

Hebrews

A Commentary by David Green

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Hebrews as seen by one who likes to take the Word of God at face value: not educated in the Greek or Hebrew languages. As such I rely on the expertise of others and on the remembered doctrines and thoughts garnered over the years.

Concerning the writer I think it is the Apostle Paul and as I write that will be my assumption. Matthew Henry: *As to the divine amanuensis or penman of this epistle, we are not so certain. It does not bear the name of any in the front of it, as the rest of the epistles do, and there has been some dispute among the learned to which they should ascribe it. Some have assigned it to Clemens of Rome, other to Luke. Many suggest Barnabas, thinking that the style and manner of expression is very agreeable to the zealous, authoritative, affectionate temper that Barnabas appears to be of, in the account we have of him in the acts of the Apostles. And one ancient father quotes an expression out of this epistle as the words of Barnabas. But it is generally assigned to the apostle Paul; and some later copies and translations have put Paul's name in the title. In the primitive times it was generally ascribed to him, and the style and scope of it very well agree with his spirit, who was a person of a clear head and a warm heart, whose main end and endeavour it was to exalt Christ. Some think that the apostle Peter refers to this epistle, and proves Paul to be the penman of it, by telling the Hebrews, to whom he wrote, of Paul's having written to them, 2Pe 3:15. We read of no other epistle that he ever wrote to them but this. And though it has been objected that, since Paul put his name to all his other epistles, he would not have omitted it here. Yet others have well answered that he, being the apostle of the Gentiles, who were odious to the Jews, might think fit to conceal his name, lest their prejudices against him might hinder them from reading and weighing it as they ought to do.* I also understand that prior to the acceptance of this epistle to the canon of scripture it always bore the name of the apostle. If this is not so it is possible that Paul did not want to infringe on the work of Peter so left his name off. Peter was the Apostle to the Jews and Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles. This epistle concludes, as do all the letters of the Apostle Paul, with a reminder of the Grace of God, generally as a blessing.

Why the Epistle to the Hebrews was written is surely to convince the readers of the supremacy of the Gospel over the Law. Many of those who had come from the Jews faith in the Law to the freedom that is in Christ were not able to leave all their beliefs and trust in the Works of the Law behind. The change was so dramatic that it created trauma for them and they tried to ease it by bringing some Works to the Faith as it is in Jesus. This resulted in the Holy Spirit guiding the writer to inform the believers of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. To instruct them more perfectly in the way, the Apostle issues five warnings, in chapters 2, 4, 6, 10, and 12 to hinder or halt the backward slide into a mixed religion of works and faith. In doing this the Apostle must of necessity show the Messiah is the Son of God. The word better is used 13 times, most setting the Saviour in a higher place than any Old Testament person or angelic creation, of any rank is. The mixture of faith and works today is so intricate that it is a major operation to extricate oneself from a particular religion, especially if one is instructed in that religion from childhood. Unfortunately all religions lead to the same place, and that is not into the presence of God. Christ is the only way into God's presence and then only by faith. A religion, of whatever denomination, expects a following of particular doctrines, but the truth as it is in Jesus frees one from earthly ties to worship the living God without the trappings of man that are accumulated by the rites man imposes. Though the Bible clearly teaches **faith without works** is dead, we work because we are saved, not to earn favour with God or to purchase our place in heaven.

The Apostle Paul, instructed in the Law, indeed a Pharisee, [Hebrew word Porush, means dedicated, separated] well knew the intricacies of the Jewish faith and demonstrates the higher office the Son of God holds. Paul presents the Lord Jesus Christ as greater than angels, with priesthood better the Aaronic and as a sacrifice that is able to save the one who identifies with that sacrifice, eternally. The sacrifice of the person of Christ is superior to all the Old Testament sacrifices of animals and the efficacy of Christ's death never ceases or wanes. God is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto Him by faith. This Paul emphasises in all aspects of the letter to the Hebrews.

The divine authority of the Epistle to the Hebrews is unquestionable, for the doctrines, references, the types and illustrations are indisputably scriptural. There are at least 150 references or allusions to the Old Testament scriptures. The Apostle was instructed at the feet of Gamaliel in the faith of his fathers and profited above his equals in the Jews religion. After Paul's conversion he spent many years in close communion with the Saviour, learning to apply those truths to the new dispensation, the dispensation of the Grace of God. Sufficient concerning the writer: let us look at the Subject of the epistle.

Before the first warning to the Jews who had become Christians Paul does what all those who preach the Gospel of the Grace of God should do. Establish the person and character of the Sacrifice that supersedes all the ways and means that have preceded the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first admonition to the recipients of the letter is; *how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation*. So the letter is begun with a presentation of God sending His Son as the final Word to mankind in relation to the way back to God from the way of sin and death.

Chapter 1

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

These opening verses present us with a picture of the Almighty God wanting to communicate with a creation that has refused to hear Him in the past. Many have been sent before to show the Israelites the way but all have finally been rejected. God spoke in various ways, by angels, prophets, and judges, priests with rites and sacrifices, kings, by signs and miracles all to no avail. We know how vexing it is when trying to communicate with someone who will not listen to us, or deliberately misrepresents us. We try discipline or coercion, bribes or threats, promises and if we can find another means will use that also. God tried to reach us, for many years tried, in many ways tried, and finally sent His Son. The prophets were taken from the priesthood, the common people, kings and judges, God giving these persons many ways to get His message to the Children of Israel. Isaiah summed up the situation saying in 59:2 but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. {Have hid: or, have made him hide} a principle seen here is that we cannot hear God when we are still in our sins and God cannot hear us if we continue in sin.

The last thing God has to say to us is said in Son, by whom He made the worlds, the ages, all the times, dispensations, periods past, present and future, all brought into being by the Son of God. These last days God makes His presence known to us **in Son**. The personal pronoun is not in any ancient text so should not be supplied. Better to read '**in a Son**' who he has appointed heir of all things. Many represented God in the past as God spoke to the children of Israel. Men and women from all walks of life were chosen and used by God to make the message known. Because we in this generation, and all prior to the Incarnation, failed to hear God is not a failure on His part. Sin kept us from hearing God in the past and will keep us from hearing God in the present. The final Word of God to all mankind is a Word of love, a Word of invitation, a message of salvation and is a presentation of His Son. The Son of God is the Word of God, the living Word of God. Who is this marvellous person? A description is not easy; a mind that has been darkened by sin has difficulty grasping the awesome nature of the person of Christ. Trying to grasp the excellence and magnificence of the Creator of the universe is more than is possible for the finite mind. But, the Holy Spirit of God is indwelling the person to whom the apostle is writing, and He takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto us who believe.

The person occupying the pages of this epistle is the Eternal Son. This is the One who said 'if you have seen me you have seen the Father'. He, that is God's Son, is appointed heir of all things, so that not only were all things made by Him, all things are also his by redemptive right and come to Him as legal inheritance. God has chosen to reveal Himself to mankind in the person of His Son. To know the Son is to bask in the brightness of the glory of God. God, manifest in the flesh, is a revelation of the extent to which He chose to go to redeem sinful man. The Lord Jesus Christ never ceased to be God, and while on earth he still upheld all things by the word of His power. This same Jesus, **when he had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.**

God rested the seventh day after creating all things, and the Lord Jesus is seated, at rest, at the right hand of the Father, after completing the work of redemption.

This third verse of the epistle to the Hebrews establishes the divine nature of the Son of God beyond question. The glory of the Son is that of the Father, the representation is of the substance of the Father, the power is God's and the overall statement is that God did a work in Christ that only God could do. Two persons of the Triune God are present in this one verse. The three opening verses of this chapter draw our attention to the contrast between the dispensation of the Law and the dispensation of the Grace of God.

What the law could not do because of the weakness of the flesh, God accomplished in the person of His Son. The Lord Jesus Christ was alone doing the work allotted to Him. All the disciples fled, and in His extremity He cried out 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me'. There was none to assist in the work of purification, He was alone doing a work that no other could do, for all of mankind had sinned and a sinless sacrifice was needed. The Lord came from the glory of heaven, to the earth as a baby, into the home of Joseph and Mary. The only way back into heaven was via the cross, where He completed the work God sent Him to do.

Inherent in the phrase 'sat down at the right hand' is the concept of a man in heaven, seated at the place given to the most powerful in the kingdom. So Jesus Christ is presented as God with God on the throne of God. A Man exalted to the highest possible position in all of creation and above, in prestige and honour, any that preceded Him. Sat down tells of a work that is finished and the rest that is enjoyed in a satisfactory conclusion to a task well done. **Sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high** informs us who read, that God is fully satisfied with the sacrifice offered on our behalf. We who deserved to die as the penalty for sin escape that penalty because Christ died for us; *He bore our sins in his own body on the tree*. What the Lord Jesus accomplished on the Cross was not possible by a prophet or priest or angel. This method of communication, God sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, is a powerful statement of the superiority of the Christ over the prophets.

The Son came with a message from God to all mankind and a comparison is made in the fourth verse with angels. Angels are messengers, there are myriad's of them, and were sent in threes or twos at various times to minister to God's people. Man does not know how many were active around the world at any given time. Jesus Christ alone is so much better than all the angels, irrespective of their ministry or ability. He has essentially a better name than they all do: and in consequence of His sufferings and death He has inherited a more excellent name than they possess. No angel ever heard the voice of God saying what was said to the Son. No angel ever had an invitation to sit on the throne of God. No angel was ever acknowledged as the Son. No angel ever had God say to him '*you are my Son, this day have I begotten thee?*' This quotation is from Psalm 2: 7 and is used by the apostle in Acts 13: 33 in connection with the resurrection. The resurrection is the most fundamental and important doctrine of the Christian Faith. It demonstrates the truth of the son of David being the Son of God; it states that Jesus was born of a virgin; it proves that each believer is freed from the penalty of sin; it shows that God is satisfied with the price paid for the redemption of sinners. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ gives hope, certainty to the believer, that where he is we shall be also with Him in heaven.

There is reference to the name made in Philippians 2: 8 – 9. *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name:* The Name the Lord has inherited is yet to be revealed, Revelation 2: 17. The New Name referred to in The revelation of Jesus Christ 3:12. *Him that overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out. And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.* The Lord Jesus Christ is prepared to put His new name upon the person who is diligent in Christian witness by word and life. Angels cannot bestow other than that which is commissioned by God, but the Lord, who is God can give abundantly more than we can ask or think.

Consider the responsibility we bear to live up to the name we carry when we are designated Christian. It is too easy to take the name of God in vain, accepting the title Christian and continuing as a child of the world, living for self rather than being an example to those who know us, of the grace that has set us free. The name **Jesus** brings a wealth of good thoughts to mind, so the **new name** opens another world of interest and speculation. Bliss here on earth to be Christian, saved by faith in the finished work of Christ, His giving satisfaction to God by His death on the Cross. What greater glory awaits those who will bear the **new name**?

The superior name and nature of the Lord Jesus Christ is adequately attested to in the scriptures. Not made better, not created, but shown to be better. Declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, as the apostle states in the Roman Epistle. The resurrection of the son of David, the Christ, is a vindication of all His claims and an assertion of His purity and sinless nature. God could not violate His own pure nature by raising a sinner from the dead. **Let all the angels of God worship him**, all created beings will bow before him sooner or later. For man it is infinitely better to bow in time than to be forced to bow in eternity. Bowing before the Lord Jesus Christ and confessing, my sin held Him on the Cross-of Calvary, is salvation now and security for eternity. Failing to bow before Him in this life is to choose a lost eternity; ever knowing your sin has made a separation between you and God.

Angels are only spirits but the Son of God, as man, is body, soul and spirit and at the same time was God manifest in the flesh. Now a quotation is taken from Psalm 45, **Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteous is the sceptre of thy kingdom.** A most powerful statement concerning the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ is in this eighth verse of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. God speaks to His Son and calls Him God, expressing the dignity of the office and the duration of the appointment. The character of the sceptre is beyond reproach and is the standard of the whole kingdom. God has seen the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, as He was tested in all points like as we are, and being found **sinless is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.** The kings and priests and sometimes prophets of the old dispensation were anointed before taking up the official duties. Sometimes a king was also a prophet, and a priest could be a prophet, but a king could not be a priest neither could a priest be the king, they were each in the wrong tribe. Jesus Christ is the only One in whom these three offices could be. He was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. The Greek word translated anointed, Christ, is the same as the Hebrew word Messiah. The Holy Spirit was given to Him without measure; He is God's anointed the Christ of God. As a King, He is King of Kings. As Priest, none ever had a perfect sacrifice but He, He offered Himself without spot to God. As a Prophet, He is That Prophet, as promised by God; Deuteronomy, 18:15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

Deuteronomy 18:18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. Jesus Christ is set as Judge of the whole earth; all judgement is given to Him. The Lord Jesus Christ is therefore Prophet, Priest, King and Judge.

John 1:21 *And they asked him, [John Baptist] What then? Art thou Elias? And he said I am not. Art thou **that prophet**? And he answered no.* John 1:25 *And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptise thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither **that prophet**?*

John 6:14 *Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth **that prophet** that should come into the world.*

Ac 3:23 *And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear **that prophet**, shall be destroyed from among the people.*

The throne is His, He is on the throne of God, so His kingdom is over all; the creation is the work of His hands and is His to uphold or destroy at His will. Unlike the kings of old His throne is forever: Unlike the prophets of old His word stands forever. Unlike the created universe, which only continues by the word of His power, **Jesus Christ is supreme ruler; Jesus Christ is alive for evermore.**

All creation waxes old, even as our clothes show signs of wear. With deserts, dry watercourses, dead trees, mud slides, volcanoes and so much more on earth. That which happens in the heavens is not so easy to record, but those who study these things tell us that the universe is winding down. Though they also say there are yet billions of years to go; they fail to take into account the word of God which tells us that all this will be folded up as a piece of used clothing and put aside. The same verse in this first chapter informs us that the years allotted to the Son of God will have no end.

God never said to a created being, **Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee;** neither did He say to any angel, of whatever status; **sit on My right hand, till I make thy enemies Thy footstool,** because they are all ministering spirits. The Son is sovereign not servant; the Son is monarch not minister; the Son is suzerain not subject. There is not a higher position in all of creation; **He is over all, God, blessed forever, amen.**

The apostle has demonstrated the unique nature and exalted position of the Son of God; he has shown how God's last word to a world of sinners is His only begotten Son. Set forth clearly in this first chapter is the Lord Jesus Christ as better than prophets and angels. Better than prophets for they conveyed the word of God but Christ is Himself the Living Word of God. Better than angels for they are created to serve those who shall be heirs of salvation but Christ was anointed of God as the Saviour.

Chapter 2

Therefore begins the next verse, so we look to see what therefore is there for. Christ is depicted as the express image of God. He is stated to be the creator of all things and to have an eternal nature. He is exalted to sit on the throne of God and to receive worship from the angels; **therefore we should give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard.**

To hold fast to the things that we learn about the Lord is to believe them and do what is required to demonstrate our faith is in the Lord. What prophets said and what angels communicated to man from God, if not adhered to received appropriate rewards. When the children of Israel, who received the Law did not do as the law commanded they were reckoned to be **sinner**s. God decreed that the soul that sins, it should die. What the law could not achieve because man is prone to sin and is weak in the flesh, God sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. The Word of the Gospel is the best word man can hear so he is exhorted to give that Word his total attention. The gospel is the way of escape from the banishment afforded to all that do not accept the word spoken by the Son of God, the Lord. If we do not heed that Word there is no escape from the wrath of God, which abides on all that do not believe in the Son, John 3: 36.

God confirmed the Word spoken by the Lord, with signs and wonders and miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, and those that heard and believed the gospel, when they preached, saw and had the word confirmed by the same phenomena. In this present day the Word of the Gospel is confirmed by gifts of the Holy Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit gives a spiritual gift, or gifts, to each and every person that believes. A sign to the friends and family of the new believer is the changed life and affections. A miracle is wrought in the individual as the **'leopard changes its spots'** and the wonder, amazement at the new confidence this Christian has in his Lord. There were sign gifts in the early church for the specific purpose of convincing the Jews that God was dealing in grace with Gentiles. 1Corinthians 14: 22, *Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serves not for them that believe not, but for them, which believe.* As we see God working in our midst we take note of the signs following the preaching of the gospel. We look for fruit when a person has been 'Born Again', things that accompany salvation. The Lord that at the first made the gospel message known said *'by their fruits ye shall know them'* so we recognise the Christian by his new desires, conversation, company, and his departure from the things that do not agree with such a testimony. *Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and was buried and rose again the third day according to the scriptures,* so our testimony by word and walk should be to the saving power of God.

So great salvation is not to be neglected. This salvation offers eternal security, gives reconciliation with a Holy God, frees one from a guilty conscience, empowers the Christian to live a life pleasing to God. This great salvation is the only way to avoid eternal damnation, is the only way back to God, and gives an abundant entrance as more than a conqueror to eternity. There is no other salvation that offers these blessings; in fact there is no other salvation.

The first warning having been sounded the Apostle now starts to set out the purpose and course God intended man to take. The statement of chapter 2: 5 addresses the question of the order of God's created beings. The future world, the world into which the Messiah comes, will not be subject to angels for it is decreed and prophesied that a man will be the one who rules over all things. Man is lower than the angels are and the Lord took upon Himself the form of a man, for a little while, expressly to taste death. Psalm 8: 4-6, *What is miserable man, that thou should remember him? And the son of Adam, that thou should visit him?* This version is more emphatic than the Septuagint and is quoted as the authoritative passage and has in view the Messiah. For Him to be given supreme authority and power it is necessary for the man, Christ Jesus, to be tested and tried in all points like as we are, for only a perfect sacrifice is acceptable to God.

There are three classes of angels mentioned in the scriptures, two individuals being named, an archangel, Michael and Gabriel. The ministering spirits of Hebrews 1:14, the fallen angels of Jude and 2Peter, which are reserved under chains of darkness, and the angels that are doing the will of Satan; generally called demons. Man created in the image and likeness of God was at that time higher than the angels were. When Adam sinned he brought man into a lower position in the created order, below angels, and man is now subjected to death. Angels are not mortal they are spirits. The Son of God was for a little time made lower than the angels were; showing it was possible for a man to live a life without sin. No man had lived without sin before the Lord did so and none since. Angels had a choice and multitudes of them failed, but the Lord Jesus Christ, for a little while lower than the angels, **did not sin**. Because He was without sin He could taste death for every man. Having done so He is crowned with glory and honour. God was never more gracious than when He gave His only begotten Son to die in the place sinners should occupy. God could not show His infinite and unconditional love more precisely than when He let His Son die as a sacrifice for sin.

But we see Jesus; not as a vision or even as an angelic appearance, we see Jesus by the eye of faith. Faith initially saw the Lord Jesus on the cross, and faith accepted that it was God's way of dealing with the sin question. Faith saw the Lord Jesus, God's man, the last Adam, outside the tomb and realised that in Christ there is eternal life. Faith saw the Lord Jesus Christ rise up through the clouds and be received up into glory. Faith sees the Lord of all creation seated at the right hand of God. Faith expects the Lord Jesus to return, even as the angels at the ascension spoke to those present at that time. Faith sees Him crowned with glory and honour and bows down in worship.

Crowned with glory and honour: the epitome of honour was upon the Lord as he was here on earth. As He lived in the land of Israel there was nothing that was not honourable; He displayed the glory of God in his discourses, in his doctrines, in his demeanour, in his attitude, in his works, miracles and parables. The crowning glory, that of the accomplishment of Calvary. Jesus confounded all that came against him, materially, religiously and politically. In every way it was possible for the Apostle John to say 'we beheld His glory'. He used his power honourably, doing good works that put to shame the rulers of Israel. God will not share His glory with another; the Lord Jesus Christ had a glory with the Father that He would have again when He returned to His Father's side, while on earth He had glory no mere man could equal. John 7:39 (*But this spoke he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*)

John 11:4. *When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*

John 12:16. *These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.*

John 12:23 *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*

John 12:28 *Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.*

John 13:31 *Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.*

John 13:32 *If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.*

John 14:13 *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

John 15:8 *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

John 17:4 *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work, which thou gave me to do.*

John 17:10 *And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.* These verses from the Gospel of John are evidence of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth and in heaven. Though the glory was veiled while He was on earth, it was impossible to hide it completely, especially to those that believed He was the Christ, the Holy One from God.

For it became Him; it was suitable for Him who has created all and upholds all and for who are all things; the One by whom all things consist. This One, God, could not leave the bringing of many sons to glory in the

hands of another. The righteousness of God is available to the sinner through the Captain, Author, of his salvation. The justice of God is upheld and displayed in the acceptance of the sinner on the basis of a perfect sacrifice. The perfect sacrifice was manifested in the man Christ Jesus. Jesus, as the Originator, Captain, was a man who was tested in all points like as we are, yet without sin. The perfection of the sacrifice was accomplished by the suffering it went through and is an example of the lengths God was prepared to go to in order to establish His righteousness, *that God might be just and the justifier of him that believes on Jesus.*

Perfect through sufferings: of course the Lord Jesus Christ was always perfect in all his ways, in all his thoughts and all his words. This one thing He lacked, He had not been through the agonies that are associated with the disease of sin. The Lord was tested in the wilderness, by the devil, for forty days; tested with the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life but did not succumb to the temptations of the devil in any particular, not for a moment. The Lord used the written word of God to rebuke the evil one and as his bulwark in the time of trial. As a man He was proved perfect in all his ways, none could convince Him of sin. Throughout His childhood and till He was on the Cross-, he was in all ways pushed to the limit of endurance, without sinning. On the Cross-, on which He died, in great agony, He was conscious of the need to be obedient unto death, thereby demonstrating perfection.

Are all of one is the interesting phrase which next takes our attention. The sanctity of God and the sanctity of the believer are in the same source. God is set apart from all that defiles; He has purer eyes than to behold iniquity. This posed a dilemma as God desired the salvation of all, but all had sinned. The grace of God is evident in that we are set apart in the Lord Jesus Christ, so that being sanctified by the death of the Son of God we are brought into a relationship with God whereby we can call Him Father. In this relationship the Lord is not ashamed to call us brethren. The word sanctify is a general term, meaning, to make holy or pure; to consecrate, set apart, devote to God; to regard as holy, or to hallow. Applied to the Saviour here, it may be used in this general sense--that he consecrated, or devoted himself to God. Sanctified, is in the context of this paragraph, reconciled to God. The enmity is removed, reconciliation, and the blood of Christ brings us nigh to God. Christ took upon himself the nature of man, so we are of one nature. The righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ is imputed to us so we also have a unity in holiness. We had nothing within ourselves that could cause God to love us so He sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins; that is Grace! Being born of the Spirit we also have new life, spiritual life, so we are one in the new nature. This work of God is not to be received with levity, it is given with responsibilities and the encouragement in the word of God is to *grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.* Intrinsic unity works in the believer to create apparent unity.

Brethren, bespeaks a family relationship, as such a Christian can call upon God as Father. As a child of God by regeneration and adoption we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. All the brethren; the sons and daughters of God, make up the church of the living God. God dwells in this temple that is not made with hands; it is constructed of living stones fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies. The Lord is not ashamed to call us brethren because we are clothed with His righteousness. The Lord is pleased to name those who trust Him as His brethren. In this thought is the concept of the family name, all born into the family have the same name, and have the same father.

Declare thy name is what the Lord is doing through his people today: those who are born again of the Spirit show forth the wonderful name of God as they display the beauties of Christ. In being a Christian, not just talking, but living a changed life, departing from iniquity and delighting in the things of God. The Lord is building the Church and declaring the Love of God and the Grace of God with each new believer. The power of God to save is still evidenced today as another is saved from the wrath to come. Praise is becoming on the lips of the saints at any time, and in the gathering of believers it has a special place. The sacrifice of praise gives thanks to God and exalts His name. This quote from Psalm 22, a Messianic Psalm, speaks of the delight Christians will have in the Name God has revealed of Himself. The word Name is often used to denote God and is used in this way in John 17: 6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which you gave me out of the world: 26, And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it. Being in the same family as the Son of God let us take care to guard the name we bear, and not bring dishonour to it.

In the midst of the church is the Lord. He is where his people gather and is united with them in making the wisdom and power of the gospel known. The Lord is pleased to give praise through the saints to His Father. The church is the group of believers that meet in a certain place. In unity of heart and mind and desires they pursue a

course of holiness, are taught in the scriptures and encouraged to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Doing this brings honour to the God of our salvation and causes the redeemed to burst out in hymns of praise and thanksgiving. Later we will see that in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren. What pleases the Lord at this time is that his brethren be transformed into His likeness, not physical appearance but moral likeness

I will put my trust in him is an indication of how the man Christ Jesus was subject to and relied on the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is not alone in this; the children given to Him are dependent on God also. The faithfulness of the Son of God is to be reciprocated in those that have a like dependence on God, for their deliverance from the penalty and power of sin. The life of faith is to rely totally on God in all aspects of life and experience no matter what our financial state or intellectual ability. The social standing we enjoy or lack must bring us closer to the Lord, causing a reliance on Him that will enable us to be conformed by the renewing of the mind. Agur recorded in Proverbs 30: 7. *Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: 8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: 9 Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.* The Lord Jesus Christ was an example unto all them that afterwards would believe on His name. He trusted, so how much more needful is it for us to trust?

Behold I and the children whom God has given me is a quotation from Isaiah 8: 18. The quote is not complete but it states without doubt the work of God in bringing many sons to glory through the Lord Jesus Christ. In the context of Isaiah's prophecy, the reason the children of God were chosen was for signs and wonders in Israel. Looking back at verse two of this chapter we note God also bore witness in those that preached the gospel, with signs and wonders, and diverse miracles. A wonder to the individual is the grace of God in saving one who all his lifetime was in bondage to sin, never sparing a thought for God who gave and sustains life. A sign of the work of God to those that know us is the transforming power of the Gospel; it brings a person out of darkness into light and changes the focus of ones life. The condemnation of Christian, in *The Pilgrims Progress*, a book by John Bunyan, was that his speech was different, his dress was not conforming to their standards and Christian was not interested in the wares that were for sale in the market place.

As the children are partakers of flesh and blood He took upon Himself the same nature. The Lord did not take the nature of angels for as an angel He could not suffer and die. He was not made in fashion as an angel; as such he could not be tested and tried in all points like as we are. He did not take the nature of angels for He was to be the sacrifice, not the messenger. He took on the nature of man, flesh and blood and bones for the suffering of death. As a man He could and did destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. The Christ of God negates the power of Satan. Jesus Christ in rising from the dead demonstrated His victory over sin, death and hell. The devil is defeated yet we do not see the complete victory if fact, but we see the victory by faith. The fear of death loses its domination as we see the resurrected Lord at the right hand of God. The Lord of glory took on the Seed of Abraham so He could accomplish the work He was sent to do.

Seed of Abraham; this implies more than humanity. The **Seed of the Woman**, Genesis 3: 15 is human. The **Seed of David**, John 7:42. Hath not the scripture said that Christ comes of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? The Seed of David is to do with the kingdom. The seed of the woman is related to Humanity, the seed of David is related to Royalty and the seed of Abraham is Loyalty, faithfulness. This is the designation given to the Son of God as a man. He never ceased to be divine nor was he ever more than a man was. As a man he conquered all the difficulties a man could ever encounter, as a man He was tempted and tried in all points as we are, yet without sinning. Having been in the flesh on earth, He is able to exercise the office of High Priest in things pertaining to God.

A merciful and faithful high priest is the attitude and character of this activity that brings a sinner back to God. Having been through all the vicissitudes of human experience and knowing the pull towards sin of the human heart, He is able to help all that are tempted. Mercy is an attribute of God that enables Him to pardon a sinner on the basis of another's sacrifice. 'God be merciful to me, a sinner' is the cry that is immediately heard and answered by God. That particular prayer is calling on the high priest to exercise his duty. What the high priest of the Levitical order could not do; in that order sin was only covered, God sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The Lord Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins, *and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world*, 1John 2: 2.

Reconciliation, properly propitiation, is the act by which God can accept the sinner as though that sinner was without sin. Reconciliation is a removing of the enmity, atonement is a covering of the sin by an acceptable means, but propitiation conveys more than these do. Propitiation is the way the Christ of God gave satisfaction to God on our behalf; He satisfied all the righteous claims of a Holy God. The Lord Jesus Christ supplied all that God required from sinful man in His incarnation and death. God declared He was completely satisfied when He raised up Christ from the dead. The second warning of the Apostle Paul in this epistle is to the effect that we cease from our own works and find complete satisfaction in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is prepared to accept all who come unto Him by faith; that faith being in the work finished on the Cross-at Calvary.

He is able to help them that are tempted; this gives great comfort to the afflicted. Because the Lord Jesus went through much persecution, hardship, suffering, distress, ignominy; because He was tested and tried in all points like as we are, He can sympathise with us in our times of need. What He went through was infinitely greater than anything we will ever be called to suffer was. So we can go to Him for help in time of need for he knows the weakness of our nature. The Lord is alive from the dead so has the victory over all that might bring fear or defeat to those He has purchased with his own blood. We have no call to go to philosophies or other religions; they cannot help for they have no individual that can say I have been through the same trials in greater intensity so can sympathise with you. Politics along with materialism were declared ineffective at Calvary; neither have the means to save. Social standing and family name do nothing to make available a place with the Lord in eternity.

In these two chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews the Lord Jesus Christ is set forth as the Son of God, better than angels are; with a better name than they. He is presented as the last and most effective means God chose of communicating with His human creation. No prophet in the past economy was a Son nor had a message in his or her own person, as a sacrifice for sin. The final way God chose to make His message known and to bring salvation to a sinful race was in the person of His Son. The Lord Jesus Christ as the Prophet spoke the word of God to the people of that day, indeed He speaks the same word today in the Gospel record. The Lord Jesus Christ as the priest offered Himself without spot to God, an acceptable sacrifice whereby He paid the price demanded by God for the redemption of a soul. **The first warning is sounded;** *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.*

The second warning to the Hebrew Christians and to those that are following Judaism, who are associated with the believers and trying to seduce them away from the faith is the subject of the next section. Chapters three and four are explicit in teaching the fundamental truth of resting in the finished work of Christ for eternal security. The warning: **Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.**

This warning sees the believers reminded of the way in which they are redeemed and the provision God has made for their safety and security. We may take note of the fullness of redemption and the person of the Redeemer. Special place is given to the Lord Jesus Christ, the builder of the house of God. He is the Sent One, Apostle; He is the Serving One, the High Priest and as such is the subject of our confession of faith. Dominant in this section of the epistle is way of the believer in the journey between the turmoil prior to salvation and rest we enter into when at peace with God.

Previously we have seen that the Christian religion has a superior foundation than Judaism. The Faithful of the Christian religion do not rely on angels or prophets for God now speaks in His Son. Moses was considered the lawgiver of the Jews and the High Priest the functionary that kept the details of the law on behalf of the people; we see these two overshadowed by the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus. The closing verses of the previous chapter reveal the High Priest and these first verses of chapter three are an exhortation to the new believers from among the Jews to hold fast to the confession of faith that made them inheritors of the kingdom of God.

Chapter 3

Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling are the designation of those that have faith in the One sent from God. These are set apart for God and enjoy the privileges consistent with a right relationship to God. They are called saints in the Roman Epistle and addressed as saints in many other epistles; the implication is that these who are redeemed should be holy in thought, life and service. The consecrated servant of the Lord considers Him, **the**

Apostle and High Priest of our confession, above prophets, angels, lawgivers and servants. The **High Priest** that is mentioned in verse 1 takes us to the closing verses of chapter 2. At this time I will only say He was Chosen, Cleansed, Clothed Crowned and Consecrated.

Christianity as a mainstream religion is no better than any other, has no power to save and leads those who adhere to the particular denomination, on the clean side of the road that leads to destruction. None of the 'Christian rites', christening, infant baptism, confirmation, first communion, adult baptism, or last rights can ensure a safe conduct to the presence of a Holy God. The prophet in speaking for the Israelites declared, Isaiah 64:6. *But we are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.* The Apostle Paul in the epistle to the Romans wrote; there is nothing done in the flesh that can please God. We are made holy by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; that faith sets us apart from all other religions for it is the way the Almighty God has planned for sinful mans' redemption. *There is a way that seems right to a man but the end thereof is the way of death,* Proverbs 16: 25. Salvation is not achieved by anything we can do so we confess our inability and proclaim the wondrous grace of God. The righteousness of the Lord Jesus is imputed to me when I by faith see Him bearing the penalty for my sins on the Cross. By faith I am set apart for God and join the Holy Brethren on the path to heaven and the face to face meeting with my Saviour.

Was faithful to him is the testimony of God concerning His servant in the Forth Book of Moses, Numbers 12: 7 *my servant Moses is - faithful in my entire house.* This is spoken concerning the nation of Israel; Moses was faithful in more than the family situation. Now this word is taken by the Holy Spirit and used about the Lord Jesus Christ. The man Jesus was faithful to God who appointed him as builder of the Church, the house of the living God.

Moses was the servant of God to the nation of Israel but Jesus is the Son of God and as such is worthy of more honour than a servant. Moses was sent to the children of Israel with a message from God and after their redemption from the dominion of Pharaoh and the Egyptians brought to the family of God, the Law as God instructed him. Jesus Christ brought to the whole creation the word of God, the freedom from the penalty of sin, the salving of a guilty conscience, in toto, **the grace of God** that brings salvation. Moses was sent to the house of God, the children of Israel, the Lord Jesus is building the House of God, the church.

For this person refers immediately to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is reckoned worthy of more glory than Moses is, because he is the builder not the building. Moses was a member in the nation of Israel where the temple was; God put that nation together and Moses as a servant did as he was instructed. The Son, the upholder of all things, builds the church here called a house or family. The Son gives life to the church, is the head of the church, and gives to the church the means of building itself up. The Son gives to each living stone the Holy Spirit of God and the Holy Spirit gives to each member a grace gift by which the church is edified, built up. Prophets, angels, legislators and judges all are much less than the one who appoints them. The believing of faith superseded all the pride the Jews had in their religion. The works of the law were replaced by the hearing of faith.

He that built all things is God, states the deity of the Lord Jesus *for by Him were all things created and without Him was nothing made that was made.* The implication is that each building of whatever kind has an architect, and an end use. The house of Israel as built by God was for the bringing forth of the Messiah into the world. This entailed a series of laws and rites that would show the holiness of God and how He could be approached. The house of God being built by the Lord is to bring the Saviour to the masses of peoples that know not the Lord at this time. The church, the house of the living God, has as a duty to show forth the mercy and grace of God for He takes the most unlovable and moulds them into the image of His Son. The church is a gathering of priests over which the Lord Jesus Christ is the Great High Priest.

Thy throne O God is forever and ever is said to the Lord Jesus in chapter 1 and in the closing verses of chapter 2 He is the **faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God**. Note carefully that this royal appointment and priestly designation present the Lord Jesus Christ as a Priest and King. In the old religious economy this was not possible for the priest had to be of the tribe of Levi and the king of the tribe of Judah. Therefore the new religious economy is better than the previous system as there is now a King who is Priest, even Jesus who is made a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

But Christ as a son puts him in the position of heir and as such in charge of the household of which his father is the overall owner. As Son he is in authority over all the servants and the building is fully in his charge.

Since the building is of living stones the Son places them carefully in the position which is best suited to their peculiar shape, where they will be the best fit and supply the most support to the rest of the building. The servant owns nothing, but the son is heir to all; the servant must obey orders that the son gives; the servant must give an account to the son of all the activities and expense, so we see that the son is far superior to the servant. Moses was faithful in the house as a servant but the Son is faithful over the house, which He is building as the heir.

Whose house are we, - not the house over which Moses was given charge but the house that the Son is building. Not the tribes of Israel subject to the Law, for those that were under the Law were all their lifetime under the curse. This house is the house that will stand for eternity. Time cannot damage neither can weather erode this edifice for the stones are given eternal life. As Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes *whatsoever God does it shall be forever*. The mortar that holds the living stones together is love mixed with the grace gifts given by the Holy Spirit and tempered by the truth and discipline of the gospel message. The decor of the building is a display of the attributes of the Son of God as he is formed in each believer. There appears to be a condition set for the assurance of those in the house of God, **if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end**. We must understand that when we say the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ redeems us, then we are committed to a life of obedience to the scriptures. For me to say 'I believe' and then to do contrary to what I say I believe is a negation of the testimony. What I say I must do; my talk must match my walk; my lips and life must agree for in those circumstances I will be able to rejoice in the Lord and enjoy the certain hope of being with Him one day. He that endures to the end shall be saved from the pitfalls that are in the way of each of us to divert us from the truth and spoil the testimony. In verse 14 of this chapter we are 'made partakers of Christ', if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end: the life of faith makes the believer a sharer of the character and nature of the Saviour.

Hope for the person that has faith in the living Saviour is so much more than the maybe hope of the unbeliever. We have a certainty as our hope for it rests in the Son of God, who himself rests at the right hand of God. Our hope assures us that what He has promised He is able to do and none can stay His hand.

The next subject is the reason for the warning to the Judaisers and the believers that are being led astray by their false doctrines and unbelief. The Holy Spirit takes the pen of the apostle to record the heart attitude of the children of Israel during their wilderness journey. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, but God knows it. It is here revealed to us with the warning neither to revert to the dictates of the law nor to err by thinking God is not able to completely deliver from the penalty and place of sin. There are only about a dozen situations recorded in the Pentateuch where the Children of Israel sinned during the forty years in the wilderness, but this passage, that we will now consider reveals the **evil heart of unbelief**, verse 12.

The second warning and reason for the epistle is after stating that Jesus Christ is the final word from God, higher than angels, crowned with glory and honour, and most importantly a high priest. After this warning is declared, Jesus Christ is designated the Great High Priest.

Wherefore: - in view of the fact that Jesus is so much greater than angels and has an authority vastly superior to Moses or any mere mortal let us heed the voice that now speaks to us from heaven through the Word recorded for us. God has recorded all we need to know concerning eternal issues and divine *beings*, implying He expects His children to read or at the least have the Word read to them. A good habit for a child of God is to read a portion of the bible each day before starting on those daily tasks that keep us occupied and do not leave time to meditate on divine *things*. The Psalmist wrote 119: 11 *Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee*. To remember portions of the Word of God is an exercise that is of immense profit. If the memory is such that it does not retain the Word yet we are still benefited by the exercise. Having the Word in mind helps us to be clean living people with a testimony that speaks of the Power of God to save unto the uttermost all that come unto him by faith

Today if you will hear his voice is the utterance of the Holy Spirit to the recipients of this letter. God graciously brings our attention to the situations that confronted the children of Israel in the wilderness. He does this so we will be reminded of the power and love he displayed in keeping a rebellious people through years of travelling through difficult and uncertain times. The days in which we live are just as uncertain and we do well to heed the warnings given to the readers of this epistle. The word of God came to the people through angels, prophets, priests, and judges, the Lord Jesus Christ and latterly through the recorded word. This verse tells us God is still speaking to the world, through the holy persons He chose to write the things recorded in the Bible. The

Bible does not contain the Word of God **'it is the Word of God'**. Today, if you will hear His voice you must, it is mandatory, recognise and believe that God still speaks to us through His Word the Bible. The bible is not the exclusive way that God uses to speak to a person in this generation.

It may be that your conscience troubles you or that the lifestyle of one you knew before salvation is so changed that you remark on it. Have you thought that the creation is that which God holds in order after He set it in place? Do you realise that the moral laws generally adhered to in this land are based on the Judeo Christian teachings? Can you hear God speaking to you this day or is your heart hardened as the Israelites in the wilderness. Do you continually close your mind to the voices that would bring you to recognise that God wants you to forsake the path to hell and take the way to eternal life by a step of faith. This epistle to the Hebrews brings a constant reminder of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ so that the readers may know who He is and place their trust in Him.

Harden not your hearts, we need to hear this exhortation today. Pride is the hardener and all other sins proceed from the hardening of the heart; a seared conscience leads to a deaf ear, which then allows all manners of evil without the effect of a guilty conscience. The Ten Commandments are a list of the things that God would have us avoid and things that we should do. Obeying them will not see us released from the penalty of sin; neither will it give us any advantage with God but it is a good way to live and will aid in relationships and avoiding the pitfalls that arise through self gratification. The children of Israel said with conviction, 'all that the Lord has commanded we will do' but through the hardness of their hearts were unable to continue as they started.

Christians are as liable to suffer from a hard heart even as those that know not the saving power of the Lord Jesus are. In the Church congregation it is not unusual to have a number of believers that sit through many gatherings without exercising their priestly responsibilities. In the matter of clothing very often the older generation are appalled by the immodest dress of the younger generation. When we move away from the instructions given in the bible it is because we have a hard heart; pride does not permit the humble attitude to prevail. The *hard heart* tells us that the methods we use to spread the gospel are better than the way we are instructed to in God's word. The *hard heart* hears the voice of modern man more clearly than the still small voice of the Holy Spirit. The *hard heart* causes the owner to read all manners of books about the bible and leave the bible on the shelf. The *hard heart* keeps the child of God from prayer. The *hard heart* allows the saint to be deceived into thinking that worship is a particular standard of song rather than a life lived in the presence of God. The *hard heart* does not allow us to hear any preaching or teaching that will bring us back to a close walk with our Lord. The *hard heart* takes no heed to the admonishment of friends and often causes a break in the relationship. Our hearts should melt when we consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, what He suffered at the hands of His own people is almost beyond belief. The faithfulness of the Son of God is an example that is brought before us to encourage us in a determination to be faithful to Him who called us out of darkness into light.

Provocation, the day of trial in the wilderness: "The Israelites *provoked* God first in the wilderness of Sin, when they murmured for want of bread, and had the manna given them, Exodus 16:4. From the wilderness of Sin they journeyed to Rephidim, where they *provoked* God a second time for want of water, and insolently saying, Is the Lord God among us or not? Exodus 17:2-9, on which account the place was called Massah and Meribah. From Rephidim they went into the wilderness of Sinai, where they received the law, in the beginning of the third year from they're coming out of Egypt. Here they *provoked* God again, by making the golden calf, Exodus 32:10. After the law was given they were commanded to go directly to Canaan, and take possession of the Promised Land, Deuteronomy 1:6,7. God spoke unto us in Horeb, saying you have dwelt long enough in this mount: turn you, and take your journey. Go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vales, and in the south, and by the seaside, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, and unto the great river, the river Euphrates. The Israelites, having received this order, departed from Horeb, and went forward three days' journey, Numbers 10:33, till they came to Taberah, Numbers 11:3. There they *provoked* God the fourth time, by murmuring for want of flesh to eat; and for that sin were smitten with a very great plague, Numbers 11:33; this place was called Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who lusted. From Kibroth-hattaavah they went to Hazeroth, Numbers 11:35, and from thence into the wilderness of Paran, Numbers 12:16, to a place called Kadesh, Numbers 13:26. Moses, Deuteronomy 1: 19-21 describes their journey from Horeb to Kadesh; and when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which you saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the Lord our God commanded us; and, we came to Kadesh-barnea. And I said

unto you, You are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God does give unto us. Behold the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee, go up and possess it. But the people proposed to Moses to send spies, to bring them an account of the land, and of its inhabitants, Deuteronomy 1:22. These after forty days returned to Kadesh; and, except Caleb and Joshua, they all agreed in bringing an evil report of the land, Numbers 13:25-32; whereby the people were so discouraged that they refused to go up, and proposed to make a captain, and return into Egypt, Numbers 14:4. Wherefore, having thus shown an absolute disbelief of God's promises, and an utter distrust of his power, he swore that not one of that generation should enter Canaan, except Caleb and Joshua, but should all die in the wilderness, Numbers 14:20; De 1:34,35. God ordered them to turn, and get into the wilderness, by the way of the Red Sea. In that wilderness the Israelites, as Moses informs us, sojourned thirty-eight years, Deuteronomy 2:14. The time in which we came from Kadesh-barnea, until we were come over the brook Zereb, was thirty and eight years; until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the Lord swore unto them. Wherefore, the Israelites *provoked* God to wrath in the wilderness, from the day they came out of the land of Egypt until their arrival in Canaan, as Moses told them, Deuteronomy 9:7. Their greatest provocation, the provocation in which they showed the greatest degree of evil disposition, undoubtedly was they're refusing to go into Canaan from Kadesh. It was therefore very properly termed the bitter provocation and the day of temptation, by way of emphasis; and justly brought on them the oath of God, excluding them from his rest in Canaan. To distinguish this from the provocation at Rephidim, it is called Meribah-Kadesh," Deuteronomy 32:51. The children of Israel provoked God by faithlessness, by disobedience, by disregarding His authority, by unbelief and by disdain for His provisions and wanting to return to the fleshpots of Egypt.

The day of trial in the wilderness refers to the specific period of time and the ways in which the children of Israel provoked God. By their disregard of God, their unbelief and their not listening to the leaders that God gave them these redeemed people caused the wrath of God to be exercised against them. Through to verse 11 the Holy Spirit is speaking to the children of God and warning them about a heart that disregards the instruction of the historical record and the failure to apply that knowledge to the present circumstances. A common saying in the secular society is 'the only thing we learn from history is that we learn how to make the same mistake again'.

So I swore in my wrath; the determination of God was against those he had redeemed from slavery in Egypt. The Israelites were redeemed by blood, brought out from the land of Egypt and led to the Promised Land, which land they refused to enter in faith but determined to spy out the land first to see whether they were capable of conquering the land in their own strength. This occasioned the wrath of God and the judgement of God to be exercised against His redeemed people. For forty years God dealt graciously with those He had brought out of Egypt after the application of the blood of the Pascal Lamb. They saw the miracles prior to the redemption, knew as a personal experience the preservation of God at the Red Sea. They had their every need supplied for the wilderness journey, were preserved from all dangers and had enough to eat and drink without labouring, yet because the heart was hard they erred and did not acknowledge God nor give thanks to Him. This provoked God to wrath, this untoward hardness of heart caused the sentence to be passed; **they shall not enter into my rest.** Psalm 7: 1, *God is a righteous judge and is angry with the wicked every day.*

My rest is the quiet confidence one can have in the promises of God, is the peace enjoyed having the sin question dealt with. For the children of Israel the rest promised to them was the entering into the land flowing with milk and honey. This would have been a restful situation had they relied on the Lord. The rest was available to the faithful of the tribes as and when they received the promises of God and walked with God expecting Him to keep His word. What transpired for them was a period of warfare, idolatry, judgements and internal strife so preventing peace.

The word REST is used eleven times in this epistle and only in chapters 3 and 4. 10 times the Greek word used is Katapausis, on the 11th instant the word translated REST is Sabbatismos. The significance of this will become evident when we consider the verse containing Sabbatismos, chapter 4: 9.

The rest God has planned for those who exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a conscience void of offence, and a hope which enters within the veil, wither the forerunner is gone for us. Peace with the Creator, a relationship that establishes God as Father, and not by any means least, the indwelling Holy Spirit are also incalculable benefits for those who are called brethren in verse 12.

Take heed; notice the end of those that departed from the Living God. They had instruction in righteousness; they had a good leader in Moses, they were taught in the Word of God and had a means of dealing with their sins. All this was not enough, as the lusts of the flesh were not brought into control. The end of those that forsook the ways they were instructed in is described in verse 17, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. Be assured of this, the person that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour and Lord cannot lose that salvation. There will be loss of reward; there will be disquiet in the spirit of the one that sins. The Holy Spirit indwells each person that has a saving faith in the Lord and He; the Holy Spirit, is the earnest of a full salvation. The Holy Spirit works in the life of a believer to reveal Christ and to convict of sin so that each of us will desire to do, as God wants, at the same time forsaking the things that are displeasing to the Lord Jesus Christ. The deceitfulness of sin convinces us that we are able to do better than God and that what we do is not contrary to the doctrines and practices contained in the Word of God. **Take heed!**

Brethren, the word used by the Holy Spirit in this verse denotes the faithful in Christ Jesus. Brethren are those in the family and in the context of this epistle, those redeemed by the blood that speaks better things than that of Abel, [12: 24]. As children of God it is expected that we will show some resemblance to, and have a likeness in some measure to the One that gave us the New Birth. The brethren are the believers that are being spoken to by the Judaisers, those that are trying to lure them away from the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

An evil heart of unbelief is not the norm for a believer and must be guarded against at all cost. We are saved by faith and we live by faith so to revert to living by our own wits or in our own strength is to depart from the faith. Doing things, in the church or in the world, spiritual or secular, believing that of ourselves we are capable is to depart from the Living God. It is so common today for the children of God to suppose that they can do the work of God in a better way than he teaches in the Word. What is supposed to be the Gospel, in this modern world, has become an entertainment. Vast sums of money go to individuals, buildings, organisations and activities attracting many people to the congregation where they cannot see the Lord Jesus for the trappings that disguise the Truth. Numbers is not a proof that God is in the work and an individual's popularity does not denote the spirituality of the person. An evil heart of unbelief damages the testimony and the possessor that heart loses sight of the main aim. The deceitfulness of sin can leave the believer in a position where he thinks all is right while it is far from the way God planned it and not as the Lord Jesus builds the church.

Departing from the living God is the way the Children of Israel walked in the wilderness. They murmured against the leadership God instigated and despised the food He supplied. Though redeemed by the right hand of God they thought they could do better than God in defending themselves. They decided to walk according to the flesh and lusted after the things that were left behind in Egypt. The allurements of this age are far subtler as so much is done in the name of the Lord or purports to as the Lord has given instruction or guidance. Be assured of this; God cannot and will not guide a person contrary to the written word, the Bible. God cannot contradict Himself and will not condone sin in any form.

Exhort one another daily; find time to be a comfort to another believer each day. Use whatever means available to encourage another believer, or assist one that has a need that you can meet. If you notice something that needs doing you should be the one that plans to do it and executes it in good time. We do not need permission to do good, though we must be careful not to intrude on another's field of service without their consent. An encouraging word, a phone call, a letter, a hug, a smile or a handshake goes a long way towards creating an environment where the saints are united in Christ. This consideration keeps the local church members in a state where they each support one another and is a help in avoiding the pitfalls that are dug in the Way. Mutual support and encouragement is a blessing for all concerned. Example is an excellent teacher, exhorter and encourager, going a long way in enforcing the verbal message.

While it is called today: now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. The Greek text emphasises the word today the three times it is used in this passage. This brings to our attention the importance of the proclamation of the Gospel message; where there are so many other voices clamouring for attention the word of God is often drowned in the cacophony. Today is the time to be committed to an uncompromising walk with the Lord. Today is the day when we must stand for the Lord among all those that would try to destroy the testimony. Today is the day to encourage the weaker brother, to lift up the fallen, to speak a word in season. Today is the day to seek the presence of the Lord and be humble before Him. Today we should each rekindle the desire and stir up our hearts, returning to the first love.

Hardened through the deceitfulness of sin: When I worked with metal there were times when I had to harden the finished product. Prior to hardening I could machine, saw or file the metal, after hardening it was in a state that could not be changed, the fashion of the object was permanent. Sinning so hardens the heart that it is nearly impossible to reform it. The Spirit of God does not give up on the children of God but the voice of God is harder to hear for the deceitful nature of sin has a very loud voice, it drowns out the words that God would have us hear. Proverbs 29:1 *He, that being often reprov'd hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* For the person that does not have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ eternal damnation is the end result of the hardening of the heart. That individual will go to hell thinking all is well, because of the deceitfulness of sin. The situation of the believer is somewhat different as the person who is resting in the finished work of the Lord Jesus is saved for all time and eternity. What then is the end of the believer that has fallen away? God strives with His children, through the Holy Spirit to bring them into a close relationship with himself. When we are led away by the lust of the flesh and the heart gets hard so that we cannot hear God speaking to us then we will be as those mentioned in the Corinthian epistle. *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep, [have died],* 1Corinthians 11: 30. There will also be a loss of reward in the day when the Lord Jesus is commending His own. The deceitfulness of sin will tell us we are indispensable in God's plan, or that God needs us to do a particular work or speak a certain message or have a special talent to use for Him. This caters to the ego and causes a downfall through the puffing up of pride. God does want to use us but we are not indispensable; remember He used Balaam's ass to speak when Balaam would not listen to the word God spoke. Sin deceives us by appearing to be good or by doing the right thing with the wrong motive. To gain renown as a minister of the word of God can cause a downfall by engendering pride. Possibly when the gospel is faithfully preached and the evangelist boasts about the numbers responding to the message, as though it were by the messenger the souls were reached and not the message. Having a certain ability or talent and deciding in one's own strength to use it for God, rather than waiting on the Lord to see if and where He wants that talent used. The remedy for a hard heart is confession of sin and being humble in the quiet place where we meet with God. The Apostle Paul teaches that there is nothing done in the flesh that can please God, also that in my flesh dwells no good thing. *Remember that pride puffs up but love edifies.*

For we are made partakers of Christ: in the union brought into being by faith, the Christian is offered a variety of blessings and benefits. The Christian is given God's Holy Spirit, as if He was a down payment, with the assurance of total redemption. As partakers of Christ we are made one with Him, we are given eternal life in Him; all our needs are met in Him. Because the Lord Jesus Christ is with the Father in glory we have access to the throne of grace. The marvel of being partakers of Christ is that we supply nothing to the relationship, the Lord Jesus gives and gives more abundantly than we can ask or think. *God supplies all our needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.* As partakers of Christ we have power to say no to sin, we have authority to preach the Gospel and we can have understanding of the deep things of God. Growth as a Christian, is as we put on the attributes and characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ, being conformed to the image of God's Son. Partakers of Christ is the overall blessing that God bestows on His blood bought children, those called saints, or the redeemed of the Lord. Nowadays the name Christians is adopted by many that are far from the truth as it is in Jesus, some even denying the divinity of the Lord. Others do not accept that the Lord Jesus was raised bodily from the tomb. There are those that will not believe that the work of salvation is completed and they go about to establish their own righteousness. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness in all that put their faith in Him. For what we could not do through the weakness of the flesh, Jesus Christ did for us.

If we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end: initially we expressed our confidence in the salvation that is offered to us in Christ Jesus and through the work of salvation, which He completed at Calvary. The word confidence is translated from the Greek word hypostasis and is the word from which we get foundation. At the time we were saved, born again, the basis of faith was the death of the Lord Jesus Christ as a substitute sacrifice. This is the foundation truth of all that are saved. While we hold fast to this truth we will grow in the Lord, grow in grace and in knowledge of him. Reading the word of God and being instructed by the Holy Spirit concerning the Lord Jesus will greatly assist us in spiritual growth. Seeking the truth by reading the word and waiting on the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the means whereby we hold fast the confidence of our faith firm unto the end. If we move away from the truth we will cease to grow, we will not be changing by the renewing of the mind. To stop growing in the Lord is the same as no longer being a partaker of Christ. I will add that this situation will also be an end to the joy of the Lord and lead to various errors and bad relationships. Divisions in the

church come from individuals trying to establish another foundation, other than that, which is laid by the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. This verse does not teach that a person can lose the salvation, which was received by faith. This verse teaches that to grow in the Lord Jesus is the way in which we partake of the divine nature. Building ourselves up in our most holy faith is the way to continue firm unto the end.

Perseverance is evidence of saving faith to those around and to the individual. The Lord Jesus Christ said that by their fruits we should know them. So to show others that we are the children of God we must pursue the things of God ardently. To be sure in ourselves we must foster the desire to be close to God in prayer, delight ourselves in the word of God, seek fellowship with the people of God and exhibit the joy of the Lord. When trials come our way and unbelievers observe us, they will see what our faith is based on and be attracted or repelled accordingly. With the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ as our foundation we will not be overcome with the difficulties of the way. With the Lord as the Rock on which we stand we will not be moved by the problems that confront us, for we can cast all our cares upon Him. Our assurance is confirmed as we pass through life with the Saviour as one who is alongside us. The rest of the sentence, verse 15 is when we should consider enjoying our rights and exercising our responsibilities as a Christians.

While it is said; today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. Since we are redeemed from the world and are brought across the gulf into the kingdom of God we must now live by faith. That means we must heed the voice of God, or the voice from God, as He speaks to us from His word or through His ministers, pastors or teachers. It means that in this journey to eternity, while we are in the world, we need to take special care to listen to and do, as God requires. Aaron led the children of Israel astray and by their own lusts and by idolatry they forsook the way of their redeemer. We must not be like them on this, our journey through life. A hard heart fails to respond to the word of God; does not enjoy the fellowship of the saints. The hardened heart looks for entertainment rather than enlightenment, seeks the pleasures of the flesh instead of growth in the spirit. Probably the greatest need in this generation is a turning back to simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Reader let me ask; do you find yourself cold to the fellowship of the saints and seeking entertainment? That is a symptom of a hard heart. Do you seek knowledge rather than closeness to the Lord? That is a symptom of a hard heart. Does your employment have a greater priority than Church fellowship? That is a symptom of a hard heart. Do you grab an opportunity not to go out to a meeting? That is a symptom of a hard heart. Do you dress to turn the heads of the opposite sex? That is a symptom of a hard heart. Do you question the wisdom of the elders in the church? That is a symptom of a hard heart. If there is no time to pray in your daily routine, it is a symptom of a hard heart. Would you rather read a secular book than God's word? That is a symptom of a hard heart. Do you love the things of the flesh more than is appropriate? That is a symptom of a hard heart. Today is the day to get right with God, to turn from the way of the world, from which we are redeemed and to turn back in repentance to God. During the wilderness journey the children of Israel provoked God. Let us not be guilty of provoking God by doing our own thing, forsaking the right way for the way that which seems right to a man.

For who, when they heard did provoke? The question asked here alerts us to the danger of complacency and the real problem of disregarding the guidance God gives through the spiritual leaders in the church. Early in the wilderness journey there were appointed seventy elders to share the burden of leading the redeemed of the Lord through the desert. They had the word of God and the presence of God in the tabernacle. Was that sufficient for God's people? Obviously not! **Was it all that came out of Egypt by Moses?**

With who was God grieved forty years? The hard heart is identified by unbelief and that is what grieves God most. When we do our own thing or try to do God a favour then we exhibit unbelief. Instruction for the saints is detailed in the New Testament, by word or example and to try other means of building the church numerically or spiritually is say God's way is not working. God instructed the children of Israel of the evil of sin by the giving of the Law. The holiness of God was evident in the same manifesto and made real to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, and in the tabernacle rites and sacrifices, the priesthood and order of the tribes. The cleansing ceremonies clothing of the priests and the offering of blood gave testimony to the holiness of God.

Was it not with those that sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? Sin when it is finished brings forth death and it is estimated that more than one million died in the years prior to the entry into the Promised Land. All that lack a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will die in unbelief. But the sin of unbelief is not limited to the unsaved; many of the redeemed in this generation suffer from the same malady, a sickness that pervades the Christian church in the western world. The Judaisers were trying to bring the believing Jews back into the bondage

of the law and the writer is issuing a powerful warning against turning back. Those Christians that listen to the doctrines of Christianity rather than getting their instructions from the Word of God will fall into the same condemnation. Christianity, in general, teaches salvation by good works but the bible teaches; **therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God**, Romans 5: 1.

But to them that believed not; that did not confide in God. Deuteronomy 1:32: "*Yet in this thing you did not believe the Lord your God.*" In consequence of this want of faith, God solemnly swore unto them that they should not enter into the Promised Land. Deuteronomy 1:34, -38: "*And the Lord heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and swore saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I swore to give unto your fathers. Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the LORD. Also the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shall not go in thither. But Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.*" The distinct reason, therefore, assigned by Moses, as to why they did not enter the Promised Land, was a want of faith. This is the explicit design of the apostle here. He is exhorting those whom he addresses to beware of an evil heart of unbelief, Hebrews 3:12.

So we see they could not enter in: unbelief had so taken hold on the minds and lives of that generation that they were no longer capable of hearing the word of God, they did not hear Moses or the priests, their ears were closed to the leaders and judges. The sacrifices had no relevance to those that brought them to the priests; a hard heart was in all that came out of Egypt with Moses. God did not hinder them from the Promised Land, nor did His representatives; unbelief brought disobedience and disobedience hardened the heart.

This chapter, indeed the whole epistle is a warning about going back to the law or leaving the first love, about forsaking faith for works, about turning from God to man. No man should put off his salvation, for since God speaks today, today is the day to heed His voice. Do not suppose that you have tomorrow or that you will hear God at a future time. A Merciful and Loving God extends to you the offer of free and eternal security, of sins forgiven and a future with Him in glory. Do not let a hard heart deprive you of such a wonderful provision or let unbelief rob you of a place in the family of God.

The warning of this and the next chapter is also to the redeemed of the Lord. The blessings that accompany salvation are forfeited through unbelief. Supposing that parts of the Word are not for today, or taking your burden to the Lord in prayer and then taking it back off Him again demonstrate a heart that is in need of restoration. When listening to the ministry of the Word of God and thinking how suitable that word is for another brother or sister in the gathering is saying to oneself that the word does not apply to me. Pride is a major cause of sin in the church, and is easily fostered. Holding a grudge or thinking I could do that job better is a destructive thought that will interfere with the smooth running of the Assembly of God's people. These features of a hard heart are and those previously mentioned are the reasons we do not see the power of God manifest in our meetings today.

So we see they could not enter in because of unbelief. From those that came out of Egypt with Moses it is easy to demonstrate unbelief. They had seen the power of God displayed in the ten plagues, in crossing the Red Sea, in divine provision and appointed leaders yet continued as if God did not exist. The promises and curses were explained to them but they continued in their own way as if there was no God. Unbelief was the downfall of those that died in the wilderness, unbelief was the reason they could not enter into the Promised Land. There is no rest for the wicked as God is angry with them every day; but God does not want anyone to go to everlasting damnation. God is long suffering toward us not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Do you believe that God can save to the uttermost each one that comes to Him by faith?

The first warning was to those that would be lost, die unsaved, came to them through the words of 2: 3. Failing to hear the word spoken by angels and prophets and then by the Lord Jesus Himself left the hearers with no means of salvation. God in grace continued to have the same message preached by the disciples of the Lord Jesus but still the Jews refused the word of God. There is no escape from the wrath of God by any other means. Philosophy, science, religion, good works or good living cannot secure freedom from the penalty of sin or give the individual the peace that God offers through the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The second warning to the same people that are trying to lead the Hebrew believers back into the Jewish rituals and works points out the failure of trying to secure eternal redemption by working for it. So the Apostle draws conclusions concerning the

rest available in the finished work of Christ, the finished work of salvation and the labour of someone working to achieve favour with God.

The chapter before us now, to verse 11, contains an exhortation and encouragement to continue fervently in the way initially preached to those in the wilderness and then to the nation of Israel after the resurrection and now to all mankind. The rest available to the believer is an end to labouring to find favour with God. There is no work we can do to cause God to favour us with a special dispensation or to expurgate the penalty of sin. Salvation is received by faith and continuing in the Christian experience is to go from faith to faith.

Chapter 4

Let us therefore fear the possibility of falling short. The apostle in the foregoing chapter set forth the sin and punishment. The sin of unbelief brought the punishment of no rest. As the apostle makes clear in the Corinthian epistle all these things happened to them and are an example to us. The Hebrew nation were brought out of Egypt by the mighty hand of God but did not enter the rest in Canaan He had prepared for them because they did not believe God could do as He promised. The Christian church is brought out of the world by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus and will not enjoy rest without the exercise of faith. We need to have a reverential fear, a fear of displeasing God so that we walk circumspectly and worthy of our calling. There is not a loss of salvation but there is a loss of peace and joy and fellowship. *If I regard iniquity in my heart then God will not hear me.*

Seem to come short of it relates to the identification with Christ in His suffering and death. Unbelief leads to a lifestyle that leaves God out and will not be attractive to those who we would speak to concerning their soul's salvation. Seem to or have an appearance of being ungodly, or actually putting the world or flesh first is detrimental to the testimony. Unbelief causes the spirit to be troubled and leaves the mind in a state of unrest as the Holy Spirit strives to make us aware of the holiness of God and the evil of sin. Unfortunately the believer may revert to works and seem to be a fervent and diligent Christian yet is not at rest or at peace with God. The word translated 'SEEM' is probably 'ACTUALLY' so the hearers of the gospel are warned about the possibility of falling short of salvation by faith.

For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them, they were given the promise of an earthly rest and we are given a promise of a heavenly rest. Moses and the word of God assisted them on the journey through the wilderness. We are aided on our pilgrimage through this scene by the word of God and those He has appointed as guides namely elders and deacons; pastors, teachers and evangelists, and says to us through the apostle Peter 'whose faith follow'. The gospel preached to us is a simple request, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. To the Children of Israel in the wilderness it was 'go in and possess the land'.

The gospel preached was **not mixed with faith in them that heard it.** They did not have the faith to do what was required to enter into the rest God had prepared for them. Had they exercised faith they would have seen that God was able to do all that was promised. The natural eye saw all the problems they would face, giants and armies, walled cities and hoards of enemies. The Gospel of the grace of God is incomplete without the assurance that all that is required for the believer to enter into his rest is accomplished.

The word *sugkekramenov*, **mixed**, is peculiarly expressive. It is a metaphor taken from the nutrition of the human body by mixing the aliment taken into the stomach with the saliva and gastric juice, in consequence of which it is concocted, digested, reduced into chyle. This mixture absorbed by the lacteal vessels, and passed into the blood, becomes the means of increasing and supporting the body, all the solids and fluids being thus generated. On this process, properly performed, depend (under God) strength, health, and life itself. Should the most nutritive aliment be received into the stomach, if not mixed with the above juices, it would be the means of death rather than of life; or, in the words of the apostle, it would not profit, because not thus mixed. Faith in the word preached, in reference to God, who sent it, is the means of its becoming the power of God to the salvation of the soul. Faith is the way in which we appropriate the promises of God to our own benefit. When the Word is received as academic information it increases knowledge but the spiritual nature of the recipient is unchanged. When the word is received and by faith appropriated then spiritual growth takes place. The word preached, when mixed with faith, is the word that will be used by the Holy Spirit to bring unbelievers to faith in Christ. That word, the word mixed

with faith is the word that brings a person out of darkness into light; is the word that brings a child of God to maturity in Christ.

We who have believed do enter into rest, not the Sabbath rest or even the rest of Canaan but the rest of peace with God, of sins forgiven, of freedom from guilt. The rest of the Christian is an inward rest of the spirit. The Lord said that in the world we would have tribulation, and though that is so, in the heart there is peace and rest. The rest that the believer enters into differs from the Sabbath rest. The Sabbath rest was typified in Canaan but we have a rest that is superior to the Canaan rest. The rest the believer receives through faith in the risen Christ brings an end to keeping the law as a means of giving God satisfaction. This is a present possession that is only upset by sin. The peace and joy of the believer is not conditioned upon external situations for the Holy Spirit brings it about. The Apostle is saying ‘**We [Jews,] who have believed** in Christ, do actually possess that rest-state of happiness in God, produced by peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost. This state which was typified by the happiness and comfort to be enjoyed by the believing Hebrews, in the possession of the Promised Land’.

The works were finished from the foundation of the world informs us of God’s intention to supply a rest. The Old Testament also informs us of the failure of the Hebrew nation to enter into that rest because of unbelief. From the end of the sixth day God rested and established a precedent. This became a Law for the children of Israel in the wilderness, when they received the Ten Commandments. The Creator set an example for the creature to follow and when the manna was supplied to the redeemed in the wilderness, Exodus 16:23-30 covenant significance was given to the Sabbath day. Violation of the commandment brought judgement and condemnation as seen in Numbers 15:32-36, for God must punish the sinner. When the Sabbath was made mandatory for the Israelites, they were given strict instructions as to the keeping of it. Later the Lord spoke to Moses to tell him that the Sabbath would be a sign, Exodus 31: 12-17. God in observing the nation that He had brought out of bondage in Egypt and was going to bring into the Promised Land would know the hearts were right when they kept the Sabbath as a day of rest. Believing God and keeping faithful to the word of God enabled the redeemed to rest even in the most trying circumstances. I ceitfulness of sin convinces us that we are able to do better than God and that what we do is not contrary to the doctrines and

The Lord Jesus said there would be no sign given to the Jews apart from the sign of the prophet Jonah. He said ‘as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth’. This period of time matched the Passover, the first day of Unleavened Bread and the weekly Sabbath. From this we see that the Crucifixion was not, as commonly taught, on a Friday but on the fourth day of the week. The fifth, sixth and seventh days were spent in the tomb as no work could be done on the Sabbath days following the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He spoke, probably in Genesis 2: 2, *and on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.* **God did rest**; this record is the beginning of a theme that is dominant in each period of God’s dealings with mankind. He rested after creating all things, established a Sabbath for mankind, promised a rest for the children of Israel in the Promised Land. For the believers of this generation there is rest now in the finished work of Christ, and the prospect of rest in heaven when life in this scene is complete. **God did rest** must only apply to the work of creation as He did not stop working on the redemption of man. Though it was planned from eternity it was not executed till the fullness of time was come. Though the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world, the time had to come when wicked hands would take and crucify the Lord of Glory. God did not need rest because He had to recover from His exertions; there is no weakness in Him. The rest was only an end of work, so the demonstration of the power of God is awesome. After creating all things and setting them in order He was not diminished in the slightest measure or in any capacity. Creation completed was the start of the revelation of God and the setting in place of the way of salvation. Though this rest is the seventh day rest, the word used is not the word for Sabbath, so the apostle is not referring to the weekly rest that God set as a rule for his redeemed from the land of Egypt.

And in this place again must be the reference in the 95th Psalm as the mention of David in verse seven implies. The rest spoken of in the last verse of Psalm 95 is a rest not associated with the entry into Canaan as that is

long past and indeed Canaan is now the land of Israel. God rested on the seventh day and the Lord Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God, at rest from the labour of redemption.

My rest is the rest provided for those that believe that Jesus is the Christ and that he gave God satisfaction. To enter the rest of God we must also find satisfaction in the finished work of Christ and rest there from all our labours. Christ is seated at the right hand of God having finished the work that God gave him to do. We can enjoy our rest if we stop our striving for righteousness and rely on the Lord who has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. The righteousness of the Lord Jesus is imputed to all that believe and that gives to those same persons a standing that is not achieved by any other means. This is how to rest in God, by faith, by believing.

Do not suppose that being at rest in the Lord Jesus Christ is an end to all activity. As believers we each have a grace gift given to us by the Holy Spirit at the time we believed. The exercise of that gift is the activity we must be engaged in. Effective use of spiritual gifts is as the user is at rest in the Lord. There is no room to boast; the Holy Spirit gives the gift and the Lord Jesus Christ uses the gifted person where the Father places that person, 1Corinthians 12: 4, 5, and 6.

It remains that some must enter into the divine rest. God has furnished a rest for those that will enter that rest through faith. Unbelief precluded entry for those that came out of Egypt, unbelief sees a barrier that is impenetrable. The preaching to the children Israel from the Law of Moses and the preaching to the Kingdom of Israel by judges, prophets and kings was not effective in the hearers as it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it. Yet **some must enter** into it, so today the Gospel is preached and if one is to take advantage and enter into the rest God offers it must be by faith.

The argument of the Apostle Paul is that as there is a rest, those for whom it is prepared must occupy that rest. The original hearers of the message did not enter that rest. The gospel was not received by faith. God would have a people called out of the world to occupy the rest that the previous hearers rejected by unbelief, so warns, **do not harden your heart** as those that have gone before.

He limits a certain day, by specifying the wilderness experience and the time of King David. The word spoken by the servant of God is not heard with the physical ear alone. God speaks to the heart and conscience, offering forgiveness of sins and peace of mind, promising a future and giving a hope. Jeremiah 2: 11 *For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.* This is the rest available to all who will put their faith and trust in the word of the Gospel, hearing the Holy Spirit as He takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to the heart that is no longer hard. **Today** the gospel of the grace of God is preached and you may hear and enter into rest. Do not jeopardize your eternal future by hardening your heart as those in the past or maybe even as those closely related to you. The way to the **rest** was closed to those of the wilderness and them that dwelt in the Promised Land because of their unbelief; it is therefore evident that the possibility of entering the Rest of God is open to those of this day. **Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart,**

For if Joshua had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day. The apostle shows that though Joshua did bring the nation into the Promised Land it was not the rest intended. Many years later, in the reign of David, the warning, *harden not your hearts*, is reiterated. Of there being another rest other than that which Joshua and Caleb enjoyed with those that entered Canaan is a certainty. Joshua did lead the people into a rest, but not the rest as is promised in Christ. The rest in Christ is an end to a guilty conscience, is a promise of a future, and is an established righteousness imparted to the soul and recognised and accepted by the mind.

There remains, therefore, a rest; this is the conclusion to which the apostle comes. The meaning is this, that according to the Scriptures there is now a promise of rest made to the people of God. It did not pertain merely to those who were called to go to the Promised Land, or to those who lived in the time of David, but it is still true that the promise of rest pertains to all the people of God of every generation. The reasoning by which the apostle comes to this conclusion is briefly this.

1. That there was a rest called "the rest of God"--spoken of in the earliest period of the world. Not a rest to recuperate because of tiredness, but the rest of God.
2. That the Israelites, to whom the promise was made, failed to obtain that which was promised by their unbelief.

3. That God intended that some should enter into his rest,

4. That long after the Israelites had fallen in the wilderness, we find the same references to a rest in a Psalm written by David

5. That if all that had been meant by the word rest, and by the promise, had been accomplished when Joshua conducted the Israelites to the land of Canaan, we should not have heard another day spoken of when it was possible to forfeit that rest by unbelief.

It followed, therefore, that there was something besides that; something that pertained to all the people of God, to which the name **rest** might still be given, and which they were exhorted to seek after and obtain. The word rest in this verse sabbatismov, Sabbatism, in the margin is rendered keeping of a Sabbath. It is a different word from sabbaton --the Sabbath; and it is not used anywhere else in the New Testament. 11 times rest is mentioned in this epistle and only once is this word used, specifying a different rest to any promised or realised in the past. To enter into the **rest in Christ** is to discover what real joy is, is to have a hope before you of being in the presence of God in a future that is assured. This rest is made available to all that will put their faith in the One who is seated, resting, at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

He that is entered into his rest, is the person that has realised that no amount of effort or thought, money or kudos can secure eternal redemption. To find the rest that is offered by the Lord one believes that another purchased it. An end of oneself is the start of the realisation that we have nothing and can do nothing to earn this rest which we enter by faith.

Has ceased from his own labours, or has stopped trying to find favour with God by doing things. Religious services or righteous acts, church attendance and good deeds cannot buy that which is *without money and without price*. We come to an end of ourselves at the point of knowing that we deserve eternal damnation and cry out to the Lord for His mercy. We stop our endeavours to please God, and please Him by doing as He commands. The laborious tasks we undertook to seek the blessing of God come to an end when we rest, by faith, in Christ.

As God did from His work of creation, resting on the seventh day. God, who created all things, finished that particular work in six days and then stopped working creations miracles. From that time God has had a plan unfolding to bring all men to repentance. The Lord said '*hitherto my Father works, now I work*', so we see the work of redemption, the plan of God for the salvation of man was a continuing effort. It is the work of creation that ended not the work of salvation. Similarly we must cease from our labours to earn salvation and when saved, at rest in Christ, must work to do the will of God. While we are at rest in the Lord Jesus Christ then He may use us in a work that will be for His glory.

Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest us strive to enter the narrow gate and walk the straight path. The rest available in Christ is worth every effort to obtain. This rest is of inestimable value and is offered freely to all that diligently seek the Lord. He said, 'you will find me if you seek me with all your heart'. Be warned a believer can lose the peace and rest purchased for him, by activities that draw him away from the Lord. When we rest, in faith, then we can be active in the Lord's work Christian activity is acceptable when we let the Lord work through us, not when we suppose that we can do anything for the Lord in our own strength.

Lest any man fall, after the same example of unbelief, is a careful statement teaching two important truths. 1, that a believer may lose the joy of the Lord by being concerned for those things he should, by faith, leave with the Lord. 2, that the person outside of the kingdom will never find the door to the kingdom by any means other than faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. **Lest any man fall**, points out that to move from faith to works is a steep downward path. From the bottom of that fall the only way up again is to humble oneself before God. To die in unbelief is to ensure a lost eternity, an eternity knowing that the possibility of being with God is gone forever and punishment is for refusing to believe God has provided a way of salvation, freedom from the penalty of sin.

For the Word of God is living, is alive, not like the word spoken by the prophets or the word spoken by angels. The written word of God is vital, revealing the mind of God, the divinity and dignity of the person of His Son and setting forth the gospel message in very clear terms. Called in Ephesians the sword of the Spirit this word enters the heart and intellect, changes the motives and thought patterns. So powerful is the Word of God that it can do what is impossible by any other means; it can save a soul from hell, change a lifestyle, it can bring a person to

faith, it makes those things that are not temporal a reality. What God has said will reveal to the hearer the true nature, detect hypocrisy, bare the soul and open the understanding.

Sharper than any two edged sword is a reference to the broadsword that the Romans introduced. The Romans were ridiculed for the short broadsword, the enemies believing they had an advantage with the longer rapier or scimitar or pointed weapon. This was their downfall as they had to withdraw their weapon before striking again but the Roman sword cut in both directions. This word may be applied in a number of ways; here one will suffice. The word of God must enter my heart and change my life before I can use it to make the truth known. This passage is a declaration of the revealing effect of the word of God, hypocrisy is uncovered, motives are revealed, and intentions are clarified. The word of God is a revelation of the nature of God, of the persons of the triune God, of the all sufficiency of God, the omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence of God; nowhere else can this information be garnered. The word of God brings a believer into knowledge of God that enthralls and thrills the heart of man. The word of God is such as to show clearly, as looking into a mirror, the person we are and the person we should be. Dividing asunder the soul and spirit and the joints and marrow makes the word of God the most efficient and effective surgeon ever known.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; creation of the mind, thought, or desire or motive that can be hidden from God. He who gave us life, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the High Priest that can delve into the innermost thoughts and see the reason and motive. He it is that tries the reins and hearts to see if there is any wicked thing there.

Naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. This phrase has two applications or meanings, both related to the High Priest's work in the tabernacle. First the word naked is related to bending back the head so the neck is fully exposed for the sacrificial knife. The life is made bare, and in the hand of the Priest who at this moment has power of life and death. Second, the priest flays the beast that has been sacrificed, cutting it apart to remove the skin, reveal the intestines, separate the fat and divide the carcass into two equal portions, left and right. There is a complete and detailed inspection of the various parts for nothing that is tainted or imperfect is acceptable to God.

God sees the inmost thought of each of us; we can hide nothing from Him. Looking into the Word of God we will see ourselves as He sees us for the Word will show us the perfection's of the Lord Jesus Christ. The clearer picture we have of the Lord the better understanding we will have of the sinfulness of our nature, and a greater appreciation of the Grace of God, Who has brought us out of darkness into His marvellous light. God sees all and knows all, and this omniscience is equally with the Lord Jesus. We are not able to hide anything from Him; all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

We have a great high priest; both in His person and in his work. The Jews that were unsaved thought that they might influence the Hebrew believers to return to the fold, telling them how inadequate the religion was that did not have a priest. The Apostle Paul points out that not only do they have a priest but He is also a **great high priest**. There was never a great high priest prior to the Lord Jesus Christ, each in succession died; succumbing to the wages of sin. When the high priest entered the Holiest on the Day of Atonement he had to come out again, after sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice. The Aaronic priesthood was confined to the earth and limited by reason of the frailties of the flesh and mind. The high priest that we testify to is alive after having tasted death for every man. The great high priest of the Christian testimony is the only one that ever gave permanent satisfaction to God. Jesus the high priest, offered a sacrifice that was both perfect and sufficient for all time and all people. God demanded the death of the sinner and our Great High Priest gave himself as a sacrifice for sin. Dying for all that will exercise faith in Him and the work he finished on the Cross-, When He cried with a loud voice 'it is finished' and lowered His head and dismissed His spirit.

Our great high priest **is passed through the heavens**. The flesh or the laws of nature did not confine him. He, who made all things, passed through the heavens, out of the temporal world and into the presence of God and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Jesus, the Son of God, is the only man in the glory at this time. He is there physically, he was raised from the dead and is now seated on His Father's throne, Revelation 3: 21. How the Lord Jesus Christ travelled to heaven is an interesting study in itself. Luke 24: 51 records that He was **carried up** into heaven. Mark 16: 19 that He was **received up** into heaven. Luke in the Acts 1: 11 tells us He was **taken up** into heaven. Paul in this epistle informs

us He *entered* into heaven, 9: 24. Peter recounts that He is *gone* into heaven, 1Peter 3: 22. John in the Revelation, 12: 5, makes known He was *caught up* unto God. Not only do we have a high priest; a great high priest, His is an unchanging priesthood and He continues in the Holiest never having to leave the presence of His Father.

Jesus, the Son of God, is a clear statement of the divine nature of the man Christ Jesus. It was because He claimed to be the Son of God that the Jews wanted to stone Him. Jesus asked, ‘for what good work do you stone me?’ They replied, ‘not for a good work do we stone thee, but because, you being a man make yourself out to be the Son of God.’ Jesus was perfect in all His ways, a perfect man. Jesus was divine, God manifest in the flesh. **He was never less than God was, and at the same time never more than man.**

Let us hold fast our confession because we can have confidence in the work that our high priest is engaged in. The testimony need never suffer of lack conviction for we know that our high priest ever lives. Let us hold fast our confession of faith, for it is God that works in us, both to will and to do His good pleasure.

This verse is fraught with doctrines to encourage and bolster the Christian: We see **1**, That Jesus Christ is the great high priest of the New Testament. This implies that the believers are the priests over whom He is the great high priest. **2**, Jesus is alive from among the dead, so we can be sure of being with Him in glory, even as he promised. **3**, The great high priest is Jesus, the man in heaven, assuring us of a physical resurrection. **4**, That Jesus is divine, the Son of God. A greater gift could not have been given nor a more valuable sacrifice offered. **5**, God was manifest in the flesh. Humility is a characteristic the Lord would like to see displayed in the believers. Armed with these doctrines we are ready to do battle with the flesh and stand against all the enemies of the gospel. Faith gives us the victory.

We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. All the previous high priests succumbed to the weaknesses of the flesh; the Lord Jesus Christ did not. There may have been sympathy between the high priest and the people but there was no empathy. Over Aaron and all the subsequent high priests death had the victory, they each in turn sinned and death is the wage received for sin. By reason of the weakness of the flesh the Aaronic priesthood was a failure, they were tempted as we are but failed to resist the temptations. Within man is the desire to cater to the lusts of the flesh and the eyes. In each of us we find a need to be recognised and praised, revealing the pride of life. How different is the high priest appointed by God, which is not from the tribe of Levi? This high priest was one with the people, went through all the phases of family life and growing up with a peer group that wanted to do their own thing. This high priest was special in that he never disassociated Himself from those frailties, so He knows what we go through. He knows our every peccadillo, fault or flaw and is aware of the pull that is exercised on us to sin. **He has been there without sinning.** Our infirmities were never weaknesses in Him but occasions to show that we do not have to give in to the weakness of the flesh.

He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. The words rendered tempt and the word test is generally used with the thought of proving under trial, sometimes solicitation to do evil. When the devil tempted the Lord in the wilderness, Satan thought there was in the Lord Jesus Christ a desire that was selfish. If point of fact the propositions put before the Lord Jesus found no response in Him, He was not tempted. A lesson we can learn from the temptations of the Lord in the wilderness is that there is a way of escape so that we need not sin. The Word of God has the answer and the resource needed by us to keep us from falling. The Lord Jesus Christ was free from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. In Him was no sin, he did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. The man Christ Jesus was and is perfect in all His ways. **He could not sin.** Adam did sin because he was not perfect; Adam was innocent until he was drawn away by the lusts of the flesh. Adam it was that brought sin into the world, Romans 5: 12, but Jesus, the last Adam dealt with the question of sin for all people and for all time when he became the propitiation for the sin of the whole world.

When we are tempted, we are drawn away by the lusts of the flesh. There is in each one of us a propensity to sin. The old man that was crucified with Christ refuses to die and often causes the desires that we have tried to control, surface with a power to drag us down. The Apostle Paul, in the epistle to the Romans 6: 11-13 exhorts us to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. That is the description of the Lord Jesus Christ, dead to sin and alive to God. Nothing could be put in the way of the Lord Jesus that could entice Him to move away from a pathway of obedience to God. His only desire was to do the will of his Father. Now He is with the Father on His throne.

Let us therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace. We do not come brashly nor with a demanding spirit, for God is not a servant to the whim of man. We do not come with arrogance or proudly, as if God would do well to favour us. We come boldly, that is confidently, relying entirely on the knowledge that Jesus, who has made it possible for us to enter the presence of God, is the only way for us to enter the most holy place. Our confidence is in the work that the Lord did in being the one sacrifice for sin forever. Boldness in the presence of God is a very humble experience. When in the presence of the Almighty God it will serve us well to remember the pit from which we have been lifted. Psalm 40:2 *He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.* **The throne of grace** is the place where God gives freely and abundantly to the redeemed all those things that are needful for a sanctified life, that will enable us to please him. The Throne is the seat of the sovereign, and the Lord on the throne is ready to dispense mercy to all that call upon Him. At the throne of grace God displays a characteristic that we should try to emulate, mercy. **Let us, therefore, come** has the meaning; let us come often or daily, not to miss an occasion or opportunity to be at the throne of grace.

That we may obtain mercy, for this we have a great need. It is of His mercy that we are not consumed. We obtain mercy because He is merciful and cannot resist delighting in the praise and thanksgiving that is given to the Lord Jesus. Our high priest is on the throne and He is aware of our infirmities and ready to be merciful to those that call upon Him. Before Calvary the children of Israel were required to bring a sacrifice to the priest when they had sinned and the offering of that sacrifice made atonement for them. Today, having heard his voice, the word spoken by God, we have a sacrifice that has an everlasting power to save. When we come to the throne of grace we come with thanksgiving, for the high priest on the throne is the one who is our sacrifice. He is a merciful high priest, knowing our weakness and has been through all the problems that we may face, therefore is ready to offer comfort and be merciful as necessary.

Grace to help in time of need is available at this throne. The one with the ability to assist is ever ready to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think. There is a proviso, that what we desire be to the glory of God. There is never a time when we can stand in our own strength and resist the evil inclinations of the world, flesh and the devil. The frailty of the natural man and the propensity to evil is our lot so we need to be reminded of the grace of God continually and be thankful. Our high priest knows what is best for us and He will guide us as we wait upon Him. Do we need grace to serve; it is there for us at the throne. Do we need grace to conform to the image God wants us in; He is waiting to bestow it when we ask. Do we need grace to get on with other people; the grace we need is ours, received by faith at the throne on which our great high priest is seated.

The perfect rest of the child of God is in the grace of God as offered to him in the finished work of the high priest. The person filling this superlative role and the excellence of the sacrifice offered is brought to our attention in the following chapters, to the end of chapter 10. There is a small digression, as a warning, in chapter 6: 1 – 12, to sample and then refuse, leaves the sampler with the prospect of eternal damnation. In this fifth chapter the apostle proceeds to describe the institution of the priesthood and the overriding excellence of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ over the Aaronic order.

Chapter 5

Every high priest taken from among men, an essential feature of the priesthood was the human element. God chose the tribe of Levi as the people from whom the priest was to be appointed. The priest had to be a man, not a boy, girl or woman, but a mature male. These and other qualifications are noted in following verses.

Is ordained by God to do the priestly work on behalf of sinful man. The sinner can approach a holy God if the sacrifice is appropriate and the priest is the one appointed. The man chosen by God was ordained **to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.** The gifts given were freewill offerings and the sacrifices were to make atonement for sin. Gifts are not compulsory nor given under duress but from a thankful person acknowledging that what is possessed is only as God has given. We only give to God what He has freely bestowed on us. The way to God is through the high priest; all we bring to God is presented by the high priest and the only way a gift or sacrifice will be acceptable to God is when the high priest presents it in the appointed way.

The high priest was one, **who can have compassion on the ignorant.** That is, he must treat with gentleness and moderation those that come to him. He must take into consideration the circumstances of the misdemeanour, the situation of the offence, and be compassionate toward the offender. The punishment must never be more than

the crime merits and must be meted out with sympathy and mercy. The **ignorant and them that are out of the way** need instruction and correction in the paths of righteousness, before any admonishment.

The reason given for the high priest to be slow to punish and quick to forgive is that **he also is compassed with infirmities**. This is the case with the Aaronic priesthood; the weakness that attended the people was also in the priests. They were all of the same stock and as is said in the epistle to the Romans, *all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the great high priest of our confession, was completely without sin in any form. This is a major reason why the priesthood of the Lord Jesus is so much better than the priesthood of the old covenant. Though He was tested in all points, as we are, He remained without sin. The Lord knows what our infirmities are because he was truly man, and was limited by the flesh while here on earth, till he was placed in the tomb.

By reason of this he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. The office of the priest, the high priest, is a very great honour and responsibility. He had to be religiously clean before he could be a representative of the people over which he was the high priest. On the Day of Atonement the high priest had to wash and change his raiment to that prescribed, linen garments. Then with a young bull as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering, he could proceed with the duties allotted for that day. Let us understand that we cannot approach God with iniquity in our hearts. The Psalmist penned; if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me, 66: 18. When the high priest offered the bull as a sin offering it was after he had confessed his sin while holding his hand on the head of the beast. God transferred the sin to the animal and the innocence of the animal to the priest. The priest could then enter the most holy place, with blood of the slain bull, to make atonement for his sin. Because his sin was covered, atonement had been made, he could enter without fear into the presence of God.

The Lord Jesus, being without sin, had no need of a sacrifice for himself. As the spotless Lamb of God He shed His own blood, gave His life as a sacrifice for those who would believe. We, then, can enter the most holy place, when we have believed to the saving of the soul, the Lord Jesus Christ being our sacrifice for sin.

No man takes this honour unto himself; the remarkable privileges and responsibilities of being a priest are only at the calling of God. A direct descendant of Levi was the chosen line, at the command of the God of Israel. Aaron was the first in that line and Moses consecrated Aaron to the office and function after being instructed by the Lord God to do so. The position of the high priest was an honourable office, for God appoints the high priest to that office. The appointment to any work in the church is an honourable commission. As the high priest went into the presence of God so must each one of us that has a work to do in the church. The work of the high priest could not be completed without authorised access into the most holy place. We will never do a work acceptable to God without first being sent by Him, from the most holy place, **the throne of grace**.

Please bear with me as I digress from the subject for a moment. The person He appoints may successfully complete each and every work that God wants done. Though I have a talent that is unique, until God requires it or commands its use my exercise is valueless. Of myself I can do nothing for God that is acceptable to Him, until I am at rest in the Lord Jesus Christ. When I humbly acknowledge my true state before God then He might take my particular talent or expertise and use it for His glory and the extension of His kingdom or the edification of His people. Before God can use me I must realise that He does not need me. God, who formed me in the womb, gives the abilities I have to me. He gives according to His own will and uses the gifted person where He chooses. The work we do, whether in the church or in the secular field, is done with the God given ability. *Humble yourself, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he might exalt you in due time.*

He that was called of God, as Aaron, was the high priest of the Jewish nation. God had sole right to appoint him and his direct descendants to that role. God has sole right to appoint a high priest for all the world of man, and did so when He established His Son, the man Christ Jesus, as the high priest.

Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high priest; The Father sent the Son. Though equally God, the Son submitted Himself to the humiliation of humanity and then as a man, the ignominious death on the cross. This had to be, before the Lord Jesus could be made a high priest. Without being made in fashion as a man, Jesus could not be a sympathetic high priest. To truly represent man he was tested and tried in all points like as we are, without sinning. He had family relationships and peer group pressures, suffered ostracism and rejection; He went through religious persecution and was slandered never deviating from the path God selected for Him. The Jewish high

priest had to offer beasts at set times but the Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself without spot to God. The high priest of the old economy was changed by reason of death; the high priest of the Christian ever lives.

Thou art my Son, today have I begotten Thee, is a quotation from the second psalm. When the Apostle Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, took up this quotation in Antioch of Pisidia, recorded in Acts 13, it was in direct reference to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. This teaches us that the high priestly work of the Lord Jesus Christ began after the resurrection. It was said also that God would not allow His Holy one to see corruption, so the Lord Jesus was pure throughout His life and did not come to a state of decomposition in any degree. There was no defiling influence in Him; He would not have died, as there was no sin in Him. For the same reason He did not start to corrupt, sin when it is finished brings forth death and sin is the beginning of corruption, even in the physical life. The Psalmist in 51:5 penned 'Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me' thereby instructing us that we are all dying from birth; sin working in us. This is not so with the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh was not marred by sin internally or externally. In thought, word and deed He was without sin. God stating, even prophetically, that Jesus was His Son is exalting the Son to the highest extreme, the position of equality in deity.

The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ on two occasions, recorded in the Gospels, spoke from heaven saying '*this is my beloved son*'. The first instant was after the baptism of the Lord; God spoke from heaven to make known His pleasure in the obedience of His Son, saying '*this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased*.' The second time was when the Lord was on the mount of transfiguration; God then said '*this is my beloved son, hear him*'. The significance of words '**hear him**' is that the conversation, with Moses and Elijah was about the death the Lord would die at Jerusalem. In the gospel record, the voice from heaven is for the bystanders, a confirmation of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Psalmist has recorded a prophetic word from heaven addressed to the Lord Jesus personally; *Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee*. Sonship is a special relationship that is entered into when the son comes of age, understanding, ability and desire to do only and entirely as the father pleases. The Greek word used in the first chapter of Ephesians, *hiothesia*, [adoption of sons] denotes for the believer, more than becoming a child of God. It is what takes place when we are conformed to the image of Christ, Romans 8:29, finally seeing Him as He is. The man, Christ Jesus, lived an exemplary life before God and man; perfect in all his ways, this fitted Him for the work God had for him to do. Only a Lamb without spot or blemish, in fact and appearance, was suitable as a sacrifice. Jesus was the Lamb chosen of God, to be the sacrifice He would accept on behalf of all those that would believe.

There is no provision for a human sacrifice in the Old Testament. God expressed His displeasure with the children of Israel when they sacrificed their offspring to idols. When God said to the Lord Jesus, ***thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee***, He exalted Jesus to the office of high priest; accepting the sacrifice Jesus made of his own person.

Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek; a prophetic statement taken from Psalm 110, indicates the high office bestowed on the man who offered himself without spot to God. Jesus is presented to mankind as the Son of God and now is declared to be the high priest that will be the representative of man, before God eternally. **Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men**; is a special application as to the tribes of Israel, the children of God. Each high priest was taken from among the living to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. Jesus, the first begotten from among the dead is the beginning of a new order; He is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek is chosen to represent the office that Christ Jesus has been ordained to. He is presented to us as **a man**, Hebrews 7: 4 and as a mediator between God and man, the work of the high priest. As first seen in Genesis 14: 18 Melchizedek is presented as **a king and priest** and with the prophecy of Zechariah 6: 13-14 Christ Jesus is the fulfillment of that prophecy. Melchizedek in direct translation is, Melchi- king and Zadek- righteous, so means Righteous King; the Lord Jesus Christ is the **righteous king** in his own right; His is an inherent righteousness, not obtained from another as ours is. Melchizedek was king of Salem; that is **king of peace**, a fit title for the Prince of Peace. There is no record in the historical account of Melchizedek telling of his birth or death, his parentage or length of life; it is made to appear that Melchizedek had no beginning of days or end of life. The Son of God was in the beginning with God and ever lives. What was depicted artificially in Melchizedek is reality in the Lord Jesus Christ. Man did not appoint Melchizedek to the priest office nor could man to that office appoint Jesus, for He was of the wrong tribe.

The Apostle Paul has presented irrefutable arguments to the unbelieving Jews of the excellent priest the Christians have in the person of Jesus, the man who is alive from the dead. No wonder He is called the **Great High Priest**.

Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest; He was not ambitious, seeking an office that was not for the tribe He was born into. The Lord showed a consistent attitude before the incarnation and during manhood. While he was with God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, not a position to be exploited. From the glory He humbled himself to be made in fashion as a man. As a man he did not seek for himself fame as the king of Israel nor did He desire to put himself into the office of priest. The Father of our Lord Jesus honoured Him with recognition as Son and nominated Him as priest and the priesthood conferred on the Lord Jesus Christ was after the order of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek was the priest of the most high God, or as more properly expressed, God Most High. Abram knew El Shaddai, God Almighty, and the Jews knew God as Jehovah, but El Elyon, God Most High reaches beyond the bounds of earth to everywhere and all things in heaven and earth. This name was recognised by the Gentiles as seen in the prophecy of Balaam and in the understanding of Nebuchadnezzah. The Spirit world was cognisant of this appellation of God also for we read of Satan saying 'I will be like the Most High' in Isaiah 14: 14, and the demons of the Gospel record crying 'what have we to do with Thee, Thou Son of the Most High.

Who in the days of His flesh, refers to the Lord as a man here on earth living in Israel. He is a man today, a man in the presence of God. He is the man who has made heaven inhabitable for humankind, that is those of us who believe that Jesus Christ is the one offering for sin forever, those of us who can say with faith, 'He bore my sin in His own body on the tree'. Life was not easy for the Son of God, nor was death going to be without anguish. In the days of His flesh He was slandered, mocked, laughed at, scorned, ridiculed and treated shamefully by those in authority. None of that would cause the Lord to turn from the path of obedience. All that had an effect on His person He bore patiently.

When He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears. What brought the Lord to such a state and when was this situation? As the last representative man, the last Adam, suffering was as necessary as death. We suffer because we sin but we die because the wages of sin is death; we die because we have broken the Law. The Lord Jesus Christ went through all the vicissitudes of life; knew the limitations of the flesh and the emotional turmoil that mere mortals go through. He has been touched with the feelings of our infirmities. In the garden of Gethsemane the Lord Jesus prayed 'let this cup pass from me' but there was no other means of salvation available. The Lord agonised in prayer, sweating as it were great drops of blood but it was not possible for another person or animal to take the place of the man, Christ Jesus. The Lord was the anointed of God for the purpose of bearing the penalty for the sins of all that would call upon Him. The Lord went through all the pain and suffering so that He could be a sympathetic high priest. The prayers of the Lord Jesus were addressed to the only one **that was able save Him from death**, fervent, intense prayer. The Lord Jesus Christ was heard. What God said in reply to the Lord is not recorded in words. It was acted out in reality, the answer beginning with the betrayal shortly after the end of the prayer. The Lord Jesus Christ went beyond the limitations set by the priests of the old dispensation. No situation is unknown to the Lord, apart from sin.

Though He was a Son, this did not exclude Him from experiencing obedience through intense suffering. Being the Son of God was not a reason for the Lord to escape the wrath of God against sin. He, being sinless, learned obedience and discovered what suffering was by going through all the emotions and distresses of the flesh. The Lord was always obedient to the Father, ever mindful of the Father's will and determined to do all that was needful for the salvation of man and satisfaction of God. The example set by the Lord Jesus in the times of intense suffering that He endured is an example to us and an encouragement to continue in the love of God through all adverse circumstances. It is as man that the Man Christ Jesus must suffer. We mortals must bear the punishment, the penalty of sin or provide a sin bearer that can give satisfaction to God. The sin bearer had to be without sin, and as all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, it was beyond the ability of any man to be a sacrifice as pure as the Law and God required. This we could not do, as the Justice of God demanded the death of the sinner, not allowing for a substitute. *So God, sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh*, Romans 8: 3.

Man, because he has sinned must suffer; man because he has broken the Law must die. Man for all his searching and religious observance never encountered a perfect substitute in the animal world. Man had no substitute in his own society of his flesh. **Being made perfect, Jesus became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him;** He was never less than absolutely holy, never short of the standard God required, perfect in all His ways. **Being made perfect** means having completed satisfactorily all that was set to do for the redemption of man. He was born into this sinful scene and lived here without being contaminated by sin, He suffered without cause and died when He was taken by wicked hands and crucified. The work God set for the Son was done; the last Adam, the last representative man, was the propitiation for our sins.

The Lord Jesus Christ was instituted as the high priest and as the sacrifice when God set His seal upon the finished work, raising Christ from the dead. As the author of eternal salvation he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto Him by faith. Believing and obeying are jointly essential for saving faith. We will enjoy our salvation to the same extent that we obey the Lord Jesus Christ. Assurance is proportional to the measure of obedience to the revealed will of God.

Called of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, addressed as a high priest, as in Psalm 110. In this verse the Lord is not called to an office but addressed in that office. The Apostle Paul has answered the queries of those who suggested the New Testament believers were without a priest. He proves that not only do they have a priest but that He is a great high priest and that he has a sacrifice of a value that surpasses all the beasts of the past. He shows that the salvation of this dispensation is eternal, not a covering that has to be renewed each year. The apostle points out that the high priest lives in the power of an endless life and that he was called to, and ordained by God and not by man, to this office.

Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to express, not about Melchizedek but he who is made a priest after the order of Melchizedek. This is most likely to mean things concerning the man, Christ Jesus, who ever lives, who has an eternal priesthood. A new Christian, of whatever physical age, may find it difficult to grasp the deep meanings of the type presented in Melchizedek. **Dull of hearing** or slow to understand is the common lot of us all, till our spiritual senses are exercised to discern the truths about the Son of God. The Old Testament is full of *things concerning Himself*- did not Jesus, on the road to Emmaus, *beginning at Moses and in all the prophets, expound unto them in all the scriptures, things concerning Himself*, Luke 24: 27. The more we hear of the doctrines of men, however well intentioned, the harder it is to hear the Spirit of God. What is it that dulls the hearing? Is it not worldliness in one form or another, described as carnality? Pride is a major problem today while academics are sought after rather than closeness to the Lord Himself. There is nothing wrong in learning, or high academic achievement, always providing it does not replace spirituality, that is a close walk and communion with the Lord Jesus.

The third warning of the Apostle is as an entreaty to hear with spiritual understanding the word that the Holy Spirit utters and respond as He awakens thoughts of the need for faith in the work that the High Priest of our confession has completed.

The first warning was an entreaty to listen to the Son and rejoice in the salvation offered by Him, or suffer the consequences of eternal damnation.

The second warning was for the hearers to cease from their own works and rest, with the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Rest God has prepared for them that love Him.

This third warning is to the same people. There are Jews who follow the Law and Jews who are complete in Christ. The first claimed that without a priest there is no valid religion to follow. For this reason the Apostle Paul has proved that the priesthood continues in the person of Christ, without end. The others are being weaned away from the faith that is in Christ Jesus. Instruction to ignore all that detracts from the person or work of Christ is the Apostles major theme. There is no peace, no security, no access to God, no fellowship with the Father no communion of Saints and no joy in the Lord to be had if the understanding of who the Lord Jesus Christ is falls short of the scriptural designation allotted to Him.

The apostle recording '**ye ought to be teachers**' states the recipients of this epistle had been saved for some time. They had the Old Testament and other writings that later became the canon of scripture. They had the teachings of the Evangelists and the elders in the local church. They were going on well with the Lord till being

seduced from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus, by those coming in to the fellowship who had a diverse agenda. Being led into discussions about alternative religions and doctrines of works was the way Satan used to keep the saints as infants. Though we are not all teachers we should all teach; the mothers teaching the children, fathers guiding the family, all of us teaching by example so that neighbours are reached with the gospel and the church is edified and growing through the supply from each member. Distractions from any source necessitate the need to return to the **first principles of the oracles of God**. There was a need for the saints to be **taught again** as they had been drawn aside to consider those things that were not needful in their walk with the Lord.

Dull of hearing and become such as have **need of milk** is a trap that we fall into when we listen to speakers, teachers, ministers talking about the Word of God. Academic abilities instead of spirit-filled aptitude draws a church down from the lofty heights at the throne of grace, to the earth and its environs, where the things of God are debated instead of being followed.

Such people have **need of milk**, till they are weaned off the **first principles of the oracles of God** and go on to prove the deep things of God. Milk is the essential ingredient for the baby to grow to the point where teeth are developed. Milk is so important the apostle uses this metaphor so we will understand the importance of giving the new Christian food that is convenient. Those that move away from the doctrines of grace and faith are returning to the state they were in before salvation and must be reminded of the first principles. The Christians the apostle is addressing are in danger of completely losing their testimony; listening to outsiders who would draw them away to the Jewish faith which they had left for salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone that uses milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness. To stay in the infants' school signifies a lack of growth. It shows that the learner is not growing and that the teacher is not completely meeting the need of the child. When the teacher in the local church ministers, it should be as the oracles of God. In such a case there is food for young and old. Where the ministry of the Word of God is as the Holy Spirit teaches then the saints go from faith to faith, from strength to strength. Leaving aside the first principles they develop teeth and enjoy the deep things of God. He is a babe who continues saying the same thing or gets stuck on a particular doctrine. **He is a babe**; he remains a child who has one theme that is promoted to the exclusion of all others. For instance to be taken up with the dispensations, though correct, may take one on a single track that stunts growth. Again when one only considers the scriptures in relation to the Lord's return, whilst being encouraged during difficult times that study can keep us from knowing Him and put us in a position where we know about Him. To have a one-track mind as we consider the Word of God will not allow us to grow to the potential we will reach as a balanced student of the Word.

Strong meat belongs to them that are of full age. Good ministers of the Word of God will so prepare the message that mature and less mature will find sustenance. The doctrines expounded in a way that the young can see the nature of God, and appreciate the wonder of salvation and the Christ of God. To speak of the Holiness of God is to encourage the saints to be holy; revealing the deep things of God takes the saint into the presence of God and is an awesome responsibility. Making known the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ is a duty for all those who preach the Gospel. Progression is symptomatic of growth as a Christian, going from faith to faith.

Strong meat, solid food is for those who by **reason of use** have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. As with a developing child so with a new believer, if a babe were never given solid food then the teeth would eventually decay and fall out. If a convert to the faith is never weaned from the milk onto solid food growth is deformed or at the least, hindered. The senses are exercised as we consider Christ, pray, meditate, speak of Him, fellowship with the Father and study the Word. Hearing with the ear of faith draws us nearer to the Lord we confess as our Saviour. **Full age** or maturity is the ability to do as the bible teaches in relation to one's particular gift and leave the result to God. Maturity is trusting God to do as He has promised. Maturity enables one to discern between good and evil, to distinguish between that which is of God and that which is of the flesh. Christian maturity is living one's life as an open book in the sight of God.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 begins with an exhortation to leave the basic principles of the Christian religion and to go on to the contemplation of the higher doctrines. The elements were the doctrines of repentance, faith, washings, laying on of

hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgement. They were its first principles, and were indispensable. The apostle desires the saints to leave these doctrines in the past and proceed to higher levels of knowledge. Peter says, *'grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

An unfortunate situation has arisen in some local churches, called Gospel Halls. Week by week the gospel is preached in these halls, most often a clear presentation of the need of man and the provision of a gracious God. That is of itself good, what is not good is the attitude of the saints that are there; praying fervently for the Lord to bring in unsaved persons when He has given instruction for the saints to go into all the world preaching the gospel. Lord bring them in does not equate with go out and reach them where they are. It is prudent for the believers to be conversant with the doctrines they need to point a sinner to the Saviour.

Therefore leaving the basics of the doctrine of Christ, move on past the truths that led you to the Lord Jesus, where you found salvation. Move on from milk to meat; seek a more intimate relationship with your Lord and Saviour and greater knowledge of Him.

Let us go on unto maturity, put the bottle aside, don't seek to be fed but go hunting for your own food. There is a mine where the treasure is there for any to dig out. Surplus treasure has good trade value and many saints will benefit from your find when it is displayed and described. The exhortation is for the believers to leave the law and its associated truths and take hold, by faith, of the Gospel of the grace of God. To go on to perfection is **not to be sinless but to sin less.**

Repentance from dead works is the foundation principle by which a person must come to God. If I do not know I am a sinner then I do not know my need of a Saviour. Being dead in trespasses and sin I cannot realise my lost position before a holy God. The Holy Spirit of God convinces me of my sin, dead works. Dead because I was dead in trespasses, dead because I was dead in sin and dead because the sentence of the Law was death to the sinner. To repent is to turn from and continue in the new direction, as the Thessalonians turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven.

Faith toward God is also fundamental to salvation. Without faith it is impossible to please God. The truth expressed in this sentence is most carefully applied to the readers of this epistle. Dead works were the activities of the Law, which were done away with by Christ when He filled all the requirements of the Law. Life is not there for the keepers of the Law, for what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: Romans 8: 3. Life is there for those who have faith toward God. In the Acts of the Apostles 20:21 Paul recounts he testified *both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The doctrine of baptisms, properly washings, was part of the Leviticus teaching for the priesthood. Entry into the most holy place was after ceremonial washing and change of clothes. In this dispensation there are two baptisms, immersions; when a believer gets baptised it is to confess publicly to a work that has taken place inwardly. This baptism is a testimony to the faith the individual has in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Going down into and under the water is symbolic of being buried with Christ, dead. Coming up out of the water is symbolic of being raised from the dead to live in newness of life. Romans 6:4 *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* The change of clothes is done by imputation; the righteousness of the Lord Jesus is reckoned to us who believe and His righteousness is our clothing when we approach our Father in heaven. This is the only way for a person's righteousness to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:20 *for I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* The second baptism is of great doctrinal significance; as baptism is to be immersed in the medium so each new believer is placed in the Body of Christ. It is impossible for an individual to put himself into Christ, the Holy Spirit of God places the new believer, at the moment of regeneration, into the church, which is His body and over which He is the Head. 1Corinthians 12:13 *for by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free:* We are not saved by baptism, as some erroneously teach, eternal security is on the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. Baptism is the answer of a clear conscience before God. Note the tenses of salvation as they appear in the epistles; 1, saved from the penalty of sin. 2, being saved from the power of sin as one waits on the Lord and heeds the Holy

Spirit's teaching and guidance. 3, and the final deliverance from the presence of sin when we are with the Lord Jesus in person.

And of laying on of hands: The Jews practised the laying on of hands on a great variety of occasions. It was done when a blessing was imparted to any one; when prayer was made for one; and when they offered sacrifice they laid their hands on the head of the victim, confessing their sins, Leviticus 16:21; 24:14; Numbers 8:12. It was done on occasions of solemn consecration to office, and when friend supplicated the Divine favour on friend. In like manner, the Saviour and the apostles often did it. The Redeemer laid his hands on children to bless them, and on the sick when he healed them, Matthew 19:13; Mark 5:23; Matthew 9:18. In like manner, the apostles laid hands on others. In healing the sick as in Acts 28: 8 and in Acts 6: 6 where it is recorded the apostles confirmed the choice of the people and agreed to the work they were chosen to do by the laying on of hands. The practice of some, claiming the Holy Spirit is imparted by the laying on of hands is an error that has divided the Lord's people. No man can control the Spirit of God. God is not beholden to man and he gives His Spirit to each person that believes, the moment that person believes.

And of the resurrection of the dead, a Jewish belief that was not fully revealed in the Old Testament. Isaiah 26:19, where it is stated to be the consequence of the death and resurrection of Christ. Thy dead shall live; with my dead body shall they arise: awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. The valley of dry bones, Ezekiel 37:1ff is both an illustration and proof of it. And Daniel has taught both the resurrection and the **eternal judgement**, Daniel 12:2: And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. In the New Testament, before the death of the Lord Jesus, both Martha and Mary declared their confidence in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

The resurrection of the dead is fundamental to the Gospel message. The Hope of a believer is anchored in the living Lord. He, alive from the dead is the proof positive of the resurrection of the rest of the dead. Because He lives we know that we shall live also. A message that leaves out eternal life and that omits eternal judgement is not the Christian gospel.

Eternal judgement is the prerogative of God. He judges all in Christ to be righteous and He, a holy God, judges all outside of Christ to be in their sins. For those in Christ, eternal life-eternal blessing is the expectation. For those that are still in their sins a resurrection to eternal shame and everlasting contempt. The results of the decisions taken at the judgements, when Christ died at Calvary or the Great White Throne, where unbelievers will stand, will continue unabated for eternity. Please note, our place in eternity is determined while we live, it is essential for us to determine our eternal state while we have opportunity to hear about the Lord Jesus Christ and believe that He died in my place, bearing the penalty for my sins. **Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.**

This will we do, my plan is to teach beyond the rudiments of the faith, says Paul. The best is yet to come, how to live in the world and in the sight of God. How to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. How to interpret the scriptures so to reveal the Lord in his glory and what can be understood of the Law as it relates to the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In short John 17: 3 that we may know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you sent.

If God permit, is a phrase showing how the apostle depends entirely on God for ability, time, knowledge, interpretation and application of the scriptures. God has preserved His word so it is assumed He would have us read it. The Lord Jesus has given gifted people to the church, for the purpose of teaching the truths contained in the Word, for the edifying of the saints and the building up of the church. God is not a hindrance to the publication of the truths concerning those things mentioned in verses one and two. The difficulty God faces and would overcome is our inability to see beyond the doctrines of men and the rites of a dead system.

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come: -what kind of people is this? The people are described before the warning is given. A superficial reading of verses 4 and 5 lead to the misunderstanding that those who have believed to the saving of the soul can subsequently lose that salvation because they sin. The security of the believer is attested to in both the Old and New testaments. So before looking in detail at these verses I will record the words of the Preacher, John, Paul and Peter. In

Ecclesiastes 3: 14 he writes *I know that, whatsoever God does, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God does it, that men should fear before him.*

John quotes the Lord Jesus, 3: 15-16 that *whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* In verse 36 of the same chapter: *He that believes on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.*

John 10: 27-30 *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.*

Romans 8: 35-39, *who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Ephesians 1: 12-14 *that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

Philippians 1: 6 *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

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

1 Peter 1: 3-5 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

It is impossible for those who were once enlightened must be considered in the light of other scripture. The words of the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel recorded by Matthew 13. 3, *and he spoke many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; 4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell **by** the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them: 5 Some fell **upon** stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: 6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. 7 And some fell **among** thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: 8 But other fell **into** good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred times, some sixty times, some thirty times. 9, who have ears to hear, let him hear.*

The Lord Jesus Christ gives the interpretation to these verses later in the chapter so before considering **those who were once enlightened** we will look at the words of the Lord. Verse 18 – 23. 18. *Hear therefore the parable of the sower. 19 When any one hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the wicked one, and catches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he, which received seed **by** the way side. 20. But he that received the seed **upon** stony places, the same is he that hears the word, and anon with joy receives it; 21. Yet hath he not root in himself, but endures for a while: for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended. 22. He also that received seed **among** the thorns is he that hears the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. 23 But he that received seed **into** the good ground is he that hears the word, and understands it; which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

In each situation the Holy Spirit applied the Word of God in the heart of the hearer, that is enlightenment. **By the wayside** is explained by the Lord Jesus as the person who hears, appears to accept and then is led to believe

that the word received is not in fact the word of God. Satan is successful in securing the death of a sinner by distorting the truth. The apostle in writing to the Galatians calls it another gospel, which is not the gospel, but is anathema. It was sown in the heart. **Upon stony places** applies to the person that with joy received the Word of truth, enlightened, but without a responding belief, so no roots, no salvation. **Among the thorns**, the Lord says is one who hears the word but because the word is not mixed with faith in the hearer, anxiety and riches choke the Word and the hearer is unfruitful. He that received seed **in the good ground** is he that hears the word and understands it so goes on to bear fruit, thereby demonstrating saving faith, fruitfulness. God, who wills not the death of any sinner, sends forth the Word of Life, called elsewhere the Sword of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes the Word and with it convinces the world of sin, righteousness and judgement. The Word of God can bring salvation to all that are exercised by it, to all that call upon the Lord when they are convicted by the Holy Spirit of the need of a Saviour. Enlightenment is not salvation but may lead to salvation if the word has landed in prepared soil.

The five points mentioned in verses 4 and 5 may precede salvation or may accompany salvation, they do not always lead to salvation. They belong to those persons who are in the sphere of Christians, to such people as reject the whole Christian system, and its author, the Lord Jesus. Those of them only who join with the Jews in calling Christ an impostor, and vindicate his murderers in having crucified him as a malefactor; and thus they render their salvation impossible. Wilfully and maliciously rejecting the Lord that bought them puts them outside the grace of God. No man believing in the Lord Jesus as their personal sacrifice for sin, and acknowledging Christianity as a Divine revelation, is here intended, though he may be a backslider and not living in the joy of the salvation of God.

The purpose of these verses is to show how easy it is to fall, even from the highest position of favour. The Jews were those Israelites; to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. The Jews were those whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. Romans 9: 4-5. The Hebrew people is still a very small percentage of the world population, and these words of the Apostle Paul apply to so many more peoples of this day and age. There are those that are in a more privileged position than the Jews ever obtained. In this Day of Grace, 2004 AD, so many millions are hearing about the Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation offered through the sacrifice He made of Himself. The Judeo Christian ethic is the dominant teaching in law and order throughout the western world and its judicial systems.

Once enlightened- instructed in the nature and design of the Christian religion, having received the knowledge of the truth, Hebrews 10:32; and being convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgement, having been made aware of the importance of faith in Christ for salvation.

Tasted of the heavenly gift- having received the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins. The seed sown has fallen onto or among or by, but not into good soil.

Partakers of the Holy Ghost The Spirit himself witnessing with their spirits assuring them of God's mercy towards them, and of the efficacy of the death of Jesus through which such blessings were available.

And have tasted the good word of God. Have had this proof of the excellence of the promise of God in sending the Gospel, the Gospel being itself the good word of a good God. Genuine believers have an appetite for the word of God; they taste it, and then they say with Job; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.

The powers of the world to come, These words may be understood about the miracles wrought in confirmation of the Gospel, the Gospel dispensation being the world to come in the Jewish phraseology. The prophets had declared that the Messiah, when he came, should work many miracles, and should be as mighty in word and deed as was Moses; see Deuteronomy 18:15-19. And they particularly specify the giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, strength to the lame, and speech to the dumb; Isaiah 35:5,6. All these miracles Jesus Christ did in the sight of this very people. The Jews had the highest evidence they could have that Jesus was this promised Messiah, and could have no pretence to doubt his mission.

So we see from this that the Jews who were not of the Christian faith, having rejected the Christ of God, and the Gentiles who would not believe the message presented to them were in a hopeless plight. It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance because they will not accept God's way of salvation.

For it is impossible, --- if they shall fall away, to bring them to the point of acknowledging that Jesus Christ is Lord. Why? Because God does not have a plan of salvation apart from salvation by faith, in the satisfaction Christ gave to God when He died on the Cross. Those people who have heard the truth and decided it is not relevant fall from the position where they might be saved. To decide that the death of the Lord Jesus was not as God planned as the means of propitiation, was not the penalty for sin, leaves no other possibility of redemption for that person. The text of the K.J.V. uses the words IF they shall fall away but the tense of the text is Aorist, hence HAVE fallen away. Though the word is not spoken about the saints it is nevertheless a warning for us to be conscience of our weaknesses and our need for dependence on the Lord at all times. **If they shall fall away** is used in the same way we would say- **if the plane crashed** they would certainly have died.

To renew them again unto repentance is inconceivable. Repentance is the first step on the path back to God. If a person has heard that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried and rose again the third day, according to the scriptures, and rejects it, there is no hope for that person. If as a penitent I refuse the offer a gracious God makes, I put myself on the road to a lost eternity. That road has no escape hatches or side doors, no life belts or any other means of avoiding the fate ordained for those that choose to die without the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, is the apparent attitude of these people. Rejecting the salvation of God puts you with the people that crucified the Lord Jesus. You say with them, this man is an impostor, this man is worthy of death, and this man is not the Christ of God. You say with those that crucified Him, that this man is not the provision of God for my sin.

And put Him to an open shame; publicly denounce Him. Passive rejection is no less devastating than active rejection; neglect of the message brings the same judgement as rejection of the message. Any one who hears of the way of salvation, by faith in the sacrifice God provided, and refuses to believe, put to shame the Son of God. Each so called Christian religions that do not have as the one and only means of salvation the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ put Him to an open shame. Any professing Christian that teaches that works are necessary for salvation puts Christ to an open shame. Teaching that a person once saved can lose his salvation puts Christ to an open shame for that is tantamount to saying that the sacrifice God provided is not adequate.

The earth and rain, - herbs and blessing, the earth and rain, - thorns and briers, near cursing, is a comparison from life that we can all understand. The rain waters land that is cultivated, and land that is not cultivated. The husbandman receives the fruit of his labour, after the rain has fallen indiscriminately. His work has been profitable and the increase is as God purposed. *Whatsoever man sows that shall he also reap*. Land that is not cleared of weeds, not prepared for a good harvest will bring forth that which is useless. The rain falls on the prepared soil and the uncultivated land. The seed, which falls into good soil, brings forth fruit after the rain falls. God blesses the toil of the labourer.

In relation to those that preach the Gospel, the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians in his second epistle 2: 15-16. *We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other, the savour of life unto life*. The same word preached to a group of people produces life in those where the word is mixed with faith and death where the word is not accepted as the Word of God.

Is nigh unto cursing. It is acknowledged, almost on all hands, that this epistle was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This verse is in my opinion a proof of it, and here I suppose the apostle refers to that approaching destruction; and perhaps he has this all along in view, but speaks of it covertly, that he might not give offence. [Adam Clarke]

There is a sense in which all these things, verses 4 and 5, may be applied to the Jews who were favoured by our Lord's ministry and miracles. His preaching **enlightened** them. They **tasted the good Word of God**, the Christian religion established among them saw many of their children and relatives made **partakers of the Holy Spirit**. They tasted the good word of God, by the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham; and saw the almighty **power of God** in a variety of miracles. They were convinced that never man spoke as this man, and that none could do those miracles which he did, except God were with him. They followed him in thousands, for three years, while he preached to them the Gospel of the kingdom of God. They **fell away** from all this; they crucified him. In His death and His resurrection, He was demonstrated to be the Son of God with power. Then the religious

leaders, to vindicate their unparalleled wickedness, endeavoured to make him a public example, by reproaches and blasphemies. The hearts of this people, the Jews were the cultivated field; farmers were the judges and prophets, working from the time of Moses through to the Apostles. Now the fruit of their labour was revealed, showing the state of the ground that they tried to cultivate. The soil brought forth pride, unbelief, and hardness of heart, contempt of God's word, blasphemy, and rebellion. This people were rejected-reprobate, they were **nigh unto cursing**. Thus the apostle, under the case of individuals, points out the destruction that was to come and, viewed in this light, much of the obscurity and difficulty of these verses disappears.

The apostle has demonstrated how there is no hope without Christ; he has pointed out the way God works to bring a sinner to repentance. Paul has made it quite clear that to be saved is the responsibility of the individual to respond in faith to the overtures of God. He has shown that to try to reach God by any other means is vanity giving the land on which rain falls as an example of how some is fertile and fruitful and other is barren and brings forth only useless growth.

The third warning is now expressed: **The first**, there is no escape from the penalty of sin apart from salvation by faith in the Sin-bearer, Jesus Christ. **The second**, all the voices clamouring for attention drown the most important voice, the voice that cries, Today if you will hear His voice harden not your heart. **The third**, works of the flesh, following close beside those with faith, and amending your ways is the clean side of the path to a lost eternity.

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you. In verses 4 and 6 the apostle spoke of **those** and **they** and warned them of the consequences if they should fall away. The experiences outlined may precede and even accompany salvation, but do not always result in salvation; as may be seen from the parable of the sower. Here the form of address is more intimate and to a different audience. These people are the beloved in the Lord; they are expected to show the fruit of the Spirit as they grow in the Lord, and to develop Christlike characteristics. Better things in relation to your understanding of the Word of God and better things in relation to your dealings with other believers. The apostle is persuaded that these Christians will bring forth the: -

Things that accompany salvation, things that show works have been done in the heart and soul, things that have changed the thought patterns. So what accompanies salvation? External testimonies, baptism, fellowship with others of like mind, ministering to the saints, and privately, a desire to know the Saviour, an interest in the Word of God, communication with the Lord, holiness as an ambition and not least, a love of the brethren. We encourage each other to grow in grace and we strengthen and support each other. The local church shows a willingness to reach out with the Gospel message both locally and further afield. The impact of the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, is not queried or doubted for the changed lives of the people in the community are a testimony that cannot be denied. Do you stand out in the group of Christians you associate with? Is the fruit of your labour edifying to the church? Are you displaying in some small measure the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ? Is the bible a book that you want to read more than any other books are? Is your quiet time with the Lord Jesus so precious to you that you would rather miss your breakfast than communion with the Lord? Is your heart set on knowing God and Jesus Christ, whom He sent? These attitudes and activities are the things that accompany salvation. Good works cannot save us but good works are the sign or fruit of someone that is saved.

Though we thus speak, about falling away, it is not because we doubt the power of God to save to the uttermost all that come unto Him by faith. The Apostle associates himself with the saints in the warning to those that are near to salvation but who are falling short through lack of faith. They want the Law because it is an activity in which they can participate, thereby earning merit. Christ is the end of the Law to every one that believes, so the keeping of the Law though good, does not satisfy the righteous claims of a Holy God.

God is not unrighteous, which He would be if he did not keep His promise. God made His promise without provocation from any created being, God is sovereign over all creation and has no need in any area, but having made a promise He must keep it.

To forget is a weakness in man; God has no such shortcomings. God may choose not to remember but He cannot forget.

Your work and labour of love will be remembered. More properly, **labour and love**; will not go unrewarded. God will reward all endeavours to bring glory to His name. God is pleased to own the new nature that

is manifesting itself in the beloved. The Holy Spirit, which is given unto us, sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts, and love of the brethren is a characteristic that should be encouraged. Paul in the Ephesians epistle states; we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. So the beloved who are reading this letter have shown their real faith by the changes to their beliefs and activities.

Shown toward His name points out to us in this generation the folly of trying to get a name for ourselves. Many Christian groups lay claims to various names, the largest congregation, the best singers, most spectacular performance, the most valuable buildings, and the biggest givers financially, the most enthusiastic etc. but this is all vanity. All good works to be accepted by God must spring forth from love to God and have love for God as the motive force. Self-seeking and self-promoting destroys the work God would do in an individual and through a congregation. The size of a group is not a sign of the favour of God, nor is the wealth accumulated a measure of the goodness of God.

You have ministered to the saints and do minister, your work continues as it began. It may be that these brethren contributed to the poor saints at Jerusalem or some other situation where there was need. They desired the welfare of the saints and worked to that end. The comfort given and the aid afforded were noted and it is recorded that the activity continued. It is good to continue in a work once started, to be diligent and consistent. The reward will follow for the Lord cannot forget your labour and love. There is a good work for each member of the body of Christ to do; waiting patiently on the Lord will give spiritual discernment and confirmation what that work is and where it will best be exercised. If there is uncertainty as to what that work is then do what comes to mind for it is never wrong to do good works; especially to the household of the saints.

And we desire; we have a yearning, we who oversee the work locally long to see the saints going from milk to meat. We greatly rejoice in the believers going from faith to faith.

That every one of you, that no one should be left out, that all **show the same diligence**. Each member of the fellowship has a responsibility to encourage another in the work God has equipped that person to do. Younger saints, seek a mentor among the older saints. Older saints look for and encourage a younger saint, draw out the gift to the benefit of the saints and the local church. Diligence in the things of God is the way of assurance. Regular reading of the word, meditating therein, continuing diligently in prayer, attendance at the meetings arranged for the building up of the church; numerically and spiritually. Mutual exhortation and encouragement is the way of increased confidence.

Full assurance of hope unto the end, the joy and confidence of the person who has just believed is evident. This euphoria wanes as the days go on, as the difficulties encountered impinge on the time and emotions of the believer. It need not be so; the enthusiasm for the Lord and the things of God can and does increase if we allow time for God in our busy schedules. Assurance, belief in the certainty of a hearts desire and the promise of God that occasioned it, is the hope that is set before us. This hope, not as the world hopes in lacking a promise from God, is a sure and certain future, expected and to be realised because backed by God, who cannot lie. Diligence is a sign of assurance and assurance brings diligence.

That you be not slothful, there is no time to be wasted in frivolity. Maybe some in the fellowship were not pulling their weight, not giving the church the benefit of the gift they had been blessed with at new birth. The gift that the Holy Spirit gives to each one severally as He wills, 1 Corinthians 12: 11. A gift not used is laziness, it is detrimental to the holder of the gift and those that do not have the blessings available through the use of the gift. Maybe the fellowship you attend has a Pastor or a Minister, if that is so do not let that hinder you in the development and use of your gift.

Follow them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. In each Christian denomination there are those who are looked up to. Though denominationalism is wrong, there are those that are looked to as examples. In the congregation you attend there are those that you see as devout Christians, follow their example. The Apostle Paul said be followers of me as I am of Christ. Look for the characteristics of the Lord Jesus in the saints around and seek to grow in that way. Faith believes in the promise of God and patience waits for it.

Faith gives substance to things hoped for. This is the third mention of faith in this epistle. The first mention was associated with those who died in the wilderness, without faith. The second mention is as a basic necessity for

salvation. Here we see it as the fundamental way of life for one who would inherit the promises. Without faith it is impossible to please God

Inherit the promises given by God to those who have a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider the number of these promises, 1, forgiveness of sins. 2, the indwelling Holy Spirit. 3, a Father child relationship. 4, an inheritance with the saints. 5, eternal life. 6, a home in heaven. 7, a reign with Christ. 8, the continuing presence of God. 9, day by day enlightenment. 10, peace and joy continually, and other more subtle promises that an individual may realise in quiet communion with God.

God made promise to Abraham of His own volition, and kept the promise to the letter. The promises made to Abraham and to his seed were 1. That Abraham should have a numerous seed by faith as well as by natural descent. 2. That God would be a God to him and to his seed in their generations, 3. That he would give them the possession of Canaan. 4. That he would bless all the nations of the earth in him. 5. That he would bless the nations through Christ, Abraham's seed.

Because He could swear by no greater, he swore by Himself; after Abraham offered up his son Isaac God swore that He would multiply Abraham's seed. Men swear on the bible or some may say 'on my mother's deathbed', that for them being a sacred place. God has nothing more than His own word, no one greater than He is; He has no person whose memory is revered, to call upon. God's word is the final authority. His character will not be impugned.

Saying, surely, blessing I will bless thee and multiplying I will multiply thee. The blessings of the Lord make rich and Abraham had that experience, he believed God and received the promises. His seed is today the nation of Israel, the seed of the flesh, and today his seed is numbered with the Church, as Abraham is the father of the faithful. The blessing on Abraham was a continual blessing in prosperity and posterity. Concerning multiplying the seed of Abraham, God continues to add to the church daily, the number of the faithful increasing as the gospel is preached and soul respond to the overtures of God.

After he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. More than 45 years the before the offering of Isaac at Moriah, God promised Abraham a seed of his own wife and flesh. After he had waited for a long time. He did not faint or grow weary, but he persevered in a confident expectation of the fulfillment of what God had so solemnly promised. He obtained the promise. Evidently the promise referred to in the oath--that he would have numerous posterity. The Apostle Paul intimates that Abraham had waited for that a long time; that his faith did not waver, and that in due seasons the object of his wishes was granted. To see the implications of this, we are to remember, That when God called him from Haran, and when the promise of a multiplication of his seed was made to him, he was seventy-five years old, Genesis 12:1-6.

Twenty-four years elapsed after this, during which he was a sojourner in a strange land, before the manner in which this promise would be fulfilled was made known to him, Genesis 17:1-16.

It was only when he was a hundred years old, and when he had persevered in the belief of the truth of the promise against all the natural improbabilities of its accomplishment, that he received the pledge of its fulfillment in the birth of his son Isaac, Genesis 21:1-5.

The birth of Isaac was a pledge that the other blessings implied in the promise would be granted, and in that pledge Abraham "**obtained the promise.**" He did not actually see the, multiplication of his seed much beyond Isaac and the sons of Keturah, nor did he see the Messiah who was to descend from him. He saw the certainty that all this would occur. He saw by faith the Messiah in the distance, (John 8:56,) and the numberless blessings which would result from His coming. It was a remarkable instance of faith, and is a suitable instance to encourage the saints he is writing to, to continue in the path of faith with patience. If Abraham persevered when appearances were so much against the fulfillment of what had been promised, then Christians should persevere under the clearer light, and with the more distinct promises of the gospel. Patience is in relation to oneself, having a mindset that accepts the promise and waits expectantly; endurance is waiting through all the difficulties of life, without wavering, knowing that the promise will finally be obtained. There is always an interval between the promise and its fulfillment, patient endurance sees the obtaining of the promise. The circumstances may make the end obscure but cannot eradicate the promise made by God.

Men verily swear by the greater, that is, they appeal to God. They appeal to God, as they know He is able to exact the judgement expected for a breach of trust or wrongful declaration. They appeal to God, trusting the person with whom the altercation is will accept the higher authority.

An oath for confirmation is an end to all strife. The Lord Jesus taught that our word should be our bond; saying let your yes, be yes and your no, no. This must be the way of believers in the Lord Jesus; members of a church are obliged to keep their word, to do as spoken. When appearing before unbelievers, I suggest it is not an unchristian thing to take an oath, to show we have faith in a just and holy God, who is able to mete out justice. The powers that be are ordained of God, and if the law so requires we should take an oath. It is a solemn undertaking in the presence of unbelievers that God is witness to the proceedings, hears the words spoken and will hold to account the persons that call upon Him. Strife is ended when an oath for confirmation is taken; at least that used to be so. It was such that when a person swore in the presence of witnesses and before God, that the word spoken was accepted as truth. Breaking the commandment, thou shall not bear false witness, was a fearful thing, so the oath ended strife.

Promises given are oaths and swearing allegiance to the sovereign or country should not be done lightly. Promises given in the marriage vows cannot be abrogated under any circumstances. Even though the law of the land makes provision for the breaking of one's word, the law of God does not condone it, it remains a sin.

Wherein God; because God had sworn an oath and an oath had the effect of ending strife He gives assurance to those that will believe, that all things will be as God has promised. God has bound Himself with an oath to give us confidence to rely on Him for a full and free salvation.

Willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise, to make it as clear as possible. To remove all doubts so that we can be fully assured of the salvation promised. The Father did what was necessary for fallen man to know the truth and believe with certitude that what He promised He was able to do. The **heirs of promise** were those of the children of Abraham and those who would be the children of Abraham by faith. Excluded are all that refuse to believe that Jesus is the Son of God and will not allow that God has made provision for them, for the remission of sins, in the work of Jesus Christ when He offered up himself as a sacrifice on the Cross at Calvary. As Abraham was an heir to the promises of God, so are we, believers, of this dispensation. Many promises were made to the children of God prior to the death of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ made more promises all of which will be kept.

The immutability of His counsel, the incorruptible nature of the Word of God, the unchanging values by which God rules, give to man the assurance that what He has promised He is also able to perform. The counsel of God was agreed before the foundation of the world was laid. Those present at that meeting had absolute agreement in all the matters that were raised. The Triune God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit laid out the plan of salvation and the participant's, time and place of execution. They determined the blessings and made record of the benefits that would accrue to those that walked according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh after believing. The character of God is unchangeable, the word of God is established forever, and there can be no change of plans. What has been decreed stands for eternity. The way of salvation is permanent and by faith for Jew and Gentile. The destiny of the believer is as secure as the person of His Son in heaven.

Confirmed it with an oath; this gives assurance to all who accept the word of God as final. We put faith in an oath and the courts of the western world accept the word of the oath taker. How much more can we have confidence if God? God swore by Himself so we can be assured of the certainty of the end result. Had He sworn by the heavens or the earth we could have no confidence, for they will pass away. He gave Himself as the pledge and security for His oath so our reliance is in God, who cannot lie.

That by two immutable things, His oath and His promise, both offering a foundation for the faith of the person that believes that Jesus is the Son of God and that salvation is by faith. Heaven will be attained by all that receive the promise of God.

In these things, as in all divine matters, **it is impossible for God to lie.** Though the end result is not yet, we patiently wait for it. We have received the promise and patiently wait, knowing God has spoken and His word will not be recalled. God is complete in Himself, God is absolute, God changes not, and God does not have other ideas or thoughts. God cannot deny Himself, what He has promised He is able also to perform.

The Christian believing God finds a **strong consolation**. A stronger consolation is not available for there is no one that can out perform God. The reference here seems to be to one of the six cities of refuge, which were dispersed around Israel, to which the children of Israel fled if they killed someone accidentally. We, who in this age have **fled for refuge**, find that safety in the salvation secured by the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jew found safety and security in the city, where he was safe till the death of the High Priest. The High Priest of our confession lives for evermore, and our city is not built with hands but is eternal in the heavens.

To lay hold upon the hope set before us; we turn to the Lord for salvation and its accompanying blessings. A major part of the joy of salvation is **the hope set before us**, the hope of eternal life, of seeing our saviour face to face, of rest in heaven and deliverance from this body which is full of corruption. To lay hold on it is to know and experience it now. The *authority* for this hope is the Word of the Lord Jesus and the written word of God. The *assurance* of hope is the fulfilled promises of God. The steadfastness of hope, the *anchorage*, is the Rock, on which we are built, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. The *appearance* of our hope is when our Lord returns to call his people to Himself. And the *anticipation* of this hope will have us purifying ourselves, for we do not want to be ashamed at his coming.

Hope is an anchor for the soul, hope is set before us by the Lord and gives a focal point for the assurance of faith. Hope is to a Christian as hands are to a carpenter, or an oven to a baker. Hope is essential to a person who expects a future in the presence of God. What is the soul as distinct from the body and spirit of a man? The body makes us aware of our surrounds, gives to us a consciousness of things, the five senses enriching one's existence. The spirit gives a sentience of God and associated truths, which are only realised by faith. The soul is the heart of a person, the soul is the centre of the emotions. The soul gives self-awareness, makes me who I am, is the character that is seen by others and is where conforming to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ begins. In short; the body, earth awareness; the soul, self-awareness; and the spirit, awareness of God.

An anchor for the soul is such a blessing in this world. The changing values make it difficult to be consistent. As an example, love is an excuse for all manners of atrocities, many of which are condoned by the society, and in some cases by the judiciary. For the child of God, love does nothing evil; love is never rude or harmful. Love is an activity that seeks only well for all that come into contact with the person that loves, in the Christian sense of the word. Hope is the anchor, hope is the assurance of the future, and hope keeps the Christian steady and stops the drift away from God and his word. Hope allows for a balanced view of eternal issues. Hope is **sure and steadfast**, is what stops the Christian from being driven with every wind of doctrine. As an anchor cast out of the ship fastens to the ocean bed, and fixes the ship to a specific location, so hope is the tie that sets the position of the Christian in the holy place.

Within the veil is a phrase designed to take our thoughts to the work of the high priest, on the Day of Atonement. The place "**within the veil**"--the most holy place--was regarded as God's peculiar abode, where he dwelt by the visible symbol of his presence between the cherubim above the mercy seat. That holy place was emblematic of heaven; and the idea here is that the hope of the Christian enters into heaven itself; it takes hold on the throne of God. Such hope is made firm by being fastened there. It is not the hope of future riches, honours, or pleasures in this life, such a hope is vanity and would not keep the soul steady. It is the hope of eternal blessedness and purity in the new heavens and new earth where only righteousness dwells.

Whither the forerunner is for us entered; being 'in Christ' is how we enter the presence of God. Being 'in Christ' that is being baptised into the body of Christ, made a member of His body, the church, over which He is the head. The forerunner is the representative man, Jesus. The previous representative man, Adam, brought sin into the world, so 'in Adam' all die. 'In Adam' there was no way into the most holy place, for nothing that defiles or that is defiled can enter into the presence of God. The Lord Jesus Christ shows us the way and is the means whereby we can get to God. The word forerunner is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. It bears the meaning of one who goes before others to prepare the way. The Father sent to earth to His Son, commanded Mary and Joseph to name Him Jesus, then Jesus lived here on earth, in Israel, under the Law. He spent His entire earthly life doing the will of the Father, even dying the death of a sinner, thereby preparing the way into the Holiest, the place where God dwells. Jesus has gone before so we can be sure of access to the place where He sits at the right hand of the Father on high.

Jesus is the forerunner, the apostle does not say Christ or Lord, and he specifically uses the name of the Man without a title. As a man Jesus kept the Law, as a man Jesus was obedient to the Father in all things, as a man He learned obedience through sufferings, as a man Jesus represented sinful man, though without sin, so as a man He enters within the veil, thereby anchoring our hope. We have a Man as our representative at the throne of grace. Knowing a Man is there is the most comforting knowledge, a man tested in all points as we are, at the right hand of the Majesty on high. **Jesus** is the man nominated earlier in this epistle as the high priest; he entered into the holy place, as proscribed in the Law, with blood, and is accepted. This assurance is the foundation for our hope; it settles forever the doubts that may assail.

Made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, this is our Saviour, our Lord, and our representative in the highest court. An eternal priesthood is the unique constitution of the new covenant and the high priest is Jesus.

The apostle started on this subject earlier but diverted to emphasise the dangers of listening to false teachers. He also stressed it is a sign of salvation to proceed, going on to know the Lord and practising those things that accompany salvation. Through to chapter 10: 25 the apostle expounds the teaching relevant to the priestly work of the anointed Man, Jesus. The remainder of chapter 10 contains the forth warning which we will consider at a more appropriate time.

Chapter 7

This Melchizedek, there was no other, was named earlier and the apostle said there was a lot to learn from Melchizedek. He also said they were not able to receive the teaching at that time because they were dull of hearing, taken up with other things. Now having warned of the futility of following the old dispensation or turning aside from the faith that is in Christ Jesus, the apostle returns to the king of Salem. Most believe Melchizedek was a Canaanite king who worshipped the true God. He is introduced in this way to be a type, depicting the high priest of the new order. Melchizedek is not a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord, for there is no value in presenting Christ as a type of Himself. All typical teaching, relative to the Lord Jesus Christ, must fall short in some aspect. No one type could show all the facets of the perfection's of Christ.

Melchizedek was a king, and so is the Lord Jesus; a king of God's anointing; the government is laid upon his shoulders, and he rules over all for the good of his people.

That he was king of righteousness: his name signifies the righteous king. Jesus Christ is a rightful and a righteous king--rightful in his title, righteous in his government. He is the Lord our righteousness; he has fulfilled all righteousness, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, and he loves righteousness and righteous persons, and hates iniquity.

King of Salem, that is, king of peace; first king of righteousness, as to character and after that king of peace. So is our Lord Jesus; he by his righteousness made peace, the fruit of righteousness is peace. Christ speaks peace, creates peace, and is our peacemaker. Salem is now known to be Jerusalem.

Priest of the most high God, qualified and anointed in an extraordinary manner to be God's priest among the Gentiles. So is the Lord Jesus; he is the priest of the most high God, and the Gentiles must come to God by him; it is only through his priesthood that we can obtain reconciliation and remission of sin. The patriarchal priest had the same responsibilities as a Christian father in this dispensation; he must represent his offspring before God and lead them to God, by way of the cross on which Christ died.

Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days or end of life. The scripture has chosen to set him forth as an extraordinary person, without giving us his genealogy. In this way Melchizedek is presented as a clearer type of Christ, who as man, was without father, as God without mother. The priesthood of Melchizedek is without precedent and did not descend to him from another or from him to another, but is personal and perpetual.

Who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him. The incident is recorded Genesis 14:18ff. He brought forth bread and wine to refresh Abraham and his servants when they were weary; he gave as a king, and blessed as a priest. Thus our Lord Jesus meets his people in their spiritual conflicts, refreshes

them, renews their strength, and blesses them. Bread and wine are the emblems of remembrance and suggest the priestly work of Christ be subsequent to the resurrection.

Abraham gave him a tenth part of all, that is, as the apostle explains it, of all the spoils. It is not apparent why Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek; it can be assumed that Abraham recognised a priest of the God in whom he trusted and desired to give thanks in a practical way. At this time Abram had not heard the promises that gave him a hope and a future.

A tenth is not a legal requirement for the members of the body of Christ, but it is a good starting point. Nevertheless God looks on the heart and knows how much is given whether it is 1% or 99% of the increase He bestows. God loves a cheerful giver, and God who sees all does not leave a willing giver destitute.

Melchizedek was **made like unto the Son of God, and abides a priest continually**. He was made to appear as one with no beginning and no end, so to give the impression of an unending priesthood. As the king of righteousness and king of peace Melchizedek is as the Lord Jesus. Jesus alive from the dead, is the high priest that continues eternally, who ever lives, is able to save to the uttermost and never ceases to make intercession for the saints.

The apostle began to write about the high priest in chapter five and now returns to the details that he felt the readers were not able to grasp. The importance of the work of the high priest is expounded in the following dissertation, certain aspects of that work being compared with the old order. The Aaronic priesthood falls short of the priesthood of Christ Jesus. The Aaronic made nothing perfect. The priests of the tribe of Levi died, and their ministry died with them. The Old Testament priesthood served the shadow of which Christ is the substance. Jesus Christ is the mediator of a better covenant. The activities of the old order pointed forward to the work that the Lord Jesus now does as the high priest. The old covenant is replaced with a new covenant. The rites practiced in the tabernacle and temple were examples to us of the new system. The sacrifices had to be repeated often, but now there is one sacrifice, never to be repeated. The heavenly sanctuary was cleansed by a better sacrifice than was possible under the Law.

Consider how great this man was, the writer asks of the readers. Melchizedek is depicted as greater than Abraham is, so the Jews that read this letter will comprehend the surpassing importance of the Son of God. That, which was manufactured by God, in the appearing and person of Melchizedek, is actual reality in the person of Christ. This man is presented as greater than Abraham is, even Abraham as the father of many nations, the father of the faithful.

The patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils to this man. The greatness of Melchizedek is apparent in that Abraham gave, voluntarily, a tenth of the spoils of war without any obligation to do so. The patriarch, the head of the fathers, Abraham submitted to Melchizedek and in doing so said Melchizedek was greater. The importance of this is seen as the law is given and the priests receive tithes of the people. The Jews have a profound respect for Abraham so the Apostle Paul shows that even Abraham was less than Melchizedek was. In this way also the apostle emphasises the greater, better priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A precedent was begun with Abraham giving to Melchizedek a tenth of his gain. Moses was instructed to incorporate into the law a system of giving by the children of Israel, as support for the priests. All the needs of the priests were met by the obedience of the people to whom the priests ministered. The Lord God established a principle that tries the motives of the giver and humbles the receiver. The giver is tested when it is difficult to meet the needs of the family after deducting a tithe, but we can be certain that God will not forsake the person that is true to Him, but will supply all that is needful as and when needed. The receiver is humbled when he accepts that he must depend on God for all the needs of life, when he realises that his best efforts are not enough. Do you have a good job and are well paid, it is because God is gracious. The life of faith is for you as much as for the missionary or evangelist that knows not where his support is coming from. Pray for your employer or your employees that they will come to acknowledge the faithfulness of God in meeting all physical and spiritual needs.

Paul asks us to consider the greatness of this man to whom Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils of war. This he does to turn our thinking from the man, Melchizedek, to the Christ of God. This consideration sees the patriarch Abraham as lesser than the person to whom he gave a tenth of the spoils. The custom was to pile all the spoils of

war in a heap and then disperse them according to the whim of the leading warrior or king. A tenth of the spoils was then 'the top of the heap' and this is what Melchizedek received.

Verily they that are the sons of Levi, the tribe from which the priest were taken, were eminent in Israel. The progeny of Aaron, through Levi, produced the priesthood, but not all the Levites were priests, though all priests were Levites. The tribe of Levi were given 2000 cubits around the Cities of Refuge, of which there were six. This land was theirs in perpetuity; it could not be sold off or taken from them by another Israelite. The harvest of this land, from horticulture or agriculture, was theirs. The Levites were exempt taxes, so did not support the kings from their produce.

The sons of Levi who receive the office of the priesthood, those direct descendants from Aaron who were the priests had a commandment to accept tithes of their brethren as well as from the people. Levites gave tithes to Levites in the same way that the other tribes supplied the needs of the priests and the ministry they had to perform. This puts the priesthood above the general populace of Israel. They, as the servants of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were held in high esteem. God gave the Law through Moses, Moses taught the Law of God to the people and that Law established the sons of Aaron as the priesthood. So the children of Israel gave tithes to the Levites who were also the children of Israel. All the tribes were out of the **loins of Abraham**, the fulfilment of the promise given to him before the birth of Isaac.

The priesthood had a **commandment to take tithes of the people**. There was to be no hindrance to the people giving to the work of the Lord. The servants of the tabernacle lived by the gifts of the people. In this day I have heard of missionaries who have returned from the field of harvest, occasionally through lack of support. You may argue they should not be there if they are not supported, but we cannot question the hearts of these persons; we cannot discern the motives. As the church is a kingdom of priests so they servants of the Lord; in evangelism or teaching may expect to live off the gospel. Paul said to this problem; *my God shall supply all my needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus*.

The giving of Christians is not limited to a tithe, more or less is acceptable as long as it is given willingly and is given with the right motive. The Israelites were told by the prophet Malachi to bring all their tithes into the storehouse so that they would be in a position to receive the blessings that God had ready for them. In the same passage in chapter three they are informed of the wrong attitude and motive that governed their reluctance to give to the work of the ministry. Offerings were also withheld, in this way the Israelites robbed God. There is another type of gift mentioned 8 times in the Old Testament, the freewill offering, this is over and above the others and in each mention was for God. I suggest we bring our tithes, however much, into the assembly, the storehouse. That we give our offerings to the Lord's people as we see the need and are able to alleviate it. The freewill offering is such as is ministered to the saints in the daily round, that which will meet the need of missionaries on furlough, or making contact with neighbours so the gospel message may be proclaimed with accompanying good works to back it up.

Now is the time to note the importance of the addressees of this epistle. It is not addressed to Jews that have embraced the truth or to Jews that have rejected the truth. It is written to those who are from the **loins of Abraham**. The Hebrew people that read this letter will associate themselves with the truths contained therein or reject them according to the faith they exercise, whether they believe in the Christ of God or hold to the Law as delivered by Moses.

Melchizedek was not a descendant of Abraham; he was a contemporary of Abraham. So the argument Paul presents is that Abraham, though the Patriarch, is of less stature than the priest of the Most High God, therefore Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek. After Abraham acknowledged the superiority of Melchizedek, Melchizedek blessed Abraham and in doing so agreed with the assessment.

Without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better. The argument is that the priesthood of the Lord Jesus is greater than the Levitical priesthood for Melchizedek blessed Abraham and all those who would spring from him, and Melchizedek was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. The promise of a Messiah was through Abraham but that did not make him or his offspring greater than the type presented in the priest, to whom the patriarch gave tithes. Melchizedek accepted the gift of Abraham and as a superior, a priest, blessed Abraham. God gave the authority to His priest to bless Abraham.

Men that die receive tithes; but there he receives them of whom it is witnessed that he still lives: And so it continues to this day. But the Priest of the Most High God is not recorded as having died. The apostle is writing about the religious order that continued after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jews were reluctant to move on from the works of the flesh to faith in the risen Son of God, they continued tithing to men, for as one died another was appointed to take his place. They failed to see that Christ was the end of the Law to all that believe. There is no account of Melchizedek ceasing to be a priest or of his dying. This then is a clear type of the Lord Jesus Christ, who ever lives and has an unchanging priesthood. The order of Melchizedek is not a service in the tabernacle or temple, nor was it during those times. It started before Abram received the promises and, as Melchizedek is not recorded as having died the order points to the resurrection ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Melchizedek bringing forth bread and wine enhances this similarity. Though it is likely the food and drink was to refresh Abram it is symbolic that these are the emblems by which we remember the death of the Lord Jesus and in doing so look for His return to call the Church to Himself.

And as I may so say, or consider this; the apostle is suggesting that the tribe of Levi from whom are the priests, paid tithes while yet unborn, as Abram gave to Melchizedek the tenth of the spoils. This occurred 400 or more years previously, for Levi was not born to Moses and Jocabed till the last years of the sojourn in Egypt. A precedent is set in the early days of Adam's life, Adam sinned and so death passed to all. The sin of Adam brought death to all born in Adam's line. Paul uses this reasoning to show that Levi paid tithes while yet in the loins of Abraham.

Levi, who receives tithes, that is the priests, who are all Levites, have a commandant to take tithes of the people. They are not to hinder the giving or reject the gift of the person who desires to support the work of the Lord. Before Aaron had a child and named him Levi Abram saw Melchizedek and gave to him a gift.

In the loins of his father: God's vision of the future is not clouded by the events that will take place or by the multitude of them. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and of Moses, Aaron and Levi planned the type, Melchizedek, and the meeting with Abraham, to put the picture of Jesus Christ as a high priest in the right setting. The Lord Jesus, ordained a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, is of a higher order than the Aaronic priesthood. Firstly because the Levites paid tithes while still in the loins of Abraham. Second because the Aaronic priesthood made nothing perfect, as we see in the following 12 verses.

If, therefore, perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, we would not have a Saviour. The word-translated perfection is used in the sense of fullness, maturity or completion, leaving nothing to be done. Applied to the Levitical priesthood; consider why that priesthood was established. The Levitical priesthood was established to give to God the glory that is due unto His holy name. It should have so enlightened the people that their enjoyment and proximity to Deity would have kept them from sin. The sacrifices would have purified the conscience and purged the soul from all guilt. The people to whom the Law was given would have lived in a theocracy where God ruled in the midst of His people. The Levitical priesthood represented a perfect system but it was not possible for the imperfect people to keep the Law, for by the Law came the knowledge of sin. The Levitical priesthood was therefore a shadow of good things to come.

Under it the people received the Law, that is on account of it. The priesthood was after the Law, for Moses received the law then consecrated the priests. The priesthood was established because the Law had been broken and must be fulfilled, so to satisfy God. The Law could only show the way to enjoying the good things of God. It is necessary to see that the economy, that is the culture, under which the Law was received, fell short of that which was desired by God, as the standard. *The law is holy and the commandment, holy, just and good* but the ability of the people of the covenant to keep the Law was no greater than ours is today. The Law served to show the exceeding sinfulness of sin as well as giving the parameters for righteousness. Romans 8:3, *for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.* The priests of the Levitical order sinned so a new priest had to be found of an order that would not succumb to sin. A priest that would keep the Law in its entirety, having no needs to sacrifice for himself.

Another priest after the order of Melchizedek, ---not called after the order of Aaron was the plan God brought to fruition in the person of His Son. The prophecy had gone before that another priest would arise after the order of Melchizedek, this implies that the previous order was not accomplishing the purposes planned for it. The apostle says in another place 'if righteous came by the Law then Christ died in vain'. The weakness of the Law is

in the flesh of those to whom it was given. Therefore another priest had to be raised up, a priest that was without any weaknesses, one that could impute His righteousness to those that exercised faith in the sacrifice He offered. This priest must have none of the limitations of the flesh, must not be subject to death, must be free from sin, must maintain close contact with God and must be perfect in all his ways. This was not possible for any of the priests that were of Aaron's lineage for all born of Adam are born in sin and shaped in iniquity. Of the Lord Jesus Christ it is recorded that he was perfect in all His ways so after the resurrection it can be ascertained that He is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the Law. There was a close relationship between the priesthood and the Law so that the failure of one necessitated a change in the other. The priests failed in that they died and in that they sinned. The Law failed in that it made no one perfect. The Law in the context of the priesthood is here intended for it is evident that the moral law was not abrogated. The priesthood operated under a strict code of rites including sacrifices, washings, clothing, tithing, speech and conduct and these laws changed with the introduction of another priest who was not of the old order. The Ten Commandments were given before the priesthood was established and they were not dependent upon the priests for enforcement. Melchizedek was a priest more than four hundred years before the law was given; and David prophesied, Psalm 110:4, that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, nearly five hundred years after the law was given. The law, therefore, did not contain the original priesthood; this existed typically in Melchizedek, and became a reality in Jesus Christ. The priesthood of Aaron's line has given way to the priesthood that preceded it by over four hundred years.

The change to the law is in the application of it. The standard God has set will ever be the standard of righteousness but the way in which sinful man attains to that standard is not the same as under the Aaronic priesthood. The priests of the covenant offered sacrifices, the blood of which was the atonement for sin, the blood covered the offence. Under the new covenant the sacrifice, which was once, for all, deals with the sin question in its entirety. "My sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to His cross and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul". The change in the priestly office made imperative the change in the Law.

For He of whom these things are spoken pertains to another tribe, a tribe that had no priestly duties or responsibilities. The tribe of Levi was chosen by God to do the work, offer the sacrifices, receive the tithes, and live off the gifts brought to the service of God in the tabernacle. He whose descent is not of Levi, the one of whom the apostle is now speaking, was from the tribe of Judah. It was not allowed in the Law of the priesthood for a man of Judah to be priest so a special dispensation began when the Lord Jesus was made a priest after the order of Melchizedek. These things are spoken of Jesus the Messiah, who was not of the tribe of Levi. The apostle has led the readers to the conclusion that the high priest that will continue the work of God, is the Lord Jesus Christ. No man from the tribe of Judah gave attendance at the altar so the change in the Law was initiated to accommodate the new priesthood, an undying priest, after the order of Melchizedek.

It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah. Tracing the generations of the Lord Jesus, in the Gospel of Matthew, we see that Joseph was of the tribe of Judah. This may pose a problem, for the line of Judah's kings was cut off at Jeconiah, [Coniah in Jeremiah 22], where it is predicted that none of his seed should prosper any more, sitting on the throne of David. Had Jesus been the natural son of Joseph, who was descended from Jeconiah, He could never reign in power and righteousness because of the curse. Jesus Christ came through Mary, also of David's line, as recorded in the Gospel of Luke so avoiding the curse on Jeconiah, and his sons, and descendants.

It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah. It is well known and it is not a matter of dispute. The fact that the Lord Jesus is of the tribe of Judah is without question and not doubted in any historical document or by any person of any race that has looked at the scriptures. Compare. Matthew 1:3. But probably the apostle means here to refer to more than that simple fact. It was a doctrine of the Old Testament, and was admitted by the Jews, that the Messiah was to be of that tribe. See Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 11:1; Micah 5:2; Matthew 11:6, This was an additional consideration to show that there was to be a change of some kind in the office of the priesthood, since it was declared Psalm 110:1-7 that the Messiah was to be a priest. The fact that the Messiah is to be of the tribe of Judah is still admitted by the Jews. As their distinction of tribes now, however, is not clear, and as it is impossible for them to tell who belongs to the tribe of Judah, they hold it that when He comes this will be made known in a miraculous way. The Messiah was to be King, so setting in order the thought and promise of a King Priest, not

possible in the old economy but essential to the plan God has for the redemption of man and the edification of a Church.

Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood and the tribe of Judah. This was not remiss of Moses, Moses was careful to follow all the instructions given to him. Moses was the meekest man in all the earth and had no aspirations for greatness or to impose his will on the children of Israel. As Moses gave commandment to the tribe of Levi, and directions in the service of the tabernacle it was as he received instruction from the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses spoke nothing concerning Judah and the priesthood nor Judah and the king of Israel for he understood the nation to be a theocracy and reported to the people all that God told him was needful for their moral and physical wellbeing.

And it is yet far more evident that there must be a change to the priesthood because the new priest is not of the tribe of Levi. **And it is yet far more evident** for the new priest is a king. The newly established priesthood of which the apostle is writing is of the oldest order, preceding that of Levi, going back more than 420 years to Abraham and Melchizedek. Melchizedek was made to appear as the Son of God, and the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah, the King of David's line, is made a high priest forever in this new order. The change to the priesthood does away with the old order and establishes the new order of a priest that ever lives in a priesthood that will never change, where the priest is the King, the Messiah, and the Christ of God.

Who is made, that is Christ is made a priest. Not of the Levites, not following after one that has died or is perishing. The weakness of the flesh and the sinfulness of the nature were prejudicial to the priesthood. A new Law was introduced to establish a new priest in an order that preceded the priesthood of Aaron and his sons. God Himself appoints Jesus to this high office, for though He had ordained the priesthood of the previous dispensation, it failed by reason of weakness and death.

Not after the law of a carnal commandment, where the priesthood continued by reason of birthright. Not according to the law of a commandment pertaining to the flesh, carnal means fleshly. The laws for the priest were external and served the people in an obvious way. The new High Priest serves a spiritual need more than outward observances. There is a change in the form and order of making the priests. Before, in the Levitical priesthood, they were made after the law of a carnal commandment; but our great high priest was made after the power of an endless life. The earlier law appointed that the office should descend, upon the death of the father, to his eldest son, according to the order of carnal or natural generation. None of the high priests under the law were without father or mother or without descent. They had both beginning of days and end of life; and so the carnal commandment, or law of primogeniture, directed their succession, as it did in matters of civil right and inheritance. But the law, by which Christ was constituted a priest, after the order of Melchizedek, was the power of an endless life. The life and immortality, which he had in himself, were his right and title to the priesthood. The very law which constituted the Levitical priesthood supposed the priests to be weak, frail, and dying, not able to preserve their own natural lives. The high priest of our profession holds his office by that innate power of an endless life which he has in himself, not only ever living in himself, but able to communicate spiritual and eternal life to all those who rely upon his sacrifice and intercession.

After the power of an endless life is descriptive of the priest that is in office today; not dying or unable to perform through weakness, but having power in Himself to confer life and immortality on all who believe. He lives so gives to all those that believe to the saving of the soul, that *He is able to keep that which is committed to Him until that day* in which He takes us from this scene, to be with Him forever.

For He testifies, as recorded in the scriptures or as the voice from heaven. God speaks for Himself and needs no other confirmation, for it is impossible for God to lie. **Thou-** the Lord Jesus Christ, **a priest-** the office to which Jesus is appointed after being raised from among the dead, **forever-** the duration of this priesthood will not end through weakness or death or succession. **The order of Melchizedek-** undying, serving the true God, able to confer a blessing and, in the case of the Lord Himself able to impart eternal life.

There is verily a disannulling, an abrogation of the commandment, the laws of the priesthood. The ceremonial rites were deemed inadequate and the priests ineffective for none were changed either in heart or lifestyle. The law required perfect obedience but was without power to assist, so leaving the law keepers frustrated, and not knowing whether they had done all that the law demanded in an adequate manner.

Weakness and unprofitableness, no man was benefited by the mere observance of its precepts: it pardoned no sin, changed no heart, reformed no life; it found men dead in trespasses and sins, and it consigned them to eternal death. It was therefore weak in itself, and unprofitable to men. The law did show to the observer of its precepts the extreme sinfulness of sin, at the same time pointing out the standard of holiness God expected man to strive for.

For the law made nothing perfect, it did not pardon sin; it could not change the heart. When the blood of a sacrifice was applied it only covered the sin, made atonement. It did not reconcile the sinner to God; it did not remove the guilt, or bring peace to the troubled soul. There were many saved prior to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, but in every instance it was as the type represented the Saviour. The only means of salvation from the beginning has been by faith. That has not changed through all the dispensations, from Adam to the present day. Each generation and all kindred's may be saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in Him alone, without the mediation of man be he priest or prophet. The keeping of the law will not save but it will enable a saved person to enjoy life in the presence of his Saviour.

The bringing in of a better hope did what the law of the offerings and the rites of the priesthood failed to do. The law left the conscience guilty and the heart unchanged, so the sinner remained outside the most holy place. The better hope allows the sinner to be reconciled to God. The better hope removes the enmity by dealing with the sin of the penitent. Our sin was the cause of the break, destroying the peace, and setting the distance between God and His creation. The better hope bridged the gap for it satisfied the claims of the Lord God Almighty by meeting all the requirements He set-up.

By which we draw near unto God, this in contrast to the priests and people of the priesthood before the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only the high priest was allowed to enter the most holy place and that on only one day in the year, with the blood of a beast. The blood was sprinkled before and on the Mercy Seat to make atonement for the sins of the high priest and the sins of the people. Atonement is covering; it is not a New Testament word and should not be used in relation to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The better Hope is the Lord Jesus Himself and as he is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high we draw near unto God with the full assurance of faith. The gospel message teaches us that our sins are nailed to the Cross-, in the person of Jesus Christ, and can not be put to our account again. The resurrection gives us confidence to draw near to God because our Saviour is there at His right hand. *He, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the **propitiation** for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world.*

And inasmuch as not without an oath, The apostle's reasoning here is founded on this, that God never interposed his oath, except to show the certainty and immutability of the thing sworn. So he swore to Abraham, Genesis. 22:16-18, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. God swore to the rebellious Israelites, Deuteronomy 1:34,35, that they should not enter into his rest; and to Moses, Deuteronomy 4:21, that he should not go into Canaan. He swore to David, Psalm 89:4, that his seed should endure forever, and his throne unto all generations. Since Christ was made a priest, **with an oath** he should be a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek. God, establishing the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ by an oath showed the immutability of His purpose. The Levitical priesthood and the Law of Moses were established without an oath, so were superceded by Grace and the Spirit of the Law. The appointment of the Lord Jesus by an oath shows the superiority of the appointment and the permanence of the office Jesus fills. He is our great High Priest.

Concerning oaths or vows, it is notable in this generation, particularly in the Western Civilisation, that they are taken very lightly. In Parliament the members swear allegiance to the sovereign and subjects but reject the commitment as soon as another prospect arises; i.e. a republic. The marriage vows are ignored when the lust of the flesh diverts the attention for a moment. Employees cheat on their employers by taking time off when not sick and claiming sick benefits, also taking action to the detriment of the employer although they have agreed to work for a certain sum. Unscrupulous claimants for all manners of false claims consider insurance companies fair game. Those who have lost their rights, prisoners of the state, seek compensation against those who do their duty. The lawyers acting on behalf of the wrongdoer often treat victims of crimes as the criminals, and the punishment rarely fits the crime. The powers that be [judicial] are ordained by God, He gives us what we vote for in a democratic society. The political party's set the laws by which the people live, generally these laws are a retrograde step so the moral state of the nation degenerates.

For those priests were made without an oath. The Levitical priesthood was as one died and passed the mantle to the successor, who was then set apart and consecrated according to the Law, without the swearing of an oath on the part of God. Jesus entered his office and work of Priest by the swearing of an oath, God swore an oath and will not withdraw it, neglect it, rescind it or change it as long as there is a person that needs a high priest to officiate on his behalf.

But this, the everlasting priesthood of Christ, was inaugurated with an oath to show the excellence of the new order. The oath indicates the permanence of the office and the immutability of the purpose of God.

By Him, by the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ was the oath sworn. **That said unto Him,** thou, the person is designated, art a priest, the office is determined, forever, the duration is till all things shall be handed back to God, that God may be all in all. After the order of Melchizedek, the type of priesthood is described.

The Lord swore and will not repent; what a great comfort it is to know that our high priest is eternal in the heavens. To have as a mediator one who has been tested and tried in all points like as we are, yet without sin. To have as our high priest one who is appointed by God. To know our high priest ever lives to make intercession for those He has redeemed. How comforting it is to know that God will not change His mind. Ecclesiastes 3:14 *I know that, whatsoever God does, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, or any thing taken from it: and God does it that men should fear before him.*

By so much, by the oath of God, by the endless priesthood, by the proximity to God of the priest, by the satisfaction given to God, by the keeping of the Law, by the complete sacrifice. **By so much was Jesus,** the man, declared the one that could guarantee the full salvation of all that come to God by faith. The name of the man is used in this context as He by Himself purged our sins and He is the one designated a priest forever. Faith exercised in the Man and the Work He accomplished at Calvary and the place, which He now occupies at the right hand of God, is salvation. Jesus, the promised seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham through which all the nations of the earth can be blessed. Jesus, the seed of David who will reign for a thousand years, but would like to reign in your heart now.

By so much was Jesus made a surety, a guaranty of all the promises of God to all that believe in His Son. With the Lord Jesus Christ as our surety it does not do away with the need for faith as the basis on which we draw near to God. Faith in the Priest and the Sacrifice is the foundation that allows us to know and enjoy the things of God. The surety of Jesus is the work of the Mediator, bringing together two parties, sinful man and a Holy God. The Lord Jesus Christ pledges on behalf of all believers that all the demands of the Law will be met, that God will not twice demand satisfaction, once in His Son and again of the penitent who trusts in the finished work of the Lord Jesus. The ever-living High Priest, is the mediator of and the surety in the new covenant and whosoever trusts in Him shall never be confounded.

A better testament, or covenant, [the same Greek word is translated, testament and covenant], that is better than that which has gone before. A better covenant signifies two simple but important facts, a previous covenant and a superior covenant. In fact there are eight covenants that can be traced through the scriptures, eight covenants where God enters into a commitment with his creature, man. Generally the covenant requires a certain activity from man then God says 'I will' on the basis of obedience to His will. In the covenant God made with Moses, He said 'If you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people'. The desire to keep the word of God and to be obedient was not in the heart of most of the children of Israel, any more than it is in the hearts of the majority of people today. A better covenant has written the law in the hearts of those that trust in the living God and in His provision of a Saviour. In the new covenant God says 'I will' but does not make his promise conditional upon the obedience of the one who believes. In the days of the better testament, this present time, the Holy Spirit is sent down from heaven to indwell all that have a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit writes the requirements of God in the heart of the believer and so a change is wrought in the life, thereby pleasing God. The better covenant that Jesus is made a surety of is a result of the unconditional love of God. In the Old Testament obedience sprang from fear, but in the New Testament obedience springs from the heart in which the love of God is spread abroad.

And they, truly were many priests because of the frailty of the flesh. The priests had their own weaknesses as well as the death sentence that is on all born of woman. They could not continue in the office to which they were

appointed since age brought infirmity and eventually death. Whether they were good or bad in the office they died and another took on the duties.

But this Man, because he continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. The excellence of the priesthood of Jesus Christ is enhanced by its unchanging and permanent nature. The contrasts between the priesthood of Aaron and his sons and that of Jesus Christ are considerable. Not least is the fact that the Man, Christ Jesus, has been dead and is alive for evermore. The priests were not able to continue in their ministry, they aged and died and the duty passed to the next in line. It mattered not how well they performed in the office; death brought an end to the ministry. But this Man, alive from the dead is the minister of the New Covenant; having a work to do and a ministry to perform that will never cease or be passed to another.

Wherefore, He is able also to save them to the uttermost: because He lives the work He has initiated will continue. The salvation offered is from the power, guilt, nature and penalty of sin, a complete work that the Lord Jesus will carry out [has carried out] on behalf of the redeemed till they are all with Him in Glory. A notable condition is mentioned in this verse, only those who come to God through Him, Jesus Christ and the sacrifice He offered of Himself, are the persons who will be saved to the uttermost. They may experience now the joy of a conscience freed from guilt, have power over sin and expect to be delivered from the very presence of all that is contrary to holiness. To the uttermost means there is not a circumstance where He is unable to impart a blessing and enable a saint to stand. At all times in all situations, in physical difficulties and through mental stresses our High Priest can deliver the individual that has fled to Him for refuge. This is because:

He ever lives to make intercession for them. Jesus ever lives, having been raised from among the dead. The Man in the holiest place on one day in the year was the high priest; there He presented the blood of the sacrifice and claimed the promise of God for the people of God. The Christ of God, as a man in the flesh, died. The Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world. The man Christ Jesus presents Himself to God, as the High Priest and as the Sacrifice, alive from the dead and able to save, from Adam to this day, all those that come to God by Him. As a man in the flesh Jesus is a High Priest that is sympathetic, having been tested and tried in all points as we are. The high priest took the blood of the sacrifice into the holiest place and sprinkled it on and before the mercy Seat, Jesus takes His humanity, perfect, and claims the lives for whom he died as being freed from the penalty of sin and therefore acceptable to God. The intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ is effective; His life was given and is restored to show us that the sacrifice He made of Himself is accepted on our behalf. The Last Adam is the High Priest, is the Man in heaven, is the Final sacrifice, and is the Saviour, the Intercessor.

For such a High Priest was fitting for us, He was suitable for us. Man with his sinful and selfish nature could not do what God required to be truly holy, nor could the high priest do enough to meet the ransom price God demanded for the release of the sinner from the penalty imposed. It was fundamental to God's law that the sacrifice should be without sin. It was a basic prerequisite that the high priest was morally cleansed, by a sacrifice for his own sins before he could offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people. We have before noted that all born of Adam are born in sin and have a bias to sin. This is not so with the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Adam as a representative man, the first man, sinned, so sin passed upon all men. Jesus is the last Adam, the last representative man and He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. We have in the Son of God a high priest of the utmost purity, the highest moral standard, one that has no need to offer a sacrifice for himself, as there is no blemish in or on Him. He is exactly fitted to the needs of fallen man and all the benefits of a perfect sacrifice may be ours. These benefits include a conscience that has ceased to condemn us, an assurance of sins forgiven, and a proximity to God. A new relationship whereby we can know God as Father and with many more blessings, the certainty of a life with the Lord Jesus even if we have to pass through death.

Much of the following is as expected of the high priest as he served in the Tabernacle or Temple. He was required to be holy, [Hebrew word meaning merciful.] Holiness was his calling; and, as he was the representative of his brethren, he was required to be merciful and compassionate. Jesus was **holy**, infinitely so; and merciful; He demonstrated this by shedding His blood for the sins of mankind.

The high priest was to be harmless, without evil-holy without, and holy within; injuring none, but rather living for the benefit of others. The Lord Jesus Christ was **harmless**-perfectly without sin in his humanity.

The Man Christ Jesus was **undefiled**, without blemish, without any bodily imperfection. There was nothing crude, inferior, base, or unbecoming in His conduct. Jesus contracted no infirmity as He dwelt in the flesh among men.

The high priest was supposed to be separate from sinners, by his office he was separated from all worldly occupations, and entirely devoted to the service of God. Jesus was **separate from sinners**-absolutely without blame in the whole of his conduct, so that he could challenge the most inveterate of his enemies with, 'Which of you convicts me of sin'? Who of you can show in my conduct the slightest deviation from truth and righteousness!

Higher than the heavens, a reference here to the exceeding dignity of the high priesthood and the entry into the Holiest of All, which he alone had on the Day of Atonement. The exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ places Him **higher than the heavens**-more exalted than all the angels of God, more than all created beings, whether thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers, because all these were created by Him and for Him, and derive their continued subsistence from His infinite energy.

We need such a High Priest for He has what we have not. His greatness is put in opposition to our small-mindedness. He is holy, we unholy. He is harmless; we are harmful, injuring both others and ourselves. He was undefiled; we are defiled, sinful and impure. He was separate from sinners; we are joined to sinners, companions of the depraved, the unworthy, the profane, and the wicked. He is higher than the heavens; we are baser and lower than the earth, totally unworthy to be acknowledged as His created beings.

Who needs not daily, as those high priests to offer up sacrifice; the apostle was instructed in the ways of the priesthood and here tells us of the practice of a daily sacrifice made by the high priest for the sins he is aware of. They prayed as follows: - "O Lord, I have sinned, and done wickedly, and gone astray before thy face, I, and my house, and the sons of Aaron, the people of thy holiness. I beseech thee, for thy name's sake, blot out the sins, iniquities, and transgressions by which I have sinned, done wickedly, and gone astray before thy face, I, and my house, and the sons of Aaron, the people of thy holiness; as it is written in the law of Moses thy servant." This prayer informs us of the attitude of the high priest, admitting he is a sinner and the need for cleansing, of himself and the people. The Lord offered one sacrifice, not for himself for He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. **The one sacrifice He offered was of Himself, but it was not for himself.**

The sacrifice offered by Christ differed in four essential respects from those offered by the Jewish priests: 1. He offered no sacrifice for himself, but only for the people. 2. He did not offer that sacrifice annually, but once for all. 3. The sacrifice which he offered was not of calves and goats, but of himself. 4. This sacrifice he offered, not for one nation, but for the whole human race; he tasted death for every man.

The Law makes men high priests that have infirmity, therefore the need for a daily sacrifice. Let us learn from this that we all need to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, admitting our failures and seeking his forgiveness to maintain a close relationship with Him.

But the word of the oath, which was since the Law, nearly 500 years after the Law was given, annuls the law of the priesthood as practiced by the Levites.

The Son is consecrated for evermore. The priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ will never be superceded. He is consecrated, set aside for this special work and only the Lord Jesus can do it to the satisfaction of God. the Apostle Paul points out several aspects of note in the new priesthood: -

Being after the order of Melchizedek, there was no need of a rigorous examination of his genealogy to show His right. Indeed He was banned by birthright. In that office he had no predecessor, and has no one to succeed him. In this respect he is without father, mother, or descent--and he stands in lonely majesty, as the only one who sustains the office, Hebrews 7: 3.

He has an eternal priesthood, whereas theirs was but temporal. He lives in the power of an endless life. He is superior to all the Jewish priesthood, sustaining a rank, and performing an office, above them all. In our contemplation of Christ, therefore, as priest, we have the privilege of regarding him as superior to the Jewish high priest.

The other priests, as a token of the dignity of their office, and their state of dependence on God, received tithes from the people. Melchizedek, a priest and king, after whose order Christ comes, took tithes from Abraham,

the father of the patriarchs; He is superior to Abraham. Abraham never laid claim to the office of priest, but he recognised his inferiority to one whom the Messiah was to resemble Hebrews 7: 2, 4. Jesus, infinitely greater than all, having an absolute and independent life, needs none. He is no man's debtor, but all receive out of his fullness. *My God is able to supply all your needs, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus our Lord*

He alone can bless the people, not by praying for their good only, but by communicating the good which is necessary.

As another priesthood, different from that of Aaron, was promised, it necessarily implies that the Levitical priesthood was inadequate. The priesthood of Christ, being that promised in Psalm 110, must be greater than that of Aaron. The great High Priest of the Christian profession is the only perfect priest, Hebrews 7:11,19. The Jewish priests were all imperfect and sinful men. The sacrifices, which they offered, were imperfect, and could not give peace to the conscience. There was need of some better system, and they all looked forward to it. But in the Lord Jesus, and in his work, there is absolute perfection. What he did was complete, and his office needs no change.

That, which God has appointed and consecrated with an oath, as to endure forever, must be greater than that which he has appointed simply for a time. The office now is permanent. It does not change from hand to hand, Hebrews 7: 23, 24. He who sustains this office does not die, and we may ever apply to him, and cast our cares on him.

All the Levitical priests were fallible and sinful men; but Christ was holy and undefiled, impeccable. The Christian religion is fitted to our condition, Hebrews 7: 26, 27. It has just such a High Priest as we need, holy, harmless, and undefiled. Is the propitiation for our sins and need never be made again. It reconciles us to God just as it should be done and in such a way that God can be honoured, and the purity and dignity of his law maintained. It is the religion adapted to dying, ignorant, sinful, wretched man.

The Levitical priests were only by their office distinguished from the rest of their brethren, they were just as frail, mortal, and corruptible; but Jesus, our high priest, is higher than the heavens. The apostle in this chapter, clearly setting forth the more excellent priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ notes these particulars.

Chapter 8

The Apostle Paul sum up at this point the information already conveyed to the readers and specifies three details. 1. That Jesus is the high priest. 2. That the high priest is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and that, 3. He is the minister of the true tabernacle, the sanctuary, and even the most holy place in the heavens.

Such a high priest that is able to stay in the Holy of Holies, always able to present himself to God as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all those that repent. A high priest that ever lives, having been raised from among the dead. Jesus is the only high priest that is allowed to sit down after offering a sacrifice, for the offering he made was of Himself, and it was accepted as sufficient for the sins of the world. The high priest is now of a different order to those of the old economy, for He will not die but is after the order of Melchizedek. We have such a high priest as is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by Him. The Jews always had a high priest and expected one to continue in a ministry after the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the apostle provides the evidence that the only high priest that is acceptable to God is one that is perfect in all His ways and will live for evermore. In Jesus Christ there is such a high priest.

A high priest who is seated on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens is Jesus. That the Lord Jesus is **seated** on the throne is an important observation. The work of the priest in the Jewish system, of whatever rank, was never finished so the priest could not sit down after the completing his duties. Eli was sat on a log when he heard news that caused him to fall backward and die. Eli was sat down when the sin in the camp and in the family was not atoned for. The Christian has a high priest that not only is seated but also is seated on the throne of the Majesty on high.

Hebrews 1: 3 reminds us of the person who is sat down, it is the Redeemer, the Son, on the right hand of God. When He had by Himself made purgation for our sins, sat down. The redeemer finished the work God gave Him to do.

Hebrews 1: 13 is a prophecy concerning the Victor over sin and death and hell. In the context the Son is presented as the Lord, the creator and sustainer of all things, yet the temporary nature of the creation is asserted.

Hebrews 8: 1 brings to our notice the office of the person who is sat down. On the throne of the Majesty in the heavens is the Great High Priest. This High Priest is seated because He has offered Himself to God and has been accepted.

Hebrews 10: 12 is a reminder of the grace of God, in that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; it was necessary that He did this in an appropriate way. Through this Man is how a sinful person can be at peace with God. The Man, Christ Jesus is the only Mediator that God can hear and respond to on behalf of the sinner.

Hebrews 12: 2 sets Jesus as an example to follow, a model of service and attitude that will surely please God; He is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

On the right hand of the throne is the Lord Jesus seated. God raised Jesus to that position and there He entered upon the high priestly work for which He alone is suited. The right hand of God is figurative as God is a Spirit and has no hands. Anthropomorphisms are necessary to convey the thoughts of the Eternal God to the finite mind. We understand from the right hand, the place of the highest honour and the place of greatest authority. No higher position could be given to the Lord Jesus Christ. The **right hand of the throne** puts Jesus as the pre-eminent High Priest, with the most effectual and acceptable sacrifice. The **right hand of the throne** is the place of the most powerful officer in the kingdom, so the Lord Jesus Christ is able to save unto the uttermost all that come to God through Him. Seated there is the High Priest that need never leave the holiest place in all the creation. ***In Christ we are as close to God as He is.***

The **Majesty** in the heavens is a term for the great and holy God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who has purer eyes than to behold iniquity has raised from the dead the Lord Jesus and set Him at His own right hand. Jesus humbled Himself unto death, bearing the sin of the whole world; and that the death of the cross, but God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name that is above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. The **Majesty in the heavens** has given all authority and all power to the Lord Jesus who is seated at His right hand. [Authority to make the rules and power to implement them].

A minister of the sanctuary, the office Jesus is raised to. This is where He can act on the behalf of the redeemed. In the sanctuary, the holiest place is where the ministry of holy things is most appropriate. Here the Lord Jesus applies the Blood that was shed at Calvary, here He intercedes for His own, from here the Holy Spirit was sent to be another Comforter to each one when they believe in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus as their personal substitute. In the sanctuary is where the Lord Jesus intercedes for His adopted brethren.

The true tabernacle is in the heavens, the tabernacle in the wilderness being the copy of the true. In the tabernacle in the wilderness God proposed to dwell, between the cherubim above the Mercy Seat. In the true tabernacle the Lord God Almighty sits on a throne, the same throne to which He has raised the Lord Jesus to share. Tabernacle could correctly be translated tent or booth, and applied to the wilderness experience of the Jews on their journey to Canaan, that is very accurate. A tabernacle, tent or booth is a temporary structure, a short time residence in a place that will support the occupant for a limited duration. The tabernacle gave way to the Temple; a magnificent structure, expected to last through many generations, but even this was a temporary dwelling place of God. Ichabod means the Glory has departed, and this was said when the Ark of the Covenant was taken in the days of Samuel the prophet, the day Eli died. There is further reference to the Glory of God in Ezekiel as follows

Ezekiel 10:4. Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD'S glory. 10:18 then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. 11:23 and the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain, which is on the east side of the city. The presence of God, His glory has left the temple and the children of Israel. Ichabod!

Ezekiel 43:2 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. 43:4 and the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. 43:5 so the Spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold; the glory of the LORD filled the house. 44:4 Then brought he me the way of the north

gate before the house: and I looked, and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD: and I fell upon my face. This second section is a prophecy about the Lord returning to the temple in the thousand-year reign that is mentioned in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, recorded by the Apostle John.

The true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. It is a temporary dwelling that is pitched as a tent when one goes camping, this is not a description that sits easily with the place where God dwells. The reference is to the wilderness form of worship and sacrifice, a truly temporary structure, a copy of that which was revealed to Moses. Man was fitted by the Spirit of God to build the tabernacle in the wilderness, but the Lord prepared the holy place that He inhabits, the place to which the Lord Jesus has been exalted.

The tabernacle on earth, here the holy and most holy places are intended, were never entered by the Lord Jesus while He was on earth as a man. There is a real sense where the tabernacle on earth is typical of the Lord Jesus; the earthly tabernacle or temple was made with hands, to instructions given to them by the Holy Spirit, as a dwelling place for God. The Lord Jesus Christ, the unique man, the only begotten Son; had a body prepared and in Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Christian are you aware of the privilege accorded to you as a child of God, you are the temple in which God dwells by His Spirit. Each one of us that believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and is a new creation, fitted as a place where God can dwell. The apostles John and Paul teach us that the Triune God indwells us, that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit take up residence when a sinner becomes a saint, when a sinner is born again of the Spirit of God.

Every high priest is ordained [appointed] to offer gifts and sacrifices, such an office was maintained by the priests, from the giving of the Law to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever the people brought to the Lord God had to be given to the priest so that he could offer it to the Lord. They brought offerings for sin and trespass offerings, peace offerings and burnt offerings, thanksgiving offerings and freewill offerings. Each offering had to be given to the priest for his responsibility was to present it to God in the manner prescribed. The priest also had a series of duties to perform that included the morning and evening sacrifices. The priest, in doing his duty, made the sacrifice and offering acceptable to God. The children of Israel gave thanks to God for His provision of the necessities of life and brought offerings to make atonement for the sins and transgressions that left them out of favour with the Lord God.

It is of necessity that this man has somewhat also to offer, this man who is the High Priest of a new order. The Lord Jesus Christ is in the most holy place now, he was raised to show we are justified, and seated to show that the work of redemption is completed. In the presence of the Almighty God, Jesus continually offers Himself. What Jesus could not do on earth, he can do in heaven for He is the minister of the true tabernacle.

Since this idea that a priest must offer sacrifice is correct, then it follows that the name priest should not be given to any one who is not appointed to offer sacrifice. It should not therefore be given to the ministers of the gospel, those that officiate in Christian churches, for it is no part of their work to offer sacrifice. The great sacrifice for sin has been offered by the Lord Jesus, and cannot be repeated. Accordingly, the writers in the New Testament are uniform and consistent never once giving to the leaders of the flock the specific title, priest. They are called ministers, ambassadors, pastors, bishops, overseers or elders, but never priest. The leaders in the Christian congregation are appointed by the Holy Spirit and in the spiritual work are called elders [overseers or bishops] and in the practical work are called deacons. It is also noteworthy that in a church there are a number of such people, that in the multitude of counsel there will be wisdom and a closer adherence to the word and will of God.

The Lord Jesus offered the sacrifice here on earth and presents the blood of the sacrifice in heaven. We are blessed in that the sacrifice was the perfect man, Christ Jesus and that the blood of that sacrifice will never cease to be effective. Our present salvation is in the sacrifice offered on Calvary, and our future delivery from this present evil world is assured to us by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus to the right hand of the Majesty on high.

For if he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for no person from the tribe of Judah was allowed to officiate in the tabernacle or temple. One reason therefore that the Lord Jesus is in heaven is that He can be a High Priest in without breaking the Law. The temple was still standing when this epistle was written and though Christ is the end of the Law to all that believe, that did not give to Him access to the most holy place on earth. What Jesus could not lawfully do on earth because of the Law, He can do perfectly in heaven because He has filled all the Law's requirements, in himself, and for us.

There are priests that offer gifts according to the Law, those appointed to the specific office. Notice here that the word sacrifices is not used in conjunction with the word gifts, as in the previous verse. Did the animal sacrifices cease after the death of the Lord Jesus Christ? Did the general population feel dissatisfied with the priesthood? Was it possible that the people were coming to understand that the blood of beasts sacrificed did not do what was expected? Are the priests looking for a more effective means of reaching God, knowing that the blood of beasts only covered sin and never made the conscience clean? Is it possible that the children Israel, which had a fear of God, were realising they could not find peace with the blood sacrifices? How wonderful to know, fellow believer, that our Priest is in heaven and that the sacrifice He offers, gives the guilty conscience peace. It is amazing to enjoy the peace that the Lord Jesus has purchased for us with the blood of the cross.

Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, not knowing the reality for it was not given to them to serve in the heavens but only in the copy. The priest served faithfully in the representation of that which Moses saw. The example given was to be copied for it resembled in a small measure, enough to let man understand the holiness of God. The service in the tabernacle revealed the purity of God as it showed the sinfulness of man and the need man had of a means of cleansing that is acceptable to God. The tabernacle was made after a pattern, which was shown to Moses; it was made so as to have some faint resemblance to the reality in heaven, and in that **example**, they were appointed to officiate. Their service, therefore, had some resemblance to that in heaven. And **shadow**, that is, in the tabernacle where they served there was a mere shadow of that which was real and substantial. A shadow, as of a man, a house, a car will indicate the form, the outline, the size of the object; but it has no substance or reality. The service of the priests was an imperfect representation of the service of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven.

As Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle, as Moses was divinely instructed. God carefully instructed Moses, speaking to him and showing to him the requirements of the building and fittings needed to be a true, though inadequate example of the heavenly reality. So much of the tabernacle in the wilderness was typical, was designed by God to display something of His Son, of the Church, or of the service Christ and the Church perform today. Neither Moses nor any other man could conceive the intricate details needed to express the mind of God, for that reason God showed to Moses what was in the heavens and instructed him to carefully copy what he saw. The colours and materials and the objects and erections were particular in size and shape so making visible on earth what was real in heaven. It is repeatedly said of Moses, that he made all things as he was commanded of God.

See, said He, that you make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mount. Great care was taken by God to make Moses aware of the exact requirement needed to depict the future priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ and the place where that priesthood would be exercised. The structure was not intended to be beautiful to the eye or grand in size, impressing by its grandeur. It was to lead the people to a closer appreciation of the grace of God and the merciful nature He delighted to show to those of a humble and a contrite heart. As it is not possible for a man to be perfect so it was not possible for a structure made by man to be a perfect illustration of the heavens where Christ sits at the right of God. But it was as close as Moses could make it to the pattern shown to him on the mount. Oholiab and Bezaleel were enabled by the Holy Spirit to do and teach so to make the tabernacle to the instruction given to Moses and passed on by him. The tabernacle and the priesthood were designed to foreshadow things to come, they were an adumbration of the work the Lord Jesus, as high priest, and the place where that ministry would be exercised.

But now has He obtained a more excellent ministry. His office of priesthood is more excellent than that given to Aaron through Moses, because the covenant is better and established on better promises. The old covenant referred to earthly things, shadows, the new covenant, to heavenly things, realities. The old covenant had promises of secular earthly good, the new covenant, of spiritual and eternal blessings. The ministry of the Son of God as the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, is a ministry that surpasses in acceptance by God, all the previous religious exercises under the Levitical system, though God gave the old covenant to the Jews. The work and ministry of the priests, of whom Aaron was the first, was on earth, to a single people of one nation. The ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven and deals with eternal issues but the effectiveness of the ministry is felt in all kingdoms of the earth and can be of lasting benefit to any person that calls on the name of the Lord. So the ministry of the Christ of God is greater by far for it reaches all peoples in all nations and can deliver from all sin for all time.

By how much He is the mediator of a better covenant, by as much as the new covenant is better than the old covenant. The place where the ministry is exercised is better, the efficacy is eternal, and the implementation is more far reaching. By the authority and power vested in the mediator, by all judgement being committed to the mediator, by so much He is the mediator of a better covenant.

Better covenant, or testament, or will: This word properly denotes a disposition, arrangement, or ordering of things; and, in the Scriptures, is employed to describe the arrangement which God has made to secure the maintenance of his worship on earth, and the salvation of men. It is uniformly used in the Septuagint and in the New Testament to denote the covenant, which God makes with men. This is a better covenant than the old, inasmuch as it relates mainly to the heart; to the pardon of sin; to a spiritual and holy religion. The former related more to external rites and observances, and was destined to end ignominiously.

The better covenant is established upon **better promises**; this is a better covenant than the old, inasmuch as it relates mainly to the heart; to the pardon of sin; to a spiritual and holy religion. The former related more to external rites and observances, and was destined to vanish away. The promises made with the new covenant are unconditional; God did not say 'if you do', 'I will', He simply says 'I will'. Today the children of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ have the assurance of an eternal relationship with the Lord and the blessings, which accompany salvation while here on earth. All the promises of God are 'Yes and Amen' in Christ Jesus our Lord.

For if that first covenant had been faultless; this does not suggest that God made a covenant with Moses that had faults or was imperfect. The first covenant prepared the way for the second. The first covenant was limited by mans inability to keep the commandments so another was inaugurated by God that could give to man the power and freedom to refrain from sinning. **If that first covenant had been faultless** then any change would have spoiled it.

Note carefully that the Greek word translated covenant and testament is the same, *diatheke*. The consistent usage in the New Testament is of a will; the last recorded desires of the deceased. The New Testament is the record God has given us of his Son and teaches what He requires of man. The covenant He has made with man for the benefit of man and His glory is final, irrevocable.

Then should no place have been sought for the second, there would have been no need for another covenant if the first could accomplish all God required for all mankind. If under the old covenant a person could have been reckoned without sin and been the recipient of eternal life then there would have been no need for the second.

There are reckoned to be eight covenants that God has entered into with man and each is important in showing a relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first, entered into with Adam in the Garden of Eden, portrays Christ as the last Adam. There will never be another representative man; all that Adam lost, for the human race by sinning, is recovered by the Lord Jesus, who knew no sin. Generally called the Edenic covenant; it established the moral nature of the man God would walk with through the day. Innocence is what God looks for and it is ours in Christ, for in Him we are without sin.

The second, after the fall of man, is the promised seed of the woman that will bruise the serpent's head. The Lord Jesus Christ is that Seed and was obedient in all his ways; worked hard to secure the salvation of man; sweating as it were great drops of blood. The Adamic covenant saw the state of fallen man and determined the standard of life, while promising a Redeemer.

The third covenant was when God promised to Noah that He would never again destroy all flesh with a flood, and set the rainbow in the heavens as a reminder. In that covenant man was instructed to hold life itself in very high regard and to punish severely those who took the life of another. The Lord Jesus gives eternal life to all that ask forgiveness of Him, and all judgement is committed to the Son of God. The covenant with Noah [Noahic] gave to man the government of society, man should rule man with the standards God has given, and the morality He desires.

The fourth covenant was made with Abraham and was unconditional; Abraham was promised a Seed that would be a blessing to all nations of peoples. We read in the epistle to the Galatians that the Seed promised was in

fact the Lord Jesus Christ. The Abrahamic covenant founded the nation of Israel and gave the promise of a saviour, the Seed, Christ who is a direct descendant of Abraham, as are the tribes of Israel.

The Mosaic covenant was the fifth; and is the one replaced by the new covenant. The Law, as given to Moses, was a hard taskmaster; every disobedience and transgression brought death. The Lord Jesus filled all the requirements of the Law without ever missing the mark. What we could not do, the Man Christ Jesus did do for us. He kept the Law for us; He bore the curse of the broken Law for us. The covenant made with Moses condemns all men; for all have sinned. But God does not leave man without hope; the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

The sixth covenant was with the children of Israel before they entered the land of Canaan. The redeemed of the Lord that came out of Egypt and were brought into the Promised Land, were instructed to walk in the ways of the Lord. This they failed to do through the sinful nature and bad leadership, selfishness and disobedience. Jesus Christ lived in the land and kept all the laws promulgated by the Jewish leaders and the Law of Moses; Jesus makes available the promises of blessing in that covenant, to all who exercise faith in the work he finished before being placed in the tomb. Called, I would suggest erroneously, the Palestinian covenant gave hope to the Israelites of a final restoration of the land and nation with God as Sovereign. [Palestine means; the land of the Philistines, but it was not theirs, they were intruders.]

The seventh covenant was with David and the Lord Jesus Christ is the Seed of David, the Heir of all things and the King that will reign in the Millennium. The covenant was with David for an everlasting kingdom. The Davidic covenant establishes the perpetuity of the family of David and the Kingdom of David in its universal dominion.

The eighth covenant is the one ratified with the blood of the Lamb, slain before the foundation of the world. The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, in the fullness of time; the New Testament is the covenant God has committed Himself to. The New Covenant rests upon the sacrifice of Christ and secures for the believer the eternal blessings promised under the Abrahamic covenant. The New Covenant is unconditional and as man has no responsibilities for it, it being entirely of God, is irreversible.

What then was the fault with the first covenant, that is the Law given to Moses and including the priesthood and associated rites. There was nothing lacking morally, it served well in making the Israelites aware of sin. The holiness of God was evidenced in the ritual cleansing and the application of the blood of the sacrifices before any approach could be made to Him. The fault was in the inability to change the heart and mind of the person living under the covenant of Law. The Law made nothing perfect, as recorded in chapter 7:19 of this epistle, but God demands perfection of each of us. The New Covenant gives to the repentant sinner, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. The blood of the New Testament, the sacrifice offered at Golgotha, when applied by faith, cleanses from all sin. The Old Testament did not promise that the individual that offered a sacrifice would have the Holy Spirit indwelling, so there was no power outside of oneself to enable one to walk with God. The New Testament gives the promise that the Triune God will abide in the person that owns Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour so fitting that person to enter the most holy place where Christ is the forerunner.

It is of note that the **seed** was promised of the woman, and a **seed** was promised to Abraham. In the epistle to the Romans the Lord Jesus is presented as the **seed** of David. The significance of this is paramount in understanding the person of the Lord Jesus. As the Seed of the woman a man was to be the one that bruised the serpents head. In the Seed of Abraham the covenant was established before the Law was given, and the faithfulness of Abraham was commended; Jesus Christ is the promised Seed and he was faithful and loyal in all ways to His Father, God. The Seed of David is to be the King that will reign forever, His kingdom shall know no end. The Seed of the woman, Humanity; the Seed of Abraham, Loyalty; the Seed of David, Royalty.

For finding fault with them, it is not expressly stated whether the fault was with the people or the articles of the covenant. The Greek allows for either translation, though it is previously understood that the covenant lacks only in the people to whom it was given. Jeremiah is quoted as the focal point and reason for a New Covenant.

Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. The Lord God in His infinite wisdom saw the covenant did not have the desired effect because the law was not the aspiration of the heart of the sons of Jacob. The Jews had no input into the statutes and

ordinances of the covenant; God decided it in its entirety. The Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob wanted somewhat more of the children of Israel, more than they could give as they were as we are, dead in sin. Without an acceptable sacrifice the nature of man is not changeable, and the sin is covered and not done away with.

Behold; this particle is designed to call attention to what was about to be said as very important, claiming attention. It is of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures, calling for the careful focus of the mind to the point being made.

The days come, the time is coming. This refers doubtless to the times of the Messiah. Phrases such as these, "the last days," "after these times," and "the time is coming," are often used in the Old Testament to denote the last dispensation of the world, the dispensation when the affairs of the world will be wound up. There can be no doubt that, as it is used by Jeremiah it refers to the times of the gospel, the day of grace.

When I will make a New Covenant, a covenant that shall have somewhat different ends; that shall have different conditions, and that shall be more effective in keeping the second party of the agreement from sin. The word covenant here refers to the arrangement, plan, or dispensation into which the Lord God Almighty would enter in his dealings with men. The word covenant with us generally denotes a pact or agreement between two parties that are seeking a common goal, and who are free to enter into the agreement. In this sense, of course, it cannot be used in relation to the arrangement that God makes with man. There is no equality between God and man, and man is not at liberty to reject any proposal, which God shall make. The word, therefore, is used in a more general sense, and more in accordance with the original meaning of the Greek word. It has been above remarked that the proper word to denote covenant, or compact is never used either in the Septuagint or in the New Testament; another word *diatheke* is carefully employed. The word *diayhkh*, *diatheke* means, the arrangement or disposition which God made with men in regard to salvation; the system of statutes, directions, laws, and promises, by which men are to become subject to Him, and to be saved. The meaning here is, that he would make a new arrangement, contemplating, as a primary thing, that the law should be written in the heart; an arrangement which would be spiritual in its character. A treaty, which would be enforced with the full agreement of the person accepting the terms and conditions, without reservations, of the covenant relationship entered into.

With the house of Israel, The family, or race of Israel, for so the word house is often used in the Scriptures and elsewhere. The word "Israel" is used in the Scriptures as a name given to Jacob, because he wrestled with the angel of God and prevailed as a prince, Genesis 32:28 and Hosea 12: 3, 4. As denoting all that were descended from him, called "the children of Israel" or the Jewish nation. It also denotes the kingdom of the ten tribes, or the kingdom of Samaria, or Ephraim, that kingdom having taken the name Israel in contradistinction from the other kingdom, which was called Judah.

In this place, quoted from Jeremiah, it seems to be used to denote the kingdom of Israel in contradistinction from that of Judah. Together they denote the whole people of God, or the whole Hebrew nation. This arrangement was ratified and confirmed by the gift of the Messiah, and by implanting his laws in the heart. We may understand this as referring to the whole of the nation of Israel when the Lord returns to the Mount of Olives. The words Israel and Judah are used to denote the people of God in general; and the idea is, that with the true Israel under the Messiah the laws of God would be written in the heart, rather than mere external observances.

And with the house of Judah, the kingdom of Judah, this denoting the southern kingdom. This kingdom consisted of two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin was, however, small, and the name was lost in that of Judah.

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, that covenant should have prepared the Jews for the New Covenant as promised through Jeremiah and as detailed in the following verses. The covenant given to the Jews on leaving Egypt was mainly outward observances and temporal blessings. The New Covenant is such that all who believe will be kept by the power of God, to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled that fades not away, reserved in heaven.

When I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, the way God demonstrated His power and concern for the children of Israel is seen in the leader He gave to the people and the miracles He performed to confirm that leadership. This is called leading them by the hand; He was with them each step of the way. At the start of the journey, God was with them as a pillar of fire and a pillar of cloud for the 24 hours of each

day. When the children of Israel reached Mount Sinai God gave to Moses the law by which they should live and the terms on which they could approach Him.

Because they continued not, in My covenant, I regarded them not, said the Lord. The children of Israel failed to comply with the terms and conditions set by God so He says I regarded them not; they did not receive the blessings that were available for those that kept the law, as God required. Since the Jews did not do as ordered by the law, God lightly esteemed them; He did not continue as a Husband to them. Hosea 1: 9 puts it, Lo-ammi, for you are not my people. The first covenant was right for the nation that came out of Egypt and would have been suitable till the first advent. It was designed to lead the tribes of Israel into a real and personal relationship with the God who redeemed them. They continued not in the law so God withheld the blessings that they could have been enjoying till the advent of the Messiah. A remarkable distinction between the old and new covenants is the relationship God has with the people of each covenant. Jeremiah quotes God as saying 'though I was a husband unto them' but the New Covenant teaches God will be a Father to those separated unto Him.

The law given to Moses, which law included the priesthood of Aaron and his descendants, was a failure. It failed because it was not in the hearts of the children of Israel to do as God stipulated in that law. What the law could not do, it could not do, because of the weakness of the flesh. This did not deter God from His purposes and in the prophecy of Jeremiah God presages the giving of a New Covenant that will be effective in bringing about the plans He formulated before the foundation of the world.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days; God plans a future agreement that will do what the law did not do. The house of Israel in this instant may mean all the tribes and include all those who are the true Israel of God, the household of faith. **After those days,** after the days of the Messiah on earth, or after the dispensation of the law; either way it is materially the same.

I will put my laws into their mind and write them write them in their hearts, the meaning here is that the new dispensation will not limit the faith to external rites, however willingly they are performed. The conscience and the heart will be effected, with the implementing of the New Testament. Instead of God writing on tablets of stone, the Holy Spirit will write the word of God on the heart, when He comes to indwell each believer. With the desires of the heart changed the conscience will follow the dictates of the heart and the life will be, as God requires. The 'law of works' is changed to the 'law of faith' by the gospel of the grace of God. The rites man imposes on the religions, even Christian religions, detract from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. Ornate buildings, dressed up persons, long ceremonies and religious fervour do not negate the responsibility to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people. This is quoted literally from the Hebrew. The meaning is that God is promising to sustain them in all ways, as is appropriate for a God. God intends us to understand that He will enter a new relationship, that of a Father. We speak of a father's acting in a manner most suited to the character of a father; and the meaning here is, that he would be to his people all that is implied in the name of God. He would be their Lawgiver, their Counsellor, their Protector, their Redeemer, their Beneficiary and their Guide. He would provide for their needs, defend them when necessary and put away their sins, comfort them in trials, and save their souls, he would be a faithful friend, and would never leave them nor forsake them. It is one of the inestimable privileges of God's people that JEHOVAH is their God. The creator, sustainer of the universe deigns to enter into a permanent relationship with a peculiar people, a people redeemed by the Blood of the sacrifice that was for the sins of the whole world. More than the fact, the priceless privilege of being a child of God, born into the family when born again of the Spirit and adopted to the position of sons and daughters as mature Christians. [No account is taken of physical age]. The people of God are all who are born again of the Spirit of God. Where they meet with other believers, or if they practice certain rites that others avoid do not disqualify them. The one essential is the New Birth, having a saving faith in the achievement of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary where He made satisfaction to God, on our behalf.

And they shall not teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord. One of the advantages of the New Covenant is that the law is written on the heart. This important asset is complemented with the added blessing of the mind of God being engraved on the mind of the believer. What was engraved on stone is written in the heart and what was sparingly taught by the prophets and priests is now imparted to every believer by the Holy Spirit of God who is in each one.

Neighbour can be accurately translated, fellow citizen and applies to all the saints of this economy. All the 'born again' are born into the family of God and are in a special relationship with certain blessings. The Jews did not have the advantages that the Christians enjoy; the Holy Spirit was not given to them so freely. They did not have the word of God in their personal possession so were dependant on others to teach them. Few of the children of Israel had a personal experience with their God, so the knowledge imparted was often tainted by the motives of the teacher. With the sending of the Holy Spirit, as promised by the Lord Jesus Christ, on His return to glory, was the enlightenment of God, the knowledge of God, to the people of God.

For all shall know me, from the least to the greatest is the prophecy by Jeremiah. He speaks of the day in which we live, the dispensation of the grace of God, the day that began at the death of the Lord Jesus. All that depend on the Lord Jesus Christ as the Sin-bearer, the household of faith, have a personal and precious knowledge of the Saviour. The social status or community achievement does not limit or enhance the closeness to God or the fellowship that is possible; The Son of God in prayer said, *this is life eternal, that they may know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*. A current miracle of this age is that we who were dead in sin are now alive in Christ, and that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ brings us who were separated from God near. How marvellous to know that God, who is so pure that He cannot look upon sin, can now take us into His presence and see us as fitting companions for His Son.

I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, is the desire of a Holy God, to those who benefit from the covenant God has drawn up for these last days. The old covenant marked each breach with severe restrictions; mercy was not the order of the day. Law and justice reigned till the Lord bore the wrath that was the just punishment all sinners.

Mercy is what separates Christianity from all other religions. The whole agreement is one for the pardon of sin in a manner consistent with the claims of law and justice, and it bestows the benefit of forgiveness in the most plentiful and perfect manner. In fact, the peculiarity by which the gospel is distinguished from all other systems, ancient and modern, philosophical and moral, pagan and deistic, is that it is a system making provision for the forgiveness of sin, and actually bestowing pardon on the guilty. This is the heart, the coronet, and the glory of the new dispensation. God is merciful to the unrighteousness of men; and their sins are remembered no more. Take careful note; the guilty party knows and enjoys pardon. In is not done in absentia or vicariously, the pardoned one is reunited to the God who laid all our sins on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more; God does not forget; forgetfulness is a weakness of man and cannot be attributed to God. When God becomes our Father He chooses to put our sins away from His mind for all eternity. It was our sin that made us enemies of God, when the sin question was dealt with the enmity was removed. Since the Lord Jesus has borne the penalty on our behalf God is able to look on us as if we had not sinned. God is able to put out of His mind for eternity all that previously offended Him. This is a major benefit of the New Covenant; in the preceding verses are four details, 1, I will put My laws into their minds and write them in their hearts. 2, I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people. 3, I will be merciful to their unrighteousness. 4, I will not remember their sins and iniquities. These all go to show the superiority of the New Covenant over the old. Sin that has not been pardoned will bring judgement; it is merciful and just God that teaches us, 'the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.

In that He says a New Covenant, He makes the first old. God considers the old as being without power to do as desired. Old and new are opposites and when God instituted the New Covenant He regarded the preceding covenant as old, as out of date ready to be discarded. The moral obligations of the old are not changed, indeed we see all of the Ten Commandments, apart from the law of the Sabbath, in the New Testament. What is remarkable is that the Law is written in the hearts of the believers in this dispensation of grace. Keeping the law is not the means of salvation, but it is the way of sanctification.

Now that which waxes old and decays is ready to vanish away, as is any thing that has lost its effectiveness or usefulness through wear and tear or deterioration. The covenant God made with the children of Israel did not reach out beyond that nation; that specific made it old and incapable. God wills not the death of any sinner so the old covenant was inadequate in that context and had to be replaced. The very fact of growing old is an indication that it will soon be gone, and with so many old institutions the members try to bolster its image with new rites and ordinances, which happened with the scribes and Pharisees. So Paul says it was so with the dispensation

of the Law, that it was represented as old. It had symptoms of decay. It had lost the rigour which it had when it was fresh and new; it had every mark of an antiquated and a declining system; and it had been expressly declared that a new and more perfect dispensation was to be given to the world. Paul concluded, therefore, that the Jewish system must soon disappear.

Chapter 9

The general design of this chapter is to show the superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ as the High Priest in the superior sanctuary of which that on the earth was a grand but shadowy copy. His status is greater than the high priest that served on earth and the covenant, which He ratified with His blood is more efficacious. Now we are shown that the current place of service is the permanent residence of the High Priest, not a place that could only be entered on one day in the year.

The fact that we have a High Priest is the subject of the previous chapter. He ever lives, and is ever the same. Jesus is the minister of the true sanctuary, and is ever on the throne of Grace, which we can approach to find mercy and grace to help in time of need. He entered the sanctuary to abide in the presence of God forever. We can never approach the throne of grace without having a High Priest there; for He at all times, day and night, appears before God. The merits of his sacrifice are never exhausted, and God is never wearied with hearing His intercessions on behalf of His people. He is the same that He was when He gave himself on the cross. He has the same love and the same compassion that He had then; and that love, which led him to be the propitiation for our sins, will lead him always to regard with compassion those for whom he died.

The old covenant had an earthly sanctuary and ordinances of divine institution, so the Apostle Paul demonstrates in this chapter the service the Lord Jesus Christ performs in the heavenly sanctuary. The superior priesthood of the Lord Jesus and the superior place of service are brought before us and a comparison is made between the earthly and the heavenly.

The first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, rites and ceremonies. The children of Israel had specific instructions as to how to approach God, how to prepare a sacrifice, what was acceptable as an offering. The priests had duties that kept them occupied daily so that they needed the support of the people to live, receiving tithes and offerings.

An earthly sanctuary, now to be described, wherein the priests ministered daily; earthly as opposed to the one where the Lord ministers in the heavens. The apostle takes care to show what is worthy in the execution of the priestly duties and make the comparison with the heavenly situation, thereby proving the more excellent ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. The tabernacle mentioned in these early verses, is the edifice in the west of the compound covered with various layers of materials. A structure that was in length 30 cubits, 10 cubits broad and 10 cubits high divided into two sections by a veil. The first area, the holy place, was entered through a veil, that area was twice the size of the Holy of Holies, which was 10 x 10 cubits, entered through the dividing veil, and called the second veil. God had a tabernacle on earth as well as His home in heaven; He as truly dwelt in the tabernacle in the wilderness as he did in the heaven of heavens; the one being his house on earth, the other his heavenly house.

For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein were the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. After the second veil, the tabernacle that is called the Holiest of all; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercyseat. These verses do not agree entirely with the description in the book of the Exodus. So before considering their import let us look at the tabernacle that Moses erected in the wilderness.

This tabernacle was the model for the temple, built by Solomon. It comprised the court where the people might enter through a curtain spanning 20 cubits of the east end which was 50 cubits wide. The length of the court was 100 cubits. In this courtyard was, at the east end, the altar for the sacrifices, the sin offering and the burnt offerings and the daily morning and evening sacrifices, etc. This is commonly called the brazen altar, though it was a copper covering on the wood of which it was constructed. Moving west towards the tabernacle we next come to the laver, at which the priests did their ritual ablutions. Further to the west was the tabernacle that the apostle is

bringing to the attention of the readers, the two principal parts of the tabernacle were the holy place and the holy of holies.

In the holy place,

1. The golden lampstand of seven branches, on the south side.
2. The golden altar, or altar of incense, on the west, before the veil.
3. The table of the showbread; where the twelve loaves, representing the twelve tribes, were laid before the Lord, on the north side.

In each branch of the golden lampstand was a lamp; these were lighted and tended every evening, and morning. They were the only lights in this place. The altar of incense was of gold; and a priest offered incense every morning and evening in a golden censer, which he probably left on the altar after the completion of the offering. The table of the show-bread was covered with plates of gold; and on this, every Sabbath, they placed twelve loaves in two piles, six in each, which continued there all the week till the next Sabbath, when they were removed, and fresh loaves put in their place. Aaron and his sons would feed on these loaves in due course. On this table were also the implements used for tending the lampstand and the altar of incense. The whole of this may be seen in all its details in the book of Exodus, from chap. 35 to 40.

There was a tabernacle made, the first, in this case not the first in construction but the first area entered by the high priest on his way into the place where God dwelt and from which He ruled over His people.

Which is called the sanctuary, or holy place; a place set apart for God in the midst of the people of God.

After the second veil; the apostle does not mention the first veil, which separated the court from the holy place; we enter the most holy place, sometimes rendered the Holiest of All or the Holy of Holies. This is the place on earth that represents the place in heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ, as the high priest, has gone to minister. In the Holiest of All, in the tabernacle in the wilderness where the Ark of the Covenant, the Mercy Seat, the Golden Pot that had Manna and Aaron's rod that budded. Where in the Holiest of All they were, is not as described by the Apostle Paul in the next verse, but we will come to that later.

After the second veil, There were two veils to the tabernacle. The one which is described in Exodus 26:36,37, was called "the hanging for the door of the tent," and was made of "blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine-twined linen," and was suspended on five pillars of shittim-wood, [acacia] overlaid with gold. This answered for a door to the whole tabernacle. The second or inner veil divided the holy from the most holy place. This is described in Exodus 26:31-33. It was made of the same materials as the other; but with the addition of the figures of cherubim were curiously wrought in gold. The design of this veil was to separate the holy from the most holy place and it was hung on four pillars; and in regard to its symbolical meaning we can read that in verse 8 of this chapter and verse 20 of chapter 10.

Which had, that is in the Holiest of All, the apostle tells us that there was the **golden censer**. The censer was a fire-pan, made for the purpose of carrying fire, in order to burn incense on it in the place of worship. Some difficulty has been felt respecting the statement of Paul here that the "golden censer" was in the most holy place. Moses mentions no such utensil as pertaining to the tabernacle; nor in the description of Solomon's temple, which was modelled after the tabernacle, is there any account of it given.

Paul as a Jew, and was familiar with what pertained to the temple, and gave such a description of it as would be in accordance with what he had been taught. The fact that Moses does not expressly mention it does not prove that, in fact, no such censer was laid up in the most holy place. The temple was ransacked and all the gold removed to Babylon, apart from the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat. This occurred about 600 years before Christ; but the temple worship and services continued without the ark or Mercy Seat. God had promised to dwell among His people; above the Mercy Seat and between the cherubim, but as the Ark was no longer in the Most Holy place it is possible the Lord was not in that place either.

There was a censer; Aaron and his successors were expressly commanded to burn incense in a "censer" in the most holy place before the mercy seat. This was to be done on the Day of Atonement, and but once in a year, Leviticus 16:12,13.

As the golden censer was to be used only once in a year, it would need to be kept carefully and I suggest it would be placed on the altar of incense ready for use when the occasion occurred. The object of the incense burned on the Day of Atonement was to produce a cloud of smoke to dim the brightness of the Glory of God so that the High priest could enter the Holiest of All and live, Leviticus 16:13.

And the Ark of the Covenant; this ark or chest was made of shittim-wood, was two cubits and a half long, a cubit and a half broad, and the same in height, Exodus 25:10. It was completely covered with gold, and had a lid, which was, the "mercy-seat," above which rested the Shekinah, the symbol of the Divine Presence between the outstretched wings of the cherubim. It was called "the Ark of the Covenant," because within it was the two tables of the covenant, or the law of God written on tables of stone. It was a simple chest, coffer, or box, with little ornament, though rich in its materials. A golden crown or moulding ran around the top, and it had rings and staves in its sides, as we are told in Exodus 25: 12-16, with which to carry it. This ark was regarded as the most sacred of all the pieces of furniture of the tabernacle. At the dedication of the temple Solomon placed it in the Holy of Holies, where it remained for many years. Subsequently, it is said, the wicked kings of Judah, abandoning themselves to idolatry, established idols in the most holy place itself; and the priests removed the ark, and bore it from place to place to secure it from profanation. When Josiah ascended the throne he commanded the priests to restore the ark to its place in the sanctuary, and forbade them to carry it about from one place to another as they had been doing, 2Chronicles 35: 3. The subsequent history of the ark is unknown. It is probable that it was either destroyed when Nebuchadnezzar took the city of Jerusalem, or that Jeremiah carried it to a safe place from which it has never been recovered. There is no good reason to suppose that it was ever in the second temple; and the Jews generally admit that the Ark of the Covenant was one of the things that were missing there.

Wherein, that is, in the ark the apostle states were the tables of stone, the golden pot that had manna and Aaron's rod that budded. In 1Kings 8: 9, however, it is said that there was nothing in the ark, "save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb." The account in Exodus 16: 32-34 and Numbers 17: 10 is that they were laid up in the most holy place, "before the testimony." It is clear, from the passage in 1Kings 8: 9, that they were not in the ark in the temple.

The golden pot. In Exodus 16: 33, it is simply a "pot," without specifying the material. In the Septuagint it is rendered "golden pot;" and as the other utensils of the sanctuary were of gold, it may be fairly presumed that this was also. **That had manna.** A small quantity of manna which was to be preserved as a perpetual remembrance of the food which they had eaten in their long journey in the wilderness, and of the goodness of God in miraculously supplying their needs. As the manna would not of itself keep, Exodus 16: 20, the fact that this was to be laid up to be preserved from age to age was a perpetual miracle in proof of the presence and faithfulness of God.

And Aaron's rod that budded; that budded and blossomed and yielded fruit as a proof that God had chosen Aaron, of the tribe of Levi, to minister to Him. The princes of the tribes were inclined to rebel, and to call in question the authority of Aaron. To settle the matter each one was required to take a rod or staff of office, and to bring it to Moses with the name of the tribe to which it appertained written on it. Aaron's name was written on the rod, not the name Levi; Moses laid these up in the tabernacle; and it was found, on the next day, that the rod marked with the name of Aaron had budded and blossomed, and produced almonds. In perpetual remembrance of this miracle, the rod was placed before the testimony, Numbers 17:1-13. The dimensions of the Ark of the Testimony allowed for a maximum length of rod, about 3.1 cubits, approximately 4 ft, 10 inches. This length does not match with the Rod or Staff, normally taller than the bearer.

Both Aaron's rod and the golden pot that had manna were in the Holiest of All, but as we read in Exodus and Numbers, both were laid up before the Ark. The rod was there, that stopped the rebellion of the princes; a continual reminder to the High priest of the choice God made, that members of the tribe of Levi should minister to Him. The golden pot that had Manna was there as a reminder to the high priest of the Grace and provision of God through the wilderness journey. The high priest was reminded of these things on the Day of Atonement when he sprinkled blood on them seven times, after sprinkling the blood once on the Mercy Seat, Leviticus 16: 14-15. Since it is supposed that the Ark of the Covenant is typical of the Lord Jesus Christ, the wood being humanity and the gold deity, it is tantamount to blasphemy to suggest the symbols of disobedience and rebellion were in Him. The Jews continued with the temple worship, sacrifices and feast days for hundreds of years without the Ark of the Covenant, the Mercy Seat, or the presence of God in the Holiest of All. Most likely the golden pot was taken with the other gold items when Nebuzar-adan took the captives and gold, silver, copper and all the other items that had

any value, Jeremiah 52:19-23. If the teaching was as corrupt as the service that God rebuked in the days of Malachi it would explain where Paul got the misinformation he conveys in this passage.

And the tables of the covenant, the two tables of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written. They were expressly called "the words of the covenant" in Exodus 34: 28. These two tables were in the ark at the time the temple was dedicated, 1Kings 8: 9. Their subsequent history is unknown. It is probable that they shared the fate of the ark.

Over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat; the cherubim were mounted on each end of a gold plate with their wings open and reaching to the middle of the mercy seat. They were also of gold and God told Moses He would dwell among the children of Israel from between the cherubim above the mercy seat. The mercy seat, which was the covering of the ark; it was called the propitiatory, and it was of pure gold, as long and as broad as the ark in which the tables of the law were laid. It was an eminent type of Christ, and of his perfect righteousness, ever adequate to the dimensions of the law of God, and covering all our transgressions, interposing between the Shechinah, or symbol of God's presence, and our sinful failures, and covering them. In the ark was the unbroken Law as in the Lord Jesus was no sin. The Lord Jesus Christ is between those who believe and the wrath of God, which is against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, more than between for He has borne the penalty for those that believe.

Bear with me as I suggest a meaning for the various items before us. Typical teaching is inadequate for no one type is sufficient to exhibit all that is necessary to make known the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. However He is the Tabernacle, on account of the human body in which he dwelt for God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. He is the Table, because he is the Bread of life. He is the Ark which has the law of God enclosed within, because he is the Word of the Father. He is the Lampstand, because he is our spiritual light, the Light of Life. He is the Altar of incense, because he is the sweet-smelling odour of sanctification, a sweet smelling savour to God. He is the Altar of burnt offering, because he is the victim, by death on the cross, for the sins of the whole world. The holy place is the place of **Fellowship**. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son. The Holiest of All is the place where the Christian is when at **Worship**, telling the Father of the worth of the Lord Jesus. The courtyard is where **Christian Service** is experienced among the saints and outside the courtyard, among the general populace is the place of **Witness**.

Of which we cannot now speak particularly sounds like a lament from the apostle. The apostle may mean that the readers are not in a state to receive the word or that the details of the tabernacle and furniture are no longer clear, so leaving room for conjecture. With the loss of the Ark of the Covenant so many years before, the Jews had manufactured a system of worship. The blood, of the goat, on the Day of Atonement, could not be applied to the Mercy Seat, so all manner of fables were built around the service of the high priest on that day. For instance, an extra long linen girdle with which to pull the high priest out of the Holiest of All when the bells on the hem of his garment stopped sounding. [The high priest did not wear the garments of glory and beauty when he went into the most holy place, Leviticus 16: 4].

Now when these things were thus prepared, when the tabernacle was completed each appointment had a peculiar usage. They were prepared as God required and to be used as God directed. Take special note of the absence of any earthly building or appointments, fittings or furniture in this Day of Grace. All such used in this generation detract from the work of God and give glory to man. The Church of the Living God is not a building fashioned and built by man, it is a edifice of people redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, Baptised into one body by the Holy Spirit, fitly framed together, building itself up in love.

The priests went always into the first tabernacle accomplishing the service of God. Daily duties had the priests entering into the tabernacle where was the Lampstand was, servicing the lamps, tending the altar of incense. The blood of the sin offerings of the people was to be sprinkled once on the ground before the vail and on the altar of incense, the morning and evening sacrifices required the burning of incense, so the priests had ready access to the holy place. The shewbread had to be changed each week, so there was no hindrance to the activities of the priest in relation to the holy place.

But into the second went the high priest alone, once every year, on one day of the year. On that day the high priest entered the Holiest of All, at the least, twice. Entry to this inner sanctuary was forbidden at any other time. The man that had the honour of representing the Lord Jesus Christ on the Day of Atonement, had first to take

the blood of a bull, sacrificed as a sin offering for himself, with burning coals of fire and incense, within the veil. The incense was to make a cloud that would cover the Mercy Seat that the brightness of the glory of God did not consume the high priest.

Not without blood, for that would have been a death warrant. No one person of any religion, culture, creed, cult, sect or race can enter the presence of God without blood and live. Who would dare to claim the right to the presence of God of their own merit; a person that has never sinned could, but all have sinned and fallen short of the mark set by God, for direct entry into the most holy place, the Holiest of All.

Which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people, the blood of the bull for himself and the blood of the goat for the people. Two goats were needed on the Day of Atonement for the people, one to put away the sin of Israel the other to put away sin from Israel. The one, the Lord's goat, was sacrificed and the blood taken into the Holiest of All and sprinkled according to the directions given to the high priest. The other had the sins of ignorance and the unknown sins of the people confessed over it and this goat, the Scapegoat, was taken by a fit man into the wilderness and released. God has in grace and mercy made provision for the sins of ignorance as well as the sins of the past and present and future, in the giving of His own Son as a sacrifice. This truth the Apostle Paul would convey to the Hebrews, the children of Abraham, which read this epistle, and all of succeeding generations of whatever race. This reminds us of the fact that all of us, even of the highest religious order, need some one to offer a sacrifice for the remission of sins, on our behalf.

The Holy Spirit thus signifying that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest. The Holy Spirit teaches the humble reader of the Word of God the significance of these things. A particular point to note is that the way into the Holiest was not there for all, it was limited to the person appointed by God and consecrated to that office. Sometimes the Holy Spirit taught by direct revelation, sometimes by the prophets, He used the written Word and in the tabernacle, used types. The truth brought to us by the limited access of the high priest is that the way to the presence of God was not free to all. The approach to God had to be in the way of God's choice and through the person selected by God and at a time specified by God.

The way for man to appear and stay in the presence was not apparent, for the high priest had limited access and brief appearance in the Most Holy place. This is the teaching of the Holy Spirit as we look from this side of the Cross-at the types and figures of the tabernacle. The old had to be put away for the new to take effect. The veil that kept the priest out during the year is said to be on the heart and mind of them that adhere to the law of ordinances and rites of the priests that ministered in the tabernacle. The veil that divided the tabernacle had to be removed or opened in a way that the high priest had no power to do. This is what the Holy Spirit teaches, and we cower in fear when burdened with sin, wondering how this awful burden can be eased.

Which was a figure for the time then present; the word-translated figure, is not the same word as type, it is the word translated parable in other portions of the scriptures. In this context it bears the meaning of comparison or resemblance and is specifically used as representing a reality of which the tabernacle was the unclear copy. **The time then present** takes us back to the days of the high priest and his ministry in the tabernacle, the dispensation that proceeds this Day of Grace, being the sixth dispensation.

In which there were offered both gifts and sacrifices, thanksgiving offerings and animal sacrifices according to the laws of the offerings. Though we do exactly as the law requires it will only keep us from punishment for wrongdoing; keeping the law is the right thing to do and the promise to the children of Israel for doing the right thing was long life in the land that God had given them. The tabernacle and the services of the priests were only for the years from Moses to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gifts, tithes, services, sacrifices, offerings did not, indeed could not;

Make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience. Some religions of this dispensation, major Christian denominations, still practise a variety of services and demand a specific amount in offerings, telling the people that the way to peace is by following the tenets of their particular group. None but the Lord Jesus Christ can remove the guilt from a conscience marred by sin. No faith designed by man can bring an end to the burden of sin carried by one to whom the Holy Spirit brings conviction. No amount of wealth amassed by man is sufficient to redeem a soul or give the guilty conscience peace. Doing what the law demands is the least expectation of the society in which we live, but have you noticed in yourself the tendency to break the law, to stretch the limits, to see how far you can go before acknowledging to yourself that you have sinned. The guilty

conscience will not allow you to have or enjoy peace. Even when the gifts and sacrifices were as the law asked it was not enough to change the nature of the offerer, cleanse the soul from guilt or give the guilty conscience peace.

The service of the tabernacle and the laws for the people of God **stood only in foods and drinks, and carnal ordinances**. The animals they were allowed to eat and those animals and birds that were forbidden. The practices of the nations round about generally related to idolatry and the foods and drinks offered were dedicated to those idols, these pursuits were to be avoided. Lists of clean and unclean meats and drinks and details in the preparation of foods, including personal hygiene, were specified. Washing of clothes and sacrifices, of people for ritual cleansing and after checking for the signs of illness, leprosy and such, were a high priority. These all are classified as carnal ordinances, along with the rituals and ceremonies, none of which could cleanse the conscience. Carnal pertains to the flesh and the rites and ceremonies were to the end that the people should be externally clean.

Imposed until the time of reformation [setting things right]; the imposition was not an oppression or an injustice, it was the best for that time and pointed to the better that should follow. The Law was the teacher that praised good and punished wrong, all the time looking forward to the completion of the education. The Gospels usher in the times of refreshing from the Lord, the setting of things right, the better life and liberty to be had with the conscience purged from guilt. Access to God, granted to one man on one day of the year, is now freely accessible through the gospel of the grace of God. Worship is now in spirit and truth, possible because the mind is freed from the carnal ordinances imposed for the times prior to the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Law, the ordinances, were a temporary system, not designed to purge the soul from guilt, but to lead to the better system that could bring a sinner into the Holiest of All, cleansed from all sin and fitted for the presence of God.

But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come; Christ being come, the Lord's anointed filling the prophecies of the Old Testament. The many saints of the old dispensation are enjoying their eternal state because the Christ has come into the world and of the types He is the antitype. They looked forward to the Messiah, and by faith believed God. The many good things of the Gospel day are also received by faith because the Christ of God has been to the Cross-, and there succeeded in putting away the sins of the world. The conscience has been freed from guilt in all that believe in the first advent of the Son of God as being the outworking of God's planned way of passing a blessing on to man.

The High Priest is active promoting the growth of the Church and the blessing of the members of the Building of which we are the Living stones. Good things to come are anticipated by the saints and taught to us by the Holy Spirit, who was sent down to be our Comforter in the physical absence of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the blessings bestowed upon man in the past, all the good things received in this dispensation and all the future expectations of blessing are possible because Christ has come and has taken the role of high priest.

Christ is the high priest, the apostle does not say here that Jesus Christ is the high priest nor does he say the Lord Jesus is the high priest. The apostle being guided by the Holy Spirit gives special emphasis to the One Anointed by God for the work of high priest in heaven. Christ, **by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands**, not a structure manufactured by man, has become the high priest. Some think this to be expressly about the Man, born of the virgin, a body not like any previous, nor of the tribe of Levi. The context is more about the place where the Lord Jesus is ministering now as the high priest, not the shadow on earth. For the place where He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, the Lord Jesus, the Christ, is actively promoting the growth of the church and blessing the members of that Body of which He is the Head. The high priest of the Aaronic order was consecrated to that office, anointed with oil and clothed in a way to depict the high position held. The Lord Jesus is the Christ, the last one to be anointed to that office, so the Apostle Paul sets before the Hebrews the exalted position of the High Priest of the new order, the order of Melchizedek.

Not of this building is a remarkable way of saying that the sanctuary is not something man has organised, planned or built. If the reference is to the body the Lord Jesus Christ had when here on earth, the Psalmist presents to us the beautiful truth, 'a body have You prepared me', quoting the Septuagint for Psalm 40: 6ff. If the remark is related to the sanctuary in the heavens, which I surmise is the case, then it obviously was not built by man, so is not temporary. Being built by God it is permanent in the heavens and the ministry of the High Pries is never ending also.

Not of this building, neither by the blood of goats and calves; it was not of the tribe of Levi nor with the sacrifices offered on the Day of Atonement that the Christ succeeded in satisfying the just claims of Almighty God,

the Holy One. Blood of animals could never satisfy fully; the value of an animal was limited and varied according to the circumstances of the owner. The blood of an animal applied would soon dry and flake off; even the most effective sacrifice of the old order was only a temporary covering, atonement, for sin. Consider the millions of animals that were sacrificed by the children of Israel; in just one year, well over a thousand, and not one of them could give the guilty conscience peace. Clearly then the blood of an animal was not good enough for the Holiest of All not built with the materials available to Moses or Solomon. The law called for a personal awareness of sin and a sacrifice as prescribed according to the wealth of the sinner. That was enough to make the sinner comfortable as to the demands of the law, but not to ease the conscience of guilt.

By his own blood He entered in once into the holy place, presents us with two wonderful truths. First, the Blood shed on the Cross-of-Calvary has an efficacy that will never wane. The precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, cannot have a price put on it. The value of the sacrifice the Son of God made is as the value of God Himself, nothing can be compared to it nothing equals it. God who dwells in the Holiest of All gave His own Son as a sacrifice; *the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world*. Can you say with the Apostle Paul and countless others 'the Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me'. The worth of the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is not in what we can afford but in who He was, and is today.

The second great truth in this phrase is the statement; **He entered in once into the holy place**. All the high priests of the hundreds of years before the incarnation entered the Holiest of All each year with the blood of a beast. However careful the high priest was the blood he brought into the Holiest of All would not allow him to stay, he had to leave the place where God dwelt. But Christ, - the high priest of good things to come, - entered in once into the Holiest of All. He need never leave the place to which God has exalted Him. The value in the Blood of the Christ of God is in His person and in the finished work, so the God can say, 'sit at my right hand till I make thy enemies thy footstool'. As we read on a number of occasions in this epistle, the Lord Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, the Majesty on high.

Having obtained eternal redemption for us the Lord Jesus Christ can rest from His labours. He by Himself made purgation for us; who He is and what He did gave Him permanent access to the heavenly sanctuary on our behalf and to us eternal security. Being the redeemed of the Lord our position is irreversible; we can never be sold to the slavery of sin again. The three Greek words needed to describe redemption convey the thoughts, bought in the market place, taken out of the market place, released into the free world. The Lord Jesus Christ did what no high priest before Him could do. They could only offer a sacrifice that would cover sin with the blood of the slain beast; Jesus put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself thereby paying the full price demanded by a just and holy God. He had decreed that the soul that sins should die so Jesus Christ bore the sins of the whole world making it possible for those that believe in Jesus to find salvation. Jesus paid the price of our redemption when He died in our place; He satisfied the righteous claims of a just God, making propitiation for our sins. Eternal redemption is in this instance freedom from the penalty due to us as sinners for God is just and will not twice demand payment for the crime we committed against Him.

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh: if the ordinances of the Day of Atonement and the Red Heifer of Numbers 19 can do so much, meet the legal requirements. Free sinners from the punishment due, and reconcile the sinner to the wronged party, thereby typifying the soul and conscience cleansing available in Christ Jesus.

And the ashes of a heifer, Numbers 19:2-22. *This is the ordinance of the law, which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke. And you shall give her unto Eleazar the priest that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face. And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times. And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn. And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer. Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even. And he that burns her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even. And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin. And he that gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes,*

and be unclean until the even: and it shall be unto the children of Israel, and unto the stranger that sojourns among them, for a statute forever.

He that touches the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean. Whosoever touches the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifies not himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him. This is the law, when a man dies in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean. And whosoever touches one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days. And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel. And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave. And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even.

But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean. And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them, that he that sprinkles the water of separation shall wash his clothes; and he that touches the water of separation shall be unclean until even. And whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; and the soul that touches it shall be unclean until even.

The ashes were to be carefully preserved; and, being mixed with water, were sprinkled on those who were ceremonially impure. The reason for this appears to have been that the heifer was considered as a sacrifice whose blood had been offered, and the application of the ashes to which she had been burnt was regarded as an evidence of participation in that sacrifice. It was needful that there should be some method in which they could be declared to be clean from their "uncleanness." The ashes of the heifer that had been sacrificed --of which they could avail themselves at any time, was, therefore, a provision of convenience; and at the same time was designed to keep up the idea that all purification was somehow connected with the shedding of blood.

Sprinkling the unclean. Mingled with water, and sprinkled on the unclean. The word unclean here refers to such as had been defiled by contact with dead bodies, or when one had died in the family, touching an unclean vessel; things that were not sins in themselves. Clearly sprinkling a person with ashes mixed with water did not make a person literally clean even as being in the tent of the dead did not make one dirty. The association with a blood sacrifice was required to put away uncleanness of the flesh occasioned by contact with uncleanness from sources other than sin.

Sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh. Makes holy so far as the flesh or body is concerned. The uncleanness here relates to the body only, and of course the means of cleansing extended only to that. It was not designed to give peace to the conscience, or to redress moral offences. The offering of calves and goats at the appropriate times removed the obstructions to the worship of God, so far as to allow him who had been defiled to approach God in a suitable manner. The Jewish rites had an efficacy in removing ceremonial uncleanness; and made it possible for the one who had been polluted to approach and worship God. The apostle goes on to argue that, if the Old covenant sacrifices had such an efficacy, it was fair to presume that the blood of Christ would have far greater effectiveness, reaching to the conscience itself and making that pure. Though a man did, as the Law required all his life, at the most it kept him free from corporal punishment but was never able to give the guilty conscience peace. Keeping the Law kept a man out of prison but did not give that man right to enter heaven; a clean body does not give a man access to God neither does it secure for the man a place in heaven.

How much more shall the blood of Christ, as being infinitely more valuable than the blood of a beast, do what God required for the sinner. The blood of the sacrificed beast could make ceremonially clean and for the penitent renewed the relationship with God temporarily. Each misdemeanor needed another sacrifice, when the defilement was by contact with the dead, the sprinkling of the ashes of the red heifer, actual sin required a blood sacrifice. The blood of Christ, the Chosen one, chosen by God as a once only sacrifice for all time and all sinners is accepted by God and demonstrated to be sufficient by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Who through the eternal Spirit; this expression is understood of the Holy Spirit himself. As Christ's miraculous conception was by the Holy Spirit, and He produced all his miracles by the Spirit of God, so His death or final offering was made through the eternal Spirit; and by that Spirit he was raised from the dead, 1Peter 3:18. Indeed, through the whole of his life he was justified by the Spirit; and we find that in this great work of human redemption, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were continually employed. The Father as God is eternal, the Eternal Father has an Eternal Son and the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of God the Father is equally eternal.

Offered Himself with out spot to God; not as the priests which preceded Him, who always offered the blood of a beast. The best of the flocks and herds had been offered for hundreds of years and never succeeded in putting away sin permanently. A better sacrifice was needed than was found in all creation, a sacrifice that could be valid to all sinners for all time and eternity. There was no such animal in the entire world, nor a priesthood that could offer such a beast if it were possible. The Man Christ Jesus offered Himself, knowing the extent of mans sin and the extreme penalty that had to be paid for the redemption of one sinner, He offered Himself. Each animal brought to the high priest as an offering for sin was inspected carefully, if any blemish was found or any sickness revealed the beast was rejected. Jesus, the Christ, the offering for sin, was without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. There was no sin in Him, nor any taint of sin on Him; He was perfect within and without. A sacrifice less than perfect would not satisfy to the claims of God or the needs of man.

Purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God, ends the question of this and the previous verse. The thousands of animal sacrifices of the Old Testament failing, the one offering of Jesus, Himself, by Himself, successfully purged the conscience. What the high priest failed to do with the animal sacrifices, indeed what was impossible under the Law; Christ did on his own when He made purgation for our sins. The idea is, that this offering would take away whatever rendered the conscience defiled or sinful. The offerings of the Jews related in the main to external purification, and were not adapted to give peace to a troubled conscience. They could render the worshipper externally clean, so that he might draw near to God, and not be excluded by any ceremonial pollution or defilement; but the mind, the heart, the conscience; these sacrifices could not make pure.

The word conscience here is as the soul or intellect itself reflecting and pronouncing on its own acts. The whole expression refers to a mind alarmed by the recollection of guilt; for it is guilt only that disturbs a man's conscience. Guilt germinates to become unrest, remorse and as it progresses despair. Guilt makes a man troubled when he thinks of death and having to appear before a holy God and it is nothing but guilt that makes the thought of dying as a sinner with the weight of sin still a burden that makes the dread of death so real. If man had no guilt he would not fear his Maker, nor would he be reluctant to enter into His presence. The fear of death, the apprehension of the judgment to come, and the dread of God, are strong and convincing proofs that every man is a sinner. If guilt is removed, man is calm and peaceful; if not, he is the victim of wretchedness, misery and despair.

Dead works as opposed to the worship of the living God; the foolishness of bowing down to idols, of looking to the state for relief from guilt, of seeking to ease the conscience by philanthropic activities are all dead works. Intended in this phrase are the works and the services of the tabernacle, the washings, sacrifices and services that could not free the conscience from guilt.

To serve the living God is the motivation awakened in those that have a conscience freed from guilt. The believers at Thessalonica turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven. The Hebrew people that become Christians cease from the tabernacle services and sacrifices. They no longer need to seek out an animal without spot or blemish, do not have to apply the ashes of a heifer but do rely on the work the High Priest of the New Covenant has done and is doing. The service of God is not in outward form now that Christ is entered into the sanctuary not made with hands; today we worship in spirit and in truth.

And for this cause He is the mediator of New Testament; by the shed blood and the presenting of that blood in the tabernacle not made with hands, Jesus becomes the Mediator of the New Testament. *Testament* and *covenant* are translated from the same Greek word; we therefore give the same meaning to both words. Prior to the death of Jesus, the Christ, the blood of the beast slain was presented only once a year in the Holiest of All; Jesus Christ has taken his own sacrificial death into the Holiest in Heaven, for this cause He is the one mediator between God and man. Jesus is the mediator of the New Testament; the covenant by which God can save all that come to Him by faith. A covenant is an agreement between two or more parties about things that are in their own power, or may be so, with or without a mediator; this agreement takes effect at such a time and in such a manner as agreed by

both parties. A testament is a voluntary act and deed of a single person, duly executed and witnessed bestowing legacies on such as are described and named by the testator, and which can only take effect upon his death. The covenant God made with His Son became the testament of the Lord Jesus Christ, the will that He wrote and ratified by the blood, which He shed when He died.

A testament or will does not need a mediator, it comes into effect at the death of the testator. A covenant is between two and may need an arbitrator; so God has set His Son as the mediator in this new dispensation of grace. The death of the Lord Jesus made Him the testator and the resurrection declared Him to be the executor of His own will. God made a covenant with himself as the second person, and the mediator of the New Covenant is His Son, Jesus, who ratified the covenant by the shedding of His own blood. This then is an assertion that the will, testament, of the Lord Jesus Christ is also the covenant God has entered into of His own volition and by Himself and with Himself.

That by the means of death, the death of the Mediator, He was the sacrifice by which redemption could be claimed for all that transgressed by breaking the Law as given to Moses. Moses was the mediator of the old covenant; it required animal sacrifice, none of which could purge the conscience from guilt and confirmed the need for redemption. The transgressor knew the thralldom of sin and was cognisant of the need to be redeemed.

For the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, all were pronounced sinners so all needed to be redeemed. Under the Law of Moses and according to the plan of God the sins of the children of Israel were covered, atonement was made. The first covenant never did more than cover the sin, leaving the sinner with a guilty conscience. The death of Jesus Christ put away sin forever; deals with sin in such a way that it can never be attributed to the penitent who calls on the Lord for salvation. The death of Jesus effectively deals with sin today and has dealt with all sin prior to His death. Abel was saved by faith in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, as was Abraham, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Nehemiah and all the Old Covenant saints.

They which are called, the Gentile believers, and believers among the Jews; those believers of all generations, from each dispensation have the promise from God of eternal security. The blessing of eternal redemption cannot be limited to the saints of the Day of Grace. The death of the Lord Jesus dealt with the sin of all time and for all who will put their trust in Him by faith; whether looking forward to the sacrifice or looking back to the completed work and having it verified by the Word of God.

The promise of eternal inheritance was to be fulfilled for all that believe. There is an inheritance reserved in Heaven for all of us who have a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Preacher recorded in Ecclesiastes 3: 14, I know that, whatsoever God does, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, or any thing taken from it: and God does it that men should fear before him. The security of the believer is directly related to Almighty God, the inheritance of the believer is as certain as Christ is risen from among the dead; we are joint heirs with Him.

It is now imperative that we consider the use of the words; **covenant testament** and **will** in relation to the text and the usage of these words in Holy Writ. The following quotes from Barnes, Stuart, Newel, Clarke and other Greek scholars though not strict in word, truly represent the meanings necessary to an understanding of verses 16-22.

Testament, this word properly denotes a disposition, arrangement, or ordering of things; and, in the Scriptures, is employed to describe the arrangement, which God has made to secure the maintenance of his worship on earth, and the salvation of men. It is uniformly used in the Septuagint and in the New Testament to denote the covenant, which God makes with men. The word that properly denotes a covenant or compact **suntheke** is never used.

Covenant, there is so much depending, however, on the meaning of this word, not only in the interpretation of this passage, but also of other parts of the Bible, that it may be proper to explain it here more at length. The word **diayhkh** occurs in the New Testament thirty-three times. It is translated covenant in the common version, in Luke 1:72; Acts 3:26; 7:8; Romans 9:4; 11:27; Galatians 3:15; 4:24; Ephesians 2:12; Hebrews 8:6,8,9,10; Hebrews 9:4; 10:16; 12:24; 13:20. In the remaining places it is rendered testament: Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1Corinthians 11:25; 2Corinthians 3:6,14; Hebrews 7:22; 9:15-17,20; Revelation 11:19. In four of those instances, Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20 and 1Corinthians 11:25, it is used with reference to the institution or celebration of the Lord's Supper. In the Septuagint it occurs not far from three hundred times; in

considerably more than two hundred of which, it is the translation of the Hebrew word **Berith**. In one instance, Zechariah 11:14, it is the translation of the word *brotherhood*. Once, Deuteronomy 9:5, translated *word*. Once, Jeremiah 34:18, rendered *words of the covenant*. Once, Leviticus 26:11, of *tabernacle*. Once, Exodus 31:7, of *testimony*, it occurs once, Ezekiel 16:8, where the reading of the Greek and Hebrew text is doubtful; and it occurs three times, 1Samuel 11:2; 20:8; 1Kings 8:9, where there is no corresponding word in the Hebrew text. From this use of the word by the authors of the Septuagint, it is evident that they regarded it as the proper translation of the Hebrew **Berith**, and as conveying the same sense which that word does. It cannot be reasonably doubted that the writers of the New Testament were led to the use of the word, in part at least, by the fact that they found it occurring so frequently in the version in common use. It cannot be doubted, also, that they regarded it as fairly conveying the sense of the word **Berith**. On no principle can it be supposed that inspired and honest men would use a word, in referring to transactions in the Old Testament, which did not fairly convey the idea, which the writers of the Old Testament meant to express. The use being thus regarded as settled, there are some facts in reference to it which are of great importance in interpreting the New Testament, and in understanding the nature of the "covenant" Which God makes with man. These facts are the following.

The word **diatheke** is not that which properly denotes compact, agreement, or covenant. That word is **syntheke** or, in other forms, **sunyesiv** and **sunyesia**, or if the word **diatheke** is used in that signification it is only remotely, and as a secondary meaning. See Passow; the Septuagint in Isaiah 28:15; 30:1; Daniel 11:6. It is not the word that a Greek would have employed to denote a compact or covenant. He would have employed it to denote a disposition, ordering, or arrangement of things, whether of religious rites, civil customs, or property. If used with reference to a compact, it would have been with the idea of an arrangement or ordering of matters, not with the primary notion of an agreement with another.

The word properly expressive of a covenant or compact sunyhhk is never used in the New Testament. In all the allusions to the transactions between God and man, this word never occurs. From some cause, the writers and speakers in the New Testament seem to here suppose that the word would leave an impression that they did not wish to leave. Though it might have been supposed that, in speaking of the various transactions between God and man, they would have selected this word, yet with entire uniformity they have avoided it. No one of them; though the word **diatheke** has been used by no less than six of them--has been betrayed in a single instance into the use of the word **syntheke**, or has differed from the other writers in the language employed. This cannot be supposed to be the result of concert or collusion, but it must have been founded on some reason, which operated equally on all their minds.

In like manner, and with like remarkable uniformity, the word **syntheke** is never used in the Septuagint with reference to any arrangement or "covenant" between God and man. In the three other instances in Which it occurs in the Septuagint, it is with reference to compacts between man and man, Isaiah 28:16; 30:1; Daniel 11:6. This remarkable fact, that the authors of that version never use the word to denote any transaction between God and man, shows that there must have been some reason for it which acted on their minds with entire uniformity.

It is no less remarkable that neither in the Septuagint nor the New Testament is the word **diatheke** ever used in the sense of will or testament, unless it be in the case before us. This is conceded on all hands, and is expressly admitted by Prof. Stuart, though he defends this use of the word in this passage.

A very important inquiry presents itself here which has never received a solution generally regarded as satisfactory. It is why the word **diatheke** was selected by the writers of the New Testament to express the nature of the transaction between God and man in the plan of salvation. It might be said, indeed, that they found this word uniformly used in the Septuagint, and that they employed it as expressing the idea, which they wished to convey, with sufficient accuracy. But this is only removing the difficulty one step farther back. Why did the Seventy adopt this word? Why did they not rather use the common and appropriate Greek word to express the notion of a covenant? Another reason may, however, be suggested for this remarkable fact which is liable to no objection. It is, that in the apprehension of the authors of the Septuagint, and of the writers of the New Testament, the word **diatheke** in its original and proper signification, fairly conveyed the sense of the Hebrew word **Berith**. That the word **syntheke** or compact, agreement, would not express that; and that they never meant to be understood as conveying the idea, either that God entered into a COMPACT or COVENANT with man, or that he made a WILL. They meant to represent him as making an arrangement, a disposition, an ordering of things, by which his service might be kept up among his people, and by which men might be saved; but they were equally remote from

representing him as making a compact, or a will. In support of this there may be alleged the remarkable uniformity in which the word *diatheke* is used, showing that there was some settled principle from which they never departed; and used mainly the meaning of the word itself. Prof. Stuart has, undoubtedly, given the accurate original sense of the word. The real, genuine, and original meaning of *diatheke* is, arrangement, disposition, or disposal of a thing, The word from which it is derived, *diatyihami* means, to place apart or asunder; and then to set, arrange, dispose in a certain order, Passow. From this original signification is derived the use which the word has, with singular uniformity, in the Scriptures. It denotes the arrangement, disposition, or ordering of things, which God made in relation to mankind, by which he designed to keep up his worship on earth, and to save the soul. It means neither covenant nor will; neither compact nor legacy; neither agreement nor testament. It is an arrangement of an entirely different order from either of them, and the sacred writers, with an uniformity which could have been secured only by the presiding influence of the One Eternal Spirit, have avoided the suggestion that God made with man either a compact or a will. We have no word which precisely expresses this idea; and hence our conceptions are constantly floating between a compact and a will, and the views which we have are as unsettled as they are unscriptural. The simple idea is that God has made an arrangement by which his worship may be celebrated and souls saved. Under the Jewish economy this arrangement assumed one form, under the Christian another. In neither was it a compact or covenant between two parties in such a sense that one party would be at liberty to reject the terms proposed. In neither was it a testament or will, as if God had left a legacy to man; but in both there were some things in regard to the arrangement such as are found in a covenant or compact. One of those things, equally appropriate to a compact between man and man, and to this arrangement the apostle refers to here, that it implied in all cases the death of the victim. If these remarks are well founded, they should be allowed materially to shape our views in the interpretation of the Bible.

The only literal, "covenant" which can be supposed in the plan of redemption is that between the Father and the Son--though even the existence of such a covenant is rather the result of devout and learned imagining than of any distinct statement in the volume of inspiration. The simple statement of verse 16 is, that God has made an arrangement for salvation, the execution of which he has entrusted to his Son. God has proposed it to man to be accepted as the only arrangement by which man can be saved, and which he is not at liberty to disregard.

There has been much difference of opinion in reference to the meaning of the passage here, and to the design of the illustration introduced. If the word used, **diatheke**, means testament, in the sense of a will, then the sense of that passage is, that "a will is of force only when he who made it dies, for it relates to a disposition of his property after his death. The force of the remark of the apostle then would be, that the fact that the Lord Jesus made or expressed his will to mankind, implied that he would die to confirm it. Or that since in the ordinary mode of making a will it was of force only when he who made it was dead, therefore it was necessary that the Redeemer should die, in order to confirm and ratify that which he made. But the objections to this, which appears to have been the view of our translators, seem to me to be insuperable. They are these.

- 1, The word **diatheke** is not used in this sense in the New Testament elsewhere.

- 2, The Lord Jesus made no such will. He had no property, and the commandments and instructions which he gave to His disciples were not of the nature of a will or testament.

- 3, Such an illustration would not be pertinent to the design of the apostle, or in keeping with his argument. He is comparing the Jewish and Christian dispensations, and the point of comparison in this chapter relates to the question about the efficacy of sacrifice in the two arrangements. Paul shows that the arrangement for blood-shedding by sacrifice entered into both; that the high priest of both offered blood as an atonement or expiation; that the holy place was entered with blood, and that consequently there was death in both the arrangements or dispensations. The former arrangement or dispensation was ratified with blood, and it was equally proper that the new arrangement should be also. The point of comparison is not that Moses made a will or testament, which could be of force only when he died, and that, the same thing was required in the new dispensation. It is that the former covenant was ratified by blood, or by the death of a victim, and that it might be expected that the new dispensation would be confirmed, and that it was, in fact, confirmed in the same manner. In this view of the argument what pertinence would there be in introducing an illustration respecting a will and the manner in which it became efficient. It seems clear, therefore, to me, that the word rendered testament here is to be taken in the sense in which it is ordinarily used in the New Testament.

The opinion that the word here means such a Divine arrangement as is commonly denoted a "covenant," and not testament, is sanctioned by not a few names of eminence in criticism, such as Pierce, Doddridge, Michaelis, Steadel, and Dr. J.P. Wilson. Bloomfield says that the connection here demands this. The principal objections to this view are,

1, That it is not proved that no covenants or compacts were valid, except such as were made by the intervention of sacrifices.

2, That the word rendered testator *diayemenov* --cannot refer to the death of an animal slain for the purpose of ratifying a covenant, but must mean either a testator or a contractor, i.e. one of two contracting parties.

3, That the word rendered dead Hebrews 9:17-- *nekroiv*--means only dead men, and never is applied to the dead bodies of animals.

These objections to the supposition that the passage refers to a covenant or compact, Prof. Stuart says are, in his view, insuperable, and they are certainly entitled to grave consideration. Whether the view above presented is one that can be sustained, we may be better able to determine after an examination of the words and phrases that the apostle uses. Those objections, which depend wholly on the philological argument derived from the words used, will be considered, of course, in such an examination. It is to be remembered at the outset,

(1.) That the word *diayhkh* -*diatheke*--is never used in the New Testament in the sense of testament or will, unless in this place;

(2.) That it is never used in this sense in the Septuagint; and

(3.) That the Hebrew words --*Berith*--never has this signification. It must require very strong reasons to prove that it has this meaning here, and that Paul has employed the word in a sense differing from its uniform signification elsewhere in the Bible.

There must also of necessity be, *anaghk*—death. That is, it is necessary in order to confirm the covenant, or it would not be binding in cases where this did not occur. The necessity in the case is simply to make it valid or obligatory. So we say now, there must "necessarily" be a seal, or a deed would not be valid. The fair interpretation of this is that this was the common and established custom in making a "covenant" with God, or confirming the arrangement with him in regard to salvation. To this it is objected, (see the first objection above,) that "it is yet to be made out that no covenants were valid except those by the intervention of sacrifices." In reply to this, we may observe,

(1.) That the point to be made out is not that this was a custom in compacts between man and man, but between man and his Maker. There is no evidence, as it seems to me, that the apostle alludes to a compact between man and man. The mistake on this subject has arisen partly from the use of the word "testament" by our translators, in the sense of a will. Supposing that it must refer to some transaction relating to man only; and partly from the insertion of the word "men" in Hebrews 9:17, in the translation of the phrase--*epi nekroiv* upon the dead," or "over the dead."- But it is not necessary to suppose that there is a reference here to any transaction between man and man at all, as the whole force of the illustration introduced by the apostle will be retained if we suppose him speaking only of a covenant between man and God. Then his assertion will be simply that, in the arrangement between God and man, there was a necessity of the death of something, or of the shedding of blood in order to ratify it. This view will save the necessity of proof that the custom of ratifying compacts between man and man by sacrifice prevailed. Whether that can be made out or not, the assertion of the apostle may be true, that in the arrangement which God makes with man, sacrifice was necessary in order to confirm or ratify it.

(2.) The point to be made out is, not that such a custom is or was universal among all nations, but that it was the known and regular opinion among the Hebrews that a sacrifice was necessary in a "covenant" with God. In the same way as if we should say that a deed was not valid without a seal, it would not be necessary to show this in regard to all nations, but only that it is the law or the custom in the nation where the writer lived, and at the time when he lived. The fact or custom to which I suppose there is allusion here, is that of sacrificing an animal to ratify the arrangement between man and his Maker, commonly called a "covenant;" In regard to the existence of such a custom, particularly among the Hebrews? We may make the following observations. It was the common mode of ratifying the "covenant" between God and man. That was done over a sacrifice, or by the shedding of blood. So

slaying a heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon ratified the covenant with Abraham. The animals were divided and a burning lamp passed between them, Genesis 15: 9,18. So the covenant made with the Hebrews in the wilderness was ratified in the same manner, Exodus 24: 6. Thus, in Jeremiah 34:18, God speaks of the "men that had transgressed his covenant which they had made before him when they cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts thereof." See also Zechariah 9:11. Indeed, all the Jewish sacrifices were regarded as a ratification of the covenant. It was never supposed that it was ratified or confirmed in a proper manner without such a sacrifice. Instances occur in which there was no sacrifice offered when a covenant was made between man and man. See Genesis 23:16; 24:9; Deuteronomy 25:7,9; Ruth 4:7; but these cases do not establish the point that the custom did not prevail of ratifying a covenant with God by the blood of sacrifice. Further, the terms used in the Hebrew in regard to making a covenant with God, prove that it was understood to be ratified by sacrifice, or that the death of a victim was necessary. **Berith**, "to cut a covenant"—the Hebrew word **karath** meaning to cut; to cut off; to cut down; and the allusion being to the victims offered in sacrifice, and cut in pieces on occasion of entering into a covenant. See Genesis 15:10; Jeremiah 34:18,19.

These considerations show that it was the common sentiment, alike among the Hebrews and the heathen, that a covenant with God was to be ratified or sanctioned by sacrifice. The statement of Paul here is that the death of a sacrificial victim was needful to confirm or ratify such a covenant with God. It was not secured, or confirmed, until blood was thus shed. This was well understood among the Hebrews, that all their covenant transactions with God were to be ratified by a sacrifice; and Paul says that the same principle must apply to any arrangement between God and men. Hence he goes on to show that it was necessary that a sacrificial victim should die in the new Covenant which God established by man through the Mediator. See Hebrews 9:23. ***This I understand to be the sum of the argument. It is not that every contract made between man and man was to be ratified or confirmed by a sacrifice--for the apostle is not discussing that point. It is that every similar transaction with God must be based on such a sacrifice, and that no covenant with him could be complete without such a sacrifice.*** This was provided for in the ancient dispensation by the sacrifices which were constantly offered in their worship; in the new, by the one great Sacrifice offered on the cross. Hence all our approaches to God are based on the supposition of such a sacrifice, and are, as it were, ratified over it. We ratify or confirm such a covenant arrangement, not by offering the sacrifice anew, but by recalling it in a proper manner when we celebrate the death of Christ, and when, in view of His cross, we solemnly pledge ourselves to be the Lord's.

The death of the testator according to our common version, is the death of him who makes a will. But if the views above expressed are correct, this should be rendered the covenanter or the victim set apart to be slain. The Greek will admit of the translation of the word **diathemenos** by the word covenanter, if the word **diatheke** is rendered covenant. To such a translation here as would make the word refer to a victim slain in order to ratify a covenant, it is objected that "the word has no such meaning anywhere else." It must either mean a testator, or a contractor, i. e. one of two covenanting parties. But where is the death of a person covenanting made necessary in order to confirm the covenant? Prof. Stuart, To this objection I remark respectfully,

(1.) That the word is never used in the sense of testator, either in the New Testament or the Old, unless it is here. It is admitted of the word diatheke by Prof. Smart himself, that it never means will, or testament, unless it be here, and it is equally true of the word used here that it never means one who makes a will. **If, therefore, it should be that a meaning quite uncommon, or wholly unknown in the usage of the Scriptures, is to be assigned to the use of the word here, why should it be assumed that that unusual meaning should be that of making a will, and not that of confirming a covenant?**

(2.) If the apostle used the word diatheke in the sense of a covenant in this passage, nothing is more natural than that he should use the corresponding word diathemenos in the sense of that by which a covenant was ratified. He wished to express the idea that the covenant was always ratified by the death of a victim, a sacrifice of an animal under the law and the sacrifice of the Redeemer under the gospel. No word would so naturally convey that idea as the one from which the word covenant was derived. It is to be remembered, also, that there was no word to express that thought. Neither the Hebrew nor the Greek furnished such a word; nor have we now any word to express that thought, but are obliged to use circumlocution to convey the idea. The word covenanter would not do it; nor the words victim or sacrifice. We can express the idea only by some phrase like this--"the victim set apart to be slain to ratify the covenant." But it was not an unusual thing for the apostle Paul to make use of a word in a sense quite peculiar to him. Compare 2Corinthians 4:17.

(3.) The word *diatithemi*--properly means, to place apart, to set in order, to arrange. It is rendered appoint in Luke 22:29; made and make, with reference to a covenant, Acts 3:25; Hebrews 8:10; 10:16. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in the passage before us. The idea of placing, laying, disposing, arranging, etc, enters into the word--as to place, wares or merchandize for sale, to arrange a contract, etc. See Passow. The fair meaning of the word here may be, whatever goes to arrange, dispose, or settle the covenant, or to make the covenant secure and firm. If the reference were to a compact, it cannot relate to one of the contracting parties, because the death of neither is necessary to confirm it. But it may refer to that which was well known as an established opinion, that a covenant with God was ratified only by a sacrifice. Still, it must be admitted that this use of the word is not elsewhere found, and the only material question is, whether it is to be presumed that the apostle would employ a word in a single instance, in a peculiar signification, where the connection would not render it difficult to be understood. This must be admitted, that he might, whichever view is taken of the meaning of this passage; for, on the supposition that he refers here to a will, it is conceded that he uses the word in a sense which does not once occur elsewhere either in the Old Testament or the New. It seems to me, therefore, that the word here may, without impropriety, be regarded as referring to the victim that was slain in order to ratify a covenant with God; and that the meaning is, that such a covenant was not regarded as confirmed until the victim was slain. It may be added that the authority of Michaelis, Macknight, Doddridge, Bloomfield, and Dr. J.P. Wilson, is a proof that such an interpretation cannot be a very serious departure from the proper use of a Greek word.

I would venture to sum up in simple terms the previous 4,400 words from very learned men, putting it into words more readily understood: the evidence then, so far as it is clear, is in favour of covenant; limiting the word to the sense of a Divine covenant. The mention of an inheritance in verse 15 does not point to the using of the word Will, as in the last will and testament. Though Christ has obtained an inheritance, Hebrews 1: 4, He entered the possession of it through death, He did not bequeath it by dying. *By union with Christ we enjoy what is His and will inherit what is His.* Jesus gave his carpentry business away when He entered public ministry; He had not where to lay his head during this time and even his clothing was dispersed among them that crucified Him, He had no possessions to leave to family or followers. The conceptions of Christ as 'Mediator of a Covenant' and as a Testator, the 'Framer of a Will' are essentially distinct. A covenant, in biblical context is the disposition or arrangement of things determined by God for man and brought about through Christ. A Testament would be Christ's own Will, Testament, as to what should be done with his possessions and person after His death. The two ideas are incompatible.

A translation better suited to verse 16 is as follows: **For where there is a covenant, it is necessary that the death of the appointed victim should be on display: a covenant is confirmed with the blood of a victim. A covenant is not valid while the appointed victim yet lives.** Now this verse takes on the meaning intended and the contrast and comparison with the old covenant is apparent. The covenant was between God and His Son; some time before the foundation of the world the Son of God agreed to be slain and in due course He said, "here am I, send Me". The Father sent the Son to be the saviour of the world.

A covenant is of force after men are dead, emphasises the wrong meaning again as **men** is not in the Greek text and was inserted by the translators to give the meaning they had decided was suitable. A covenant is in force after the agreed ratification is settled. In this case the death of the victim. The New Covenant came into force after the Lord Jesus was slain.

It [the covenant] has no force while the appointed victim still lives; the covenant cannot be enforced prior to the death of the victim chosen to ratify the deed. The power to enforce the agreement is absent when all the details of the agreement are not worked out in detail as planned. The seal must be set to the writing to authenticate it; the death of the appointed victim must take place to ratify the covenant. God planned the salvation of man, in the covenant He agreed with His son the Lord Jesus Christ. The exemplary life of the Lord was not sufficient to effect the redemption of man, nor was His willingness to go to the Cross-as a sacrificial Lamb capable of redeeming the cleanest person. Without the death of the agreed victim the New Covenant would have no force, no power to save, no capacity to remove guilt.

Whereupon, whence, or since this is a settled principle, or an indisputable fact, it occurred in accordance with this, that the first covenant was confirmed by the shedding of blood. The admitted principle, which the apostle had stated, that the death of the victim was necessary to confirm the covenant, was the reason why the first covenant was ratified with blood. If there were any doubt about the correctness of the interpretation given above,

that Hebrews 9:16,17 refer to a covenant, and not a will, this verse would seem to be enough to remove it. It is a great principle that in order to ratify a covenant between God and his people a victim should be slain. Therefore it was that Moses ratified the old covenant in this manner, and therefore it was also that the death of a victim was necessary under the new dispensation.

The first testament, or rather covenant-- the word testament being supplied by the translators.

Was dedicated without blood, was ratified, was purified, was sanctioned, was made effective, by the shedding of blood. Blood, the death of a victim is the choice of God for the sealing of an agreement with himself and another party. The first covenant, dealing with the sin question, was inaugurated with the death of the victim and the application of the shed blood. The covenant was morally binding on the Israelites because Moses, on behalf of the people and at the command of God, inaugurated the Law by the shedding of blood.

When Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, after reciting the word of God as it was given to him, and made known all the commandments entrusted to him as the spiritual leader of the people; when he had recited the whole Law. Exodus 24: 8 And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words. Note particularly that the words were written, recorded, recited, and then the book and the hearers were sprinkled with the blood of the victim.

Careful attention should be given to the Word of God, both as a book that tells us the mind of the Lord, and as heard and explained by expositors, those gifted and given to the church for that purpose. The words being available in book form must show a divine desire for believers to read and become acquainted with the author.

He took the blood of calves and of goats. This passage is perplexing from the fact that Moses, in his account of the transactions connected with the ratification of the covenant with the people, Exodus 24:3 mentions only a part of the circumstances here referred to. He says nothing of the blood of calves and of goats; nothing of water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop; nothing of sprinkling the book, the tabernacle, or the vessels of the ministry. It has been made a question, therefore, how Paul obtained knowledge of these circumstances? Since the account is not contained in the Old Testament, it must have been either by tradition or by direct inspiration. I favour the former, as it was a common practice for the Jews to convey the instructions verbally. In fact the Law has both a written and verbal content according to the rabbis of this day. Paul is writing this epistle to the Hebrew people, the descendants of Abraham, and his teachers did have access to the writings and the interpretations of the spiritual leaders of many past generations.

Nothing is more probable than what is here stated. If this were regarded as a solemn act of ratifying a covenant with God, nothing would be more natural than that he should sprinkle the book of the covenant, and even the tabernacle and its various sacred utensils. We are to remember, also, that it was common among the Hebrews to sprinkle blood for the purpose of consecrating, or as an emblem of purifying. Thus Aaron and his sons and their garments were sprinkled with blood when they were consecrated to the office of priests, Exodus 29:19-21. The blood of sacrifices was sprinkled on the altar, Leviticus 1:5; 3:2,13; and blood was sprinkled before the veil of the sanctuary, Leviticus 4:16,17. While it is impossible to prove that Moses did not sprinkle the book and the tabernacle in the manner stated. The mere omission by Moses cannot demonstrate that it was not done.

With water, in Leviticus 14:49-51, it is expressly mentioned that the blood of the bird that was killed to cleanse a house from the plague of leprosy should be shed over running water, and that the blood and the water should be sprinkled on the walls. It has been suggested also, that the use of water was necessary in order to prevent the blood from coagulating or so as to make it possible to sprinkle it.

And scarlet wool, margin, purple. The word here used denotes crimson, or deep scarlet. The colour was obtained from a small insect which was found adhering to the shoots of a species of oak in Spain and in Western Asia, of about the size of a pea. It was regarded as the most valuable of the colours for dyeing, and was very expensive. Why the wool used by Moses was of this colour is not known unless it is because it was the most expensive of colours. Wool appears to have been used in order to absorb and retain the blood.

And hyssop that is, a bunch of hyssop intermingled with the wool, or so connected with it as to constitute a convenient instrument for sprinkling. Leviticus 14:51. Hyssop is a low shrub, regarded as one of the smallest of the plants, and has been put in contrast with the cedar of Lebanon. It sprung out of the rocks or walls, 1Kings 4:33, and was used for purposes of purification. The term seems to have comprised not only the common hyssop, but also lavender and other aromatic plants. Its fragrance, as well as its size, may have suggested the idea of using it in the sacred services of the tabernacle.

And sprinkled both the book, This circumstance is not mentioned by Moses, but it has been shown above not to be improbable.

And all the people: Moses says, and sprinkled it on the people, Exodus 24:8. All the people within reach certainly not the up to 3 million gathered to hear the covenant words spoken.

Some translate the verse such: *For after Moses had recited every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of the calves, and of the goats, with water and scarlet wool, and the book itself, and sprinkled all the people.* The rite was performed thus: Moses received the blood of the calves and goats into basins, and mingled it with water to prevent it from coagulating. He then took a bunch of hyssop; having bound it together with thread made of scarlet wool. This he dipped in the basin, and sprinkled the blood and water upon the people who were nearest to him. The crowd gathered around him, these were considered on this occasion the representatives of all the rest; for it is impossible that he should have had blood enough to have sprinkled the whole of the congregation.

This is the blood of the testament [covenant]; this shedding and application of the blood of the agreed victim ratifies the covenant and seals the deed. The Lord Jesus refers to the conduct of Moses here, and partly quotes his words in the institution of the Breaking of Bread: *This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*, Matthew 26:28. By so using the words and applying them, he shows that his sacrificial blood was intended by the blood shed and applied on this occasion, and that by it alone the remission of sins is obtained.

Which God hath enjoined unto you; In Exodus 24:8, which God hath made with you. The language used by Paul, "which God hath enjoined" commanded, shows that he did not regard this as strictly of the nature of a covenant, or compact. When a compact is made between parties, one does not enjoin or command the other, but it is a mutual agreement. In the transactions between God and man, the idea of a covenant or compact is so far excluded that God never loses his right to command or enjoin. It is not a transaction between equals, or an agreement; it is a solemn arrangement on the part of God that he proposes to men. The commandment he enjoins them to embrace; they are not at liberty to disregard.

Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. This shows that all those things used by man in the service of God, whatever capacity they are used; must be dedicated in a way which will set them apart. The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ will set apart to God all persons and things that are *sprinkled* with the blood. Inanimate objects are not changed intrinsically, their usage is different; the material value remains the same but the sentimental value differs in the use the object is put to.

And almost all things are by the Law purged with blood, the exceptions not noted at this time. It was a general custom to purify everything by blood. This rule was not universal, for some things were purified by fire and water, Numbers 31:22,23, and some by water only, Numbers 31:24; Leviticus 16:26,28. The ashes of the red heifer purified some as previously noted. But the exceptions to the general rule were few. Almost everything in the tabernacle and temple service was consecrated or purified by blood.

Without shedding of blood is no remission, Remission or forgiveness of sins. That is, though fire and water purified some things, yet when the matter pertained to the forgiveness of sins, it is universally true that no sins are pardoned except by the shedding of blood. Water and fire might remove some impurities, but the stain of sin can only be removed by blood. It is universally true that sin never has been, and never will be forgiven, except in connection with and in virtue of the shedding of blood. It is on this principle that the plan of salvation by the sacrifice of the Christ of God is based, and on this that God in fact bestows pardon on men. In the Divine arrangement there is no principle better established than this, that all sin which is forgiven is remitted through the

blood of the victim, and in this case the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. This principle has never been departed from thus far, and never will be. It follows, therefore,

1. That no sinner can hope for forgiveness except through the blood of Christ.
2. That if men are ever saved they must be willing to rely on the merits of that blood.
3. That all men are on a level in regard to salvation, since all are to be saved in the same way.
4. There will be one and the same song in heaven, the song of the redeemed.

It was therefore necessary, because God had decreed it so, that the tabernacle and its accoutrements should be purified in such a manner as before described. **The patterns of things in the heavens** setting forth in a measure the wonder of the reality of the heavenly things need a better, more efficacious sacrifice. We must always remember that any representation on earth is fundamentally inadequate to convey the full glory of the heavenly. Moses was shown the heavenly and copied it to the best of his ability at the directions given to him by God. Moses also **purified these patterns**; the sanctuary and tools of service, the priests' garments and persons, with the blood of bulls and goats.

The heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these; there was no sacrifice available to Moses with which he could purify any more than the earthly sanctuary. What is good enough for earthly service is still contaminated by immorality, not the beasts of sacrifice but the persons who offered the sacrifices. The heavens had to be purified, consecrated, with better than the blood of animals. All the things of the earthly tabernacle were purified though not capable of moral pollution. All the things in the heavenly sanctuary are cleansed, consecrated, purified, though there is nothing defiled in that holy place. The one sacrifice for sin forever surpasses in value and efficacy all the Old Testament sacrifices of all the years from Sinai to Calvary. Sacrifices, as for the Old Covenant are in plural yet the Christ only died once. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ was at the same time, the sin offering, the trespass offering, the peace offering, the burnt offering and all other sacrifice that brought pleasure to God or that were ordained to rectify the situation that man had marred. This one sacrifice infinitely surpasses in value all the sacrifices of the old economy.

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, into the temple or tabernacle. The Jewish high priest alone entered into the most holy place; and the other priests into the holy place. Jesus, being of the tribe of Judah, and not of Levi, never entered the temple proper. He had access only to the courts of the temple, in the same way as any other Jew had. He has entered into the true temple, heaven of which the earthly tabernacle was the type.

Which are the figures of the true, the representation on the earth of the reality in heaven. The real sanctuary, heaven, he has thus opened to all believers, having made the propitiatory offering by which both He and those for whom He died are entitled to enter and enjoy eternal blessedness. We may consider that Christ, appearing in His crucified body before the throne, is a real offering of Himself to the Divine justice in behalf of man. That there He continues in the constant act of being offered, so that every penitent and believer, coming unto God through Him, find Him their ever ready and available sacrifice, the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, that ever lives to make intercession for us. The word used properly means antitypes, that which is copied from a model or pattern. Moses made the tabernacle to correspond to the pattern showed to him in the mount.

Into heaven itself is the Lord Jesus gone, there to do the high priestly work, as the great high priest that ever lives and that never need leave the Holiest of All.

Now to appear in the presence of God for us, not for the Jews only, as the high priest of the Aaronic order but as the high priest for all mankind. The Lord has entered the true tabernacle, not the one made with hands, and he has an everlasting priesthood. He is now appearing before His Father for us who are the sons of God by faith and for those who will in the future believe. He there pleads the merits of His blood, the totality of His sacrifice and the intrinsic worth of His person; wonderful realisation, blessed truth, we are accepted by God as in Christ. Christ's sacrifice, though offered upon earth, was by Him carried up into heaven, and is there presented as our sacrifice for sin; the propitiation for us who believe, He, our sacrifice, appears in the presence of God for us. He has gone to heaven, not only to enjoy the rest, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high and receive the honour due to Him, but also to appear in the presence of God for us. Jesus, our high priest, is able to present our

persons and our performances, to answer and rebuke our adversary and accuser, and prepare our future-abiding place. The abiding place is heaven itself not a particular abode for me in heaven; man is earthbound and cannot live beyond the confines of material things. The Great High Priest of our confession has made it possible for us to live in heaven by preparing it for man, He being the first man in the glory.

Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, for that was a demonstration of the flaw inherent in the Law. Each sacrifice in the tabernacle service was limited to a specific need so was often repeated, never accomplishing for all the people at one time, all that was requisite to satisfy the righteous claims of God.

The high priest entered into the holy place with the blood of others, pointing out a major difference between the two dispensations. The high priest of this verse only had the blood of a beast; this gave access to the holy place on one day in the year. The blood of another species could not do a permanent work of remission; God ordained the death of the sinner, a death that an animal cannot be a substitute for. Christ was offered once and that offering is sufficient for all time and all penitents; Christ is entered into the holy place not made with hands and does not have to leave to prepare another sacrifice. He did not have the blood of others, but with His own blood He entered into heaven itself; there His sacrificial act has the same efficacy, his crucified body being still an eloquent and infinitely praiseworthy sacrifice, always acceptable to God.

For then would He often have suffered from the foundation of the world; if His offering were less than He was. The concept of the Christ of God being crucified, dead and buried; raised, seated, exalted and glorified, then repeating the process each year is ludicrous. He, as a man, was able to bear the sins of all that exercise faith in Him; He as a man in glory, is the one sacrifice that God recognises as adequate for all. In the counsel of God, Christ was considered the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Revelation 13:8, so that all believers before his advent were equally interested in his sacrificial death with those who have lived since his coming. Christ's sacrifice is ever the same; his life's blood is still considered as in the act of being continually poured out and we come to God pleading the merit of the death of His Son. *The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me.*

But now once in the end of the world, the end of the Jewish dispensation, and the beginning of the Day of Grace:

Has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, God appeared to man in the person of His Son; God was manifest in the flesh. He, the Son, came into the world for the express purpose of putting away sin, of removing the punishment from the sinner to Himself. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ as the sin bearer makes it possible for God to pardon the sinner, for God to look on the sinner and see him as without sin, with a soul clean from all stain.

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, note that death is the result of appointment, Genesis 3:19 *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.* It is not the appointment for all as Enoch and Elijah did not die, and believers still living at the return of the Lord Jesus for the church will not die. They will all be changed in a moment; mortals putting on immortality, made fit to inhabit the place that Christ has prepared. The fear of death brings a snare to those that have confidence in the flesh, to others that have confidence in the Son of God death is the vehicle to take them into the presence of God. Sin when it is finished brings forth death; the wages of sin is death, but death has no sting for those that are in Christ Jesus. Jesus said to Martha, *I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die*, John 11: 25,26.

But after this the judgement: What may be joyful anticipation for the believer can also be a time of trepidation and fear for the unbeliever. The one anticipating the face to face meeting with the Saviour, the other is dreading the face of the Judge because salvation has been refused. The One appointed to judge is the same person that could have saved. Clearly since there is to be a meeting with the Saviour or Judge after death, it follows that death is not the end of existence. This physical life will be followed by eternal life for those that are saved, for those that are still dead in trespasses and sin this life is followed by eternal damnation. Judgement, the decision as to whether we enter heaven or hell, is decided while we are in the flesh, alive and aware of the world around us. Salvation is obtained by an exercise of faith by the individual, believing the death of the Lord Jesus Christ was a vicarious death, and that it was for the remission of sins of the individual. When one can say, 'He, the Son of God, loved me and gave Himself for me' that person is acknowledging the Lord as the Saviour and has passed from death unto life.

Death is but once, judgement is but once, as a man lives so will he die. There will be no returning for a second chance so it is imperative that we settle the question of our salvation while we are able. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. To live for the flesh is to choose eternal damnation; to live for the Lord Jesus is to choose eternal life. Be very careful to avoid religions, as they are manmade and lead to damnation, seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteous; by faith believe that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. That death can only occur once gives that event an extreme importance; we will not be able to return and right wrongs, will have lost all opportunity to show love. Think of the inevitability of a complete end to earthly life and govern your deeds and plans accordingly. At the judgement following death we will all know our shortcomings, how we have neglected, despised, upset, hated, cheated, hurt, harmed, injured, wounded or offended another. We will also know the sin in ourselves that will exclude us from heaven if we have not made the right preparation for the eternal state.

Since death is to occur only once let us be like the Psalmist who could rejoice in knowing the grace of God. He could say, 'yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.' Salvation, or as Paul puts it in this passage of scripture, remission of sins, gives to that person the assurance of the presence of the Holy Spirit at all times. The Holy Spirit brings us into all truth, teaching the believer that death is just the vehicle that takes us from time into eternity.

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; death is but once so the Christ of God died but once. Death for the sons of Adam was universal because of sin; death was not the end result of sin in the Lord Jesus Christ for He is the Son of God. In Him was no sin so death had no claim on the Christ of God, the Lamb. What Christ accomplished once need never be repeated; He offered Himself without spot to God, an unblemished sacrifice so *the Lord has made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all*, Isaiah 53: 6. The Lord Jesus bore the penalty for as many as will trust Him; *He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world*, 1John 2: 2. All who refuse the salvation God offers through Christ will bear the penalty personally. The many that are saved from the penalty of sin are saved by faith; faith in the work the Lord Jesus finished when he cried with a loud [triumphant] voice '**it is finished**'.

Finished the keeping of the law for righteousness, finished the need for an animal sacrifice, finished the work of the priests. Christ is our righteousness, Christ is our sacrifice, and Christ is our High Priest.

Unto them that look for Him He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation. It is one of the characteristics of Christians that they look for the return of their Lord, 1Timothy 2:13; 2Peter 3:12, they fully believe that He will come. They earnestly desire that He will come, 2Timothy 4:8, Revelation 22:20. They are waiting for His appearing, 1Thessalonians 1:10. He left the world and ascended to heaven, but He will return. His people are looking for that time as the moment when the dead in Christ will be raised up from their graves; and those that are alive and remain will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, 1 Thessalonians 4: 17. We, who have looked to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith and have been saved, now look for the Lord from heaven with unashamed hope. He who promised 'I will come again and receive you unto myself' is due to keep that promise even as I write.

The church today is so vastly different from the apostolic pattern and has so many variations; Satan is having a time of deception unparalleled in the history of the Christian Church. The various denominations differing in basic doctrines and practices, has led to a great increase in the number of groups that call themselves Christian; many of these denying the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Irrespective of the name of the group to which you give allegiance, only individuals that have a personal relationship with the Saviour will see Him when He appears the second time; such individuals constitute the Church and whether they are alive or dead they will rise to meet the Lord. This event is commonly called the Rapture and will take place many years before the Lord returns to the earth. When the Lord Jesus does return to the earth he will bring those with Him, those that were raptured, to reign with Him. The Second Coming of the Lord, the Second Advent, the return of the Lord Jesus to reign on the earth must not be confused with the Lord Jesus returning to take the Church out of the world.

Without sin, not to present Himself a second time as a sin offering, for the work of redemption is complete. The Second Coming of the Lord is as Ephesians 5:27. *That he might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

Unto salvation, we who have been saved from the penalty of sin, rejoice in the prospect of the soon return of the Lord Jesus. He bore the penalty for our sin when He died as the Lamb of God. The Lord Jesus sent the Holy

Spirit down from heaven to be another Comforter to us and the Holy Spirit, guiding us into all truth, teaches how we may be saved from the power of sin in our lives. He who has begun a good work in you will continue that work till the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, for when we see Him we shall be changed, we shall be saved from the presence of sin. The Lord Jesus Christ has done a complete work; the salvation offered through the sacrifice of Christ is for the whole man, body, soul and spirit.

Chapter 10

We have seen in the priest of old and the service of the past dispensation was not good enough. The priest had only temporary access to the Holiest of All; the services he performed had to be repeated often for they never purged the conscience of guilt. The sacrifices failed to meet the required value for effectively dealing with sin. Even those who brought an animal as a sacrifice for the sin of which they were guilty found the conscience still condemned them. The very pious saints of the old covenant, as Job, offered daily for themselves just to cover the eventuality of sins of ignorance or presumption. Through to verse 22 of this chapter we find comfort in seeing the one sacrifice of the New Covenant is superior to many sacrifices of the Old Covenant.

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, the whole Mosaic economy was but a shadow. The Law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; the Law being the Substance that cast the shadow. A shadow is never true to the article that casts it; at best it portrays a likeness that can be recognised. A shadow is never more than a rough outlining, all the details lost in darkness; the light shines around the object but cannot shine through it. The Law was holy, just and good and spiritual but adumbrated the better priesthood and sacrifice that were to follow. The saints of old could see something of the person and work the Christ, though never a clear and detailed picture. The **good things to come** are realised in the Gospel of the grace of God. The inadequacies of the Law, for whatever reason, are not there in the New Covenant. The apostle, i.e. an eternal inheritance, a purged conscience, an efficient sacrifice, a High Priest with continuing access to God, has mentioned some of the good things with which the saints of today are blessed. The best is yet to come. Before the Lord Jesus was crucified they were not apparent, hidden as they were in rituals and the weakness of man. They were there, they cast a shadow, and some discerning Jews saw the truth through the shadows, and in that system they also were called saints.

The Gospel is the reality, when compared with the law; Christ is the great high priest, where Aaron was typical; Christ's sacrifice of Himself was of the same nature as we are, the Levitical offerings were of animals, a different nature. In the Gospel is remission of sins and a conscience freed from guilt, in the law only a temporary covering of sin. The Levitical service with its types and shadows falls short when compared with the giving of the Holy Spirit, ministered by the Gospel. The heavenly rest promised and secured by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is of surpassing value when compared with the earthly rest that is a continual warfare, trying to possess all of Canaan.

Not the very image of the things not as clear a picture as would be seen in a mirror. The Law was only a poor outline of the plan of salvation God had worked out for man by the remission of sins. The Gospel revelation filled in all the details that were hidden in the rituals and sacrifices of the priesthood. The image, the true likeness, is the revelation given to us in the Gospels and explained in the Epistles. When we look at our reflection in a mirror we can only focus our eyes on a small point at a time. When we take time to consider the Lord Jesus Christ we find that the information contained in the bible is more than is humanly possible to grasp. The Written Word of God is a detailed description of the Living Word of God, the very image of the real.

The Law **can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers' thereunto perfect**. The sacrifices referred to here are those of the Day of Atonement. Which sacrifices could not free the mind of guilt, could not ease the conscience and in a very short time left the person that offered the sacrifice with the need to repeat the cycle. Each year the high priest did as commanded, each successive year repeated the offerings because they did not permanently achieve the desired results. The animals were defective in that they were of a different nature so they were not an adequate substitute for the sinner. Moreover they were not of the same value as the soul of the sinner nor were they of enough value to satisfy God.

For then would they not have ceased to be offered? If a given task is successful the need to repeat the task is removed. The Day of Atonement brought the Jews to the high priest annually; always they came with a guilty conscience, yearly with the same need. The need to repeat the sacrifices showed the system was flawed in that the

sinner was never freed from guilt or empowered to refrain from sin. The sinner returned, even the same day, to a consciousness of sin and the alienating effect sin created with the Creator.

Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. That is, if their sacrifices had so availed as to give remission of sins, and to procure forgiveness, they would have had no more trouble of conscience on account of them. They would not have felt that it was necessary to make these sacrifices over and over again in order to find peace. When a man has full evidence that God is satisfied and of the remission of sin, he knows that it is enough. Assurance of peace with God, of sins forgiven, of the certainty of heaven is a blessing of the Gospel. They, the sins, must be blotted out if he will have peace; that can be only through a perfect sacrifice. He who is forgiven may have a deeper conviction of the evil of sin than he had ever had before. But he will not be troubled or distressed by sin for he knows the wrath of God has been exhausted on the sacrifice. This effect was not produced on the minds of those who offered animal sacrifices every year. The very fact that they did offer them annually showed that the conscience was not at peace. **No more consciousness of sin**, does not imply that the sacrifice was effective in removing the awareness of sin; the person closest to the Lord is most aware of the awfulness of sin, and how great was the sacrifice that could bring a sinner back into fellowship with God.

But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. This refers to the animal offerings on the Day of Atonement. Each animal sacrificed was an acknowledgement of sin committed, on this day the high priest was aware of his shortcomings and he made the people conscious of their failures throughout the year. As often as a sacrifice was offered, it was an acknowledgement of guilt on the part of those for whom it was made. As these sacrifices continued to be offered every year, they who made the offering were reminded of their guilt. The sacrifice on the Day of Atonement dealt only with the sins of the past year, it had no bearing or relationship with the sin of the future. The believers of the Gospel era can look back to an offering that is continually efficacious, that never decreases in value and will purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. No Jew expected a lifelong pardoning of sin by one sacrifice on one day of the year; every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ does have lifelong pardoning of sin because His sacrifice of Himself did give permanent satisfaction to God.

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Any person, priest or layman with spiritual understanding would conclude that the blood of a beast would never satisfy Almighty God. Abraham, Isaiah, David, Anna, Simeon to name a few, were some that came to the conclusion that God required more than the death of a beast. The Day of Atonement looked forward to the day when God would provide a sacrifice, the Messiah, the Lamb, and the Saviour of the world. The greatest difference between the blood of the animal and the blood of the New Covenant is in the way sin was dealt with. In the Old Covenant the blood, Atonement, covered sin. In these days of the New Covenant sin is put away forever, never to be remembered and Propitiation is the word that best describes the transaction that has taken place. We rejoice today for the Saviour says to us, 'your sins and iniquities I will remember no more'. He took the handwriting of the ordinance that was against us and nailed it to His cross. What the high priest could not do effectively with an animal sacrifice God did do when He sent *His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, to put away sin by the sacrifice of His own body.*

Wherefore when He cometh into the world, at the first advent, the Messiah was prepared to die. The Apostle Paul maintains the argument, proving that the Old covenant is ended by the simple expedient of showing the efficacy of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord Jesus came into the world He had agreed to change the system of regular sacrifices to one sacrifice for sin forever.

When He came into the world He was to the Shepherds the Lamb of God, the Bread of Life was born in the House of Bread, [Bethlehem], to Mary He was the Saviour. Simeon saw in the Babe of Bethlehem, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people, Israel. Anna, a prophetess, rejoiced for the Redeemer had come, to the Wise men from the east He was the King and to Joseph he would be Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. To the Jews He was the promised Messiah, though by the most not recognised. To the Christian He is all of the above and more, He is altogether lovely, He is God manifest in flesh, He is Lord.

He said "sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not"; these words, and through verse 7, that the apostle attributes to the Lord Jesus are a quotation from Psalm 40 6-8. The purpose of the first advent is demonstrated in this phrase; God had never found complete satisfaction in the death of animals or the giving of gifts according to the Law. The ideal, in which He would have been pleased, was a *no sin* situation. The sacrifices of the animals

according to the Law could not do more than cover sin; make atonement. God found no pleasure in this incomplete work for it left the sinner guilty and marred the fellowship that He wanted with His pinnacle of creation, man. The offerings, coming from man, did not bring pleasure to God because they came from a person whose heart was desperately wicked, and deceitful above all things.

The 40th is a Messianic Psalm; it seems to me probable that it is one of the Psalms, which had an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah. The apostle has quoted it just as it was to be understood by the Holy Spirit, as applicable to Christ. The Messiah was the hope of the Jewish people; he was the subject of their most inspired prophecies; and nothing was more natural than that he should be the subject of their Psalms and songs. By the spirit of inspiration, the Holy Spirit, they saw Him in the distant future in the various circumstances in which He would be placed, and they dwelt with delight upon the vision.

The apostle was writing to the Hebrews, he wanted to convince them of the truth of what he was alleging in regard to the nature of the sacrifices under the Law. For this reason he appealed to the Scriptures of the Old Testament; it cannot be supposed that he would cite a passage for proof that was not relevant and would not be admitted. The assumption is that the passage was in fact commonly applied as it is here, to the Messiah. These words attributed to the Lord Jesus Christ, were not heard by man but were heard and acknowledged by God in a practical way.

A body hast thou prepared Me; the Lord Jesus accepted the limitations of the flesh when He came into the world that His hands had made. The Psalmist penned—mine ear hast thou opened. This is understood as the last work done on a statue, the ear passage is dug out. Communication on an acceptable level can commence between God and man because there is a man that can hear God without the distortions caused by sin. The Lord Jesus was fully instructed in the will of God and the need of man. In the natural man every imagination of the heart is only evil continually. The body prepared for the Lord Jesus was totally without sin in any form, was pure in every way, so there was an unhindered rapport between God and man for the first time since the fall of Adam. The Son of God had to have the nature of man to do for man what God required; animals had a different nature, so God prepared a body, which would be an acceptable sacrifice for sin. Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see, hail the incarnate Deity, God with man is pleased to dwell, Glory to Emmanuel. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

The difference between the text of the Psalm and the quote in the epistle to the Hebrews is understood as the right of the Holy Spirit to give a clearer meaning to the readers of the epistle. The Septuagint is quoted in the same way we would quote an English version today, to clarify the meaning.

In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, Thou hast had no pleasure. The people did in some measure what God demanded, but what pleased God most was obedience. He said through the Prophet/Priest, Samuel, to obey is better than sacrifice; what the animal was incapable of, voluntary obedience, the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished, He was obedient unto death.

Then said I, I the Messiah. This in no way could relate to David the writer of the Psalm. David did not have a prior existence with a choice as to when he should come into the world. David was not cognisant of the fact that the sacrifices under the Law were not doing as God planned. Psalm 40 is deemed one of the Messianic Psalms, containing text directly applicable to the Lord Jesus and quoted in the New Testament as pertaining to Christ. The Apostle Paul, learned in the scriptures and in the teachings of the Law, applied this word to the Lord Jesus Christ; and without controversy it is true only to Him.

[In the volume of the book it is written of me]. The first instant of a promised Messiah must be when God told Eve that her Seed would bruise Satan's head. God spoke to the children of Israel promising a Prophet like unto His servant Moses. With many more prophecies did God prepare His people for the advent of His Son, in the volume of the book it is recorded, the Pentateuch, the first five books of the bible.

Then said I, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world; at the same time the Son came voluntarily into the world to do the will of His Father. God has not taken any pleasure in the death of the wicked, nor found satisfaction in the substituted animals demanded by the Law. The Son of God came into the world to do the will of God, up to this point in time the will of God was not done. It may be inferred from this that the will of God was for the sinner to have a conscience purged from all guilt. The sacrifices of bulls, lambs and goats, the offerings and services demanded by the Law never achieved this. The Son

of God saw the deficiency of the Law and came to remedy the situation by the sacrificing of His own life, thereby satisfying the righteous claims of His Father, God.

The Lord Jesus Christ did the will of God by being obedient to the Law in all its aspects, also by living under the lawful authorities. Jesus Christ did the will of God as the propitiation for our sins, becoming obedient unto death. The man, Christ Jesus, in the body prepared for Him, lived before man and God, perfect in all His ways, so was able to perfect the work of salvation.

The will of God may be known in two ways, that which is immutable and that which is permissive. The unalterable [sovereign] will of God does not allow for any change through any influence of any source. The permissive will of God gives man a choice and man may suffer or enjoy the consequences of the choice he makes. Galatians 1: 4 Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father is an example of the immutable will of God. Salvation is not possible by any other means. 1Thessalonians 4:3 for this is the will of God, even your sanctification, and 1Thessalonians 5:18 in every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Although sanctification and thanksgiving are the will of God for each believer, the cooperation of the individual is necessary to achieve the results desired by God.

Above when he said, when the Messiah said. This applies to the earlier part of the quotation. Having in the former part of what was quoted said that God did not require sacrifices, in the latter part he says that he came to do the will of God in the place of those sacrifices.

Sacrifice and offerings and burnt offerings, and offerings for sin Thou wouldest not, neither had pleasure therein; which are offered by the Law. The Son of God was in complete accord with the mind of God; being prescient, omniscient, the Son saw the Father would only be satisfied with a sacrifice of the same nature as the sinner. Temporary obedience by keeping the Law written on tables of stone, or conveyed by word of mouth, as interpreted by the priests, did not empower the sinner to live a life pleasing to God. The sacrifices and offerings were unable to free the conscience from guilt or change the heart attitude of the person that offered them.

Then said He, lo, I come to do thy will, O God. Having said that there was no sacrifice or offering that was adequate to take away sin and purge the conscience, the Lord Jesus said He would do all that was needful to satisfy God.

He takes away the first that He may establish the second. The first, being the offerings and sacrifices prescribed by the Law. These are removed to make way for a sacrifice that is infinitely better and efficacious than the all those that went before. The first was done away with as inefficient, the second and final is established forever. He took away legality to establish Grace; he removed the Law to institute the Gospel. The first Covenant is ended that the second Covenant may be executed.

By the which will we are sanctified, the will of God; specifically by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ as an offering for sin. It was not the general doing of God's will that did away with the first Covenant, it was the sacrifice, **the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**. Our sanctification is through the voluntary death of Jesus Christ. We could not redeem ourselves nor pay a ransom for our brother. The Lord Jesus Christ, having taken on the nature of man, in the will of God, met the need of us all by dying for us.

Clearly it was the expectation of the Psalmist that the first covenant should come to an end. It was also expressed that the Son of God would do the will of God in dying as a substitute for sinners. The Psalmist saw the sacrifices of the first Covenant were not accomplishing what was required of them, and that something more was needful. He realised the deficit of the sacrifices that had not the nature of man so from the prophecies of the psalm we look for the Incarnation of the Son of God. The expressed desire and action; lo, I come to do thy will, O God.

Once is enough for a perfect sacrifice, once only is needed to satisfy the righteous claims of a Holy God. One perfect man did for all mankind what no other could do; He did that by offering Himself to God as a sacrifice for sin. This one offering **sanctifies** forever all that come unto God by faith. Sanctified in this setting means that God is satisfied with the sacrifice offered on our behalf and accepts our persons as if they are without sin. It includes justification and redemption, in fact leaves nothing more for the believer to do.

And every high priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. The office of the priest is here compared with the office of our High Priest. The Jewish priest, in the courses allotted to them, stands daily at the altar, like a servant ministering, repeating the same sacrifices; our High Priest offered himself once for all, and sat down at the right hand of God, This continual offering argued the imperfection of the sacrifices. Our Lord's once offering proves his was complete. Throughout the years of the Law the priests had a thankless task, they were ever offering sacrifices that could not bring about the necessary change of heart or mind. The sacrifices of bulls and goats, the burnt offerings and wave offerings, the sin and peace offerings did not satisfy God nor purge the sinner of guilt.

But this man; I understand 'man' is not in the original text, so the emphasis is more; **but this priest.** This priest has completed the work He came to do.

After He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, the one sacrifice He offered, of Himself, has succeeded in removing the wrath of God from all that believe. Instead of a daily sacrifice, this priest offered to God a sacrifice of inestimable value, sufficient for the sins of the whole world. The offering of the body that was prepared for Him dealt with the sin question permanently. Therefore having completed the work of redemption:

Sat down on the right of God. They, the priests of the tribe of Levi, stood daily offering sacrifices that could never take away sins; He, our High Priest, offered one sacrifice, then was invited to sit down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross- will never be repeated. The sacrifice of one with the same nature as man is a finished work; it cannot be equalled by any number of animals and is not required of another person. Christ's was one sacrifice for sin forever. Christ has entered into rest and the invitation is to us, find rest in the Lord Jesus Christ from all efforts to achieve an acceptable standing before God. The Lord Jesus is sat down for the need to find another sacrifice will never arise. As the high priest, Christ offered Himself without spot to God, and was accepted as demonstrated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He was raised from among the dead to sit with His Father on the throne, all judgement, all power and all authority being given to Him. The rest that the Lord Jesus Christ enjoys at the right hand of God is from the need to redeem.

From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. The Lord Jesus is waiting expectantly. There is an allusion here to Psalm 110:1, where it is said, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Who are the enemies of the Lord? Satan, those that oppose the gospel, we who have hard hearts, religious people who seek the favour of God by good works. All that oppose the High priestly work of the Lord Jesus Christ will be confounded in that day; these people do not realise the sacrifice was once, for all. His enemies will be totally subdued under Him, they will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. We who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb wait for the return of the Lord for the Church. The Lord is waiting for the time when all his enemies will be subdued, sometime after or at the end of the millennial reign.

For by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified. The one offering of Him on the cross is sufficient for the sins of the whole world. That being so, it is presumptuous of me to think I can add anything to the work of salvation. My status is fixed, my standing is sure, in the eyes of God I am perfected. Not that I am perfect as I am in the flesh, but that God can look on me and see no sin because that one offering of a sacrifice of the same nature means the remission of all my sin. The offering of Christ is of such a nature as to meet the penalty of sin on my behalf. This is the declared Will of God as in Psalm 40, and Jesus said to Pilot 'for this reason I came into the world'. The often-repeated sacrifices of the priest prior to the cross never completed the salvation of the sinner that relied on them. God said when He looked out over the tents of the children of Israel, Numbers 23:21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. Now God can say of the believers that make up the Church, 'their sins and iniquities I will remember no more, they are removed as far as the east is from the west'. God is just and the justifier of all that believe in Jesus.

Wherefore the Holy Spirit is a witness to us, That is, the Holy Spirit is a proof of the truth of the statement of verse 14; that the one act of propitiation made by the Redeemer lays the foundation for the eternal perfection of all who are sanctified. The witness of the Holy Spirit here referred to is that which is furnished in the Scriptures, and not the giving of the Spirit of God to the person that is saved from the penalty of sin. Paul makes his appeal to

a passage of the Old Testament, and he thereby shows his firm conviction that the Scriptures, the Bible, are the inspired Word of God. The Holy Spirit is a witness to us of the veracity of the Word of God.

For after that He had said before; Paul reminds the readers of a passage previously quoted in Hebrews 8: 8-12. In both instances the objective is to show that the New Covenant is to form a holy people, not with an outward form only but with a changed heart and a clean conscience. "The Holy Ghost first said, this is the covenant that I will make with them:" then added, "After those days, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." The first part of the quoted passage expresses the purpose to form such a covenant; the latter states what that covenant would be.

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, said the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts and in their minds will I write them. Quotes taken from the prophets authenticate the Old Testament and validate the New Testament. This covenant made by God and ratified with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is life changing, indeed the destiny of the believer is changed and assured.

Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. What tremendous consolation this is, not forgotten, but deliberately, not remembered. God has no weakness that would allow Him to be forgetful, but His justice will not allow Him to twice demand a penalty for sin. Christ Jesus put away sin when He sacrificed Himself so on the basis of a propitiatory sacrifice God refuses to see sin in one who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Now where remission of these is, there is no more sacrifice for sin. Forgiveness of the sins mentioned in the previous verse; remission is forgiveness, of those thoughts, words and acts that were against the commandment of God. As the substitute, Jesus Christ was able to pay the ransom price demanded; pay it in full. Since the price has been paid and the just demand of God has been met there is no longer a need for a sacrifice. The one sacrifice that the High Priest of our confession made is sufficient for all sinners and for all time. The Lord Jesus Christ came to seek and to save; He came to be the sin bearer, to put away sin by being the Sacrifice. Moments before He died He proclaimed with a loud triumphant voice, 'it is finished'. He had come to do the will of God and successfully completed the work of salvation when he gave His Spirit into God's care. God returned the Spirit of Christ to the body and it was raised victorious from the grave. There is no more sacrifice for sin nor is there any need for another sacrifice for sin.

This is a demonstration of the Grace of God, a display of the richness of that grace. Because of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, we who once were afar off are drawn near to God. Because Jesus gave Himself as the sacrifice for our sins we are freed from the penalty due to us. Because the Christ of God is the propitiation for our sins we need have no fear of the wrath of God. Because Jesus is the High Priest we have a permanent representation before God. Because Jesus is the Son of God and we are 'in Christ' we have an inheritance reserved in heaven for us. Because we have faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the work of redemption, we are given the Holy Spirit to teach us and guide us. By faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we are assured of eternal life, for that life is in the Son of God. As children of God we have the Law written in our hearts and have the power of God as a resource to aid us in keeping that Law.

Having therefore, brethren, The apostle, in this verse, enters on the encouraging part of his epistle, which continues to the end of it. He has gone into an extensive examination of the Jewish and Christian systems; he had compared the Founders of the two, Moses and the Son of God, and shown how far superior Jesus is to Moses. The Apostle has compared the Christian great High Priest with the Jewish high priest, and shown that Christ is superior in person and work. He has compared the sacrifices under the two dispensations, and showed that in all respects the Christian's sacrifice of the Lamb of God was superior to the Jewish sacrifices of animals. That it was an offering that cleansed from sin; that it was sufficient when once offered, without being repeated, while the Jewish offerings were only typical, and were unable to put away sin. Paul has shown that the great High Priest of the Christian profession has opened a way to the mercy seat in heaven, and that Jesus, our High Priest is now seated there.

Boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, courage to rely on another's labour. Here the idea is that before Christ died and entered into heaven, there was no access to the throne of grace as man needed. Man had no offering which he could bring that would make him acceptable to God. But now the way was open. Access is free for all, and all might come with the utmost freedom, providing the entrance fee is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word holiest here is taken from the Holy of Holies in the temple and is here applied to heaven of which that was the earthly replica. The entrance into the most holy place was forbidden to all but the high priest;

but now access to the real "Holy of Holies" is granted to all, in the name of the great High Priest of the Christian profession.

The blood of Jesus is the means by which we have access to heaven. The blood of bulls gave the high priest freedom to enter beyond the veil; it availed only for the high priest that made the sacrifice. The blood of Jesus, the victim that ratified the covenant, is of infinite value and is for all that come to God by faith. The Blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son cleanses us from all sin, so making us fit to enter into the presence of God; the Most Holy Place. Do not imagine this is for some time in the future; communion is with God now. Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son and in fellowship we are in the Holiest of All, the presence of God. The Blood of Jesus is a euphemism for the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The victim had to die for the covenant to be sealed; God raised this victim from the dead so our privilege to enter into the Holiest is—

By a new and living way, a victim that was dead and is now alive for evermore. The newness of this is in the life of the victim. Never before had the slain been raised from among the dead; never before had the victim been alive to present itself as the sacrifice. No man of any religious stature had ever been able to enter the Heaven of Heavens. Not once had the slain bull or goat been able to present its own blood and sprinkle that blood on the Mercy Seat. The high priests of the tribe of Levi were obedient to the Law; they offered the sacrifice ordained by Law. The new and living way is that the High Priest, after the order of Melchizedek, offers Himself without spot to God. The High Priest is the sacrifice, the Sacrifice is alive from the dead, and the Lamb as it had been slain is in the Holiest of All. The way to peace and reconciliation, under the old covenant, was through the dead bodies of the animals slain; but Christ is living, and ever lives, to make intercession for us; therefore he is **a new and living way**. The New and Living way is in opposition to the old ineffectual way; the living way does away with the need for applying the blood of a dead beast.

Which He has consecrated for us; He has dedicated this way for our use. This particular path is the Way Jesus spoke of when He said, 'I am the Way the Truth and the Life.' It is a path consecrated by him for the salvation and service of man; a way of access to the heavenly sanctuary for the sinner which has been set apart by the Redeemer for this service alone. This is the only way for man to approach God; all other paths are deceptive and lead to death.

Through the veil, that is to say His flesh. The pathway into the Holiest of All is set apart for those redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. It is a way that Christ has consecrated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh. The veil in the tabernacle and temple were typical of the body of Christ. When Christ died, the veil of the temple was rent in sunder; this was at the time of the evening sacrifice, and gave the people a surprising view into the Holiest of All, which they had never before experienced. Our way to heaven is by a crucified Saviour; His death is to us the way of life; His person is our passport, not just to look into the Holiest of All but to enter into the very presence of God. Access to God is only in Christ and only as Christ is the sacrifice for sin, alive from the dead. The Lord Jesus Christ prepared and used the path that we must take; He consecrated the way for us, setting it apart for us by being the propitiation for our sins.

Having a High Priest over the house of God, not now a dying high priest over the children of God, Israel; a high priest that had a limited term of office. The high priest is the Lord Jesus Christ; He is the high priest for the house of God, the Church. Under the former dispensation it was regarded as a privilege that the people of God had access to the mercy seat by means of the high priest. It is true, in a much higher sense, that we now have access to God through our greater and more glorious High Priest. The high priest had the responsibility to keep all things in order in the tabernacle and later in the temple; he was the religious leader. The Lord Jesus Christ is the head over all things to the church, which is his body.

Let us draw near. Let us come with the blood of our sacrifice to the throne of God, in confidence praying and praising. We can draw near for our high priest has removed all hindrances to access to God. We should draw near for our resources are there. We must draw near and maintain communion with our Saviour and Lord.

With a true heart deeply convinced of our need of help, and truly in earnest to obtain it. Hypocrisy or guile is not hidden from God; they that worship God must worship Him in sincerity and truth. Can we say, search my heart and my motives and see if there be any wicked thing within me; cleanse me from all unrighteousness.

In full assurance of faith, being fully persuaded that God will accept us for the sake of his Son, and that the sacrificial death of Christ gives us full authority to expect every blessing we need. With an unwavering confidence that God is able to perform all He has promised. It is not acceptable to God if we come to Him with doubts, for what is not of faith is sin; of His ability to view us as justified by Christ's sacrifice. Without Faith it is impossible to please God.

Having our hearts sprinkled, Not our bodies, as was the case among the Hebrews, when they had contracted any pollution, for they were to be sprinkled with the water of separation, Numbers 19:2-10. Our hearts sprinkled by the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ, without which we cannot enter within the veil; cannot draw near to God. Moses actually applied the blood of the victim; we by faith have the blood of the Victim applied to us.

From an evil conscience, having that deep sense of guilt which our conscience felt, taken away, and the peace and love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given unto us. Keep our minds free from vanities, doubts, superstitions, fears and all other thoughts that may distract from the truth.

Our bodies washed with pure water. The high priest, before he entered into the inner tabernacle, or put on his holy garments, was to wash his flesh in water, Leviticus 16: 4, and the Levites were to be cleansed the same way, Numbers 8: 7. The apostle probably alludes to this in what he says here. The washing of water by the Word of God is the method for cleansing the life of the believer in the Day of Grace in which we live. Ephesians 5: 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it [the church] with the washing of water by the word, in the same way each individual is cleansed.

To this point the apostle has established that the Word spoken by the Lord Jesus is the final word of God for man. The first warning was in relation to this, that there is no salvation except as it is found in the words spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ and His death on the Cross. Prophets and angels did not have the **last word**, which was spoken by the Son, the final communication of God to man for salvation. The second warning dealt with the way in which the children of Israel missed out on a permanent rest because they did not exercise faith, looking only to God for the fulfilling of the promises. The Hebrews listened to the voice of the priests whose work had been superseded. They were offering rest by religious rites and prayers; the only rest available was by faith in Christ. The third warning was to do with the insincerity of the people spoken to by the Lord through His Spirit. They tried in the flesh to do what they thought was right, and many gave up, finding it too hard because they did not rely on the Spirit of God, indeed did not have the Holy Spirit indwelling.

The Apostle has established the superiority of the Son over prophets. Demonstrated that the Lord Jesus is greater by far than the angels are. Shown that Moses falls short as a prophet and a leader of the people. Paul has carefully laid down the facts concerning the inadequacy of the priesthood and the sacrifices that were of a different nature to man. Pointing out to the readers that the priests had only a temporary ministry because they died. He makes it clear that entry into the Holiest of All on one day in the year is not the ultimate, but that access is now possible on any day at any time because our Great High Priest is always in the Holiest of All, the presence of God.

Now the Apostle Paul enters on the forth warning to the Hebrew readers of this letter; he calls the believers to steadfastness, the exercise of faith. Then follows closely with the forth warning to those wavering and turning aside from the truth as it is in Jesus.

Let us hold fast the profession of faith without wavering; take no heed to the things opponents to the gospel say. We who are the sons of Abraham by birth, persecuted by our brethren in the flesh, have a faith, which is unassailable. All the doubts that our brethren in the flesh can raise, all ceremonies and doctrines purporting to bring us closer to God, would in fact leave us stranded outside the Most Holy Place. We, the Church, [including all of the household of Abraham that are saved], made up of every individual that has a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, may be steadfast, unmoveable, even as the work of the Lord Jesus is, and His place in the glory is irrefutable. The obligation of each believer is to hold fast to the doctrines and practices that are laid down for us in the teachings of the Lord Jesus and the writers of the epistles which make up the New Testament.

The aim of the Judaisers was to wean the new believers away from the Faith by attacking the Word of God, the priesthood of Christ, the Sacrifice for sinners, and using all means to distract them. The apostle counters this by setting forth the Son of God as the final communication of God to man. He shows the advantage of the Christian

over the Jew and exhorts the Christian to maintain a testimony consistent with the exalted position to which Christ is raised. A Priest that ever lives, a sacrifice always fresh, entry to heaven open, and acceptance by God, are blessings the Hebrews cannot know or rejoice in without Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage*, [the Law]. We must avoid the evil doctrines and practices of all religions of whatever persuasion, giving them no place, not even for a moment, for they will undermine our faith and cause doubts. Do you have ties to a Denomination? Do rituals bind you? Is there a liturgy you must recite? Is a day of more importance than another is? Put aside all these distractions and focus on the Lord Jesus Christ; there will be no wavering as we see only Him. In Him we have freedom to worship God in spirit and truth. He is the one who is our confession of faith, He brings us into the holy place, and He keeps us and supplies all our needs. Let us hold fast the profession of faith without wavering.

[For He is faithful that promised;] this parenthesis is the motive for our faithfulness; believing we have a faithful God that will do all that is promised encourages us to continue without doubts. God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. The faithfulness of the believer should be a reflection of the faithfulness of God. The difficulties that come, the trials of life, the arguments of the enemies of the Cross-must be seen in the light of the faithfulness of God. God cannot deny Himself nor go back on His word; we, therefore, need never waver though beset with tests of our faith. Know of a surety, that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. Well you may ask how much faith is needed to stay steadfast as a Christian? Just sufficient to grasp hold of the faithfulness of God; He will take your hand and be as a Father to you. He will give you His Spirit to guide you into all truth. He will never leave you or forsake you; God will look at you and accept you as a son or daughter.

And let us consider one another, not to criticise or to find something to gossip about for that would be destructive of fellowship. Let us consider the difficulties our brother or sister is facing, the distressing family situation, the financial burden, and the lack of employment. There are many spiritual burdens too and the elders of the church as well as the saints need encouragement to continue in the faith. The task of teaching the truth, of guiding those new in the faith, of visiting the sick and individual responsibility to study to show one is approved of God. The example enjoined is to be exemplary in our walk with the Lord so that others will be excited to follow on; doing all to the glory of God.

To provoke unto love and to good works, as we consider each other the motivation is to encourage the work of the Lord Jesus, the growth of the church and it's members. A good example given to others is the best and most effectual provocation to love and good works. Provoke in this context is to excite, to cause exuberance in the saints, so making the Christian message desirable to outsiders. The emotion to be stirred up is love; and this is the second mention of the sentiment in this epistle.

The three occasions where the word is used in the Epistle to the Hebrews are each in connection with Christian activity. Hebrews 6:10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which you have showed toward his name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. Hebrews 13:1 Let brotherly love continue. There is none of the modern sentimentality or sensuality in the word, as the apostle employs it. This usage is an exhortation to the activities that portray the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us. A scriptural list of the characteristics that make up love is quite formidable. Taken from Romans 12: 9-21: sincere, affectionate, humble, fervent, hopeful, patient, diligent, generous, hospitable, charitable, sympathetic, having empathy, honest, peaceable, forgiving, gracious and steadfast. This list, then, becomes the detailed character we try to provoke each other into developing and displaying in the church and community. As the brethren are provoked in this way the good works will follow, and the local community will see the love of God in the people that meet together in that place.

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is; some had forsaken this means of grace, but all are exhorted to meet often as it is a mutual blessing to be with those of a like mind. The ministry of the Word of God, communal worship, fellowship in prayer and generally sharing one another's burdens and joys is the way we are knit together in love. Pride is most often the reason for the forsaking of the meeting of the saints, leading to factions and divisions. How this must grieve the Lord Jesus, He who is building the church. Never take one from the gathering God has placed him in; if you would leave the group of saints you are currently

associated with let it be with the full assurance of faith, nothing doubting. This is a warning against the hermit attitude, or the thought that they are not doing as I think things ought to be done. In the fellowship we may observe the character of the Lord being formed in His people; which observation is an encouragement to our souls.

The assembly of the Hebrew people was a few times in the year, at Jerusalem, on certain days. There they may never meet the high priest; some not even see him in the distance. The Lord Jesus Christ has promised to be with His people whenever and wherever they meet in His Name. Far better than relying on that promise from the Lord is the certain knowledge that the Lord came with me into the gathering. Our High Priest has promised never to leave us or forsake us. What a blessing it would be if we all experienced the abiding presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our meetings would lose their formality and be occasions of tremendous power, praise and worship being the dominant activity of the saints.

Many refrain from attending the Church to which they are affiliated simply because they do not have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Apathy or self interests keep some occupied in other areas. Let us heed the word of the Lord Jesus; *seek first the kingdom of God and His righteous, and all these things will be added unto you*.

But exhorting, encouraging each other to a deeper relationship, a more prayerful life, a studious diligence in the Word of God. By example teaching a closer walk with God. It is possible to lose the first enthusiasm; example and exhortation can nourish back to life the first love.

So much more, as you see the day approaching. What approaching day is this? Is it the day when Jerusalem will be ransacked? Are we looking farther ahead to the day when the Lord will call His church away from earth? Is it more personal, persecution of Christians threatening the local believers? It may be that fear of persecution had caused some to forsake the meetings arranged for the saints. The imminence of Death and Judgement is an incentive to continue in the things, which we have learned.

The term 'day' here is certainly an event that was expected. Whether the saints were looking to that day with dread or anticipation is impossible for us to know. In either case the meeting of the saints to give the glory and praise to God, to worship and be instructed in the Word of the Lord, is a priority that must not be neglected. If you have a personal day approaching, a major operation, a job interview, a final examination, a wedding, the death of a dearly loved one, encouragement is to be had in the gathering of the saints. Christianity is a gregarious religion and true fellowship has us each bearing the burdens we see our brethren in Christ are bowed down under, so lightening their load. A burden shared is a load halved; a joy shared is a pleasure doubled.

For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins. If we deliberately, for fear of persecution from the authorities or the religious background in which we were raised or from any other motive, renounce the Gospel and the Author of that Gospel, for such there remains no sacrifice for sins. Since the Jewish sacrifices are abolished, as appears by the declaration of God himself in Psalm 40, and Jesus is the Christ, the only sacrifice which God will accept, those who reject Him have no other means of redemption; therefore their situation is without remedy. This is the meaning of the apostle, and the case is that of a deliberate apostate, one who has utterly rejected Jesus Christ and His propitiation, thereby renouncing the whole Gospel system. It has nothing to do with backsliders in our common use of that term. A man may be overtaken in a fault, or he may deliberately go into sin, and yet neither renounces the Gospel, nor denies the Lord that bought him. No person is hopeless but he that deliberately rejects the Gospel message, after having been convinced of the truth of the Gospel. To him there remains no more sacrifice for sin, for there was but the one sacrifice for sin that will suffice for today, Jesus, and this he has rejected.

The sin considered here is that of the person who having heard the word of truth, rejects it. The same person, confronted with the changed lives of those communicating the Gospel message, rejects them and it. This person decides there is no God or considers he does not need God so disregards the Gospel of the grace of God. This same person may be someone who is too good to be saved; Jesus said 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance'; a prerequisite to salvation is recognition of the need. No matter how good a person is or how a person is acclaimed by the society, it is a fact that all have sinned and come short of the standard God has set. If you reject the Gospel message you determine your own future; heaven for those that are saved by the grace of God, hell for

those that refuse to believe. This decision is made before death, the proverb states—As a tree falls so shall it lie, as a man lives so shall he die, as a man dies so shall he spend eternity. To attain to heaven and escape hell, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ while it is called today. 2Corinthians 6:2 behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Having received the knowledge of the truth must be compared to *having received the truth*. The distinction is having an understanding in the mind, knowledge, or believing by faith, salvation. Knowing how to be saved does not constitute salvation. Even believing the historic details concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and the crucifixion will not reward with access to the presence of God. Knowing the truth and rejecting it will guarantee eternal damnation. **The truth** is the reality of a living sacrifice as compared with the dead beasts of the Mosaic covenant. The character here described is of the person that embraced the gospel truth intellectually, but later rejected it, wilfully continuing without it. For such a person there is no sacrifice for sins; the only sacrifice available has been turned down.

For one who has turned away from the Truth there is no hope, **but a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation**. The certainty of the punishment is that it is according to the justice of God, He cannot deny Himself. The nature of the damnation is fearful in that it is eternal, awesome, as it is everlasting fire. Sinner take heed, to neglect the truth is as bad as rejecting the truth; salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ and cannot be had by any amount of good works or good intentions. God is not mocked, whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap; if we sow to the flesh we reap corruption, when we sow to the Spirit we will reap eternal life. No doubt a good person will reap benefits during this life but eternal blessings are totally dependent on believing the Gospel message. The acclaim of men does not automatically merit acceptance by God; there is nothing done in the flesh that can please God. To escape the wrath of God one must go to the cross on which the Lord Jesus Christ died; there He bore the sentence against sin, experienced the wrath of God on behalf of all that come to God by faith. God is angry with the wicked every day; at the same time God wills not the death of any sinner, in fact commands all men every where to repent.

Which shall devour the adversaries, those who have turned away from the truth, also those that never embraced the truth. A hostile opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ motivated the unbelieving Jews. The apostle writes in 1Thessalonians 2:15. Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us, and they please not God, and are contrary to all men. In the early chapters of the Epistle to the Romans the apostle makes it abundantly clear that all have sinned by teaching that the creation, conscience and the Law reveal that God is. By one or more of those three we are condemned, thereby also declared the enemies of the Cross-. This text does not teach annihilation, but rather the everlasting nature of the punishment, continual burning in the Lake of Fire, always on fire and never consumed.

There is a reference here for the Hebrew readers of this letter; Paul reminds them of Korah, Dathan and Abiram of the tribe of Levi. These three included with the 250 others were not content with the order of the priesthood as God had established it. They were given a special service in the tabernacle but did not find contentment in that service, desiring the office given to others, that of the priests. This discontentment caused a breach of the Law and they were minded to set up an order contrary to the instructions given by Moses. Subsequently fire came down from heaven and consumed the 250 men that offered incense. The error of Korah was in not accepting the way God had set and in wanting to do things his own way. The various religions with their ceremonies and rites, priests and acolytes, temples and cathedrals, churches and chapels are as Korah, setting up a system that does not match the scriptural criteria. All these groups are adversaries, are opponents to the Gospel and will be burnt up when judged by the Lord. **The just shall live by faith**. All the believers in those groups will escape the wrath to come because they will be *Caught Up* with the rest of the believers when the Lord comes for his church.

He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. This does not mean that all that broke the law died without mercy; it does mean that all that sinned when the penalty was death for that sin, died when convicted by the testimony of two or three witnesses. The Law was an eye for an eye a tooth for a tooth; this is a demonstration of the love and justice of God. In His wisdom God limited the punishment, revenge, so that the enmity could end because there was equality in suffering and grief. Another situation that applies to this passage is the Jew that refused to abide in the tribe, governed by the Law, that soul was cut off, in some cases reckoned dead and in others put to death.

It was the Law that in all cases where capital punishment was the penalty, a minimum of two witnesses was required, three preferred. These were to be respectable people that had first hand testimony of the situation being judged; a life depended on the proof put before the judges. Notice the discrepancy in the judgement hall when the Lord Jesus was before the Sanhedrin, there they coerced false witnesses and twisted the words of the Lord. He was falsely accused, wrongly convicted and condemned to death.

The Law of Moses, the Commandments and the verbal communication from the Lord, is not the same as the prevailing situation. Today the soul that sins, it shall die; no one sin, in the sight of God, is worse than another is. In the society we certainly judge one crime more heinous than another, murder and rape deserving of harsher punishment than shoplifting. This is necessary to govern a society, making it acceptable to all in that social order. Each sin, of whatever degree, is deserving of death as demonstrated by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ; *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world.* Regardless of the degree of sin, the amount of sins, or the standing of the person in any religious order, Christ died for our sins. Whether the sin is the rebellion of a pre-school child or that of the hardened criminal, Christ died for our sins.

If in reading this you conclude that you are still classed with those that are without a sacrifice for sin, an unbeliever, that you do not have peace with God, there is a remedy. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the way God has chosen and set before us. The Father sent the Son to be the propitiation for our sins. [Propitiation as used in this commentary, is the satisfaction God has in the sacrifice the Lord Jesus Christ made of Himself. Jesus, a sinless, perfect man, offered Himself as the ransom price and God was satisfied, accepting that price, the death of His Son, on our behalf.] Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Speak to Him; an act of faith, confess your sinfulness and thank Him for bearing the penalty for sin, for dying in your place. This act of faith will free you from guilt, secure your eternal future, make you a child of God, and establish an inheritance for you. You will have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in you, enabling you to live without being under the dominion of sin. Above all these blessings, the child of God has access into the Most Holy Place, and can commune with God the Father and Jesus Christ, His Son without an intermediary.

Of how much sorer punishment, the punishment for despising the Law as was given to Moses is not to be compared with the wrath of God that the despisers of the Gospel of the Grace of God will experience. With God the punishment always fits the crime. The reason why the punishment should be more severe is that the Founder of the faith is greater than Moses ever was. The Sacrifice is more efficacious, being alive from the dead, so ever there for all that will come to God by faith. The sinner does not have to give of his substance, a sacrifice; the Lord Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice for sin.

Shall he be thought worthy; who has trodden underfoot the Son of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is worthy of all glory, honour, and praise so the person that refuses to give to the Lord His due calls upon himself the punishment reserved for all that refuse the salvation that God has made available in His Son. The Lord Jesus Christ is the final communication from God to man, he is the only sacrifice available for sin in this present day. Jesus Christ is the Great High Priest, the Way for a man to come back to God, through the Veil. Christ Jesus is the living sacrifice, presenting His own blood as the propitiation for sin. Looking elsewhere for salvation is refusing God's gracious offer and is deserving of punishment. A much harsher punishment than can be expected for breaking the law of man. The conqueror in past ages would put his foot on the neck of the vanquished, symbolically treading him down. Ignoring the gospel message, despising the preacher, speaking the message of grace for filthy lucre, blaspheming by accepting the name Christian without acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord; all these are tantamount to treading underfoot the Son of God. Refusing to believe that Jesus Christ is Lord constitutes the worst offence; not accepting that Jesus is the only sacrifice for sin is one aspect of that refusal. God was manifest in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ, seeing Jesus Christ as a mere man is denying the truth therefore worthy of the direst punishment.

Has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing. The blood of the covenant is the blood of the victim, by which the covenant was ratified; in this case the lifeblood of Lord Jesus Christ. The covenant is that which God entered into when He agreed to accept all that come to Him by faith in the finished work of redemption; the shed blood of Christ; the life given in the stead of the penitent sinner. To treat the work of Christ as a common thing; the sacrifice on Calvary as a religious rite, is to say it is ordinary or unholy. This is the end result of all the religions that claim to be Christian and reject the necessity of a personal saviour and a personal relationship with God.

Wherewith he was sanctified applies to the person that has been set aside for God. Those that are brought up in a 'Christian country' or in a 'Christian family' individuals that turn their backs on the Lord Jesus, put themselves in the position where there is only **much sorer punishment** waiting. In a 'Christian community' as opposed to a neighbourhood of a different religion, one is set apart [sanctified] to hear the truth. Being sent to Sunday school, listening to the gospel message, receiving a tract with a gospel message, sets one aside for the special blessing of salvation by faith. Buddhists, Hindus, Shintoists, Atheists, and all others including also the Christian religions that teach salvation by works. All religions that do not have the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the only way of salvation, are in the position of denying the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ died for all, therefore salvation is available for all, so in that sense all are set aside for the blessing of sins forgiven, of peace with God. Vast numbers of children embrace the truth in their early years and turn aside as they grow; peer pressure, parental influence, educational trends and other teachings weaning them away from the truth into destructive error. If you can read this then you have no excuse; you are responsible for your eternal state. Conscience, creation and the Law teach that all have sinned and come short of the standard God has set for righteousness, but God in grace has made salvation obtainable to all. By faith we believe and are saved from the wrath to come upon all that do not obey and believe the Gospel.

Done despite unto the Spirit of grace or insulted the Spirit of grace. In the days of the Lord's ministry, He was accused of doing miracles by the power of Beelzebub. The scribes and the Pharisees would not accept that there was a power other than invested in the Hebrew people. In saying the Lord Jesus was motivated by an evil spirit they put themselves beyond the grace of God; they could not be saved because they believed the miracles were a manifestation of the devil and not of God. To attribute the work of God to an evil spirit is the same as saying there is no God. It is the unpardonable sin, for how can sin be pardoned when He who can forgive sin and pardon the guilty is denied existence or deprived of divinity. The Holy Spirit convicts a person of sin, the conscience is pricked, the mind troubled, hardening the heart at this time will make it more difficult next time to recognise the work of the Holy Spirit. He who being often reproved, hardens his heart, shall at the last come to destruction, and that without remedy. Every time an unbeliever rejects the word of God, he or she is doing **despite unto the Spirit of grace**.

It is by the Holy Spirit that the Hebrew people, as the Gentiles, are made aware of the grace of God. The Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and brings those things to the mind of an individual, generally after convincing them of sin, thereby putting that person in the position where they may believe and be saved. That is one aspect of *setting apart* or *sanctification*; the person now has to make the decision that will determine their eternal destiny. Believe and be saved or reject and be damned. Refusing the Gospel of the grace of God is treading underfoot the Son of God, counting the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ as unholy and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace.

For we know Him that hath said, the Hebrews were well aware of who had spoken, it is recorded in their own writings. They knew that the word of the Lord was established forever, they were taught from their youth the veracity of the scriptures. Paul is associating himself with the Hebrew people, as one of them, at this time; in verse 39 he disassociates himself from them and aligns himself with persevering believers. It is the Lord that has said,

Vengeance belongs unto me, I will recompense; vindictive justice is an attribute of God that will be known by all that tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and do despite unto the Spirit of grace. God is just in visiting His wrath on all that reject His offer of salvation; *In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Thessalonians 1: 8.*

The Lord shall judge His people; He will make the right decision concerning his people, the Hebrew nation. Christians are the children of God in this generation, but here the apostle is reminding those *Who are Israelites; to whom pertain the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Romans 9: 4-5.* These people will know the wrath of God if they obey not the gospel of the grace of God. The nation known as the children of God are privileged to have the word of God given to them; to have the promises and be instructed in the service of God. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, will they be thought worthy who go about to establish their own righteousness and reject the righteousness that is offered them by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christians will also be judged, and the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the

pride of life, being condemned, will bring the chastening of the Lord on those guilty. Today, if there is to be revival, judgement must begin at the house of God.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. The punishment inflicted by society, the judge or fellow man is always limited by the life of the judge or the criminal. **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God** because He is almighty and can therefore punish to the uttermost even as He can save to the uttermost all that come unto Him by faith. **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God** because He is able to punish eternally as He is eternal and can keep the soul of the sinner in a state of eternal damnation. **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God** because He is just and the punishment will perfectly fit the crime. The sin is rejecting the salvation offered by God, the punishment is commensurate with the offense. **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;** the suffering and death of the Son of God on the cross is the clearest demonstration of the wrath of God, no less can be expected by the impenitent sinner. **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God** so heed the warning, repent and believe the gospel to the saving of your soul. The Christian, by believing, has escaped the wrath of God; the Christian is at peace with God because Jesus Christ purchased peace by the blood of His cross.

But call to remembrance the former days, it appears from this, that the first believers in Judea were greatly persecuted. The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, Stephen's martyrdom, the persecution that arose after the death of Stephen, Acts 8:1, persecution by Herod, Acts 12:1, in which James was killed, and the various persecutions of the apostle Paul, show that the authorities were of a mind to suppress Christianity by all means.

In which, after you were illuminated, after the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ shined into them, after they were saved by the grace of God. This is when persecution begins; it is against Christ and His church. Satan is the antagonist and his emissaries are opposed to all things that promote the Gospel, even to singling out the believers for harassment and persecution. The saints can find comfort in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ; He said I will build my church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it. No matter what degree the persecution against the church reaches, it will never be able to stop the work the Lord Jesus is doing. Man in his natural state does not meet with any opposition from the evil forces arrayed against the Christ and his Church; opposition begins after one accepts the offer of salvation. Pressures will come to try and dissuade the new believer from continuing in the Way, pressures from family, peer groups, society, governments and even other professing Christian groups. Satan attacks in ways that seem right, with doctrines that are almost correct; he will use your loved ones to try to divert your attention away from the Bible and fellowship with the saints. The strength of the Christian is found in the reading of God's word and in the presence of God, in prayer. By these means also we find the truth with which we can repel all the fiery darts of the devil.

You endured a great fight of afflictions, you endured, and you did not go down under the awful pressures that were brought against you. The church continued to grow even as the saints were put to death for their faith. You continued to witness even with the threat of death staring you in the face.

The Apostle Paul makes a clear distinction between those that turn back, verses 26-31 and those that are suffering persecution for the testimony they hold fast to, verses 32-39. The first group should have a fear of falling into the hands of the living God; the second group looks forward to being with their God. In the early years of the Christian church, prior to the destruction of the temple, and more so afterwards, the believers suffered for the faith. James tells us that the trying of our faith works patience, and Paul tells us—we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation works patience. The early Christians endured as they looked for the blessed hope, the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. The orthodox Jews persecuted the Jews that found faith in the Lord Jesus Christ so did the Romans and those that blamed the Christians for any natural disaster or calamity. Today is no different, the question is often asked after stressful events, why did God allow that? Why did God take that child? Why does God let these things happen? The Christian bears the brunt of the unbelievers' wrath but he does so knowing *that tribulation works patience and patience experience and experience hope.*

Partly, while you were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions, they were made a spectacle to the world, angels and men 1Corinthians 4: 9. The world sees how the Christian has a resource that they cannot tap or fathom. The angels see the power of God at work in the new creation, the power that works in we who believe. Men see that the testimony of the saved is true to the word that they preach, that the life they live is lived in the awareness of Christ in us. The accusations against the Christians of the early days were many and

varied; the sufferings and hardship were not mitigated for any reason. In all the oppression and afflictions the Church grew by thousands and spread throughout the known world. The Christians were blamed when things went wrong and were caused to suffer; things never came before an honest judge so the faith of many was sorely tried.

Partly, while you became companions of them that were so used, because they were of a like mind with those that were persecuted. The spirit within Christians is one that shares the infirmities, sufferings, anxieties and pains; as one body, when one member suffers then all members are affected. The trials of the Christians during the early years of the church are not known in the western world, but there is still a reluctance to stand with a brother who is preaching in the shopping mall. One giving out gospel tracts or carrying a banner with a gospel text embarrasses some. And Paul discovered that in some circumstances he could only rely on the faithfulness of the Lord who had promised 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee'. 2Timothy 4:16 *at my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.* Christians are one body with one Spirit and are enjoined to have one mind motivating them, the mind that was in Christ Jesus. The Christians reading this epistle had probably had fellowship with those that were in dire straits in other places, though not themselves subjected to the same trials. The shared of their goods and supported, as they were able to, the saints in other places.

For you had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods. There was sympathy and empathy among the saints for they were compassionate, having hearts that were burdened for the saints in bonds and suffered materially because of the close association with the imprisoned saints. To stand with the saints during their trials and persecutions is a way of taking up the cross, of bearing the reproach of the Lord Jesus Christ. This occasion of Paul's imprisonment is not precise but clearly the persecution was widespread, and the common bond of the believers was evident for they all suffered alike. As the apostles were taken before the Council, Acts 4, were beaten and commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus, they departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for His name. No doubt the Christians being addressed sent relief to those suffering and visited the prisoners, thereby making it known to whom they owed allegiance. If the believers were harried, their goods and chattels spoiled, it was for them a cause for rejoicing.

Knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven a better and enduring substance. What a great comfort it is to know that our inheritance is secure, that it cannot corrode or be stolen, that its value never decreases with age and that it is reserved for us. How blessed we are in being able to store up treasure in heaven. Not the sentimental thinking that has the Christian sending up materials to build a mansion, the reality of a *man in the glory* that loves us and with whom we will be with forever. All our possessions we gladly relinquish to Him. We set our affections above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. The material things of this world do have a use down here, but we must not hold fast to them, counting them of more value than our inheritance in Christ. The enduring substance in heaven will not be stolen, cannot be fraudulently appropriated, will not decrease in value because of market fluctuations; we cannot be conned out of it. This inheritance is enduring, it will continue through eternity, maintaining its value and appeal.

The Christians among the Hebrew people that Paul was addressing could look forward to a better life, greater liberty, pleasures for evermore, an end of strife and persecution. When we pass through adverse circumstances they may have the effect of loosening our grip on the things of this world, causing us to view the inheritance which is laid up for us with increasing anticipation. The knowledge that we have in heaven far better than is available on earth allows us to suffer the spoiling of our persons and property here below. Though that is not often the case in the 'civilised' world, in China and countries where the Islamic faith is dominant, and in some Communist societies it is happening; there is also a militant Hinduism wreaking havoc in some parts of India at present.

Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which has great recompense of reward. In light of the future inheritance of the saints the apostle exhorts the saints, the believing Jews, to continue steadfast in the faith. To be bold and use the shield of faith as their defence against any and all the arguments that will arise to dissuade them from following the Lord Jesus to the throne of grace.

The confidence that the believers had demonstrated was not in the word spoken by man or angels, it was in the last word of God to man, His Son. This was the subject of the first warning. "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. God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will”? Hebrews 2: 3-4.

The conviction that motivated them was the assurance that Christ had finished the work of salvation entrusted to Him, they rested from their own works. This was the focus of the second warning. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard. Seeing therefore it remains that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief”. Hebrews 4: 1-2, 6.

The principles by which they lived were established in the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, after the order of Melchizedek. To turn aside from the everlasting priest to a dying priest was at the best, futile. To have been instructed in the truth and rejected it, is the heart of the third warning. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. Hebrews 6: 4,5,6.

These adherents to the Gospel of the Grace of God, found their assurance at the throne of grace, where the blood of the everlasting covenant is applied. The activities of the priests of the old order never freed the person from guilt or eased the conscience. Returning to the sacrifices that were done away in Christ, going back to the ineffectual Law that was written on stone impelled the apostle to write the forth warning. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? Hebrews 10:26-29.

The **great recompense of reward**, the immediate and continuing reward on earth is the peace and joy to be found in a life that is pleasing to the Lord Jesus. The fellowship of likeminded people is a great comfort, the ministry of the saints, one for another, is most gratifying. Being in the service of the Lord is in itself a great reward. But look at what is ahead; to be in the presence of the Lord and to be changed into His likeness, to receive the inheritance that is reserved for us, to reign with Christ. Are you anticipating the time when you will be able to give to the Lord Jesus Christ personally all the praise that is His due, to worship and bow down without the hindrance of a sinful nature?