

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 1:1—2:4

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Alexander Campbell believed that Romans and Hebrews were the two most important epistles of the NT. A verse by verse study of these two books was required of all students in Bethany College where he was President.

Christianity is the building of which the OT is the blueprint or shadows Heb. 10:1. We must not live in the blueprint or the shadows but in the *real* building. Yet, we may better understand the building where we are to live if we study the blueprints. The book of Hebrews is the NT “specs” (specifications) by which we read the “prints” (OT).

This book was written primarily to persuade Hebrew people (Jews), who had become Christians, to remain steadfast in their new relationship to Christ and **not** go back to Judaism. That cannot be emphasized enough! We must keep this focus in mind in understanding everything written in this book. When Jews became Christians in the first century, they were shunned, persecuted, often times killed, hounded and threatened by their own families to make them renounce Christianity and return to Judaism (see Heb. 10:32-39 and the book of Acts).

Paul, the author of Hebrews, wrote this treatise about A. D. 64, to convince Hebrew people once for all that Christianity was the fulfillment of the OT and that Christ, the Church and the New Testament was the **final, complete** access to God. There is no other way to God. To return to Judaism to seek God’s favor is impossible for God will not permit any access to himself that is not by faith in Jesus Christ. To return to Judaism is **Christian apostasy** (Heb. 6:1-8).

Of course, very few of us are Jews. But the book of Hebrews still has a crucial and imperative message for us that *there is absolutely no way to God except through Jesus Christ!* There is no other access acceptable to God except through the once-for-all atoning blood of Jesus Christ. To attempt access to God **any other way is impossible!**

It is our prayer that as you study through this book the impact of

the finality, the perfect completeness, the exclusiveness, the absoluteness and the blessedness of access to God through Jesus Christ will flood your mind and soul.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why emphasize that God has spoken Son-wise as compared to prophet-wise? 1:1-2. Is that emphasis relevant for the church today? How?
2. Why is it important to Paul’s audience to list the six attributes of deity in connection with Jesus? 1:2-3. Why are they important to your faith in Christ?
3. Why bring up angels? 1:4-7 (see Col. 2:18; Rev. 22:8-9; Gal. 1:8-9).
4. Name three characteristics of the Son which make him worthy of worship. 1:5-14
5. Why were these Hebrew-Christians in danger of letting this great salvation drift away? 2:1
6. What is the *proof* that they must listen to Christ’s message? 2:3-4
7. Why do people today still substitute the messages of *alleged* prophets and angels for that of Christ?

The book, *Living Jewish*, by Michael Asheri, pub. By Everest House, NY, 1978, claims to be the book that “will answer most of your questions about one who lives as a practicing Jew.” This is part of what the book says about Jesus:

“We know he lived and have a vague idea of what he preached but there it ends. The widespread idea that the Jews, while rejecting Jesus’ claim to divinity, consider him a great teacher and moral figure is completely false. We do not accept his claims and we are oblivious to his teachings; we are simply not interested in him nor in what he had to say...” p. 224

Mr. Asheri’s statement about Christian missionaries is that they are “enemies of the Jews...and any organization engaged in missionary activity to the Jews...are enemies of the Jews in the most basic sense and any Jew who would give support to a missionary organization is a traitor to his people and a fool who sharpens the axe for his own neck.” p. 229

The apostle Paul wrote, “For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his descendants...it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned as his descendants...” (Rom. 9:6-9)

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 2:5-18

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

What is man? The Greek philosopher Plato once defined man to be “a two-legged animal without feathers,” until Diogenes, another philosopher, plucked a chicken and brought it into the Academy and said, “This is Plato’s man!” Then Plato made this addition to his definition, “...without broad flat nails.”

That may be humorous, but there is nothing funny about the centuries of turmoil and tribulation which have resulted from man’s refusal to accept God’s answer to the question, “What is man?” Identity, self-worth, purpose, satisfaction and destiny are all wrapped up in the need for an absolute answer to this question!

Thomas Carlyle said, cynically, “What is Man? A foolish baby, Vainly strives, and fights, and frets. Demanding all, deserving nothing, One small grave is what he gets!” Matthew Arnold wrote, “Most men eddy about Here and there---eat and drink, Chatter and love and hate, Gather and squander, are raised Aloft, are hurled in the dust, Striving blindly, achieving Nothing; and then they die.” And even Job, one of the Jewish philosophers of the OT said, “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower, and withers; he flees like a shadow, and continues not.” (Job 14:1-2).

But God who created man, became Man and “visited” mankind as Jesus Christ. Jesus came to show us what man is. The 2nd chapter of Hebrews is one of the most *exciting* discussions in all the Bible about man’s origin, nature, and destiny. The Bible is the infallible word of The Absolute God. Thus we have in Hebrews 2, the absolute answer to who we are, how much we are worth, and what is in store for us beyond this life. This is the Divine perspective on man. Let us cherish it and proclaim it. And, as Christians let us “...regard no one from a *human* point of view” (2 Cor. 5:16ff), but always from **God’s** point of view.

QUESTIONS:

1. Does man search for and find God or does God find (“visit”) man? 2:6
2. When did God make man a little lower than the angels? Why? 2:7
3. Why was Jesus made a little lower than the angels? 2:9
4. Why did the sinless Jesus have to be made perfect? 2:10
5. How does the devil have the power of death? What bondage does the fear of death incur? 2:14-15
6. Do you believe Jesus was made like you in every respect...suffering and tempted...? 2:17
7. How does Jesus’s partaking of human nature help you when you are tempted? 2:18

Mr. Asheri says Jews believe this about man’s origin: “Casual observation will show the immense, unbridgeable gap...between the most primitive of men and the most advanced of animals. We can attribute this only to man’s soul. The theory of evolution is acceptable, perhaps, if we recognize that at some point in the process of evolution, man was separated in a basic sense from the other living beings by God, who gave him a soul and made him human. God may have chosen evolution as the means of arriving at the concrete, physical form of man, but man’s humanity is a *direct* gift from god which was given him at a distinct moment in time, not as a gradual development over generations or even years, months or hours. That moment, perhaps, was the real creation of man...The description of living beings having been brought forth by the earth sounds like a rather clumsy but not at all roundabout way of describing the process of evolution, centuries before Darwin!” *Living Jewish*, op.cit., pp. 240-241.

Ancient Jews did not believe as Mr. Asheri does! See the two books Moses wrote---Genesis 1:27; 2:7; 5:1;-2; and Deut. 4:32; David and the prophets in Psa. 8:1ff; Isa. 43:1,7; 45:12,18; 54:16; Ezek. 21:30; 28:13; Malachi 2:10; Jesus and Jewish apostles in Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6; 1 Cor. 11:8-9; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; 3:10; Rev. 4:11; 10:6. And this list is only where the English word created appears it does not include the word *made* which often means created. It is sad, but true, some of the world’s most vociferous anti-creationists were, and are, Jews (i.e., Baruch Spinoza; Vladimir Lenin; Karl Marx; Martin Buber, etal.)

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 3:1-19

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Chapter 3 is directly connected to what has been said before (especially about man's high destiny in ch. 2). The word **therefore** in 3:1 is the unmistakable clue to the connection.

From the very moment of man's forfeiture of the divine image in himself, his Creator began calling man back to his heavenly destiny. The very shutting of the gates of Eden was a disciplinary action on the part of God to initiate the process of restoring that image.

Out of the ancient world God called a man (Abram) and formed a family, then a nation (Israel) to continue his directing of man back to the divine image in himself. He put that nation in bondage in Egypt to build into its people self-discipline, self-control and dedication to his holy will. Then God delivered them, preparing to bless them with the fruits of holiness and obedience to his will. As he was leading them through the wilderness, however, they gave in to doubt, unbelief, rebellion and desire for fleshly comfort. As a result, they began to forfeit that divine image all over again and made themselves unfit for God's prepared rest.

The Hebrew-Christians to whom this epistle was written were in danger of doing what their forefathers had done. By doubting Christ and surrendering to the pressures of Jewish persecution, just to obtain a few creature comforts, they were about to forfeit the divine image that dwelt in them (God's Holy Spirit) and their heavenly calling.

We do ourselves, our loved ones, and our Christian brethren no favor if in any way we contribute to or reinforce lack of self-discipline or self-control. It is specifically and emphatically the **WAY** of God (3:10) to train by *discipline* and *self-control* all who want the divine image and the heavenly call (see Deut. 8:1-29; Psa. 119:67-75; Prov. 3:11-12; 1 Cor. 11:32; Heb. 12:1-17; Rev. 3:19). That is the WAY God works! That is the WAY we must go, because that is the WAY Jesus, the perfect Man, went and bids us follow!

QUESTIONS:

1. With whom do Christians share a heavenly call? 3:1
2. Why the comparison between Moses and Christ? 3:2-6
3. What does it mean when it says Christians are God's house? 3:6
4. What is confidence? 3:6; 3:14
5. What would keep the Israelites, or even us, from knowing the ways of the Lord? 3:7-10
6. How is the heart of man hardened? 3:7; 3:13
7. Is it alright for God to swear? 3:11; 3:18
8. What is God's rest? 3:18

God's commandments are the iron door into Himself. To keep them is to have it opened and His great heart of love revealed.
--Samuel Willoughby Duffield, preacher (1843-1887)

And a highway shall be there, and it shall
be called the Holy Way...Isaiah 35:8

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life;
no one comes to the Father but by me."
Our Lord Jesus Christ, in John 14:6

The human spirit will not even begin to try to surrender self-will
as long as all seems to be well with it. --C. S. Lewis, in *The Problem
of Pain*, Macmillan, NY, 1962, p. 92

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 4:1-16

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Rest! What an enchanting, luxurious word! Mathilde Blind, the poet, once wrote, "We are so tired; my heart and I. Of all Things here beneath the sky Only one thing would please us best---Endless, unfathomable rest."

God created man and put him in a Garden surrounded with absolute restfulness. But man rebelled against his Creator and was driven out of this Paradise. Now man drives himself in a delirious search for "endless, unfathomable rest." He demands a reduced work-week; he insists on multiplying holidays; he invents labor-saving devices. Then, he wears himself out running all over the globe frantically trying to use up this rest time before it runs out!

No one has to document the fact that there is psychological and spiritual unrest in millions of people everywhere today. Panaceas are sought in entertainment, drugs, and all forms of humanistic religions. But they find no rest there!

Rest is not the absence of work. When God created Adam and put him in Eden, he gave Adam things to do (Gen. 1 & 2). Rest is not to be found in escapism! Jesus was poor, persecuted and pilloried but in the midst of it all was at perfect rest. He needed no escape from reality. He was filled with joy (John 15:1-11). Rest is an attitude, a matter of personal character.

Rest, real and abiding rest, is found in belief and obedience to God's revealed will. It is found in trusting completely in God's sovereign faithfulness and grace. That is what Hebrews, chapter 4, is all about. It sounds simplistic, but it is really profound. It is the most profound idea on the face of this earth. Let's tell the world about it!

If you offered the average man a perpetual holiday, he would rather work in a jailhouse after six months, for almost any work is a game compared with the creative structuring of leisure time.

---Sydney Harris

QUESTIONS:

1. Is it really possible that man can enter *now* into God's rest? 4:1-3
2. *How* may man enter God's rest? 4:3, 11
3. What has creation's Seventh Day to do with God's rest now? 4:4-6
4. Why bring David into this subject? 4:7 Why Joshua? 4:8
5. What is a Sabbath rest? 4:9 Are Christians to keep the OT Sabbath?
6. If we are entering God's rest, why aren't we ceasing from our labors? 4:10
7. What does the Word of God have to do with this subject of rest? 4:11-13
8. What does Jesus's high priesthood have to do with our rest? 4:14-16

Hanging behind the check-out register in a Cincinnati candle shop is a large sign which reads: "There is a very good reason for this sign being here and you standing in front of it reading it. It is here to keep you busy. We realize how annoying it can be just standing around doing nothing, trying to find someone to help you. So, we have this sign here for you to read, and hope that by the time you finish reading it one of our salespeople will have found you.

P. S. If not, please read this sign again."

Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, by Paul Lee Tan, Assurance Publishers, Rockville, MD, 1982, p. 1141

Thou dost keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock. CIsaiah 26:3-4

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 5:1-10

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

John Haynes Holmes once wrote, "Priests are no more necessary to religion than politicians to patriotism." He probably meant that one no more needs a human priest to help him be religious than he needs a politician to help him be patriotic.

But man *does* need a priest! Job cried out in guilt and estrangement from his creator, "For he (God) is not man, as I am, that I might answer him, that we could come to trial together. There is no *daysman*, Hebrew *moukeeca*, (umpire, arbitrator, mediator) between us, who might lay his hand upon us both." (Job 9:33). Man needs a divine-human mediator between himself and God.

God chose the Israelites to be a kingdom of priests, offering service to him (Ex. 19:6ff); but the Israelites defaulted on this high call (Ex. 29:19). And because of their sin they were afraid of his presence. God then graciously set apart the Aaronic priesthood as a temporary "go-between" (Ex. 28:1ff) until our Eternal Priest, Jesus Christ, should be perfected.

This is the central point of the book of Hebrews---THE PERFECT PRIEST. There *was* Infinite God and finite man; Holy God and sinful man; but no "*daysman*" in between, to stand in the gap and affect reconciliation. Then Jesus became our "Mediator" (Greek, *mesites*, "go-between"), 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24

The author of Hebrews desires his readers to know that in the terrific struggle they face to be reconciled to God and enjoy his Holy Presence, they are not alone. They have One who is both divine and human who is able to lay his hand upon both. Paul uses the very center of his treatise to expand on this exciting concept--the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ.

"All male Jews are either *Cohen*, *Levi*, or *Israel*. A *Cohen* is a priest and a descendant of Aaron, Moses' brother...The priest...stands in a special relation to God. He is...the intermediary between the congregation and the Lord...How does a Cohen know he is a priest, a descendant of Aaron? He knows because he has been told so by his father and he by his father before

him, and so on into antiquity....People named Cohen, Kahn, Cogan, Kahan, Kaganovitch, Kohn, Kaplan or Katz are almost always Cohanim (priests)..." *Living Jewish* op.cit., pp. 4-5.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is a priest's job? 5:1
2. Why should sacrifices have to be made to God? 5:1
3. Why would a priest be expected to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward? 5:2 How should he do this?
4. Why did the Son (God in the flesh) *wait* until he was *appointed* by the Father before he became a high priest? 5:4-5
5. How could Jesus be said to have had godly fear? 5:7
6. Why did Jesus have to learn obedience? 5:8
7. What does Jesus being the author of our salvation have to do with his high priesthood? 5:9-10

"A Cohen (priest) need not have the last name Cohen in ordinary life; indeed, a great many Cohanim do not...The first modern Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land, Rabbi Abraham Kook, was a Cohen....Today there is no Temple in Jerusalem and of course the priests do not function there. Nonetheless they still have certain obligations: a Cohen (priest) is the first man to be called up (to) read the Torah publicly in the synagogue; on certain occasions the Cohanim blesses the congregation; a Cohen redeems the firstborn sons of Jewish women; a Cohen may not marry a divorced woman or a convert (a *chalutza*); a Cohen may have no contact with the dead...he is similar to priests of other religions. However a Cohen does not forgive sins and administer the sacraments like Catholic priests. To the Jewish way of thinking this is not possible; such a faculty cannot be given by one human to another but must be received directly from God...."

---*Living Jewish*, op.cit., pp. 4-5

"...no Jew today can trace his ancestry back beyond two or three hundred years." ---Jacob Gartenhaus, born a Jew in Austria, now a Christian, in *Christianity Today*, March 13, 1970.

"Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee; as he says also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek."

Hebrews 4:5-6

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 5:11---6:8

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Meshuvah (“apostate”) is an ugly word in Jewish speech...any Jew who formally abjures Judaism and adopts another religion...is not mourned when he dies, on the contrary his brothers are supposed to celebrate his death as the demise of an enemy of Israel. *Living Jewish*, op.cit. p. 213

The first century Hebrew-Christians had become **apostates** in the minds of their Jewish countrymen. But Paul is warning them here, **not** to become **apostates from Christ by returning to Judaism!**

In this section of the Hebrew treatise we must be careful to remember once again the main theme of the book---it is to exhort Christians who were formerly Jews, not to return to Judaism. Every sentence, paragraph and illustration is directed toward warning against leaving Christianity to return to Judaism. The whole point of Hebrews is to persuade those people that Christ and his teaching (Christianity) is *ten teleioteta*, “the perfect or mature thing” (6:1). Paul calls the OT in 6:1, *tes arches tou christou logon*, “the **beginning** word or doctrine of the Messiah.” In other words, Paul is saying that the OT only typified, symbolized and prophesied the Messiah---but the NT in Christ is God’s *final reality*.

This text is **not** an exhortation to Christians to go on and leave the fundamentals of the message of Christ’s gospel! The fundamentals of the Gospel must **never** be left behind, but preached over and over. This text (along with many others in Hebrews) is an exhortation to Jewish-Christians not to go back to Messianic first principles in the Old Testament.

This text is **not** saying that when a Christian sins or backslides he can never be acceptable to God again. It is **not** saying that repentance for a backslider is impossible. It **is** saying that a person who seeks repentance or reconciliation with God through any other religious system than the blood of Christ and the Gospel is seeking the *impossible!*

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father but by him! That includes Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Shintoists,

Christian Scientists, a million other “isms” or just downright pagans all over the world. It is **not** true that people who practice other religions will reach God.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was it hard for Paul to explain to these Hebrew-Christians all about the High Priesthood of Jesus? 5:11 Why had they dulled their hearing about it?
2. What are the dead works they were to leave? 6:1 (see 9:13-14; 10:1-10)
3. What are the ablutions or washings they were to leave? 6:2 (see 9:10; Ex. 30:18-19; Lev. 16:4; Num 19, etc.).
4. Was this laying on of hands ever a doctrine to be practiced by the whole Christian church? 6:2 It was practiced by all of the Israelites? Why? Is this laying on of hands talking about miraculous healing? about ordinations? (see Lev. 4:1-30; 16:20-22).
5. How would returning to Judaism from Christianity be crucifying the Son of God afresh? 6:6
6. What is Paul illustrating with his parable of the land, rain and vegetation? 6:7-8
7. Is there a lesson for Christians in this section, even though it is talking entirely about OT practices? What?

“The prevailing *halakic* (obligatory Talmudic law for today’s Jews) opinion is that the claim to be an Aaronite, of priestly descent, is mainly a presumptive one, which in the absence of pedigree registers, cannot be proved....
Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 13, pg. 1089

The *only* priesthood ordained by God in the New Testament (other than Christ’s) is the “priesthood of believers.”

“But **you** (Christians) are a chosen race, a royal **priesthood**, a holy nation, God’s own people....” the Apostle Peter, 1 Pet. 2:9

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

In our last lesson we learned that to come to God by any system for reconciliation before God other than the High Priesthood of Jesus is **impossible**. In this lesson we are to learn that the High Priesthood of Jesus is where man is to find **secure** salvation. Jesus's High Priesthood, after the order of Melchizedek, is man's **anchor of the soul**.

America's Social Security program, founded in 1937, was described by its creators as a "plan to provide a minimum income to guarantee against personal poverty---a form of insurance guaranteed to give men and women *security* in their old age." It was designed to "solve the problem of *human dereliction* resulting from the economic depression of the 1930's."

But "human dereliction" is a consequence of the soul set adrift, starving and perishing in storms of spiritual doubt, unbelief, sin and despair. Human dereliction is **not** simply a consequence of poverty or illiteracy. Some of the wealthiest and most erudite of society are tragic, social derelicts because they are *spiritually adrift*.

Man is more than a body to be fed, clothed, medicated, housed, warmed, cooled, entertained and indulged. Man is even more than a brain to be educated and trained to respond to stimuli, to be ego-fed, sophisticated and exploited. Man in his essence is spirit. Man is a person, a life, created in the image of his Creator. Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4). Man's security is in truth, holiness, love and reconciliation to God. Man needs **soul-security**. Soul-security would ultimately solve the problems of social insecurity.

QUESTIONS:

1. If Paul was sure of better things that belong to salvation for these Hebrew-Christians, what had he just discussed that did **not** belong to salvation? 6:9
2. When Paul said they should show the *same* earnestness toward their hope, to what other earnestness was he referring? 6:11
3. 3. *When* did God swear to Abraham; *what* did God swear to Abraham? 6:13-14 see also Genesis 22:16-17
4. 4. To what extent did Abraham go to demonstrate his patient endurance? 6:15
5. 5. What does it mean, God *interposed* (RSV) with an oath? 6:17
6. 6. What are the two things in which it is impossible that God should prove false? 6:18 How is it *impossible* that God should be false?
7. 7. How do these two things give us strong encouragement to seize our hope? 6:18
8. 8. What is it about the High Priesthood of Jesus that anchors the soul? 6:19

There are lots of scriptures indicating OT Jews knew there was "life beyond the grave"

"But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me." David speaking about the dead baby he and Bathsheba conceived (2 Sam. 12:23).
"And she said, An old man is coming up; and he is wrapped in a robe. And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed his face to the ground and did obeisance." Samuel had died and was appearing to Saul and the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:14)

"...and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever..." (Psa. 23:6)

"Brethren, I am a Pharisee....with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead I am on trial." Paul, the former Jewish rabbi on trial before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:6)

"...in the entire Torah there is not a single word which can literally be taken to refer to life beyond the grave or to a world to come. In other words, God did not see fit to tell us anything at all about an afterlife."

Living Jewish, op.cit. p. 195

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 7:1-28

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Melchizedek—what a funny name! Who is this person, *Melchizedek*, and what has he to do with our Christian life? Many have asked these questions, few have ever taken time to find the answers. We hope this lesson will answer these questions and provide food for your soul.

Endless conjectures have been raised about Melchizedek. The only trustworthy information we have about him is found in Gen. 14:18; Psa. 110:4 and Hebrews ch. 7. His name is a combination of two Hebrew words, *melekh* which means king and *tzedeq* which means righteousness, thus, “king of righteousness,” or righteous king.” He was king of Salem (Jerusalem) in the days of Abram and he was also an high priest of God.

Melchizedek was a *Gentile*, a priest, interceding to God on behalf of Abram (Abraham) when Abram was still a *Gentile* (there were no “Jews” until Abram was circumcised). There is no record of Melchizedek’s genealogy or of any successors. The venerable Abram, father of the Hebrew nation, and thus the Levites being in his loins, all paid tithes to Melchizedek!

Melchizedek was God’s OT picture (type) to show that he had planned for *all* mankind an *eternal* high priest and a king of righteousness. Melchizedek’s very existence proved the Levitical priesthood was only temporary (actually, parenthetical). Aaronic priests had to have a mortal genealogy, their tenure was temporary, and so they could never give the worshiper the sense of perfect (final and complete) intercession and reconciliation before God. The Aaronic priesthood left a spiritual vacuum where man needed an Endless Intercessor to restore him to perfect and eternal friendship with God.

The whole point of this chapter is to show that the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ is not Aaronic but Melchizedekian---not temporary and incomplete, but eternal and perfect. Christ is the eternal High Priest, not just for the Jews, but, after the *order* of Melchizedek, for **all** of mankind for all **eternity**. To know this and trust in it will enrich our lives.

QUESTIONS:

1. Is there anything in the name of Melchizedek to symbolize the Messiah?
2. 7:1-3
3. How does Abraham’s paying of tithes prove Melchizedek’s greatness?
4. 7:4-10
5. What does Melchizedek’s priesthood prove about the OT law? 7:11-14
6. How is the High Priesthood of Jesus a better hope than the Aaronic priesthood? 7:15-19
7. What does God’s oath *add* to Jesus’s High Priesthood that was not connected to the Aaronic priesthood? 7:20-25
8. Upon what basis, and when, did God confirm Jesus’s High Priesthood with his oath? 7:26-28 see also Heb. 2:5-18; 5:5-10; Acts 13;30-39. Remember God’s interposition in Hebrews 6:17! (see **2 Cor. 1:20**)
9. Have you ever come to the place where you couldn’t find the words to express yourself to God in prayer? Rom. 8:26-27 Do you think your High Priest, Jesus, will express your heart to God?

Bertrand Russell, famous agnostic mathematician and philosopher who wrote a book entitled, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, also wrote in his *Autobiography*:

“It is true for each and every one of us that in the depth of our being remains an empty place, a vacuum, a vacant room which no else can occupy. We may well long to usher someone in, but no one comes and nobody can. At the core of our being remains a mysterious sense of isolation which cannot be bridged. Loneliness persists, breaks through thick layers of self-protection. Sooner or later questions cascade like tumultuous waves, taunting, haunting, probing, persisting: Who really knows me? Who really understands me? Whom do I really know, deeply, intimately, completely? Everyone remains somewhat mysterious. I cannot penetrate the hidden recesses of another. A sense of cosmic loneliness remains. There is a yearning for sympathy which is not met---man remains alone!”

CHRISTIANS ARE NOT ALONE—JESUS IS ALWAYS WITH THEM

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 8:1-13

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

In our last lesson we learned of the *magnitude* of Christ's High Priesthood. Now we are to learn of the *ministry* of his High Priesthood.

Coca-Cola once had a very catchy TV commercial which sang, "It's the real thing!" But what is *real*? The dictionary says *real* is "something genuine, actual or absolute as opposed to the imaginary or the derivative or dependent...something ultimate." God tells us in his word that the *real* are those *invisible* things which transcend this material world and which he has in store for us in heaven (2 Cor. 4:16-18; 5:7; Rom. 8:18-25; Col. 3:1-4; Heb. 11:1-3). Material things (trees, human bodies, etc.) are real in the sense that God made them to serve a temporary purpose; they are not illusions. But what is seen is not the ultimate substance; this world will perish some day---down to its basic elements (2 Pet. 3:10). Man, choosing not to believe God, deceives himself that only what can be seen or handled is real. Experience should tell man that is not so. Matter is not absolute; it changes and disappears (i.e., entropy, 2nd law of thermodynamics) leading some philosophers to say that the only real thing is change and decay.

Paul is attempting in chapter 8 to convince the Hebrew-Christians that Christ's ministry as High Priest is the *real ministry* as opposed to the shadowy representations of it in the OT system. Jesus' High Priesthood is the absolutely *ultimate* ministry needed between man and God. It was not that the OT priesthood was false---it was just not sufficient, absolute and eternal.

God demonstrated in history that Jesus abides forever. He transcended the ultimate material "disappearance" we call death. Jesus did not "disappear" in death. He went through it, beyond it, and over it---the same Person. He is *real*, his ministry is *real*. It will never change---it will never pass away.

"The outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear, but every day the inward man receives fresh strength. These little troubles (which are really so transitory) are winning for us a permanent, glorious and solid reward out of all proportion to our pain. For we are looking all the time not at the visible

things but at the invisible. The visible things are transitory; it is the invisible things that are really permanent."

2 Corinthians 4:16-18CJ. B. Phillips translation

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the *point* of what is being said about Jesus's High Priesthood? 8:1
2. Why is it necessary to prove Christ has a place to minister as a priest? 8:4
3. According to what pattern did Moses make the tabernacle? 8:5
4. How is the *ministry* of Christ in the new covenant better than the old? 8:6-7. Do some people today still cling to the Old covenant?
5. If God found fault with the Jews because they did not keep his first covenant, why did he make a new covenant? 8:8
6. Was this new covenant ever predicted before it came into being? (see Jer. 31:31-34; 32:36-41; Ezek. 37:14-28; Hosea 2:16-23; Rom. 9:22-33, etc.)
7. Why does Paul say the of old covenant that it was only *ready* to vanish away? Hadn't it already vanished when Christ was crucified? 8:13

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN "COVENANT"?

"The Biblical word covenant would best be translated by the English word treaty...the normal use of covenant required mutual pledge or mutual commitment....God pledged in a very *physical* way at Calvary. He expects man to make a *physical* pledge. God pledged admission to his covenant (or treaty) of salvation by grace through the atoning death of Christ. In baptism, the sinner pledges to God his life...The sinner has God's assurance of forgiveness in the historical deed of Christ on the cross *if* he will but say, Yes. Baptism is man's initial, historical answer of Yes to God. But there is more to the term covenant/treaty than that. In 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 Paul equates covenant with ministry---especially the ministry of reconciliation. (see also 2 Cor. 5:11-21). When one is baptized he makes a lifetime commitment to advance the cause of his Lord. He becomes a slave of Christ. He gives his life away, assuming the role of Christ's steward. Keeping covenant is essential to salvation. Faith and obedience are essential to get into and remain in covenant with Christ. The certainty of one's salvation rests in the faithfulness of God. That faithfulness must be reciprocated by a similar faithfulness in the Christian."

---thoughts collected from *What The Bible Says About Covenant*,
by Mont Smith, College Press, Joplin, MO, 1981
www.soundbiblestudy.com @PTButler

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 9:1-28

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Christ told many parables concerning the kingdom of God. But one he didn't tell while here on earth was "The Tale of Two Tabernacles." That one is told in the 9th chapter of Hebrews. In Hebrews 9:9 the actual Greek word *parabole* is used in reference to the OT Tabernacle (*parabole* is translated "symbolic" in the RSV, and "figure" in the KJV). A **parable** is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. That is exactly what the OT Tabernacle was!

The *fact* of the tabernacle's symbolism of something ultimate in the area of God's residence was dealt with in the last lesson (Heb. 8:3-6). In this lesson we shall be instructed by God's Holy Spirit as to the essential *elements* of the Heavenly Tabernacle. God intended an ultimate spiritual fulfillment in every element of the earthly tabernacle.

The tabernacle of the OT was that beautiful tent, overlaid with gold and silver, which was the place of worship for the Israelite nation in the days of Moses. It remained the sanctuary of God until the days of Solomon, when a temple was built. During the wilderness wanderings the whole nation of Israel camped around the tabernacle each time they stopped. Upon entering Palestine they apparently set it up at Shiloh. It was at this sanctuary God showed his presence and received the worship of the people (Ex. 29:43-46). There God dwelt in the midst of his people (Ex. 25:8). There God's people received atonement for their sins and guidance for their lives. That God was in their midst in his sanctuary was the central fact of their lives. It meant order, protection, provision and strength.

Today, God dwells in the Heavenly Sanctuary (heaven and the church) in the midst of his people (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eh. 2:20-22; 1 Pet. 2:5). But his presence is not in a building now---it is in Christian people, wherever they are or may gather. As Christians, worship and communion with the *real*, living and ultimate presence of God should be the central fact of our lives everyday, wherever we are. Perhaps our study of the Two Tabernacles in Hebrews 9 will make a significant contribution to that end.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you have any idea as to the symbolism of the things which could not be spoken of in detail 9:1-5? That those things are all typical may be established from other NT scriptures.
2. How did the Holy Spirit use the OT Tabernacle to indicate to the world that the ultimate way back into the presence of God was not yet opened? 9:6-10
3. Didn't the blood of goats and bulls make atonement for the sins of the Jewish worshipers? 9:11-14 Why not?
4. What did make atonement for the sins of Jewish worshipers 9:15-22? Why?
5. What heavenly things did Christ purify with his blood? :23-24
6. How many times has Jesus put away sin? 9:25-26
7. If Christ's dealing with sin was once-for-all what is all this about the "restored Jewish temple and sacrifices" in some "millennial kingdom on earth"? 9:27-28

"We hear much of the substitutionary theory of the atonement. This theory to me is immoral. If Jesus paid it all, or if He is the substitute for me, or if He is the sacrifice for all the sin of the world, then why discuss forgiveness? The books are closed.

Another has paid the debt, borne the penalty. I owe nothing. I am absolved. I cannot see forgiveness as predicated upon the act of some one else. It is my sin. I must atone."

---Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam (former head of the World Council of Churches), in his book, *A Testament of Faith*, p. 144

God is faithful to give everyone what they want in the next life---so the bishop will probably get what he wants.---CPTB

"The Christian church is the only society in the world in which membership is based upon the qualifications that the candidate shall be unworthy of membership!" ---Charles C. Morrison

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 10:1-39

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The main thrust of chapters 1-9 of the Hebrews epistle is to describe what Christ, the Perfect Man, has accomplished in order to make it possible for all who put their trust in him to be “perfected.” In those chapters there are occasional hints as to man’s part in his own perfecting process (i.e., paying heed to the message; having a heart of belief; living a Sabbath-kind of life).

Chapter 10 is *climactic!*. It is the water-shed chapter in the theology of the perfecting of man. The 1st part of chapter 10 is a resume of what Christ has done in that perfecting work; the 2nd part of chapter 10 (v. 19ff) is a resume of man’s responsibility in his perfecting. Chapters 11-13 amplify in some detail the human responsibility in accepting and living the perfection Christ has made available.

What is the “perfect man”? Friedrich Nietzsche (a German philosopher worshiped by Adolph Hitler) wrote about his brutal, biologically-pure *Ubermensch* (German for “superman”) with the “will to power.” *Ubermensch* would be “created” by man himself imposing his subjective desires upon the past and the present, declaring truth to be whatever he wished it to be. Nietzsche said “...nothing exists but the human will...all knowing is inventing, and all inventing is lying...lying is the method by which reality is invented or created in the human will.” Nietzsche’s metaphysical insanity produced demonic Nazi-fascism and genocide. In today’s *academe* this is called “post-structural-thinking” (i.e., if you don’t like the definition of a word “restructure” it make up a definition which pleases you). At least Nietzsche didn’t lie about lying! Hugh Hefner built a multi-million dollar empire with his perfect man—the “playboy” which increased exponentially STDs, child-abuse, rape, incest, tens of millions of one-parent families, runaway children, and sociological, economical and political depravity. Every generation has idealized its “perfect man”---epicurean, ascetic, playboy, soldier, intellectual; but like Dr. Frankenstein’s attempt to invent the perfect man, all the attempts of finite human beings have produced only *monsters!*

Hebrews 10 is the “schematic” for perfected manhood. It reveals the *essentia* of manhood, Jesus of Nazareth, having reached the goal

for which the Infinite Creator designed man the moment he was called into being. Please, dear reader, *give this chapter your undivided attention!*

QUESTIONS:

1. If the OT sacrifices could not make perfect, in what way does Christ’s sacrifice make a man perfect? 10:1
2. What does it take to make man clean? 10:2-4
3. What does the will of Christ have to do with man’s sanctification? 10:5-10
4. Are the sanctified really perfected for all time? 10:11-18 Are you sanctified? Does becoming sanctified take a “second-work-of grace?”
5. What is the confidence by which we enter the sanctuary and draw near to God? 10:19-25
6. What is the deliberate sin the writer is talking about in 10:26-31?
7. Why did Paul want these Hebrew Christians to recall their former days? 10:32-34
8. Why do Christians need endurance? 10:35-39 How do Christians get it? see Romans 5:3-5; 2 Cor. 12:10; Heb. 12:1-11; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:1-2

“Not long ago the worth of a man was assessed at 98 cents. Now, with atomic power in view, this has all changed. Someone has figured that the atoms in the human body would produce 11,400,000 kilowatts of power per pound if they could be harnessed. On this basis of computation, a man weighing 150 pounds would be worth somewhere around \$90,000,000,000.”
Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, op.cit. p. 771

“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what can a man give in return for his life?” Jesus, *Mark 10:34-37*

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 11:1-40

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Archimedes (pronounced, *arc-a-meedees*) (287-212 B.C.) was a famous Greek philosopher and scientist. He is known for coining the famous statement, "Eureka, Eureka!" which means, "I have found it! I have found it!" He cried "Eureka" when he discovered the theory of specific gravity.

But Archimedes is famous for another statement, too. After discovering or delineating the laws of leverage, he said, "Give me a place to stand and I will move the earth." As incredible as it may seem, it is altogether probable that given a *place to stand* Archimedes might have carried off his boast.

This maxim is infinitely more critical to any attempt to move one immortal soul of man from despair to hope---from chaos to purpose---from lostness to salvation. Elton Trueblood, venerable Christian teacher of philosophy, says in his book, *A Place to Stand*, "Many terms can be applied to our age, but one of the most accurate affirmations is that ours has become an age of confusion...even large sections of the nominal membership of the churches are without any firm conviction on which to *base* and rebuild their lives." Too much of what is called Christianity or faith in God today is superficial and shallow. It is sickening sentimentality or indecisive-innerness. Agnostic philosophers like Hans Reichenbach (1891-1953) have declared, "...there is no Archimedean point of absolute certainty left to which to attach our knowledge of the world; all we have is an elastic net of *probability connections* floating in open space."

The writer of Hebrews, in chapter 11, announces **there *is* a place to stand---a ground of absolute certainty which is faith in God.** Jesus told his disciples, "...if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Move hence to yonder place, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you." (Matt. 17:20)

QUESTIONS:

1. How does faith get to be equated with assurance and conviction? Shouldn't we be sure and convinced only of what we can see, feel or taste? 11:1-3
2. Why is it impossible to please God without faith? 11:6
3. How do we know all the people listed 11:4-12 had faith?
4. What kind of perspective on reality does faith give? 11:13-31
5. What kind of power does faith in God give to live victoriously? 11:32-39
6. Why wasn't the world worthy of the people listed in 11:32-38
7. Why did they have to wait on us to be made perfect? 11:39-40

"For centuries the islands of New Zealand were unpopulated. No human had ever set foot on them. Then the first settlers arrived. They were Polynesians from other Pacific islands who had sailed a thousand miles in outrigger canoes. The Polynesians came with the purpose of settling in New Zealand. How did they know the land was there? How did they know they would not simply sail across empty seas until food and water ran out and they perished? The Polynesians had known for generations that land was there because their voyagers had seen a long white cloud on the distant horizon. They knew that when a cloud stayed in one place over a very long period of time, there was land beneath it. They called New Zealand the Land of the Long White Cloud. Faith is like that. It is voyaging to an unseen land, journeying to an unknown future. But it is not mere guesswork, or chance, or superstition. There are facts behind faith, facts that insist on conclusions."

1000 Windows, op.cit. p. 81

Have you a "mountain" in your life---an obstacle standing in your way to peace and security? Have you ever thought, "If I only had some ground of certainty---some absolute position where I could take a stand, I could move that "mountain" out of my life? COME, LEARN IN BIBLE SCHOOL WHAT GOD'S WORD PROMISES AS THE GROUND OF ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY.

LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 12:1-28

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

September 3rd, 1970, Vince Lombardi died. Vince was the beloved coach of the Green Bay Packers professional football team. He was mourned by millions of sports fans and others for his high ideals. Bart Starr, the famous quarterback of the team said, "I told my wife before I left the house this morning that it was like losing a father. I felt that strongly about him. Fellows who had the pleasure of playing under him are better people for it. One thing that was characteristic of him was **the pursuit of excellence**. He said the pursuit of excellence would make you a better person than you otherwise might be content to be."

Lombardi believed deeply in the old-fashioned virtues which were stamped over all his teams---hard work, dedication and never-give-up. Lombardi said once, "Any man's finest hour is when he has worked his heart out, exhausted on the field of battle, victorious." Lombardi always told his players that their priorities should be: God, family, team, football---in that order.

This pretty well sums up the opening lines of Hebrews, the 12th chapter. "Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us..."

Our example, of course, is Jesus Christ, the "captain/coach" of our salvation who worked his heart out, exhausted his very life away, died on the cross-studded battlefield and was victorious coming forth from the tomb---all in the pursuit of excellence (perfection). Our text exhorts us to pursue this excellence.

The 12th chapter of Hebrews gives us three fundamental guidelines for this pursuit of excellence. They are: **(a)** Discipline; **(b)** Strategy; **(c)** Goal. These three fundamentals must be applied in our spiritual life. BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL THIS COMING SUNDAY AND LEARN THEM!

QUESTIONS:

1. Why consider Jesus's perseverance as our example---didn't he have greater power available to him for discipline and perseverance than we ? 12:1-4
2. What has discipline to do with sonship? 12:5-8
3. Why is holiness good, and why does God have to discipline us to produce holiness? 12:9-10
4. Why does it take men so long to realize the fruit of discipline? 12:11
5. How are we able to strengthen our weak knees and make straight our paths? 12:12-14
6. What is the root of bitterness we are to avoid? 12:15-17
7. What is Mount Zion? Why would Paul tell these Hebrew-Christians they had come to it? 12:18-24
8. What was the kingdom that was to be shaken? and the kingdom **not** to be shaken? 12:25-29.

"We cannot...know that we are acting at all, or primarily, for God's sake unless the material of the action is contrary to our inclinations, or (in other words) painful, and what we cannot know that we are choosing, we cannot choose. The full acting out of the self's surrender to God therefore demands pain: this action, to be perfect, must be done from the pure will to obey, in the absence or in the teeth, of inclination....."

If tribulation is a necessary element in redemption, we must anticipate that it will never cease till God sees that world to be either redeemed or no further redeemable. A Christian cannot, therefore, believe any of those who promise that if only some reform in our economic, political, or hygienic system were made, a heaven on earth would follow."

C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, op.cit., pp. 99 & 114

No conflict is so severe as his who labors
to subdue himself. Thomas a' Kempis

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LESSON TEXT: Hebrews 13:1-25

Prepared by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen!” (Hebrews 13:20-21)

That is one of the greatest **benedictions** in all the Bible. Chapter 13 of Hebrews is Paul’s benedictory chapter. “Benediction” is from two Latin words *bene*, meaning, “well, good, blessed,” and *dictum*, meaning, “statement, doctrine, tenet.” A benediction is “a doctrinal statement of blessedness.”

Paul is saying in Hebrews 13 that, because of the redemptive work of God culminated in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our lives as Christians ought to be “benedictions.” Our lives should be *living-doctrinal-statements* of the blessedness found in Christ. Paul is saying that everything God has done for us through Christ (Perfect Manhood, Atoned Absolutely for Sin, Ordained an Eternal High Priest, Instituted a Better Covenant) equips us to *be* good, to *do* good, and thus to glorify *him*.

We usually think of a benediction as an eloquent prayer at the end of a “worship service.” But the *benediction* God *most* desires is “doing good” (Heb. 13:16).

Paul often pronounced a “benediction” on his doctrinal teachings by urging his brethren to “do good,” (see Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:10, etc.).

The interesting thing about Hebrews 13 is that Paul focuses our benedictory of “doing good” not upon the crisis-experiences of life but upon the **everyday, mundane routines** of life. Since that is where most of our experiences and associations take place, that is where we should concentrate our lives as “benedictions” of “doing good.”

QUESTIONS:

1. What is hospitality? 13:2 Does this exhortation mean we should risk danger to life and limb to entertain strangers?
2. What does it mean to hold marriage *in honor* by all? 13:4
3. Does being content with what you have prohibit the Christian from having job promotions, salary increases, or expanding property holdings? 13:5
4. Why, in the midst of exhortations to doing good, would Paul exhort to guard against diverse and strange teachings? 13:9
5. How do we go to Jesus outside the camp? 13:13
6. What two sacrifices may Christians make to please God? 13:15-16
7. How would you like to be an elder or an evangelist knowing you will be held responsible before God for people’s souls? 13:17 What can you do about this awesome responsibility with which these men are charged?

“If it is true that Jesus Christ died on the cross to save sinners, have we any right to say that we love sinners if we fail to confront them with this truth? And where can we find a divinely validated account of this truth apart from Scripture? In sum, we can express no higher love to lost humanity than to preach the gospel in the precise form in which God has been pleased to reveal it.”

---Edward John Carnell, in *Christianity Today*

Have you ever stopped to think that Christ never gave anyone money?

The riches of the world were his for taking, and his to give away, yet when the poor and hungry came to him, he didn’t give them money, and he rarely gave them food; he gave them love and service and the greatest gift of all---Himself.

Quote, Unquote, by Lloyd Cory, Victor Books, 1977, p. 132