly sanctuary?

**LIST** the limitations of the Old Testament sanctuary as set out in Hebrews 9:9, 10. The following table will help you. Complete it by filling in the blanks:

1. Not the “real” sanctuary: a \_\_\_\_\_ of the real (verse 9).
2. No final solution to sin: could not make \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 9).
3. External (or ceremonial) purification: \_\_\_\_\_ ordinances (verse 10).
4. Temporary: given until the \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 10).

**What “law” is referred to in Hebrews 10:1?**

The context makes clear that the “law” here is the law of sacrifices—the entire priestly code associated with the sanctuary. “Law” is being used in a similar way to Hebrews 7:11, 12. The priestly, sacrificial code was but a shadow of the Christ, the true High Priest and His death, the true sacrifice for the sins of all humanity in all ages.

**NOTICE** how Hebrews 10:1-3 stresses the *repetition* of Old Testament sacrifices:

Verse 1: “Year by year,” “continually.”

Verse 2: “not cease,” “no more conscience.”

Verse 3: “remembrance,” “every year.”

**Why did the Old Testament sacrifices have to be repeated over and over? Heb. 10:4.**

Sin is a moral offense, not to be purged by material means. Without the death of Jesus all the sacrifices of the Old Testament would have availed nothing. The men and women of ancient times who found peace with God by following His prescribed way of forgiveness—the sanctuary—did so only by virtue of God’s Lamb who would die for the sins of the world.

We should never think that the sanctuary system of the Old Testament belonged to “primitive” religion. We must not forget that God Himself was its author. At the same time it clearly was a system of limitations. If it had been able to cope with the sin problem Christ need not have come and died. Hebrews 9:6-10 and 10:1-4 underscore the limitations of the ceremonial system:

1. Lack of access.
2. No finality in dealing with sin.
3. Not the “real” or the “true.”
4. Temporary.



### III. CHRIST’S DEATH—A BETTER SACRIFICE (Heb. 9:11-14, 23-28; 10:5-18).

**In contrast to the limitations of the old system, what has Christ achieved by His death? Heb. 9:11, 12.**

Note how the superiority of Christ’s work is emphasized in these verses:

1. He is High Priest of the good things *that have come* (verse 11, RSV)—fulfillment of the promises.
2. The better sanctuary (verse 11).
3. His own blood instead of animal blood (verse 12).
4. He *has obtained* eternal redemption (verse 12).

Because Christ *has done* these things, Christian assurance is not a myth. It is rooted in the person and work of our Saviour, Lord, and High Priest—Jesus Christ.

Compare and contrast the efficacy of the blood of animals with the blood of Jesus. Heb. 9:13, 14.

What is meant by the "blood" of Christ?

"Probably it is impossible to supply a precise equivalent for the term 'blood' here. Certainly it stands for more than merely death. Throughout chapters 9 and 10, the apostle keeps the *applying* of blood to the fore. The idea is the pouring out of life in death, of a powerful medium that gathers up defilement *in* itself.

"For just as defilement and purification touch religious springs deep within us, so does blood. As mankind in all times and places has sought cleansing from the dirt of sin he has turned to bloody sacrifices. The range of practices is enormous. The sacrificial victims include all forms of life, including human. The benefits sought are diverse. But the human spirit continually testifies that we must pour blood out. And among all the agencies man has sought to purge defilement—water, salt, smoke, oil, and so on—blood has been the preeminent one."—William G. Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence*, pp. 111, 112.



How far does the purifying efficacy of the blood of Christ extend? Heb. 9:23, 24.

The "patterns of things in the heavens" (verse 23) are the earthly sanctuary and its services. They were purified with the blood of animals. But the "heavenly things themselves require better sacrifices to cleanse them" (NEB)—Christ's own blood. Hebrews 9:23 strongly implies the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. (Compare Dan. 8:14.)

In contrast to the repetition of Old Testament sacrifices, how often must Christ die as Sacrifice? Heb. 9:25-28; 10:10.

We must never suggest that the death of Christ was not an all-sufficient, single, atoning sacrifice for sins.

"Our great High Priest completed the sacrificial offering of Himself when He suffered without the gate. Then a perfect atonement was made for the sins of the people. Jesus is our Advocate, our High Priest, our Intercessor. Our present position therefore 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, Manuscript 128, 1897.

**CONTRAST** the Old Testament sacrificial system with Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, as set out in Hebrews 10:11, 12. Complete the chart that follows in order to see more clearly the sharp contrasts that are being made.

Old Testament System	Christ's Ministry
"Every priest"	" _____ man"
Stands	_____
"Same sacrifices"	" _____ sacrifice"
Daily	_____
"Never take away sins"	"one sacrifice _____"

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Am I personally convinced that Christ's death is all-sufficient? Have I found its cleansing power?



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:**

- Read *The Desire of Ages*, pages 741-757.
- Study the references to "blood" in the book of Hebrews, especially 9:7, 12, 13, 14, 18, 21, 22; 10:4, 19, 29; 12:24.

**SUMMARY:** The terrible problem of human sin demands a system of sacrifice. During Old Testament times the sanctuary system provided God's way of forgiveness. But that system was limited; only in Christ, God's once-for-all sacrifice, could the true answer to the sin problem be found.

**APPLICATION:**

- Do I grasp the terrible *cost* of sin? The *cost* of my forgiveness?
- Mediator, Priest, Sacrifice—Christ is all of these for me. Has this lesson deepened my love for Him?
- All around are people bearing a load of guilt. How can I present to them the good news of this lesson?

**NOTES:**



# The Better Hope

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Hebrews 10:19-39.

**SAB PM. MEMORY TEXT:** "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward" (Heb. 10:35).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Fully assured that Christ as our High Priest ministers in our behalf, we must persevere in the Christian life as we await His return.

## OVERVIEW—Heb. 10:19-39

Heb. 10:19-25	Heb. 10:26-31	Heb. 10:32-39
Living in full assurance	Strong warning	Awaiting Christ's return

**INTRODUCTION:** The "therefore" of Hebrews 10:19 marks the transition from exposition to application. Since chapter 7:1 we have been following an unbroken line of reasoning designed to establish that Christ is High Priest and Sacrifice. We have been told that He is a better Priest, belonging to a better order of priesthood; that He ministers a better sacrifice in a better sanctuary, and that He is the Mediator of a better covenant established on better promises. The theological section that we have been studying contains an involved line of development that requires our deepest concentration; but it provides the foundation of our life in Christ. It tells us what Christ *has done* and is *doing now* for us.

Next the question comes: What about us? In view of God's gracious provision in Christ Jesus, how shall we live? The "what" of the good news calls for a "what shall I do?" response from us that is appropriate to the grace bestowed upon us. From chapter 10:19 onward, the book of Hebrews shows how the teaching of the earlier chapters should affect our lives. We find warning and exhortation (10:19-39), a reminder that Christian life is a pilgrimage (chapter 11), and a restatement of the privileges and counsels that have been sounded earlier (chapters 12 and 13).

In this week's lesson, built on Hebrews 10:19-39, we study what it means to live in full assurance of the great truths studied in earlier lessons. We will find that when we live the life of assurance we will not take lightly the privileges and the responsibilities of the Christian. We will not presume upon the sacrifice of Jesus once offered for us. Nor will we turn back to the world. Rather, we will press on with faith and confidence, eagerly looking for the hope of all ages—the return of Jesus.

The ideas of Hebrews 10:19-39 are of great importance to all Christians, but especially to Seventh-day Adventists. They help to guard us against falling into one or the other of the following errors:

1. A lack of assurance and confidence in our salvation in Christ, doubting whether our sins have been forgiven and whether we belong to Him.
2. A carelessness in Christian living that claims that the death of Jesus allows us to disregard His standards of faith and practice.



### I. LIVING IN FULL ASSURANCE (Heb. 10:19-25).

As believers in Jesus Christ as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, with what attitude do we come before Him? Heb. 10:19, 22.

“Those who ‘draw near’ must do so with unwavering faith in the power of Christ to cleanse the soul from sin and to impart grace to live above sin. Doubt and unbelief rob a person of the capacity to appropriate the saving merits of the Saviour. The importance of faith to a living Christian experience constitutes the theme of chs. 10:38 to 11:40.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 462, 463.

**What are the three great facts on which Christian assurance is based? Heb. 10:19-22.**

The apostle reasons that we have:

1. Access to God with confidence because Jesus has opened the way for us.
2. A High Priest who cares for us.
3. Purification from the guilt of sin.

**Explain how “veil” and Christ’s “flesh” are connected. Heb. 10:20.**

“Ancient commentators generally understood the veil here to represent the means of entrance, that is, the doorway by which the divine presence is approached. However, ‘veil’ seems here to be used in the sense of that which hides the divine presence. This interpretation of the word seems to be more in harmony with the symbolism of the veil in ch. 6:19, also with the significance of the rending of the veil at the time of the crucifixion of Christ. . . . That rending signified not only that the sacrificial system was at an end but also that ‘a new and living way is prepared’ (DA 757).

“That is to say, his flesh. ‘Flesh’ here designates the humanity of Jesus (cf. ch. 5:7). The term would comprehend all that was involved in Christ’s first advent to this earth, including His sacrificial death. . . .

“It might be well to note that this is one of several passages where the writer of Hebrews gives special emphasis to the thought that through Christ Jesus man has direct access to God. This seems to be the central thought of the whole message of the book of Hebrews. Because of the sacrifice of Christ in our behalf a veil no longer exists between us and our God. Our hope enters ‘into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus’ (ch. 6:19, 20). ‘Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, . . . but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us’ (ch. 9:24). The writer of Hebrews seeks to

establish the superiority of the heavenly service of our Lord over the earthly service conducted by earthly priests. He cites as one of the best proofs of this, the glorious fact that there is no longer a veil, a barrier, between us and our God.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 462.



In view of the three great facts on which Christian assurance is based (Heb. 10:19-22), what three responses from us are appropriate? Heb. 10:23-25.

1. “*Let us hold fast*”: As Christ our High Priest is faithful in His work for us, we should be faithful in our loyalty to Him. As He is unwavering in His ministry, we should be unwavering in our faith.

2. “*Let us consider one another*”: Often we consider one another, but *not* to encourage each other. Too often our “consideration” is in terms of criticism, faultfinding, or even envy. What a difference it would make if we went out of our way to be kind, thoughtful, and considerate!

3. “*Not forsaking the assembling*”: We can commune with God alone or out in nature, but the place to be at the time He has appointed for corporate worship is where God’s people meet together. As Christians we are part of a body—the body of Christ. No matter how small the congregation, how humble the building, or how poorly prepared the sermon, there is a blessing for us as we gather together on Sabbath for worship and during the week for prayer meeting.

**What is “the day” referred to in Hebrews 10:25?**

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Jesus foretold that as His coming draws near the hearts of many will grow cold (Matt. 24:12). How important, then, that we each keep alert and on guard, not growing lax in worship attendance, but gathering to exhort one another as we look forward to the day of His return.

## II. STRONG WARNING (Heb. 10:26-31).

**Under what circumstances does the sacrifice of Christ no longer avail for people? Heb. 10:26, 27.**

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The key word here is *wilfully*. The form of the Greek verb indicates *repeated* action—that is, “continue to sin wilfully.” From verse 29 it is clear that the reference is not to a single act of sin but to an attitude of open defiance of the will of God, a spurning of the sacrifice of Christ, in deliberate, persistent sinning.

**What attitude toward sin and the sacrifice of Christ do such people reveal? Heb. 10:28, 29.**

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The book of Hebrews rings with some of the most confident words of Christian assurance in all the Scriptures. But it also contains terrible

warnings, pronouncing unqualified doom upon the despisers of God's grace. Only the dire warning of the third angel's message (Rev. 14:9-11) matches these words of Hebrews. Any thought that Christian assurance leads to a life of carelessness or presumption is banished as we study the book of Hebrews.

**TUE** With all our knowledge of God's love and grace, what must we never forget? Heb. 10:30, 31.

Many people hold a "once saved—always saved" conception of the grace of God. The book of Hebrews, in clearest fashion possible, shows the falsity of such ideas. Three passages of the book (Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 12:15-17) pronounce words of strong warning against presuming upon God's grace.

**NOTE that in each case it is manifest that the warnings are addressed to those who already are Christians:**

- "Enlightened . . . tasted the heavenly gift . . . partakers of the Holy Ghost . . . tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come" (Heb. 6:4-8).
- "Knowledge of the truth . . . blood of the covenant . . . Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:26-31).
- The example of Esau, who despised the spiritual privilege which was his (Heb. 12:15-17).

Hebrews teaches that even those who have been converted and richly blessed by God may apostatize, reaching a point of persistent rebellion and defiance, despising the Lord and His cross. For such people no repentance is possible as long as they cling to rebellion and defiance.

**THINK IT THROUGH: Do I take these warnings to heart? Although I now may stand in close relationship to my Lord, do I heed the words: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"?**

**How can we know if someone has gone beyond hope of repentance? Or can we be sure?**

Only God reads the heart. Christian history records many stories of men and women who, to outward appearances, had reached a point where God could no longer reach them, and yet who were touched by His grace and converted. These include profligates, drunkards, murderers, and robbers. God's Spirit has wrought miracles—and still does. We never should "write off" any person as being beyond hope in the grace of God.

**WED** III. AWAITING CHRIST'S RETURN (Heb. 10:32-39).

What exhortation to the "Hebrew" Christians is still of value to us? Heb. 10:32.

There is much value in each Christian going back to his roots. These

roots are in the Bible; for Seventh-day Adventists they also are the heritage that comes to us from the pioneers. We need to remind ourselves of origins, of the "faith of our fathers." There is value, too, in going back to our personal Christian roots. Like the Hebrew Christians of old, we should seek for perspective in Christian living. We cannot rest upon the past—we must build upon it. But in that building, particularly when we become weary, we do well to look to the origins of our faith.

**Hebrews 10:33, 34** gives us a glimpse of some of the hardships of being a Christian in the world of the first century. Summarize the difficulties the early Christians faced.

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Apparently they had been Christians for some time—certainly for several years. Their "illumination" possibly refers to baptism; the term was used that way later among Christians. It certainly indicates the knowledge of Christ that had brought them new life. (Compare Heb. 6:4.) But in the first century the followers of Jesus of Nazareth were a small, despised, illicit sect. The "Hebrews" (Jewish Christians) had had abuse and hardship heaped upon them publicly. Faced by a hostile society, they found refuge in the company of fellow Christians. When subjected to physical suffering and plundering of their property, they looked to one another for encouragement and to the better country that God had prepared for them.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** How would I react to abuse and plunder of my goods for the sake of Christ?

What quality of character is necessary for Christians to "receive the promise"? Heb. 10:35, 36.

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*Patience* here signifies far more than keeping calm under provocation. The Greek word used signifies "endurance," "fortitude," "steadfastness," and "perseverance" as well as "patience." It also can be translated as "patient expectation." Note how modern translations sharpen the meaning of Hebrews 10:35, 36:

"Do not then throw away your confidence, for it carries a great reward. You need endurance, if you are to do God's will and win what he has promised" (NEB).

"Be as confident now, then, since the reward is so great. You will need endurance to do God's will and gain what he has promised" (Jerusalem).

"So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised" (NIV).

What hope will sustain us as we face hardship and difficulty in the Christian life? Heb. 10:37.

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Christian hope rests upon certainties, not speculation. It centers in a

person, One who is absolutely faithful. We *know* Jesus, and we know He keeps His word. Throughout the book of Hebrews the great certainties of salvation have been brought before us—the deity of Christ, His full humanity, His atoning death, His high-priestly ministry. These are not theory, not an empty hope. Because they are sure, the other certainty—the second coming—also is sure. Because He promised to come back we *know* that He will come.



The “little while” of waiting for the second coming has now stretched to nearly 2000 years. How do we cope with this apparent delay and retain the expectancy of “the blessed hope”?

**ILLUMINATION:** “The day and the hour of His coming Christ has not revealed. He stated plainly to His disciples that He Himself could not make known the day or the hour of His second appearing. Had He been at liberty to reveal this, why need He have exhorted them to maintain an attitude of constant expectancy? There are those who claim to know the very day and hour of our Lord’s appearing. Very earnest are they in mapping out the future. But the Lord has warned them off the ground they occupy. The exact time of the second coming of the Son of man is God’s mystery.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 632, 633.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Does the hope of Jesus’ return still burn brightly within my heart? Or am I like the wicked servant in the parable who begins to say in his heart, “My Lord delays His coming”?

What is the secret of Christian living? Heb. 10:38.

The Christian never goes beyond faith. We begin with faith, we live by faith, and we shall stand entirely at last by faith.

**ILLUMINATION:** “Do you ask, ‘How am I to abide in Christ?’ In the same way as you received Him at first. ‘As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.’ ‘The just shall live by faith.’ Colossians 2:6; Hebrews 10:38. You gave yourself to God, to be His wholly, to serve and obey Him, and you took Christ as your Saviour. You could not yourself atone for your sins or change your heart; but having given yourself to God, you believe that He for Christ’s sake did all this for you. By *faith* you became Christ’s, and by faith you are to grow up in Him—by giving and taking. You are to *give* all,—your heart, your will, your service,—give yourself to Him to obey all His requirements; and you must *take* all,—Christ, the fullness of all blessing, to abide in your heart, to be your strength, your righteousness, your everlasting helper,—to give you power to obey.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 69, 70.

What two classes are in evidence among Christians who have the better hope? How can we be among those who shall be redeemed at last? Heb. 10:39.

This lesson started with “full assurance” in Christ. Then it showed the terrible possibility of renouncing Christ and falling away to become one of the despisers of His grace. It closes with the exhortation to be among those who by His grace persevere in faith. Note the way the Revised Standard Version translates Hebrews 10:39: “But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls.”



#### FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. Study the severe warnings of Hebrews, noting the similarities and differing emphases: Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 12:15-17. Compare with 1 John 5:16 and Mark 3:22-30.

2. Consider carefully the following: “This is the great day of atonement, and our Advocate is standing before the Father, pleading as our intercessor. In place of wrapping about us the garments of self-righteousness, we should be found daily humbling ourselves before God, confessing our own individual sins, seeking the pardon of our transgressions, and cooperating with Christ in the work of preparing our souls to reflect the divine image. Unless we enter the sanctuary above, and unite with Christ in working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, we shall be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, and shall be pronounced wanting.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 933, 934.

**SUMMARY:** The great certainties of Jesus Christ as our High Priest and Sacrifice lead to a “better” life of full assurance. Such assurance, however, is no guarantee that the Christian will never turn back to the world—the possibility is ever present that we may choose to forsake our Lord. Day by day we are to live by faith, ever abiding in the promise and expectation of His soon return.

#### APPLICATION:

- With what attitude do I approach the heavenly sanctuary?
- Do I seek to build up others by loving concern and interest? What practical suggestions do I have to follow the counsel of Hebrews 10:24?
- Do I love to assemble with God’s people? Or do I find myself often staying home on Sabbath? Do I attend prayer meeting?
- How can I avoid the terrible course of action described in Hebrews 10:26-31—of falling away to become a despiser of the blood of Christ?
- Do I believe that Jesus will really come again? Am I sharing my desire for His return with those about me?

#### NOTES:

# The Better Country

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Hebrews 11:1 through 12:2.

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**MEMORY TEXT:** "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. 12:2).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** As have the godly men and women of all ages, Christians are to live by faith as they journey to their heavenly home.

## OVERVIEW—Heb. 11:1-12:2

Heb. 11:1	Heb. 11:2-40	Heb. 12:1, 2
Faith—what it is	Faith—the mark of God's people in all ages	Jesus—the Author and Finisher of faith

**INTRODUCTION:** Undoubtedly the eleventh chapter of Hebrews is the best-known section of the book. It often is referred to for its description of faith and its depiction of the line of heroes and heroines of the Old Testament. The chapter has brought inspiration to God's people for centuries.

The passage is beautifully structured. After the two opening statements, that stand as a summary of the section, a rhythmic "by faith" pattern leads the reader in steady progress forward in time. The pattern is not rigid and mechanical, however. Bible characters are dealt with unequally and we sense movement toward a climax. With Rahab the listing breaks off and Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel are gathered together in an onrushing statement that comprehends the exploits of prophets, martyrs, and others. After the surge of this climactic summary, we hear the last, gentle melody, the final notes that bridge the years to the readers' own time.

The examples of faith in Hebrews 11 inspire us to steadfastness in the Christian way. They encourage us to press on, no matter what difficulties may confront us.

As fascinating as the list of heroes of faith is in chapter 11, it should not occupy our chief attention. In chapter 12 the apostle passes on beyond the men and women of old times and exhorts us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. In Him faith finds its source, its hope, and its goal.

The instruction of Hebrews 11:1 through 12:2 is vital for the life of Christian assurance. It tells us how God's people of old lived for Him and how we in these times may also achieve that goal.





## I. FAITH—WHAT IT IS (Heb. 11:1).

What two aspects of faith are brought to light in the famous description of Hebrews 11:1?

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1, RSV). The two clauses, although in parallel, do not cover the same ground. Whereas the first is time-oriented (hope), the second is space-oriented (seen). That is, the first clause looks to the future: Faith is the certainty that hope will become reality and promise will become fulfillment. The second clause looks to the present reality of the invisible world: Faith is confident that what is ultimately real is beyond the world of sensory perception. Thus, faith turns hope to assurance and makes the unseen as real as the seen.

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** What other examples can we find in the book of Hebrews that demonstrate the same intersecting of space and time that is expressed in Hebrews 11:1? (See Heb. 8:1-3; 9:11, 12; 10:1.)

Hebrews 10:1 is a clear example of the intersecting of space and time: “The law having a *shadow* (the space aspect) of good things *to come* (the time aspect).” In the book of Hebrews the heavenly sanctuary is not a timeless realm. Rather, it belongs to the invisible world but is affected by events on earth—Christ *becomes* High Priest and by His death *obtains* a sacrifice for His ministry.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Is the unseen world—the world of God, the world of the heavenly sanctuary—real to me by faith? Is the hope I hold also sure because of faith?

How does faith give assurance? Compare 2 Cor. 4:18.

It helps our understanding of Hebrews 11:1 to realize that the word translated “substance” (KJV) or “assurance” (RSV) may be rendered as “title-deed.” Most of us are familiar with the use and importance of a title. The title declares the piece of property to be legally ours. Even if we have never seen the property, it belongs to us if the title-deed so stipulates. So it is with the heavenly realities and the hope that is before us. Faith is the title-deed—they are ours.



Explain how the twin characteristics of faith—seeing the invisible and making hope certain—are shown in Hebrews 11:6.

1. Faith believes that God exists, that is, it has a conviction of the invisible.
2. Faith believes that God rewards, that is, it has an assurance of hope.

**CONSIDER** the way “faith” is being used in Hebrews 11. Is the discussion about people who are coming to Christ for the first time, or is it about those who already are believers? Does this make a difference to our understanding of faith?

The Greek word *pistis*, from which we get “faith,” is a word of many facets. The same word is translated also as “belief” in English. As we move from one New Testament writer to another, we discern a variety of ways of setting forth this vital Christian quality. In Romans and Galatians, for instance, *pistis* is essentially trust—trust that accepts the divine gift of salvation in Jesus Christ in an act of commitment that turns from confidence in one’s own works and casts itself wholly on God’s provision (Rom. 4:5; Gal. 2:16). With James, we find that even the demons have *pistis* (James 2:19). Here the intellectual element is given emphasis. Thus James rebukes those who have “faith” but lack good works. In the Synoptic Gospels the emphasis in the use of *pistis* changes yet again—*pistis* is linked to the miracle-working ability of Jesus (Matt. 17:19, 20). Faith, therefore, is like a diamond with many hues, gleaming in the light as writer after writer turns it for examination. In Hebrews, *pistis* is used in connection with people who already believe and strongly suggests the elements of faithfulness and perseverance.

**NOTE** some Ellen G. White descriptions of faith:

- “Faith is the clasping of the hand of Christ in every emergency.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 262.
- “Faith is the living power that . . . plants its banner in . . . the enemy’s camp.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 202.
- “Faith is the spiritual hand that touches infinity.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 467.
- “Faith is the very lifeblood of the soul.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 472.
- “Faith is trusting God—believing that He . . . knows best what is for our good.”—*Education*, p. 253.
- Faith “is the act of the soul by which the whole man is given over to the guardianship and control of Jesus Christ.”—*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 531.



## II. FAITH—THE MARK OF GOD’S PEOPLE IN ALL AGES

(Heb. 11:2-40).

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Study the list of the men and women of faith in Old Testament times (Heb. 11:2-31). As you study, keep in mind the two aspects of faith given in verse 1: Faith *hopes* and faith *sees* (the invisible). For each example in the list, decide which aspect is the more prominent in the person’s faith, hoping or seeing the invisible:

Verse(s)	Example	Faith as Hope (check one or sometimes both)	Faith as Seeing
3	Creation	_____	_____
4	Abel	_____	_____
5	Enoch	_____	_____

Verse(s)	Example	Faith as Hope	Faith as Seeing
6	Every seeker after God	_____	_____
7	Noah	_____	_____
8	Abraham	_____	_____
9	Abraham	_____	_____
10	Abraham	_____	_____
11	Sarah	_____	_____
12	Isaac	_____	_____
13	The patriarchs	_____	_____
14	The patriarchs	_____	_____
15	The patriarchs	_____	_____
16	The patriarchs	_____	_____
17-19	Abraham and Isaac	_____	_____
20	Isaac	_____	_____
21	Jacob	_____	_____
22	Joseph	_____	_____
23	Moses' parents	_____	_____
24	Moses	_____	_____
25, 26	Moses	_____	_____
27	Moses	_____	_____
28	Moses	_____	_____
29	Exodus	_____	_____
30	Jericho	_____	_____
31	Rahab	_____	_____

**Do you find any of these examples of faith surprising? If so, which?**

That the prostitute Rahab should be given a place in this roll-call of the faithful may come as a shock. Yet she is mentioned also in the genealogy of Jesus—one of the few women to be singled out for inclusion. (See Matt. 1:5.) Like Mary of Magdala, Rahab shows that God's grace, appropriated by faith, is able to lift men and women above the most forbidding environment.

**What city was Abraham seeking in all his wanderings? Heb. 11:10. When will that city be seen on earth? Rev. 21:1, 2, 14, 19, 20.**

**What did the heroes of faith confess themselves to be in relation to this world? Heb. 11:13.**



**What does it mean to be "strangers and pilgrims" on earth? How would it apply in modern times? To clarify your answer, mark each of the following statements "True" or "False":**

1. Christians should withdraw from society. \_\_\_\_\_
2. God has forsaken this world. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Christians should be indistinguishable from other people. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Christian hope and values extend beyond the present world. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Christians are to be a transforming influence on society. \_\_\_\_\_

The Bible teaches that the world is not evil, seeing that it was made by God and is sustained by Him. But the Fall has cast a shadow over it. It cannot be restored by merely human effort and programs. God, who first brought it into being, undertakes to make it new in His own time.

Where is the "better country" to which God's pilgrims are bound? Heb. 11:14-16.

Hebrews 11:33-38 gives a list of heroic exploits without naming the people involved. Identify the Bible characters who could have been alluded to:

- "Subdued kingdoms" (2 Sam. 8:1-18) \_\_\_\_\_
- "Stopped the mouths of lions" (Dan. 6:22) \_\_\_\_\_
- "Quenched the violence of fire" (Dan. 3:27) \_\_\_\_\_
- "Escaped the edge of the sword" (1 Kings 19:1-10) \_\_\_\_\_
- "Out of weakness were made strong" (1 Sam. 17:26) \_\_\_\_\_
- "Woman received her dead raised" (1 Kings 17:17-24) \_\_\_\_\_
- "Bonds and imprisonments" (Jer. 20:1, 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- "Stoned" (2 Chron. 24:20, 21) \_\_\_\_\_
- "Wandered in deserts, mountains . . . caves" (1 Kings 19:1-9) \_\_\_\_\_

In what way were these heroes not "made perfect" without us? Heb. 11:39, 40.

"These also, one and all, are commemorated for their faith; and yet they did not enter upon the promised inheritance, because, with us in mind, God had made a better plan, that only in company with us should they reach their perfection" (Heb. 11:39, 40, NEB).

### III. JESUS—THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF FAITH (Heb. 12:1, 2).

What illustration does Hebrews use for the Christian life? Heb. 12:1.

Hebrews 12:1 presents a vivid picture of a sports arena. There are the stands, crowded with spectators, eyes fixed on the track where the runners are taking off their warm-up suits and getting ready to start the race. In this race, however, the readers—in fact, all Christians—are the runners, not the onlookers. The tape stretches out in front of them, and behind them stands Jesus, ready to award the victor's crown. But there is not just one winner—in this race, everyone who finishes is a winner.

*“Lay aside every weight.”* The Greek athletes trained with weights strapped to their bodies. Before they ran in a competition they would remove these weights.

**ILLUMINATION:** “The weights that are here referred to are the evil habits and practices we have formed by following our own natural dispositions. Who are the witnesses? They are those spoken of in the previous chapter—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. They were sustained and strengthened and the Lord held them by His hand.

“There are other witnesses. All about us are those who are watching us closely, to see how we who profess a belief in the truth conduct ourselves. At all times and in all places, so far as possible, we must magnify the truth before the world.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 934.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** What “weights” encumbering me in my Christian race do I need to lay aside?

What is “the sin which doth so easily beset us”? Heb. 12:1.

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Notice other translations of Hebrews 12:1, 2:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (RSV).

“And what of ourselves? With all these witnesses to faith around us like a cloud, we must throw off every encumbrance, every sin to which we cling, and run with resolution the race for which we are entered, our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom faith depends from start to finish: Jesus who, for the sake of the joy that lay ahead of him, endured the cross, making light of its disgrace, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God” (NEB).

“Surrounded then as we are by these serried ranks of witnesses, let us strip off everything that hinders us, as well as the sin which dogs our feet, and let us run the race that we have to run with patience, our eyes fixed on Jesus the source and the goal of our faith. For he himself endured a cross and thought nothing of its shame because of the joy he knew would follow his suffering; and he is now seated at the right hand of God’s throne” (Phillips).

What role does Jesus play in our Christian race? Heb. 12:2.

From first to last, the Christian life is all of Jesus and all of faith. The faith that we exercise in the beginning when we first come to Christ is a gift of God. (See Rom. 12:3.) As we live in personal relationship with Him, that faith grows and deepens. “Finisher” means “completer” or “perfecter.” He who began a good work in us is able to complete it. (See Phil. 1:6.)



**THINK IT THROUGH:** What does it mean in practical daily experience to keep my eyes fixed on Jesus?

How closely is Jesus able to identify with runners in the Christian race? Heb. 12:2.

Hebrews 12:2 recalls chapter 2 of the book. There the human experiences of Jesus equipped Him to be our heavenly High Priest. Here He is the One who has run the race already. Himself the Victor, He now encourages us on.

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Study the stories of the men and women of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11, first in the Old Testament itself and then in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, and in *Prophets and Kings*.

**SUMMARY:** Christian faith has two elements—assurance in hope, and confidence in the reality of the unseen. Men and women of God in all ages have shown such faith. We may learn from them; but above all we are to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who will confirm our faith to the end.

#### APPLICATION:

- Which great figure out of the Old Testament listed in Hebrews 11 most inspires me? Why?
- Am I persuaded that the “better country” is in heaven? On which city have I set my affections?
- In light of this lesson, what definition of Christian faith can I give?
- How can I keep my eyes fixed on Jesus?

#### NOTES:

# The Better City

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Hebrews 12:3 through 13:25.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8).

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The life of the Christian is based upon what Christ already has accomplished but it looks to the perfect fulfillment that is yet to come.

**OUTLINE:** Heb. 12:3 - 13:25.

- I. **Steadfast in Hardship** (Heb. 12:3-17).
  1. Divine discipline (Heb. 12:3-11).
  2. Perseverance (Heb. 12:12-14).
  3. Esau (Heb. 12:15-17).
- II. **Present Privilege: The City That Is** (Heb. 12:18-29).
  1. The better city (Heb. 12:18-24).
  2. Severe warning (Heb. 12:25-29).
- III. **The Fulfillment: The City to Come** (Heb. 13:1-25).
  1. In the footsteps of Jesus (Heb. 13:1-19).
  2. Benediction (Heb. 13:20, 21).
  3. Closing words (Heb. 13:22-25).

**INTRODUCTION:** The final two chapters of Hebrews round out the masterful sermon that makes up this book. In skillful fashion the apostle laid the theological basis for the homily as, step by step, he developed the theme of Christ as High Priest and Sacrifice. Each leading idea was briefly introduced, taken up in due course, and bound off. The progress of the logic was steady and certain, as the readers were shown the meaning of "salvation so great." Over and over the apostle emphasized the magnificence of Christianity with its superior sanctuary providing access to God and a once-for-all sacrifice for sin.

But all this theological groundwork was aimed at a practical purpose—to address the problem of being weary with well doing. If "the Hebrews" could come to realize the supreme value of their religion, they would not neglect it, certainly would not renounce it, even under persecution. On the contrary, they would persevere in the Christian way.

In this closing portion of the book we find summarized the practical concerns that have appeared earlier. We hear appeals to steadfast endurance and strong warnings. We receive reminders of the present privileges of the Christian—based on what Christ has done and what He is doing now. But with those reminders comes the admonition to press on in the way, because the best is yet to be.

This balance between the “already”—present privileges—and the “not yet”—the final fulfillment of hope—is strikingly shown in the way in which we find the idea of the “better city.” Not only are we told that we already *have come* “unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,” but also that “we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”

The life of Christian assurance, then, will always maintain this balance. It rests upon foundations, it has its certainties; but it is directed toward the future.

Both Habakkuk and Hebrews show us how to move from doubt to confidence. In both, the key word is *faith* and the same verse appears: “The just shall live by faith.” Despite the pressures of life, despite the storms that assail us without and within, we each may find a life of calm, confident joy in the Lord.

SUN

### I. STEADFAST IN HARDSHIP (Heb. 12:3-17).

When we encounter opposition from others, whom should we consider?  
Heb. 12:3.

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Notice how the apostle comes back to his idea throughout the book:

- “Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession” (3:1).
- “We have a great high priest, . . . Jesus the Son of God” (4:14).
- “We have such an high priest” (8:1).
- “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (12:2).
- “Consider him” (12:3).

What does the “not yet” of Hebrews 12:4 suggest?

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Perhaps the likelihood of renewed persecution was one of the reasons some of “the Hebrews” were growing spiritually weary and inclined to turn back to the world. They had gone through hardship in the past (see Heb. 10:32-34); now trouble may have been looming again. The book makes reference to the imprisonment of Timothy (13:23). If, as seems likely, Hebrews was written before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, such foreboding of persecution for Jewish Christians was not misplaced.

How should we regard difficulties that the Lord allows to come upon us?  
Heb. 12:5-10.

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“Trials of life are God’s workmen, to remove the impurities and roughness from our character. Their hewing, squaring, and chiseling, their bur-nishing and polishing, is a painful process; it is hard to be pressed down to the grinding wheel. But the stone is brought forth prepared to fill its place in the heavenly temple. Upon no useless material does the Master bestow such careful, thorough work. Only His precious stones are polished after the similitude of a palace.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 10.



What will trials accomplish in us if we maintain the right attitude? Heb. 12:10, 11.

One of the strongest blessings of Jesus was pronounced on those who are persecuted (Matt. 5:10-12). Trials may draw us closer to God, may sharpen and refine our character, making us "partakers of his holiness" as they yield "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." The Scriptures show how difficulties and persecution may be used of God for our benefit, but nowhere do they advise us to *seek* trouble or to encourage it. Instead, we are to "follow peace with all men" (Heb. 12:14). To desire to be persecuted is a symptom of an unhealthy state of mind.



Because God designs to work out a beneficial purpose through our hardships, how should we relate to them? Heb. 12:12, 13. (Compare Isa. 35:3; Prov. 4:26.)

Why was Esau unable to find repentance? Heb. 12:15-17. (Compare Gen. 25:29-34; 27:30-40.)

Esau is an example of the stern warnings given earlier in Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-31. Because he despised the spiritual privileges that were his, they were taken from him.

"Long years of living for earthly pursuits had deprived Esau of the capacity to bear the more serious responsibilities of life. By his own choice his mind and character had become fixed. The writer of Hebrews does not imply that Esau actually desired to repent of his worldly ways, but simply that He repented of having sold his birthright. He wished he had it back again, but realized that his decision was irrevocable. He had lost it forever. No arbitrary act of God kept Esau from receiving the inheritance that would normally have been his. His own character disqualified him for its privileges and responsibilities."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 486, 487.

## II. PRESENT PRIVILEGE—THE CITY THAT IS (Heb. 12:18-29).

To what Old Testament experience does Hebrews 12:18-21 refer? See Ex. 18:12-22; 20:18-21.

At the giving of the law from Mount Sinai God was revealed in a scene of grandeur. But it was also an occasion of inaccessibility and fear, as Hebrews points out. The mount of God could not be approached, even by a beast. The accompanying phenomena—fire, darkness, gloom, tempest, trumpet, and terrifying force—made even Moses tremble. Note the vivid contrast in this description with the emphases found in the book of Hebrews—assurance, confidence, and access.

In Hebrews 12:22-24 the “ye are come” contrasts with the “ye are not come” of verses 18-21. What do verses 22-24 portray?

The thought of these verses is: *Now God is really approachable*. The heavenly sanctuary is not a terrifying mountain, it is the place of God Himself. It can be seen as a festal gathering where angels and Jesus Himself are present. It is a place of grace, not a place of fear. And all because of the better blood that makes our salvation possible.

In Hebrews 12:18-24 we find again the same kind of contrast between the old and the new that we noticed in the opening passage of the book (1:1-4) and that surfaced at other points in our study. As we seek to rightly relate the old and the new, we must neither disparage the old (for, after all, it was God who gave it), nor must we diminish the quality of newness of the new. The old was good but the new is better, just as the fulfillment and reality surpass the expectation and the shadow.



In what way have we already “come” to the heavenly Jerusalem? Heb. 12:22. (Compare 10:19, 22; 11:1.)

By faith the invisible becomes real. In the book of Hebrews the usual scheme of reality is reversed. From a sensory standpoint, Sinai provided a strong basis for religion. Here was a mountain enveloped in sights and sounds, with the voice of God thundering down the divine will. What better basis for the religious life could be found? But for the apostle, the real is that which is invisible. It is appropriated by faith, not by the senses. It involves access to the very presence of God where guilt has been removed and we approach with absolute confidence.

What is meant by “the spirits of just men made perfect”? Heb. 12:23.

“The idea that the word . . . [translated “spirits”] denotes some supposedly conscious entity of man capable of existence apart from the body is not inherent in the word itself nor can such a meaning be derived objectively from its usage in the NT. Such a concept is based exclusively on the preconceived opinions of those who believe that a conscious entity survives the body at death and who read this preconceived opinion into such words as ‘spirit’ and ‘soul.’ . . .

“**Just men made perfect.** These are mature Christians. . . . The words ‘ye are come’ in Heb. 12:22 are addressed to living Christians, as the context makes evident. The writer is not addressing the righteous dead of ages past, as if they were actually assembled before ‘the Judge of all’ men on ‘mount Zion’ in ‘the heavenly Jerusalem’ (vs. 22, 23). All will agree that it is only in a figurative sense that living Christians can assemble before the throne of God as pictured in vs. 22-24. It is in this same sense that in ch. 4:16 he invites them to ‘come boldly unto the throne of grace.’ In this same figurative sense living Christians find ‘the spirits’ of all other ‘just men made perfect’ assembled there *in spirit*, not in an imaginary

disembodied state. To make 'the spirits of just men made perfect' refer to supposedly disembodied 'spirits' would be to set the writer of Hebrews at variance with the clear statements of the Holy Scriptures concerning the state of men in death."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 487.

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Seventh-day Adventists, with our emphasis on God's law, are fascinated by the events of Sinai. But do we realize that by faith we may even now come to the heavenly Mount Zion?

What corresponding responsibility accompanies our high privilege as Christians? Heb. 12:25. (Compare 2:1-3.)

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What is "the shaking" referred to in Hebrews 12:26-28?

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"The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 911.



### III. THE FULFILLMENT—THE CITY TO COME (Heb. 13:1-25).

**SEARCH AND LEARN:** Hebrews 13:1-7 gives a list of sundry advice for practical Christian living. Summarize *in one word* the responsibility brought out in each verse:

1. Let brotherly love \_\_\_\_\_
2. Attitude toward strangers \_\_\_\_\_
3. Attitude toward prisoners \_\_\_\_\_
4. Attitude toward sex \_\_\_\_\_
5. Attitude toward material things \_\_\_\_\_
6. Where to turn for help \_\_\_\_\_
7. Attitude toward church leaders \_\_\_\_\_

Remember that "conversation" in verses 5 and 7, as throughout the King James Version, denotes far more than speech. It points to a person's way of life or behavior patterns.

What fact about Jesus gives us firm assurance? Heb. 13:8.

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In Hebrews 2:17 Jesus was called a *faithful* High Priest and chapter 3:1-6 elaborated the idea. At the end of Hebrews the apostle returns to this foundational thought. Though all others fail, Jesus never fails. We may trust Him absolutely. He will never let us down.

**What blessing does Hebrews 13:9, 10 indicate is available only to Christians?**

To the early Christians, most of whom came out of a Jewish background, separation from the beautiful temple at Jerusalem along with separation from its services was a painful experience. The apostle reminds them that the heavenly sanctuary brings privileges that go far beyond any earthly systems.

**What is the meaning of the term *without the camp* in Hebrews 13:11, 13?**

Jesus did not die within the precincts of the temple or even inside the holy city. He was crucified beyond the walls—outside the gate. Just as the carcasses of animals whose blood was taken into the sanctuary were burned in a profane place, so Jesus died in a common, secular place—the place where criminals were executed.



**What should be our response to Jesus' willingness to suffer "outside the camp"? (Heb. 13:13, RSV).**

Because Christ planted His cross in a secular place, the *whole* world belongs to Him in a new sense. He is its Lord both by creation and by redemption. As His followers the entire world is our mission. We are not to confine our work to the so-called "holy" areas of earth, but, like Jesus, to give ourselves in service to all peoples everywhere.

**ILLUMINATION:** "As Adam and Eve were banished from Eden for transgressing the law of God, so Christ was to suffer without the boundaries of the holy place. He died outside the camp, where felons and murderers were executed. There He trod the winepress alone, bearing the penalty that should have fallen on the sinner. How deep and full of significance are the words, 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' He went forth without the camp, thus showing that He gave His life not only for the Jewish nation, but for the whole world."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 934.

**What do you think the better city that we seek, the city which is "to come" (Heb. 13:14), will be like?**

On this earth cities become run down, crime-ridden, depressed, and

drab. The largest cities have problems that defy human solution. But the city we seek—the new Jerusalem—will continue crime-free, vibrant, and resplendent forever.

Although Jesus is the true and only High Priest, because each Christian has direct access to God, we too are “priests.” What sacrifices are we to offer? Heb. 13:15, 16. (Compare 1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6.)

**THINK IT THROUGH:** Are my “sacrifices” those that bring glory to my heavenly High Priest?

How do theology and exhortation combine in the benediction that closes the formal presentation of Hebrews? Heb. 13:20, 21.

These words, committed to memory, will be a source of inspiration. They rank among the great benedictory passages of the Bible, such as Numbers 6:24-26; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Romans 16:20, 25-27; and Jude 24, 25. They call us back to the central theological idea of Hebrews—“the blood of the everlasting covenant”—which was elaborated in chapters 8 through 10. At the same time they challenge us to a life of growth and obedience as we follow our great High Priest by faith.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:**

- Study “the shaking” idea in Ellen White writings. Note especially *Testimonies*, volume 1, pages 179-184; *Early Writings*, pages 269-273.
- Review this quarter’s lessons, noting how we may rise above doubt to a life of Christian assurance.

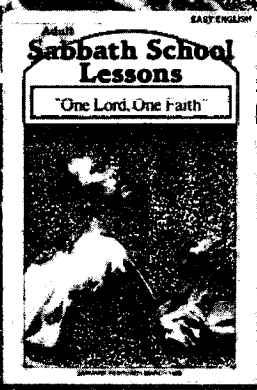
**SUMMARY:** Despite the hardships and difficulties that may befall us because we are Christians, we have the assurance that God is working out His purposes for us. Already by faith we enjoy the heavenly realities, and we press forward in the footsteps of Jesus to the eternal city He has prepared for us.

**APPLICATION:**

- How much does Jesus mean to me? How far does my loyalty to Him and His church extend?
- What difference to my life does it make to know that already I “have come unto Mount Zion” by faith?  
What confidence?  
What concern for a life that glorifies my God?
- Am I prepared to go “outside the camp” in service? Or do I confine my witness and living to the sheltered environment of God’s people?

**NOTES:**

# THE NEW Easy English Edition of the Adult Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly



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# Lessons for Third Quarter, 1986

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the third quarter of 1986 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this series is "Heaven Came Down."

## First Lesson: "All Heaven in One Gift"

MEMORY TEXT: John 1:14.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 1:1-18.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: To save us and to share with us the truth about God, Jesus Christ—the Word—left heaven and came down to this world of death and darkness, bringing life and light and taking our humanity.

OUTLINE:

- I. The Word of Life and Light (John 1:1-5).
- II. The Word Rejected: The Word Accepted (John 1:6-13).
- III. The Word Made Flesh (John 1:14-18).

## Second Lesson: "Why the Devils Tremble"

MEMORY TEXT: John 20:31.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: The word *believe* in John's Gospel, as found in such verses as John 14:1; 6:47; and 6:29.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: When Jesus came down to show us the Father's love, His great hope and purpose was that the people of the world would be drawn by that love into a relationship of trust, depending fully on God's mercy and goodness for eternal life.

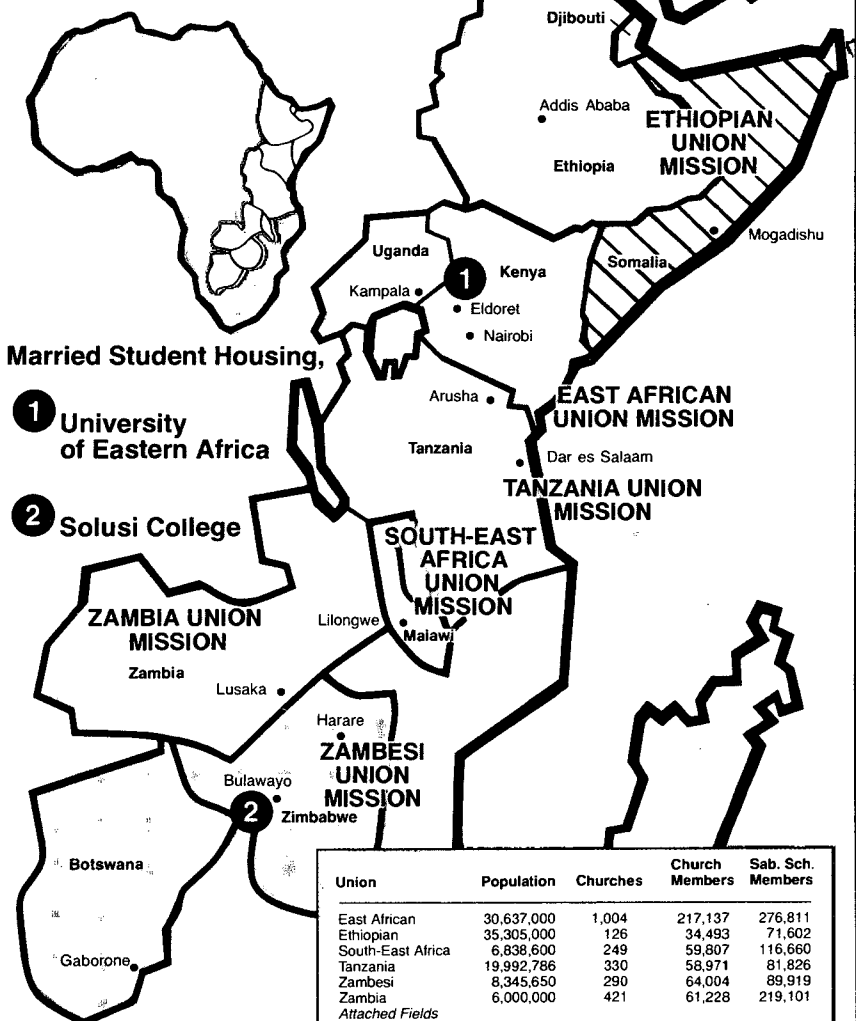
OUTLINE:

- I. Believing Is Trusting (John 14:1)
- II. Eternal Life Through Believing (John 6:47)
- III. The Work of Believing (John 6:29)

## Lessons in Braille:

The regular Adult Sabbath School Lessons are available free each month in Braille and 16 ⅔ rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact the Christian Record Braille Foundation. Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506.

# EASTERN AFRICA DIVISION



Union	Population	Churches	Church Members	Sab. Sch. Members
East African	30,637,000	1,004	217,137	276,811
Ethiopian	35,305,000	126	34,493	71,602
South-East Africa	6,838,600	249	59,807	116,660
Tanzania	19,992,786	330	58,971	81,826
Zambesi	8,345,650	290	64,004	89,919
Zambia	6,000,000	421	61,228	219,101
<i>Attached Fields</i>				
North Botswana	501,724	14	3,723	3,152
South Botswana	439,303	9	2,716	1,453
<b>Division totals</b>	<b>108,060,063</b>	<b>2,443</b>	<b>502,079</b>	<b>836,799</b>

As of Fourth Quarter, 1984

Unreached, Unentered countries