



PT Butler

Bible Study Notebooks

Study of the Letter to the HEBREWS

prepared by P. T. Butler Th.D

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These Bible study notes are provided for your use in the preparation of teaching the holy scriptures. They were meticulously prepared over many years to serve the Kingdom of God and aid in the growth of Christians of any age. Please use them in combination with prayer and diligence to promote the clear and honest declaration of God's word.

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TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

Introduction

The Hebrew religion was inseparably knotted together with Hebrew civil and social life, and with national identity. When the N.T. epistle to the Hebrews was written it became to a Jew a threat to replace his centuries-old religion with one that he believed was apostasy. Evangelical Christianity has been considered over 2000 years by most Jews (including those to this very day) as a threat to their existence and identity as a people! It is today against Keneset (Israeli Parliament) law to evangelize or proselyte any other religion in modern Israel.

The Jews themselves almost destroyed Judaism when, in the days of the prophets, they assimilated so much of the paganism around them it was nearly impossible to distinguish between God's people and the worst of the heathen peoples. God then scattered them into exile among the heathen nations of Assyria and Babylon (modern Iraq) and Persia (modern Iran). Some Jews were exiled to Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and some fled to Egypt. Then, the Jews migrated to almost every European nation existing from 721 B. C. to the time of Christ. A "remnant" of Jews returned to the land of Palestine beginning in 536 B.C. and rebuilt their temple and the walled-city of Jerusalem and other cities and villages. But they were under the "administration" of heathen empires (Persia and Greece and Syria) until about 164 B.C. when they drove the Syrians from their land under the Maccabeans. They enjoyed relative national sovereignty although it was very oppressive most of the time (even under their own rulers) for about 100 years until the Roman general Pompey "conquered" Palestine about 60 B.C. and made it, for all practical purposes, a "province" of the Roman empire. For all those centuries (721 B. C. until the time of Christ) the Hebrews struggled through persecutions (sometimes as fierce as the holocaust under Adolph Hitler in the 20th century), foreign oppression (taxation), and many other hardships to regain and retain their "Holy land." Their struggles to maintain their religion and their unique Judaic ("kosher") culture during their ancient exile are documented in the books of Daniel, Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther (and Josephus). Their return to immorality and indifference to God's word and way is documented in the OT prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. The "holocaust" during which the Syrians attempted genocide against the Jews (300-164 B.C.) is documented in 1 & 2 Maccabees (and Josephus).

Finally, when their Messiah (Jesus) came teaching that God was going to supersede Judaism with a new and universal Way to God (which the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi predicted), the Jewish rulers and priesthood persuaded the populace that Jesus was a seditious traitor and had him crucified. Jesus's threat to Judaism and its cultural traditions was really the fundamental reason the Jews had him crucified ca. A.D. 26 during the reign of the Roman emperor, Tiberius Caesar (b. 42 B.C., d. A.D. 37), by order of the

Roman procurator Pontius Pilate (an error in the Gregorian calendar would mean Jesus was born ca. 4 B. C. and crucified at 30 years of age, ca. A. D. 26).

When Jesus's apostles began to convert Jews to Christianity (beginning 40 days after his resurrection on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2), right there in Jerusalem—by the thousands—the Jewish authorities saw it as an even more crucial threat than Jesus himself had been! So, the Jews began an all-out campaign to stamp out Christianity. They even sent the most promising young Jewish rabbi of that day with official letters throughout Syria to arrest all Jews who had professed Christianity. He was Saul of Tarsus and was commissioned to bring them back to Jerusalem for “trial” as traitors. The zealous patriot Saul was converted to Christianity when he saw the risen Jesus on just such a trip to the Syrian capital city of Damascus. The conversion of rabbi “Saul” to apostle “Paul” is one of the most significant proofs for the authenticity and credibility of the New Testament scriptures and of Christianity itself!

This same converted Jewish patriot, Saul (called Paul), later wrote the book of Hebrews (a “treatise” to the Hebrew-Christians) to strengthen and admonish the Christians of Judea who had been converted from Judaism to Christianity and were experiencing the unmitigated hatred and wrath of a jealous Jewish hierarchy in their own land. These fellow followers of “the Way” were being pressured and persecuted to get them to renounce Christ and return to Judaism. Chapters 6 and 10 of the book of Hebrews indicate this was the author's primary purpose.

The book of Hebrews was written ca. A. D. 64-65 before the Jewish temple and city were begun to be destroyed in A.D. 66, by the Romans. This is clear from, Heb. 8:13 —“that which was becoming obsolete was growing old and was ready to vanish away” but had not yet done so and in 10:26 “the Day” is not referring to the 2nd coming of Christ but the coming of Roman destruction which Christ predicted in Matt. 24. The author was clearly the apostle Paul: (a) Timothy (Heb. 13:23) was a constant companion of Paul, even until Paul's death; (b) Heb. 13:24 indicates the treatise was written from Rome; (c) the style (digressive and treatise-like) is like other Pauline epistles; (d) anonymity probably indicates a well-known Jew who did not want his Jewish brethren to be prejudiced against the treatise by knowing its author; (e) no other Christian apostle would know that much about the details of Judaism except a former intellectual rabbi. There is external evidence also—Pantenus A.D. 180; Clement of Alexandria, 187; Origen 200; Council of Antioch 246, Eusebius 26-320 all attribute the treatise to the apostle Paul. It's canonicity—which is the most crucial issue—is beyond doubt. (a) Paul being its author it is apostolic and thus canonical; (b) it is quoted as Scripture in churches many years before cessation of the miraculous gifts of “discerning spirits”; (c) Clement of Rome, A.D. 96 quotes from Hebrews verbatim in his epistle to the Corinthians and affirms his belief that it is apostolic and inspired; (d) Hebrews is found in all the oldest versions of the New Testament, even in the Peshito or Old Syriac versions (A.D. 150-200); (e) Hebrews is found in all the ancient catalogs of Bible books, e.g., in Origen's catalog, etc.; (f) Hebrews agrees with doctrines of the rest of the Bible and has an “air” of authority unlike apocryphal (spurious) books.

The following questions need to be proposed preparatory to “digging into” the text of the “treatise to the Hebrews.”

QUESTIONS:

1. Did the Old Testament indicate the Hebrew system was to be fulfilled and replaced with something better in access to God?—read Isa. 66:1-8; Jer. 3:15; 31:31-34; Dan. 9:24-27. Why didn't the Jews understand and acknowledge these scriptures?
2. Did Jesus indicate the Hebrew system would be superseded?—read Jn. 4:19-26; Matt. 5:17; 9:14-17; 21:43; 32:37-39; 24:1-35; Lk. 24:25-27; 24:44-49.
3. How were Hebrews who became Christians treated in the first century?—read John 9:22; Acts 4:1ff; 5:17ff; 6:8-13; 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 9:26ff
4. What do other NT epistles (besides Hebrews) teach about God's will toward Judaism now!—read Rom. 2:28-29; 3:21-26; 9:1—11:36; 2 Cor. 3:7-11; Gal. 2:16; 5:4; 6:15-16; Col. 2:16-23; 1 Thess. 2:14-16.
5. If all this was revealed, why did God need to add the whole book of Hebrews to reiterate the same things?
6. Are we as a NT people doing as much as we are able in taking the gospel of Christ to the Jewish people? Would an increased effort on our part to understand the modern Jewish mentality help?
7. Just how much Judaism does a Jew have to relinquish to become a Christian? How much of his Jewish culture or religion may he continue to practice and be a Christian? Could the principles we learn in 1 Corinthians chapters 8, 9, and 10 and Romans chapters 14 and 15 apply to Judaism as well as to Gentile-ism? Are you equipped to discuss the finality of Christianity with a Jew today?

The book of Hebrews is extremely relevant for the 21st century: (a) it's relevant, first, because it is part of the New Testament, the revealed word of the Holy Spirit of God; (b) there are still Jews to be converted to Christ and Hebrews is crucial to their understanding of the fulfillment of the OT; (c) it is the fundamental book of the NT that helps those who are already Christians to understand the relationship of the OT to the NT; (d) BUT MOST IMPORTANT, it emphatically states that New Testament Christianity is God's complete, final, perfect, exclusive, “once-for-all” revelation to mankind about salvation and sanctification! In a world where the predominant attitude is that any one of the many

“religions” (or a “religion” that someone makes up for himself/herself) will please God, the book of Hebrews MUST BE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND PROCLAIMED by the church if the church is to fulfill its mission today!

The patriarchal and Mosaic systems were never God’s final revelation to mankind. They were intended by God to be superseded, replaced, fulfilled, completed, and made perfect (i.e., “reach their goal) in Christ, the Messiah, and his kingdom! THAT IS PLAINLY AND REPETITIVELY STATED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT ITSELF! (a) Isaiah 66:1-8—temples made with hands were totally inadequate as a system of access to God—God was going to judge and destroy the old system, but before the old passes away, God would give birth to a new “land” and a new “nation” with one stroke—all at once (the Hebrew word is pa’am, “with one stroke”)—God formed a “new Israel” (the church of Christ) with one stroke on the day of Pentecost (A. D. 34) before the old Israel had passed away (A. D. 70) and this universal church became the “habitation (temple) of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2); (b) Isaiah 56:3-8—eunuchs and foreigners would be accorded full covenant relationship with God—this alone would necessitate an abrogation of the Mosaic law (see Ex. 12:43-49; Lev. 16:29; 17:12; 18:26; 22:10; 25:35; 25:40; Num. 15:15; 16:29; 19:10; 35:15; Deut. 23:1); (c) Jeremiah 3:15—this one is explicit—Jeremiah predicts that the ark of the covenant would, someday future to him, not come to mind, be remembered, missed, or made again—it should have been plain, explicit and unequivocal that the Mosaic system was going to be abrogated—the ark of the covenant was the “mercy seat” or the “throne of God” where God’s presence dwelt in the Holy of Holies—without that ark the Mosaic system has no reason for existence; (d) Jeremiah 31:31-34—the prophet predicts that future to him God was going to make a new covenant NOT like the Mosaic covenant—covenant relationship requires definitive terms, requirements and conditions—if the covenant is new and not like a former one, then its terms, requirements and conditions will be changed—the inference that members of this new covenant would not be born and then taught, but taught and then born indicates the end of a covenant made to a physical nation and the beginning of one made to a spiritual nation; (e) Daniel 9:24-27—490 years were allotted for the Jewish people and their holy city to accomplish their part of redemption (fill up their rebellion by crucifying the Messiah (the “Anointed Prince”) which would “finish the transgression, put an end to sin, atone for iniquity, bring in everlasting righteousness, seal (authenticate) both vision and prophet, and anoint a holiest place of the holies (the church)—after the “Anointed One” is “cut off” their city would be destroyed by themselves (as Josephus confirms) and some other “prince” (Roman) to come—they could begin counting 490 years allotted to them from the official decree of the Persian emperor (457 B.C.) which de facto gave official sanction to the restored Jewish Commonwealth—that places the end of Judaism in the first century A.D.—exactly as Christ (Matt. 24:1-35) and Paul the apostle (1 Thess. 2:14-16) said it would come to pass—this prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27 is so explicit as to the time of the arrival of the Messiah and the end of Judaism, Jewish rabbis (in their apocryphal writings, Talmud, Mishna, etc.) have forbidden Jews to read and study it!

The Jewish system itself logically implied that it was temporary—its obsolescence was built right into it. It never really satisfied the deepest spiritual longings of the human

spirit for complete, final, perfect forgiveness (Heb. 9:8; 10:1-2). It never reached the goal of rest for the soul that would say, "This is it!" (Heb. 4:1-13). It predicted that the Messiah would be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Psa. 110:4) and that would necessitate an abrogation of the Levitical system (Heb. 7:1-28). It always left them short of receiving what was promised (Heb. 11:39-40). It was so "unbearable" they should have cried out for its end and replacement by grace (Heb. 12:18-29; Acts 15:10-11). So, why didn't the Jews see from their own Old Testament scriptures, understand and accept what appears so plain to Christians of the 21st century? First, there was 2000 years of Jewish national uniqueness, different from all other peoples on the face of the earth, built up, through ups and downs, glory and shame, struggle and sovereignty. Think about it!—2000 years of history, ancestry, tradition, and cultural development produces an inordinate nationalistic pride. Some pious Jews sincerely believed God's ultimate blessing for the world was to be administered through them as a nation not in the Person they would produce, (i.e., the Messiah). Some Jews (and even some Christians) still believe this today! Many of the Jews (especially the rulers of Jesus' day) simply did not want to have their private political and economic "apple-carts" upset (Jn. 11:48). Consider these modern Jewish concepts: (a) there is no separation between law (state) and religion; (b) if a member of a Jewish family adopts another religion, his relatives "sit shiva" (i.e., they mourn 7 days) for him as if he were dead—his brothers are to celebrate the day he dies and rejoice in the death of an enemy of Israel—all pictures, remembrances, etc., of the apostate are destroyed and he is never mentioned again; it is as if he had never existed; (c) the orthodox Jews include missionaries (esp. Christians) among the enemies of the Jews in the most basic sense because they (the missionaries) deny the very reason for Jewish existence. All this documented the book, *Living Jewish*, by Michael Asheri, Everest House publishers, 1978, pages 79 and 229.

What Jesus taught was in direct opposition to what all patriotic Jews of his day believed—he taught: (a) the day was coming when God would not be worshiped in Jerusalem exclusively (Jn. 4:19-26); (b) that he, Jesus, came not destroy the law of God, but to fulfill it and bring it up to its ultimate goal—a relationship with God beyond and higher than Judaism (see the Sermon on the Mount and especially, Matt. 5:17); (c) by parabolic incisiveness, that the Jewish rulers should understand that God was going to take the kingdom of God away from them and give it to others (Matt. 21:43); (d) that the whole house of Judaism was forsaken and to be left desolated by God because of the hypocrisy of the Jews (Matt. 23:37-39) and their rejection of his Messiahship; (e) that Jerusalem and the Jewish system would be destroyed by the Romans (Matt. 24:1-35; Mk. 13:1-32; Lk. 21:5-33); (f) that the law of Moses found its relevance only because repentance and remission of sins would be authoritative ONLY in his name and not in the Mosaic system (Lk. 24:44-49); (g) probably most significantly, Jesus claimed to be greater than Abraham; that all men, including Jews, must have a spiritual rebirth out of Judaism and all other "isms" to be pleasing to God; (h) he had final and absolute authority over Mosaic law; (i) and he made himself equal with God! The Gospels indicate how angry and malicious most of the Jews were toward Jesus for his remarks about the "fulfillment" of the Old Testament (Matt. Ch. 15; Jn. 5:18; Lk. 23:2; Matt. 26:60; Mk. 14:57-58—they said he was in league with Satan, demon possessed, a Samaritan, implied he was an illegitimate child John 8:41 (i.e., a "bastard"), a blasphemer, "beside himself" (crazy), and seditious against Caesar. Finally, they arranged to

have him crucified as a common criminal and blasphemer of their laws and traditions!

It is difficult for Americans to see the utter repugnance and shock a Jew of the first century (even a Jew of the 21st century) would have contemplating the abolishing of his religion. At the end of the orthodox Jewish marriage ceremony, a wine glass is placed on the floor and the groom breaks it by stomping it with his foot. This glass is broken in remembrance of the destruction of the Jewish temple, so that even at the most joyous of times the Jews may not forget the most significant of all moments in their history. According to the Jews themselves, many of their Mosaic laws do not make sense, but they accept them as definite proof (because their observance sets them apart from every other people in history) that they alone were elected by God to receive his commandments to keep them. To abrogate these laws, in their view, destroyed their exclusive “corner” on God. To destroy their unique institutions, made them no better than others—and their whole hope was that they were “better” than others! In the first century, Jews who became Christians were: (a) excommunicated from their synagogues (Jn. 9:22)—this involved severance of family relationships, economic sanctions, and revocation of political rights—excommunication made survival in a totally Jewish community extremely difficult. But, attempting to “improve” Moses, they have “voided” the Mosaic laws by their Talmudic traditions (see Mt. 15:1-20; Mk. 7:1-23). (b) charged with criminal activities (Acts 4:18) and were continually harassed by the Jewish authorities; (c) arrested, beaten and forbidden to preach the Gospel of Christ (Acts 5:17-42)—some were killed for their faith in Christ by the Jews (Acts 7:1-60; 9:1; 12:2); (d) accused by the Jews of speaking against the temple, and against the law of Moses—accused of saying that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy their temple and change the customs which Moses delivered to them (Acts 6:8-13)—Christians never did or said any of this; (e) greatly persecuted at Jerusalem and every place they to which they were “scattered”—driven from their homes, their belongings were plundered (Acts 8:1; Heb. 10:32-39); (f) the Jewish Sanhedrin of Jerusalem sent Saul of Tarsus with official warrants to arrest any Jews known to be practicing Christianity—they were to be brought back to Jerusalem to be imprisoned and executed (Acts 8:1; 9:1-2; 22:3-5; 26:9-11)—Christianity was considered a threat to Judaism all over the ancient world; (g) the same persecution of Jews who have been converted to Christianity (and even of some Christians who were not formerly Jewish) continues today—it never makes the headlines in the secular journalistic media of America, and it is more subtle in America than elsewhere, but in the modern nation of Israel it is not nearly so subtle or hidden—in fact, the Knesset (Israeli parliament) passed a law that evangelism (Christian or otherwise) is illegal in modern Israel.

Other New Testament epistles, besides Hebrews, teach: (a) Jewishness (or covenant relationship to God) really had nothing to do with genetic or physical descent even in the O.T.—but with the mind and heart—covenant relationship to God, even in the OT was grace, by faith and obedience, not by genetic birth (Rom. 2:28-29); (b) God manifested that righteousness was apart from the Jewish law even in the Jewish law itself!—righteousness is by faith in the Person (Messiah) whom the law was all about (Rom. 3:21-26; Gal. 3:15-22); (c) God selected Abraham’s descendants (by sovereign grace) to use as his servants to bring the Messiah to the whole world—he did not select them because they were “better”

than any other nation—that grace to them was available only as they received it by faith—God made the same grace available to the Gentiles and Jews alike through Christ, but it must be appropriated by faith in Christ and not in anyone’s self-righteousness or genetic birth (Rom. 9:1—22:36); (d) the Mosaic dispensation had a certain splendor—but it was a dispensation of condemnation and only temporary (2 Cor. 3:7-11); (e) by doing the law of Moses, no man could be justified before God (Gal. 2:6), and to attempt to do so causes a person to forfeit the grace of God (Gal. 5:4); (f) circumcision counts for nothing—it is the “new creation” in Christ (spiritual rebirth) that counts with God—all who have been born again are the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:15-16). Modern Jews say of circumcision: “The word covenant shows us immediately what the significance of circumcision is; it is our (Jewish) signature on the contract that God made with us when he chose us as his people”—Living Jewish, op.cit. p. 35; (g) Paul states in 1 Thess. 2:16 that the “wrath of God came (aorist tense in Greek is “past” tense) upon them unto the end” (the Greek word for “end” is telos meaning, “completely, perfectly, or, to a finish”—it is this author’s opinion that Paul is saying the prophecy of Dan. 9:25-27 was so certain to be fulfilled (just 20 years after Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians) that Paul could speak of it as already done—this would be when the Jews “finished the transgression” (see also Matt. 23:29-36) when they “cut off their Anointed One (i.e., Messiah)—God’s wrath upon the Jews was executed in Paul’s generation at the destruction of Jerusalem and the “scattering” of the Jews among the “nations.”

5-6-7. Emphasis of the book of Hebrews in Christian Bible study today is crucial because: (a) of the finality, exclusiveness, absoluteness of Christianity over all other religions, especially over Judaism; (b) Peter, a Jewish apostle, wrote, “...there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)—it is essentially a matter of authority—the imperative question today is, “Are there many religious authorities, or only one, and that one, Christ and the New Testament? THE ANSWER OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IS: THERE IS ONLY ONE AUTHORITY AND THAT IS CHRIST AND THE N.T.”; (c) the Jewish view of Jesus, by a Jewish author: “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....the followers of Jesus....ended up by saying that their revelation (the NT) made the laws of the Torah a dead letter because the acceptance of Jesus took their place...” Living Jewish, op.cit., p. 224; (d) the book of Hebrews rejects the modern attitude that religion, even the Christian religion, is essentially something humanly-invented, emotional, private, mystical, and provincial. THE BOOK OF HEBREWS TEACHES THAT CHRISTIANITY IS THE ONLY TRUE RELIGION, A RELATIONSHIP TO A LIVING CHRIST, RAISED FROM THE DEAD (Heb. 13:20-21), A SACRIFICE ONCE-FOR-ALL-ACCOMPLISHED, WITH A HIGH PRIEST INVISIBLE, ALIVE FOREVERMORE, MINISTERING IN A SANCTUARY IN THE HEAVENS! Salvation is in Christ alone! The rest of the world “lieth (or is “fornicating with” Greek, keitai—the word from which we get “coitus”) in the evil one” (1 Jn. 5:19).

Christians should be zealous to evangelize the Jews. Paul said in Romans 11:15

that even though his main ministry was to the Gentiles, he hoped everything he did would turn some Jews to the Gospel and give them “life from the dead.” He was so concerned over his brethren (the Jews) according to the flesh that he actually said he would become anathema (“cursed”) from Christ if it would save them (Rom. 9:1-5). **GOD STILL WANTS TO SAVE ALL THE JEWS—IN CHRIST—DO WE?** It is not easy to convert a Jew to Christ. The Christian will have to know the Old Testament very well. The Christian will have to know especially well, the O.T. prophecies of the Messiah and where they are fulfilled in the N.T. The Christian will have to know how to prove the authenticity, credibility, and historicity of the NT. The Christian should know something about the history of Judaism from the first century A.D. to today; and something about modern Jewish culture. **MOST IMPORTANT**, the Christian should be able to show the Jew he does not have to give up his Jewish culture and traditions, so long as he seeks his salvation by faith and obedience to Christ and not his Jewish traditions—and so long as he doesn’t bind his traditions and culture on other Christians as a necessity for salvation.

Remember, the book of Hebrews was written to Christians who had formerly been Jews, to keep them from returning to Judaism because Judaism (after Christ) offers no possibility of repentance before God. **A KEY PASSAGE IN HEBREWS IS 6:1-8.** There the author is saying that if a Jew had left the “elementary things” (the O.T. law and prophets) concerning the Messiah, had “once been enlightened, tasted of the heavenly gift, become a partaker of the Holy Spirit, tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come (the Messianic age),” if he then commits apostasy (goes back to Judaism), **IT IS IMPOSSIBLE** to restore him again to repentance, for he crucifies the Son of God on his own account and holds the Son up to contempt. The author of Hebrews is saying, essentially, **“GOD DOES NOT ANY ACCEPT ANY ATTEMPT TO REPENT UNLESS THAT REPENTANCE IS CHANNLED THROUGH FAITH AND OBEDIENCE TO JESUS CHRIST!”**

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EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

HEBREWS 1:1---2:4

The Greek definite article is absent before the noun, *huios*, or “Son,” therefore, the Greek grammar is indicating that God has literally, “spoken Son-wise.” The distinction is not “the” Son from other “sons.” The distinction is “Son” from all other “intermediaries.” God has spoken SON-WISE in the last dispensation of time. The Son is The Prophet who supercedes all other prophets. Biblical prophets (and that’s the only ones there were—there aren’t any today sanctioned by God) spoke about his redemption of creation in a revelation of variegated grandeur, but that revelation was fragmentary and had to be presented on a level of spiritual immaturity to suit the limitations of their time. No prophet had the whole truth—each had only some fragment—not even altogether did they have the whole truth (1 Pet. 1:10-12). With Jesus it was different. JESUS WAS NOT PART OF THE TRUTH, HE WAS THE WHOLE TRUTH ABOUT DIVINE REDEMPTION. “In him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, bodily” (Col. 1:19; 2:9). To know the prophets is to know only about God; to know Christ is to know God, personally (Jn. 1:14-18; 14:8-11). The prophets used many different, limited methods to speak about God—JESUS REVEALED GOD BY BEING HIMSELF —“SON-WISE.” IT IS NOT ONLY WHAT HE SAID AND DID THAT SHOWS US WHAT GOD IS LIKE, IT IS WHAT HE WAS AND IS! The Son of God is God the Son. That is extremely relevant in the 21st century world where many Christians (let alone the rest of the world) think Jews who reject the Son-ship of Jesus will somehow please God. The Jewish revulsion at Jesus’ deity comes from their refusal to accept the teaching of the Bible that God can be three persons in One. Michael Asheri states in *Living Jewish*, op.cit. p. 21 “In the Jewish concept, the ‘One’ that is God is not like any other ‘one’ in existence. This is because any other ‘one’ can be divided into fractions; halves, quarters, or, to use a more familiar example, thirds, while the One that is God is totally indivisible...He is alone—there is none other beside Him—and he is one, complete and unique.” What this statement means is that Islam is theologically closer to Judaism than Christianity is! Islam believes in only one, indivisible, non-triune, God, and they call him “Allah.” According to both Judaism and Islam, Christians divide God into “three” beings. God revealed through the Old Testament prophets (and John the Baptist) that God would come to earth in the form of a person (Isa. 7:14; 53:1-12; Micah 5:2, etc.). I believe Isaiah 48:14-16 is a hint (prediction) of the Triune God-head! BUT THE JEWS, IN THEIR ZEAL TO COMBAT THE IDOLATRY OF THEIR PAGAN NEIGHBORS, MISINTERPRETED THEIR PROPHETS! So, the writer of Hebrews set out first of all to prove that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh, and Christ’s revelation superseded that of all the prophets, including Moses!

Paul must emphatically state that Jesus Christ was Deity because so many Jewish-Christians were being severely pressured to renounce Christ as Savior and Lord and return to Judaism! So, Paul attributes six characteristics of Deity to Jesus.

- (a) Christ is heir of all things. This assumes that Jesus arose from the dead and proved his claims to Deity. And these Hebrew-Christians knew that Jesus had risen from the dead (Heb. 13:20-21) for most of them lived in Jerusalem and Judea where Christ's resurrection had taken place! "Heir" in Jesus's case, means "prospective, legal owner, and title holder..." of all that exists. This is the most profound philosophy of history ever propounded! It means that the goal, the aim, the end, the summation of all history and existence belongs to Jesus of Nazareth! How will Jesus deal with his inheritance? Just like he dealt with history and men and things when he was here on earth! If he is the heir, then everything that belongs to God, belongs to Jesus of Nazareth. And everything that belongs to Jesus belongs to those who belong to him (Rom. 8:16-17; Gal. 4:29). If these Hebrew-Christians wanted to make sure they were going to get their heritage as the "Israel" ("Israel" means, "prince") of God, they must do so through Jesus of Nazareth—God Incarnated!

- (b) Christ is Creator of the worlds (i.e., "ages"). This would have significant meaning to a Hebrew because they placed great emphasis in their theology on "ages." They looked forward, especially, to the "age" called in Hebrew, *olam habba*, or "the age of the eternal" which they believed would usher in the Messianic age where their Messiah would physically sit on a throne in Jerusalem and rule the Gentiles for their benefit. But what Paul is saying is that Jesus Christ is the "Ancient of Days" of Micah 5:2 and the eternal Father of Isa. 9:6. Jesus Christ created all the ages of time. There were no ages before him. "Before Abraham was, Christ IS" (Jn. 8:58). Jesus Christ is the Creator of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Israel, David, the temple, the Law, all human beings, earth, sky, time, eternity and everything else! Hebrew-Christians thinking about returning to Judaism to worship the "Creator" need to think again about who Jesus Christ claimed he was and how well he proved it. Remember the time he healed the man let down through the roof who was paralyzed—before he healed the man he forgave his sins. The Jews standing around said only God can forgive sins. Jesus said, which is easier, to say your sins are forgiven, or take up your bed and walk. Well, of course, to say something is easier than doing it! JESUS HEALED THE MAN INSTANTLY, BEFORE THEIR VERY EYES, TO PROVE THAT HE WAS THE "CREATOR" AND HAD THE RIGHT TO FORGIVE SINS ON EARTH! But, that is the very proposition for which the Jewish people crucified Jesus—he made himself "equal with God" (Jn. 5:18).

- (c) Christ manifests the very glory of God exactly. The Greek word *apaugasma*, means literally, "shining forth, radiating" rather than "reflecting" as the RSV translates. And what does he "shine forth"? The Greek word here is *charakter*.

The word *charakter* is, in English, “character.” Christ is God disclosed, made visible, in all of God’s character of glory. He is “God turned inside out!” The word “glory” means (“weight, rank, position”). God’s glory is not like that of men. His glory (“rank”) is in servant-hood (Jesus washed the disciples feet); serving, giving, loving, helping, saving. Man’s false glory is in self-centeredness, exploitation of others, pride, being served. The perfect revelation of God was embodied in Jesus. All of God that could be expressed in humanity was expressed in Jesus Christ—the Perfect Man! It was necessary for Paul to stress to these Hebrew-Christians that Christ is the very character and substance of God (Greek for “substance” is *hupostasis*—“that which stands forth as the essence”). Most of the Jews of Paul’s time, and our time, deny that any human could in any substantial way be God. “God, as we know, is indivisible; humans are humans, not God in any form, and there is no term in any language to describe the ‘gap’ between God and man.” Michael Asheri in, *Living Jewish*, op.cit. p. 197. And: “...we seek to avoid even mentioning the name of false gods...For this reason, the very observant will not pronounce the name of the founder of Christianity (Jesus Christ). He is referred to in Hebrew as *oto-ha-ish*, meaning, ‘that man.’” *ibid.* p. 217.

- (d) Christ is Sustainer of all creation by his word of power. The Greek word here is *pheron*, meaning, “bears up, upholds, supports, sustains.” Paul wrote the *Colossians* (1:17), “...in Christ all things consist.” In *Colossians* 1:17 for “consist” Paul used the Greek word *sunesteken*, meaning, “stands together.” Christ is THE BEGINNING AND THE END—the alpha and the omega (first and last letters of the Greek alphabet)—AND ALL IN BETWEEN. Christ is in charge of all that goes on NOW AND TOMORROW! The book of *Revelation* portrays that vividly! No emperor, empire, angel or any other being rules—Christ rules history! He is the one who took the “scroll” that had history written on it from the hand of God who sits on the throne. Christ was the ONLY one worthy to reveal what was on that scroll. The Lamb that was slain sits on the throne with the Father as Co-Ruler of the universe and history. While scientists talk about atoms and energy, Christ is the ultimate POWER and all that exists consists (holds together) by his will and his word. Everything that exists is because he wishes it to be so—and everything that is or was shall ultimately serve his purposes. Evolutionary theories not only discount God as Creator, modern “theistic evolution” discounts God as immanently involved in sustaining the natural order. The use of the word “nature” in place of “God” is a humanistic cop-out to deny that Deity is actively, constantly in control of the material creation through Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest.
- (e) Christ made purification for sins. The Greek word *katharismos*, is the word from which the English words, “catharsis, cathartic” come. It means, “cleansing, purging, purifying.” THIS IS THE VERY HEART OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS! Jesus Christ is the only One who made it possible for sinful

human beings to access, come into, the presence of the Almighty God! He did it by willingly offering himself, in a human body, as atonement (Heb. 10:5-10) and by that will (i.e., the willingness of Christ), we are sanctified. GOD VERIFIED THAT ONLY JESUS'S ATONEMENT FOR SIN WAS ACCEPTABLE AS FINAL BY RAISING JESUS FROM THE DEAD! Sinners need a "bath of regeneration." The Hebrew word for "bath" is mikva and is total immersion in water which a few Jews observe once a year just before Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). Jesus bathes every believer in his blood ONCE FOR ALL! In Christ the consciousness of sin and guilt is removed because it is all perfectly punished in him, and thus the sinner's access to God is provided and he is given assurance of holiness in the actual presence of God. In Christ, man is no longer estranged, imperfect, unsatisfying, wrong, unacceptable and condemned before God.

- (f) Christ sat down at the right hand of the Majesty (God Almighty) in the highest of places. This is the most staggering of all things attributed to Jesus Christ. That God Almighty came to earth in a human body in Jesus of Nazareth, died and rose from the dead, and was exalted to the right hand of God reveals that in him is the ONLY REAL MEANING IN LIFE!!! What he stood for, and was, in time and history is the ultimate meaning of life and this world. We have access to God through him, who while on earth lived, loved and died for us. Knowing Jesus as he lived and loved IN HISTORY, what are we to think of the nature of his divine intercessions for frail and sinful humanity as he now sits at God's right hand?! We have a human-divine friend, a Divine brother, at court! Let this bring comfort in trial, action to faith, and peace to mind and heart! CHRIST IS THE ANSWER THE ULTIMATE MYSTERIES OF NATURE, HUMANITY, HISTORY AND TIME. He has the answer to the relationship of deity to humanity and humanity to deity. He has the answer to the relationship of all that was, and is, and to all that shall ever be. God has spoken in Christ—about man, creation, sin, redemption, death, life and about himself. GOD HAS SPOKEN "SON-WISE"—MAN HAS BEEN APPROACHED BY GOD, NOT VICE VERSA! MAN HAS BEEN APPROACHED BY GOD, NOT IN A RELIGION, BUT IN A PERSON! Is this important to your faith in Christ? It should be. For if Jesus is not who he claimed he was, then it is foolish to trust him with your eternal soul. If Christ is an imposter, let us "eat and drink" like animals, for tomorrow we die and that is the end of us!

Paul emphasizes the Son (Jesus Christ) is to be worshiped, NOT ANGELS, because the Jews placed so much authority and emphasis on angels in their theology and literature of that time. The Kabbalah, literally meaning, "something received mysteriously," (in its most popular written form called the Zohar) was written about A.D. 1280. It is in Aramaic and is thought to have been written in Spain by Rabbi Moses de Leon. It was considered alongside the Old Testament, and the Talmud, as one of the three most important books in Judaism. There was a ruling for centuries that study of the Kabbalah was

forbidden to any Jew under the age of 40, because it was considered that anyone less than 40 was not mature enough to mentally handle what was in it. The Kabbalah contains instructions about the practice of magic, the use of amulets to ward off demons, and numerology, and mystic philosophies. **AND IT IS THE KABBALAH THAT CONTAINS JUDAISM'S OBSESSION WITH ANGELS.** Among other things it teaches: (a) mysteries of the end of time and that man's future is discovered only through the mediation of angels; (b) a group of 7 archangels supervises the rest of the angels—Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Sariel, Gabriel, Jeremiel—they are in charge of the spirits of humans, guard the underworld and its souls, rule over Paradise, and take revenge upon the world; (c) a special group of 70 angels are appointed over the "70 Gentile nations" of the earth; (d) certain angels rule the stars and the heavens; (e) some of them are used for magical purposes; (f) a new group of angels is created every day; (g) they walk upright, speak the Hebrew language, fly in the air, move from one end of the world to another, and predict the future; (h) while they have the shape of man, they consist half of fire and half of water; (i) there are angels who control prayer, hail, rain, anger, hell, birth and pregnancy and other matters; (j) God consults angels on occasion, as he did before creating man; (k) Michael and Gabriel (angels) acted as sponsors at the wedding of Adam and Eve—the angel Samael made Eve pregnant—Enoch was "translated" and became an angel; (l) angels argued with God over Isaac's being sacrificed; (m) they rescued Abraham from Nimrod's fiery furnace, in heaven they attempt to take Moses' life, they engage rabbis in conversation. That is only a sampling of what the Kabbalah says about angels. Some Jews even thought the Messiah might come as an angel! God did make many revelations to men through angels in the OT. God occasionally mediated his control of history through angels in OT times (Dan. 20; Isa. 37:36, etc.). The Law of God came to Moses through the mediation of angels (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19). Angels were so important to the mind of the Jew that there was constant danger of even worshipping them (Col. 2:18; Rev. 22:8-9). Paul in no way minimizes the position of angels as servants of God, but he will not permit them to usurp the position of the Son of God as the One Absolute Mediator between God and man. Angels serve in any form God may need—wind or flame or flood. The danger to giving more glory to angels and others besides Christ is still in the religious world today—not only among Jews, but Mormons, Roman Catholics and the "New Age" mysticism of Oprah Winfrey, et al. There is only ONE mediator between man and God, himself man, Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2:5). **CHRIST IS ABSOLUTE AND ALONE. HE HAS BY HIS LIFE AND DEATH AND RESURRECTION EARNED HIS POSITION AS "SON"** (see Lk. 9:28-35; Jn. 12:27-35; Acts 13:26-40). When God sent his Son to the world as a baby—angels worshiped him! Even if all the angels of heaven put together came to earth right now and said they had another Gospel or a different Gospel, or an addition to the Gospel, we must not, for a moment, pay any heed to them (Galatians 1:8-9)! There is only ONE who has earned the right to say what God's will for the whole universe is—that is Jesus Christ the Son. "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father" (Jn. 5:23). "He that hath the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life" (1 Jn. 5:12).

The Son of God is worthy of worship because of:

- (a) **RIGHTEOUSNESS** (Heb. 1:8-9)—the Son came to earth and demonstrated in human flesh the rule of righteousness; the OT prophets predicted the Messiah would be able to rule, not by force or exploitation, but by righteousness; Christ established the truth, on earth, that God is able to rule by perfect righteousness those people who are willing. Christ was the Man who was perfect before God, the Man who pleased God, loved righteousness and hated lawlessness—that’s the kind of human being God wants. PLEASE NOTE, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO LOVE RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHOUT HATING LAWLESSNESS—contrary to much secular and “religious” thinking today Christians cannot be like Christ and tolerate lawlessness! God never sent an angel on such a mission—to establish his rule in perfect righteousness. ONLY THE SON COULD DO THAT! HE DID IT! HE IS SOVEREIGN!
- (b) **FAITHFULNESS** (Heb. 1:10-12). Because he came to earth and demonstrated in human flesh the absolute faithfulness and eternal nature of God. Everything and everyone else besides the Son is “made” and may “perish”—BUT NOT THE SON—HE REMAINS—NOT EVEN DEATH COULD HOLD HIM! He spoke, and it came to pass! His word was law over disease, storm, demons, even death. ALL OBEYED HIM. NOT ONE WORD OF HIS FELL UNFULFILLED IN ITS TIME, OR WAS UNFAITHFUL. HIS WORD IS INVIOLEATE! The humanistic philosopher looks at the universe and sees no more. He talks of “the eternity of matter,” but the record of man is that he is haunted by the idea that there is something MORE and he wistfully longs too know what “it” is. IT IS THE SON OF GOD! LOOK AT THE RECORD (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John). “Change and decay in all around I see, O thou who changest not, Abide with me!” The heart (mind) of man cannot find rest and satisfaction in nature, principles, powers, processes, or even in “religions.” THE CHRISTIAN RESTS HIS ONLY HOPE IN THE ABSOLUTE SON OF GOD AND HIS ABSOLUTE WORD!
- (c) **VICTORY** (Heb. 1:13-14). This is a fitting climax to such a glorious array of evidences of the Son’s worthiness over everything and everyone. The figure, “thine enemies a stool for thy feet” is taken from the practice of Joshua when he ordered his generals to place their feet on the necks of the conquered enemy-kings of Israel (Josh. 10:24). This prediction looks to the final triumph of Christ based on his conquest of the powers of sin and the devil in his redemptive work in history, at the cross the empty tomb (Col. 2:15-16; Heb. 2:14-28). He is worthy of worship because his victory shows that history is inevitably moving toward his final triumph. HE SITS NOW AT GOD’S RIGHT HAND DIRECTING HISTORY TOWARD THAT FINAL AND INEXORABLE END! And he often sends angels to serve his purposes. We have all been served by an angel at one time or another. God does not have to put them in

human bodies to serve. He can make them “wind or fire” (see the book of Revelation’s prediction of the great struggle of the church against the Roman empire A.D. 100-500). “Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain...he who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision...Now therefore, O kings, be wise...serve the Lord with fear...do homage (kiss) the Son, lest he become angry, and you perish in the way...blessed are all who take refuge in him....” (Psa. 2). NO OTHER BEING, MORTAL OR ANGELIC, MEDIATES BETWEEN MAN AND GOD, EXCEPT JESUS CHRIST, THE SON. HE EARNED HIS GLORY, HE DESERVES TO BE WORSHIPED, HE MUST BE LISTENED TO, FOR HE IS GOD’S COMPLETE, PERFECT, FINAL REVELATION TO MAN!

Paul is saying, Therefore, since the Person of the Son transcends the work of all prophets and angels, let us now descend to the arena of life bringing the implications of this TRANSCENDENT GLORY OF JESUS TO IT! God has spoken “Son-wise”. No new revelation is needed; none will be given. All mankind must give heed to the final, complete, perfect revelation in Christ. God has spoken finally and fully in Jesus—IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT ALL THE WORLD LISTEN TO HIM, SHUTTING OUT ALL OTHER VOICES AND GIVING JESUS ITS UNDIVIDED ATTENTION! Any other “voice,” saying, “Here is life...” or “there is life...” is inadequate at best, helpless, hopeless, false and damning at worst. The great peril is that these Jews (and all other non-believers) will let that which is most important slip past them. The Greek word prosechein, translated, “pay closer attention to” in RSV, means literally, “grab hold of and hang on to, fasten oneself to...” and is stronger than merely “pay attention to.” The Greek word pararuomen, is 2nd aorist tense, passive, subjunctive, which means whatever happens to the person, has been done passively. The root of the word means, “glide by, flow by, slip by.” Thus, the idea is that the person is stationary and the things being heard are gliding by as he remains passive to what he is hearing. IT IS AS OLD AS THE HUMAN RACE. Passive lethargy to that which is best, in favor of that which is least, is ever with us! Few are ever lost to God because they deliberately decide to throw away their faith and become militant atheists. Pressures and temptations to give attention to the SEEN, to the IMMEDIATE, to the FLESHLY, to the POPULAR, divert our attention from the UNSEEN, ETERNAL, AND SPIRITUAL. So, that which is really valuable, lasting, lovely, satisfying, edifying and true is allowed by us to “glide, slip, flow and drift by.” WE NEVER SEEM TO GRAB HOLD, HANG ON TO, OR FASTEN OURSELVES TO THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE OF ALL—THE WORD OF CHRIST! Jesus emphasized this peril again and again. “He that hath ears to hear, LET HIM HEAR.” HEAR, LISTEN, GRAB ON TO, TAKE HEED, OBEY WITH ALL YOUR BEING—WITH ALL YOUR LIFE (it is of significance that the Hebrew word, shema, is translatable synonymously—“HEAR” AND “OBEY”). These Hebrew-Christians were perilously close to letting the precious reality of Christ and his New Testament “slip past” them because of their attention being diverted by temptation to return to the seen, immediate, fleshly Old Testament religious system. Along with the great peril, comes the great penalty for letting Christ “slip on past.” That penalty is ABSOLUTE JUSTICE FROM ALMIGHTY GOD FOR REBELLION AND SIN. The law of Moses was a just law and every infraction brought inexorable punishment equal to the seriousness of the infraction. Not malicious wrathfulness—but justice and righteousness from the Absolute and

Holy One. HOW, THEN, SHALL ANY ESCAPE IF THEY LET “DRIFT-ON-BY” THE COMPLETE, FINAL, PERFECT JUSTIFICATION ACCOMPLISHED IN THE HOLY SON OF GOD! The logic of this passage cannot be denied! The undeniable, compelling principle of “the greater the privilege, the greater the responsibility” is imbedded in this passage. It is a terrible responsibility to be blessed by God—and the greater the blessing, the more awesome the responsibility! Mankind now has had the incarnated revelation of Almighty God, himself, thrust into its midst. Mankind must come to grips with the most significant thing that has ever happened to it, including its initial creation. Life is real! Life is earnest! The grace of God has appeared in all the absolute fulness it is capable of expressing to man----THERE WILL BE NO MORE GRACE THAN THAT WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS. THE GRACE OF GOD HAS NO MEANING IF MAN HAS NO RESPONSIBILITY TO RESPOND WITH ALL THE GRACIOUSNESS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS OF WHICH HE IS CAPABLE! To let it slip by is to lose God, lose life, lose purpose, lose fulfillment, lose identity, to lose EVERYTHING!

The revelation of the grace of God in Jesus Christ is NOT SPECULATIVE, NOT CONJECTURAL, NOT PHILOSOPHICAL—IT IS HISTORICAL, BASED ON FACTUAL EVIDENCE. It is spoken by the Lord! It is not the trifling, meaningless, powerless jabbers of human beings. It has all, final, absolute power and authority over all other messages. God will do no more for man’s salvation than what he has done. God has spoken ultimately. The naked truth is, God has nothing more to say! This revelation has been attested to by eyewitnesses. Those who wrote this message down for all the rest of mankind, “saw, heard and handled” the word of Life (1 Jn. 1:1-4). The three empirical tests (sight, hearing, touch) for establishing anything as scientific were applied to God’s revelation of grace in Jesus Christ. These eyewitnesses were competent, honest, credible; they had nothing whatever to gain by attempting to perpetrate a fraud. This message was validated by miracles, signs and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit for a whole century, at least. That should have given the enemies of the message plenty of time to present hard, historical evidence to prove the message was not from God. BUT ALL THE ENEMIES COULD DO WAS PERSECUTE THE MESSENGERS, AND BURN THE BOOKS IN WHICH THE MESSAGE WAS RECORDED! Still the enemies could not stamp out the message. Heaven and earth shall pass away (kingdoms and kings come and go) but God’s word shall not pass away!

So, what is the inevitable question? What is the unanswerable question? “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” Most people do not allow the most important message the world has ever been given to slip past them for lack of evidence! They do so for the single reason of refusing to give their undivided attention to the evidence they possess! Dale Evans (wife of Roy Rogers), in her book, *Angel Unaware*, tells the story of her “Down’s syndrome” baby that died when she was about 2 years old. Dale tells the story as if she were the little child who had been sent from the Father for a purpose, went back to heaven and is reporting to God...the end of the book goes like this: “Well, that’s it, Father. That’s what happened Down There. That’s how I delivered Your message, and I’m sure they got it. They learned, for one thing, that there are many mansions, or rooms in your earthly house—that there’s a room for the sick, a room for the healthy and a room for the weak, a room for those born with ten talents, and a room for those with only one, a room for

the rich and a room for the poor. A room for everyone, and something for them to do in that room for You. In Your house Down There are many rooms, where we study and teach and get ready to move into Your big light room Up Here. They're a lot stronger, since they got Our message. There's a new glory inside them and on everything all around them, and they've made up their minds to give it to everybody they meet. The sun's a lot brighter in Encino (California), since we stopped off there for a while. AND, NOW FATHER, PLEASE...COULD I JUST GO OUT AND TRY MY WINGS?"

The darling Son of God has come down, born as a baby, crucified on a cross, raised from the dead. He loved us, suffered for us, triumphed for us, left us an inheritance to hope for. Our inheritance is invisible, but the testament or covenant which promises it was etched in history at Calvary and the empty tomb. Our inheritance is invisible, but more real than all the worlds and ages put together. If we get his message, everything can be a lot brighter down here!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**HEBREWS 2:5-18**

The text discussing “what is man” connects directly to the previous text stating Jesus is God’s final, complete, perfect revelation of himself to humankind. The fact that God has spoken finally and ultimately Son-wise, causes Paul to remember Psa. 8:4, and leads him to cogitate, “If God, in the person of the Son of man, has spoken to man—what must man be?” But the great tragedy of man’s perilous indifference interrupts his thought for a moment so he writes down the awful warning against letting this message drift by. God has “visited” man to keep him from this peril. God remained in heaven and spoke to man in various ways down through the centuries, by prophets. Occasionally God would send an angel to speak to humankind or help them. Sometimes God would do miracles and wonders in the natural order, but always God remained invisible. Now at the last “age” God himself has visited humanity as Man, the Son. The text of Heb. 2:6-8 is a quotation from Psalms 8. The Hebrew word pakad, in Psalms 8:4 means, “put oneself in charge of in order to give attention to and help or keep safe—thus, to visit.” The Hebrew word pakad is translated in the Septuagint (Greek version of the OT) and NT Greek (Heb. 2:6) as episkepte. Episkepte is translated “visitest” in the KJV & ASV and “carest” in RSV. Episkepte is the word from which the English “episcopal, episcopate,” come. It is sometimes translated, “overseer,” “ruler” or “bishop” in the NT where it is used as a synonym for elder. The idea is that when God became Man, The Son, he did so to “visit” man in order to take charge of man’s humanity and rule over man as a Shepherd to keep man from letting his heavenly destiny slip away! All wrapped up in the Hebrew word pakad and the Greek word episkepte is the idea of sovereignty for redemption’s sake (see Lk. 1:68ff where the word episkepte, “visited” is used in connection with Christ’s birth). The Great Creator became man’s Savior; the Great Sustainer became man’s Redeemer. God has not “visited” any of his other creatures, not even angels (see Heb. 2:5; 2:16) with such care. Angels have never been given the mercy man received from God. Angels have “longed to look into” the things God has done for man (1 Pet. 1;10-12) but have been apparently denied access. Why did God visit only man—only planet “earth?” What is so remarkable about man that the God who created all that is, should “visit” him? This caused David to cry in amazed incredulity 3000 years ago, in Psa. 8 —“What IS man that thou art mindful of him?” David’s cry focuses on man—it is an expression of the longing in the human heart to reach up to the “high calling” God apparently has for man. Paul’s treatise in Hebrews 2 focuses on THE MAN—it is the answer to David’s cry. God became Man and attained for all humanity that “high calling” in Jesus Christ. When Jesus had attained it, he made it available through faith to all who will accept it! Hebrews ch. 2 is one of the most sublime passages of all the Bible expressing the very essence of God’s redemption of mankind. Jesus Christ was the ultimate representative (the last Adam) of

humanity and brought to fulfillment the declared purpose of the Creator when he brought man into being in Eden—that purpose was to make man into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29).

While God has revealed in his word that he created man with glory, man seems ever ready to belittle his own dignity. It started in Eden when the devil seduced Eve, which led to the idolatry of ancient civilizations, and was “refined” in the Greek philosophers Epicurus and Lucretius. Two thousand years hence, Charles Darwin gave impetus to a belief that man had descended from apes! Most atheists and evolutionists scoff at Darwin’s naivete today, still, all evolutionists, humanists, and other non-Biblical philosophers degrade man. Millenniums of atheism, agnosticism, humanism, and evolution-ism have resulted in a Satanic relativism which has further developed into an existential despair. Existentialist, Jean Paul Sartre, wrote, “Man is alone, but worse than alone, he is totally unnecessary. His existence is superfluous, gratuitous in a world in which there is no reason for anything. Life is absurd; the only meaning to be found is in the meaninglessness of life.” I, Paul T. Butler, studied and taught “Philosophy” for almost 4 decades at Ozark Christian College. In all those years I never read a non-Christian philosopher who thought man had a glorious origin, a reason for existence, or an ultimate destiny. **THEY WERE ALL PESSIMISTIC AND DEGRADING IN THEIR EVALUATION OF HUMANITY!** The original Hebrew in Psalm 8 would read literally, “And you have made him (man) a little less (or lower) than Elohim (God).” The word “angels” is a Septuagint (i.e., LXX) mistranslation of the word Elohim which is everywhere else translated, “God.” The RSV in Psa. 8:5 translates it accurately, “...a little less than God.” **MAN WAS CREATED A LITTLE LESS THAN GOD, BUT ACTUALLY HIGHER THAN THE ANGELS!** Man is the noblest, highest, product of God’s creative handiwork. Mankind was created last because he is that being for whose use and benefit everything else had already been brought into being (even angels) to minister to man. Everything below man God pronounced “good”—man he pronounced, “very good.” The Greek word translated “make lower” is elattosas, and is not the Greek word for “create”—ktizo is used in the Greek NT for “create.” God made (positioned) man a little lower than the angels when man sinned—Paul said it this way in Heb. 2:8, “As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him (man).” Man was created in God’s image (Heb. tzelem, Greek, eikon, or “icon”). “In the image of God” is probably best explained by the word “personal.” Man is a “person” as God is a “Person.” Man is absolutely inferior to God, but a person, nevertheless. The fundamental essence of person-hood is individuality, otherness, eternity. Every person is an other to every other person; every person, including God, is ultimately unique. Every person is eternal and will continue, eternally, either in heaven or hell. The ultimate destiny of man, redeemed by God, is not absorption into the cosmos, into Brahma, Tao, Unity, the One, Nature, etc., **BUT REDEEMED MAN’S ULTIMATE DESTINY IS TO REMAIN AN INDIVIDUAL, UNIQUE, IN FELLOWSHIP AND UNHINDERED IN ACCESS TO THE PERSONAL, LIVING GOD!** God made each individual like HIMSELF, able to think, love, enjoy, create, and express oneself to all other individuals. No wonder the Psalmist said, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.” (Psa. 139:14). Man was created to have dominion over God’s natural creation and to have partnership with God in the spiritual realm. The word “image” carries with it the idea of “representation” and thus man is God’s

“representative” over creation. The image idea has something to say about man’s stewardship. The Greek word *hupetaxas*, translated “subjection” in most English versions of Heb. 2:8, is from the root word *hupotasso* which means, “to subordinate, to put under obedience, to bring into subjection.” The Hebrew word *mashal*, in Psa. 8:6, means “rule over.” The Hebrew word *radah*, in Gen. 1:28 is translated “dominion,” means also, “to prevail over.” All the natural order was given to man to rule over and subdue and be used by man to honor his Creator, according to the revealed will of his Creator. This was in order that man could enjoy it and say with his Creator, “...it is good.” Man was to rule over all of God’s creation so that man could be sanctified in the image of God (separate from all the rest of creation which was NOT in the image of God). GOD INTENDS THAT MAN BE SANCTIFIED, DIFFERENT, SET APART, OTHER-THAN ALL THE REST OF CREATION—EVEN THE ANGELS! Our idea of “man” forms one of the pivotal ideas of life! Is man only matter, destined to end his uniqueness in the dust--is man the same as all the rest of creation, merely animal, instinctively and totally self-oriented? Is man the result of chance—unnecessary, purposeless, meaningless? Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote,

“Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing,
Only a signal shown and a distant voice in the darkness;
So on the ocean of life we pass and speak one another,
Only a look and a voice; then darkness again and a silence.”

THANK GOD WE HAVE THE BIBLE TO SPEAK CLEARLY, POSITIVELY AND ABSOLUTELY ABOUT MAN, HIS NATURE AND DESTINY, AND WE DO NOT HAVE TO RELY ON POETS AND PHILOSOPHERS!

Despite the original dignity of man and all that God intended for him, man fell from his destiny! The human being, created in the image of God was given the awesome power of choice. He chose rebellion instead of obedience to the Creator’s will. The first two humans alienated themselves, suffered guilt, and became fractured beings (not whole). Adam and Eve (and all their progeny to this day) chose to become schizophrenic (double-minded) persons. Man, in rebellion against the absolute good willed by his Creator became a creature frustrated by his circumstances, surrounded by his weaknesses and defeated by his temptations and trials. MANKIND WHICH SHOULD BE FREE, IS BOUND—MAN WHO SHOULD BE A KING IS A SLAVE. G. K. Chesterton wrote, “Whatever else is or is not true, this one thing is certain—man is not what he was meant to be.” Paul captured the agony of the alienated human heart, the schizophrenic will of man in Romans 7:15-20. There is in man a war between two natures. When a man does not do what God created him for, then he is not a man in the fullest sense. When man rebels against his created position (highest of all creation), he lowers himself below true manhood. When that happens (as it does to every human being) the ensuing guilt keeps him estranged, alienated and forever separated from his intended, God-ordained, destiny (unless the divinely decreed guilt be removed). Man rebelled; God asserted his sovereignty. All sin is a challenge to God’s sovereignty.

Man allowed himself to be seduced by the devil in an attempt to usurp God's sovereignty in Eden (and every human since). When man tried to be greater than God, he actually became less than man! Man in rebellion against God's "image" is not fit to represent, rule, or fellowship (participate) in God's "good" creation. God had to demonstrate this unfitness in a most graphic way—God "cursed" the earth for man's sake (Gen. 3:17; Rom. 8:18-25)—to chasten man into repentance. God took away man's right and ability to have dominion over all his lesser creation, because man had made himself "lesser!" Man forfeits his real, true self (destiny) when he believes the devil's lie. He alienates himself from the God of all truth, incurs guilt, becomes terrorized and enslaved by the devil who holds over man the fear of death! BUT THEN GOD BEGAN THE LONG, SLOW PROCESS OF REDEMPTION TO BRING MAN BACK BY HIS OWN FREE CHOICE TO GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND DESTINY FOR HIM. God did this by both judging sin (casting man out of the Garden) and by providing atonement (animal sacrifices as types of The Sacrifice). God took away man's dominion and cast him out of Eden so God could remain God. God must remain absolute if man ever hopes to become truly man as God intended him to be when he was created. Man's salvation or lostness depends ultimately upon his choices. Man is saved when the image of God is reborn in him, or as it is put in Scripture, "...conformed to the image of his Son..." (Rom. 8:29). Man is lost when the image of God is continually rejected by man until he dies and goes to the next world (see Lk. 16). God must save man by getting man to choose the Divine Image, his will, and his Spirit. To free man from the deception of the devil, God must give man the whole truth. God did that by becoming Man; by becoming Incarnate Truth; by living the truth in human form. THAT IS WHY JESUS, GOD'S INCARNATE SON, HAD TO BE MADE "A LITTLE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS." Jesus had to take upon himself the flesh of man and be subject to all the limitations (not sins) of flesh and blood—"a little lower than the angels." To free man from incurred guilt and give man the opportunity to make the choice of righteousness from a new beginning, completely free of guilt, God became Man and atoned for man's sin himself (2 Cor. 5:11-21). Man may now choose (on God's terms) to have that new beginning. Choosing depends on faith, trust, love, motivation. Faith, trust, love motivation depend on forgiveness, example, help. THIS IS WHY GOD BECAME MAN AND "PARTOOK" OF MAN'S NATURE, SO MAN COULD TRUST, LOVE AND HAVE THE MOTIVATION TO MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES!

God himself must provide a way for man to regain the "image" of the Divine put in him at creation. Man is incapable of regaining it on his own—man has neither the wisdom nor the authority to change the absolute crime he has committed. WITH GOD WE DEAL IN ABSOLUTES, NOT RELATIVES! So God became man in Jesus Christ and "emptied himself" (Phil. 2:5ff) and was made a little lower than the angels for a while. GOD ASSUMED MORTALITY...HE CAME TO EARTH WITH ALL ITS CIRCUMSTANCES AND LIMITATIONS AND SUFFERED ALL THE TRIALS AND FRAILTIES OF MAN! God became man in Jesus Christ, destroyed man's guilt by living a sinless life as a Man, and by dying ("tasting death") to pay the penalty against all man's sin. "One died, therefore all have died" (2 Cor. 5:14). When Jesus died, as man, on the cross, potentially, all men died! ALL SIN HAS BEEN PAID FOR. Atonement is not forced upon anyone so man must make the choice of faith, and trust the revealed will of God (on terms God has sovereignly chosen to offer) or he will not have atonement. FOR, YOU SEE, IT IS IN CHOOSING CHRIST'S VICARIOUS DEATH FOR

HIMSELF MAN LETS THE IMAGE OF GOD BE REBORN IN HIM! God didn't just "visit" earth and atone for sin, then return to heaven leaving man to wonder and flounder, doubt and despair of any possibility that the "image" of God could be lived out in human life. So God became man (Jesus Christ) and demonstrated that it is possible to live without rejecting the "image" of God. He did it as fully a human being as you and I are human beings. Jesus became the archegon, "pioneer" (RSV) or "captain" (KJV) and "author" (ASV) of our salvation. He became our "path-finder" (like Daniel Boone), blazing a trail of salvation along which any man can follow and become a son of God and be brought to glory! Jesus cut and slashed and conquered the Way through the wilderness of human temptation, suffering, obedience, trial and sin, and CONQUERED THAT WILDERNESS FOR US. HE HIMSELF IS THE "WAY"! The word "perfect" is in the Greek text, teleiosai, and means, primarily, "having reached the goal, or end, for which it was intended." To say Jesus was "made perfect" does not mean that he had sinned. But it does mean he divested himself of "equality with God" (Phil. 2) and became in all respects like a human being in all the limitations of humanness (he tired, he hungered, he was limited in certain aspects of knowledge Matt. 24:36—he was mortal in his fleshly body). He was born a baby, grew through childhood, and adulthood. He "experienced" obedience by the things he suffered (Heb. 5:8). The Greek word emathen, (5:8) is the same word for which we get "disciple." Jesus was "discipled" or "learned" obedience, as part of the goal God set for him as a human. Jesus reached the goal which God set for man when he created man in the Divine Image. Jesus regained the full image of God in man as man, by making all the right choices as man while still suffering all the limitations and temptations of human mankind. Jesus did this to gain man's confidence, to gain man's trust, so that by total faith in his conquest of humanness, man could regain the image of God in himself. When once the rebel-self is put off and the image-of-God-self is allowed to be born in us, we are on our way to that glorious destiny for which we were made at creation! Those who are sanctified through choosing Jesus' death and his life, are sons of God. Therefore, the Son of God is not ashamed to acknowledge them as his brothers. Jesus partakes of human nature (Heb. 2:14), so humans may, if they choose, partake of his Divine Nature (2 Pet. 1:3-5). God really identified with humanity by becoming Man and suffering. As we saw in lesson one, the Jewish concept was and is that God COULD NOT BECOME MAN since God is wholly other and indivisible. Thus their concern with man has little to do with life after death, which they say is speculative. They believe that "much more important than speculation about the after-life is the acceptance of the revelation of the Torah, which is entirely concerned with life and the living." Living Jewish, op.cit. p. 196. "The emphasis of Judaism is almost entirely on the observance of God's commandments in this world and living the way a Jew should live. What happens after death we leave in God's hands and he has revealed nothing concerning it." ibid, p. 195 HOWEVER, IT IS, IN FACT, THIS VERY IDENTIFICATION WITH MAN WHICH IS THE VERY ESSENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF GOD. THE BASIS OF THE GREEK PHILOSOPHERS IDEA OF GOD (AND THAT OF ALL OTHER "WORLD RELIGIONS") WAS DETACHMENT, "WHOLLY-OTHERNESS" OF GOD, OR THE GODS! And modern Judaism's God is not much different than those of Greek philosophy and mythology!

The devil is not sovereign over death—GOD IS! The devil merely pretends to have sovereignty. He deceived Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden that he (the devil) could tell

man whether he would die or not. THE DEVIL'S POWER IS DECEPTION AND ACCUSATION—NOT REAL POWER! The devil's "power" is in the fear of death. The devil's "power" is that he is capable of deceiving people into thinking that this life is all the life there is! When human beings allow themselves to be deceived into the falsehood that physical life is all the life there is, they concentrate on the flesh—the baser, instinctive, fleshly aspects of humanness. That is when the human being loses the Deo imago, i.e., "Divine Image" in himself and becomes less than God intended him to be. Death is the "capstone" of fear! Through the fear that this life is all there is and death is the end of all hopes and aspirations for something higher, better, more real, just, and good, men will do things that nothing else could compel them to do! That is Solomon's theme in Ecclesiastes! Death is the great frustration! Life is never more absurd than at the grave if the physical life is all there is! Non-Christian literature abounds in despair, frustration fear, superstition. THERE'S NOTHING OPTIMISTIC IN HEATHEN OR HUMANISTIC LITERATURE, ANCIENT OR MODERN! Through the fear of death (which involves the devil's power to accuse sinful men before their Maker, (see Zech. 3:1-10), the devil keeps human beings in slavery to their lower, perishing nature. When people choose the perishing part of themselves, they abandon the image (Spirit) of God in themselves. The opposite of the image (Spirit) of God is destructiveness, animalism, carelessness, aimlessness, and perversity. For a classic description of human beings having rejected the image (Spirit) of God for themselves, see Romans 1:18-32. Jesus, as PERFECT MAN, destroyed the devil's power when he atoned for man's sin. Thus the devil cannot accuse anyone who is a brother to Christ. Jesus conquered sin and death in the flesh and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. MAN IS DELIVERED FROM THE FEAR OF DEATH, BY THE PERFECT MAN! Jesus suffered the penalty of the law, spiritual death, and thus took the "sting" out of physical death (2 Cor. 15:55). Jesus destroyed the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8). Jesus triumphed over the devil and his demons (Col. 2:14-15) "publicly" (i.e., historically), at the cross and the empty tomb. Jesus judged and cast the ruler of this world, the devil, out, Jn. 12:32; 16:11. Jesus bound the devil (Matt. 12:29; Rev. 20:2). CHRIST MET DEATH AS A MAN AND DEFEATED IT. HE DEALT DEATH TO DEATH! HE TOOK CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE. JESUS RENDERED THE DEVIL'S POWER IMPOTENT BY BECOMING MAN AND ACCOMPLISHING IN THE FLESH THE RESTORATION OF THE IMAGE OF GOD TO HUMANKIND,! Jesus made all the right choices by faith in the Father and he offers us his accomplished perfection if we will trust him, love him, choose him, and obey him.

So, the whole crux of the matter is that Jesus, the Son of God, willingly divested himself of equality with God and was made like his brethren, human, in order to bring man "sons" to glory. The amazing grace of it all is that he passed right by the angels and came down to mortal, sinful, and rebellious man. The purpose of God's revelation that climaxed in the humiliation and death of his Son was to bring man back to his intended glory and destiny—the image of God in him. The destiny of these "many sons" is not in being "angels bye and bye," as we sometimes sing. The destiny of the "sons" Jesus brings to glory is to partake of the divine nature, to be restored to their dominion, being a little lower than Elohim (God)! Jesus is alive forevermore, and ever present as our great high priest to help us. He endured the trials and temptations of humanity and can be "touched" with humanity's infirmities. Have you suffered rejection?—SO DID JESUS. Have you suffered privation?—SO DID JESUS.

Have you ever wanted not to obey?—SO DID JESUS (Remember—Gethsemane). Have you been wronged for doing right?—SO HAS JESUS. Have you been tempted to doubt, get discouraged, become impatient? SO WAS JESUS. This is one of those difficult things for even some Christians to believe—Jesus was tempted in all points as each Christian has ever been tempted! Not every possible, distinct, temptation that each individual human who has ever lived IS RECORDED AS HAVING HAPPENED TO JESUS (IN THE GOSPEL RECORDS). So, this is one of those things a “disciple” of Christ must take by faith in the authority (divine inspiration) of the statement here in Hebrews 2:14-18 and in Hebrews 4:14-16. The 40 days of temptation Jesus endured (Matt. 4:1-11 and parallels) outline and compress all the primary ways the devil tempts the flesh of mankind as John summarizes, “for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world...” (1 Jn. 2:16). John is also the apostle who succinctly defines sin as “lawlessness” (1 Jn. 3:4). John also defines “love” as “keeping God’s commandments” (1 Jn. 5:3). JESUS WAS TEMPTED TO “LAWLESSNESS.” HE KNOWS THE PRESSURE OF SIN LIKE NO HUMAN BEING HAS EVER KNOWN IT. The power of the temptation to sin would be a trillion times greater to one who has NEVER sinned than it could ever be to those who have capitulated to sin! YOU CAN BELIEVE IT! JESUS WAS MADE LIKE YOU AND WAS TEMPTED AND SUFFERED MORE THAN A TRILLION TIMES THAN YOU!

Jesus knows the great struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. He knows the temptation to doubt the resurrection, to concentrate on the fleshly, the temporary. He knows the temptation to stop short of a God-ordained goal or destiny. Repeatedly he had to grapple with the urge to stop short of perfection or reaching the goal God had for him as a human (e.g., Lk. 12:49; Jn. 12:27; Matt. 26:36-46 and parallels). NOW, HE IS ABLE TO HELP YOU AND ME! Two Greek words in Hebrews 2:16-18 are significant. The first Greek word is in 2:16 and it is *epilambanetai*, translated “concerned” in the RSV. It is used twice in that one verse and the ASV is the only version that translates the word twice! “Concerned” is a weak translation! The word literally means, “take hold upon.” It is the same word used in Heb. 8:9 when God “took hold” of the hand of Israel and led them out of Egypt. Jesus is more than merely “concerned.” HE WANTS TO TAKE US BY THE HAND AND LEAD US, RESCUE US! Man, not angels, is the Lord’s FIRST priority! The second Greek word is in 2:18 and it is *boethesai*, translated “help” in RSV, “succor” in KJV and ASV. This is a word that means, literally, “run to someone who has cried for help, to run to nurse someone.” Man need not struggle alone, for he now has one who has been tempted in all points like himself and he won the victory. This ONE is able and eager to run to every trusting “disciple” who cries for help! Jesus can be of absolute help to you and me because through him we can know the truth that in spite of the worst circumstances this world can ever throw against us, we can have the image of God in us through faith in the revealed will of God. JESUS DID NOT JUST PREACH THAT, HE LIVED IT, IN TIME, IN SPACE, IN A HUMAN NATURE, AND DEMONSTRATED IT HISTORICALLY, TO THE LAME, BLIND, BROKEN-HEARTED, CONSCIENCE-STRICKEN, AND PENITENTS WHOEVER THEY WERE, AND WHEREVER THEY WERE!—read it in the 4 Gospels!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**HEBREWS 3:1-19**

Once again, Paul begins (chapter 3) with the word in Greek, *othen*, a conjunction meaning, “Therefore”—you should note that each chapter beginning with chapter 2 through chapter 12 is begun with a conjunction (e.g., therefore, for, but, now). Even chapter 13 is “conjoined” with chapter 12 by the word “therefore” in 12:28 because all that follows in chapter 13 is on account of the fact that these Hebrew-Christians had “received a kingdom that cannot not be shaken” like the O.T. dispensation was when fulfilled by the Messiah. THAT MEANS EVERYTHING PAUL WROTE IN CHAPTER ONE IS CONNECTED TO AND IS THE BASIS FOR EVERYTHING ELSE HE HAS TO SAY IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS—i.e., THE IDENTITY OF JESUS CHRIST! Hebrew-Christians had a “heavenly” call which is from no less a One than God in the flesh, Jesus Christ. That “heavenly call” is the destiny of all redeemed humanity, by the grace of Jesus Christ, the Pathfinder of redemption in human form. Only those who are Christians, holy (sanctified in Christ) may make claim to this “heavenly call”—it is not available in Judaism (or anywhere else). Holiness (sanctification) is accomplished by Jesus as the Perfect Man. He earned holiness in human form and presides over it as sovereign conqueror. He gives it to whomever he wishes. He wishes to give it to all who will trust completely in him and enter into covenant relationship with him. Christians do not “sanctify” themselves—it is given them by the grace of Christ once for all so long as they continue to be in covenant with him (see Heb. 10:1-31). He dictates the terms of the covenant since he is Sovereign Sanctifier. The Greek word *metochoi*, is translated in the RSV “share” but that is not strong enough to really express the meaning of *metochoi*. Partner would be a better word to express *metochoi*. Partner is active; “sharer” is passive. Both KJV and ASV have “participate” and the Latin Vulgate has *participes*. The “heavenly call” is something in which the “holy brethren” participate! Christians are called to a vocation (*kleseos*, is the Greek word translated “call” and is translated *vocationis* in the Latin Vulgate) which is beyond the dimensions of this world. YOUR CHRISTIAN COVENANT WITH CHRIST IS YOUR VOCATION. “Heavenly call” is in distinction from “earthly” call which was the O.T. The Christian “calling” is spoken of many times in the NT (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1:26-28; Rom. 8:28; 9:25,26; 1 Cor. 1:9; 7:17; Gal. 1:6; Eph. 1:18; 4:1; 4:4; Phil. 3:14 Col. 3:15; 1 Thess. 4:7; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2:13-14; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 9:15; James 2:7; 1 Pet. 2:21; 3:9; 2 Pet. 1:3,10; 1 Jn. 3:1; Jude 1; Rev. 17:14). Being called to heavenly dimensions requires a heavenly nature: (a) guiltlessness; (b) unfettered access to God; (c) eternity; (d) divine wisdom. ALL OF THIS IS PROVIDED US IN JESUS CHRIST, OUR APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST. He provided it by becoming our apostle (i.e., “one sent”) and coming to earth to work out our redemption—and he continues to provide it by being our high priest seated at the right hand of Almighty God. Significantly, the Greek word *homologias*, is the word in Heb. 3:1 translated, “confession.” It means literally, “to say the same as....” In other words, OUR VOCATION (“heavenly calling”) IS TO SAY THE SAME AS JESUS SAYS.

Our heavenly call is to say the same as the Bible says—nothing more, nothing less!

Moses was faithful—AS A SERVANT, IN GOD’S HOUSE, BUT NOT AS THE BUILDER. Moses was a good man—BUT A FLAWED AND SINNING MAN! Why did Paul make the comparison between Moses and Christ? Because of the inordinate reverence of the Jews for Moses. Moses’ name is the highest of all on the roll of Judaism. The rabbis put him even above the angels in God’s house (see Num. 12:7-8 for God’s estimate of Moses). Here are some of the rabbinic and Haggadic views of Moses: (a) Moses didn’t really die, but still stands and ministers to God as he did while on Mt. Sinai (Sot. 13:b); (b) the whole world was created only on account of the merit of Moses (Hul. 89a) and for Moses’ sake (Lev. R. 36:4); (c) he is called by rabbis, “Moshe Rabbenu” (i.e., Moses our master); (d) he was given not only the Written Law, but also the Oral Law (or Bath Kol—“the divine voice”) which was the oral “traditions” of the rabbis written in the Talmud, Mishna and Gemara about 1600 years after Moses lived, and whatever new rabbinic interpretation of the Law was taught during those 1600 years was allegedly already given to Moses at Sinai and passed down orally through the scribes and rabbis until it was written in the Talmud, etc.; (e) Noah was rescued from the flood only because Moses was destined to descend from him (Gen. R. 26:6); (f) the angels who descended and ascended from Jacob (Gen. 28:12), were in reality Moses and Aaron (Gen. R. 68.12); (g) Moses was born circumcised, spoke with his parents on the day of his birth, and prophesied at the age of three (Biet ha-Midrash 1:128); (h) Pharaoh’s daughter was healed of leprosy when she touched the ark of Moses (Ex. R. 1:23,24) (i) Moses refused to suckle at the breast of Egyptian foster-mothers because the mouth that was destined to speak with the Shekinah-glory would not take unclean milk (Sot. 12b); (j) during the 7 days of the dedication of the tabernacle, Moses officiated as the high priest, and he was considered the king of Israel during the 40 year sojourn in the wilderness; (k) Moses died at the kiss of God, God himself buried Moses in a grave which had been prepared for him since the eve of the Sabbath of creation (Sot. 14a; Pes. 54a). The N.T. shows the extreme veneration given Moses by the Jews in Jesus’ day (see Jn. 5:45; 6:31-32; 7:22,23; 9:28-29; Acts 6:11,14; 15:1,5,21; 21:21). Paul had to emphasize Moses’ inferiority to Jesus because of the inordinate pride of the Jewish people in their earthly call. Jews, even today, believe they, of all the other peoples or nations on earth, are chosen by God to survive as a nation. This is a quotation from, Living Jewish, op.cit., p. 225. “God gives us a head start in not making us Gentiles...we have the possibility before us of making ourselves a superior people...and the Torah points the way to do it...If we follow the Torah’s guidelines, we are justified in calling ourselves superior; if we do not, we have no right to consider ourselves above the peoples of the world...” “Israel is and will always remain the beloved of God, even when their conduct leaves much to be desired...” ibid, p. 225. One of the prayers that serious-minded Jews say every day is, Baruch Ata Adonai, Elohenu Melech ha-olam, shelo asani Goy, which means, “Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, Who has not made me a Goy (Gentile)!” JESUS WAS FAITHFUL “SON-WISE” (as Heir, Creator, Sustainer, etc.). JESUS IS BUILDER (Greek, kataskeusas, “maker, establisher, ordainer, preparer) OF GOD’S “HOUSE.” The house of God belongs to Jesus as OWNER; Moses belongs to Jesus as servant in Jesus’ house. Jesus is the Absolute for he is the one who atoned for sin, saved and sanctified all Christians.

God's "house" is his living temple (Eph. 2:21-22), where God dwells in the Spirit. Even in the OT God revealed that his ultimate dwelling place was not to be in temples made with hands but in people of faith (Isa. 66:1ff). It had actually been true that God was not ultimately calling the Hebrews to an "earthly" calling—they just interpreted the OT covenant as being completed physically. God was calling the Hebrews to himself. God was calling them to a spiritual calling of real faith. It was their faith that would be "reckoned to them as righteousness" (compare Gen. 15:6 with Rom. 2:28-29; 4:3; 9:22-23; Gal. 3:6; Jas. 2:23). And by putting them in the center of civilization (Deut. 4:6; Ezek. 5:5-6), God was, through the expected manifestation of their faithfulness to a sanctified life, desiring to call all the world to himself. However, the Israelites forfeited their first spiritual call and destroyed their witness to the world by focusing on human leadership. They systematized and legalized the word of God rather than allowing their human leaders and the written word become instruments of a spiritual relationship to him. Thus, the Builder of the heavenly house, himself, (God), took on human flesh and came as Jesus of Nazareth, to issue the "heavenly call" for humans to become members of the church of Christ, "the household of God" (1 Pet. 4:17; 1 Tim. 3:15).

We, Christians, are Jesus' house IF WE HOLD FAST; WE MUST BE FAITHFUL ("filled with faith") IN HIS "HOUSE." We must trust what God has told us in his word. *Parresian*, is the Greek word translated, "confidence," and is a combination of two Greek words, *pan* and *hrema*, literally, "all speech." In other words, we must hold fast the "boldness and confidence exhibited in freedom of speech; the unreserved, unfettered flow of language that does not cringe in fear, reservation, doubt, reticence (see Heb. 4:14-16; 1 Jn. 4:17-19). If we are to "participate" in the heavenly call, we must hold fast (Greek word is *kataschomen*, "hold down, grasp, cling to") our boldness and free access to Almighty God made available in the redemptive blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:19-25). Paul is clearly talking about the free access we enjoy into the very presence of the Absolute God through Jesus Christ, the Perfect Man. Jesus restores guiltlessness (innocence) to those who trust him. Jesus restores believers to the unfettered access to God enjoyed by Adam and Eve before they sinned! Believers may approach the throne of God without fear, speaking to him without reservation, baring their every thought and motive! The believer's confidence is not him himself or any other human being or institution. This is especially directed to those Hebrew-Christians who might be thinking that going back to Moses or Israel would put them in God's "house." WE MUST HOLD TO JESUS—HE IS OUR BOLDNESS, HE IS OUR HOPE! The human tendency is to believe the lie of the devil that we can trust ourselves. We compare ourselves with other selves (humans) because that absolves us (we rationalize) from the Absolute, the Perfect. We think such relativism frees us from the Sovereignty or Lordship of our Creator. When we do this, we want to turn Christianity into legalistic rituals, so we can reduce it to a routine, rather than surrendering to a personal relationship of grace, trust, obedience and love to a Divine Person, Jesus!

A heart hardened against being tested and tried by God keeps ANYONE (not just the Israelites) from "knowing the way of God." God reveals himself as Absolutely Holy! God reveals himself this way by giving to man the divine and Absolute Will in the form of Covenant

(law and commandments). When that revelation is made, God expects man to recognize it and trust him and adhere to his will. God does this to test man, to see if man is humble in his heart, and will trust God for everything he needs (Deut. 8:1-3). "Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character and character produces hope" (Rom. 5:3-4). God tests human beings in order to produce the divine character in them! God tested those Hebrews he called in the wilderness, but they doubted and rebelled, murmured, demanding MORE "signs" that God was with them (Ex. 17:7; Num. 14:20-24). God has spoken finally and completely in his Son, Jesus Christ. And God has confirmed his power, redemption, will and promises in Jesus, once for all, with signs and wonders and miracles...THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS THE ULTIMATE CONFIRMATION (2 Cor. 1:20-21). For anyone to answer the call of God through Christ and say, "...give us another sign that you are with us..." IS TO PUT GOD TO THE TEST, TODAY! Unbelieving man is a rebel and must have Divine correction. Planotai, is the Greek word translated "go astray" or "wander" or "err." It is the word from which we get the English word, planet. The rebellious hearts of the Hebrews in the wilderness "wandered" back and forth to Egypt like the planets circling in the heavens. They constantly strayed in their affections from God to Egypt and Egypt to God, and back to Egypt. They were unstable in all their ways. Christians are warned against instability (James 1:8; 2 Pet. 2:14; 3:16). The Greek word in James 1:8 for "unstable" is akatastatos, and means, "disordered, confused, restless, to vacillate." GOD'S WAY IS THAT OF STABILITY, STEADFASTNESS, FIRMNESS. Spirituality must be characterized by order, stability, trustworthiness, faithfulness. God is not pleased with "emotional-roller-coaster-faith." Rebellious human beings do not want to acknowledge that GOD'S WAY is a way of DISCIPLINE (Deut. 4:36; 8:5; Prov. 3:12; 2:30; Jer. 5:3; 7:28; 8:5; Zeph. 3:2, Heb. 12:1-29). When man believes the devil's lie that his call is only for this earth, then man will not know God's ways of self-control, of subordinating the flesh, of holy discipline. Jesus came to show that man's call is heavenly, spiritual, and that the flesh and soul can be tested and subordinated for the higher call to heaven. He despised the earthly call for the heavenly when he cried in the Garden of Gethsemane "...nevertheless, not my will but thine be done..." JESUS NEVER WAVED AND NEVER WANDERED FROM THE WAY OF DISCIPLINE, SELF-CONTROL, STABILITY, FIRMNESS AND ORDER IN HIS EARTHLY LIFE! If there is anything the "would-be" follower of Jesus must understand, today, it is that the Way of the Cross is a way of discipline, under control of the Holy Spirit through his word. Those who would convert unbelievers must first warn them of the "cost of discipleship" (see 2 Pet. 2:21; Heb. 12:1-17; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).

The hearts of human beings are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin! Blepete, is the Greek word translated "Take care" in Heb. 3:12. It is an imperative-mood verb and literally is a command, "You look out!" Those of the heavenly call, must be ON THE LOOKOUT AT ALL TIMES lest the deceitfulness of sin "dry-bake" their hearts. The Greek word sklerunete, (3:15) literally means, "bake-dry" so metaphorically it is used for "harden" like soil "hardened" by long drought (remember the parable of the "soils" Matt. 13 and parallels). Those who subject their "hearts" (minds) to long deficiencies of the refreshing water of Life, the word of God, the Bible, will find their hearts (minds) growing as hard as "dust-bowl-baked-earth." Isn't it interesting that unbelief is categorized as evil! Many people today think you can be "good" even if you don't believe in God and Christ! WRONG! UNBELIEF IS THE WORST EVIL!

Exhortation, preaching the word, studying the word, must be constant and urgent! It is to be done every day and done today as if today is the only day we have for it! (3:13). THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH IS TO KEEP “HEARTS” OF MEMBERS AND PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS SOFT AND “WATER-OF-LIFE-SOAKED” AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY LEST THESE “HEARTS” BECOME “BAKED-DRY-HARD.” Exhortation must be clear (i.e., unequivocal, honest, and not superficial), to counteract the deceitfulness of sin. Exhorters (preachers, elders, Sunday School teachers) cannot afford to do their jobs slipshod and flippantly as hirelings. Exhorters are not to deal in trivialities, in sophistries, in illusions, flatteries, etc. Exhorters must deal in truth, in love (real love), in eternal verities. THE TRUTH MUST NOT BE SLIGHTED, ADULTERATED OR COMPROMISED! It is instructive to note that believers may fall away from God by unbelief. The Greek phrase in 3:12 is apostenai apo theou zontos. The Greek word, apostenai, means literally, “fall away” and is the word from which the English word “apostasy” comes. All the other Greek words of this phrase have entered the English language (apo becomes a prepositional prefix in English, “apo”; theou becomes a prefix in English for God, e.g., “theo—logy”; and zontos is the origin of our English “zoology”—e.g. “a study of living things.” So, contrary to Calvinism, it is possible for those who once believed to “fall away” or “fall from grace” (see also Gal. 5:4). EVER SINCE CHRIST CAME AND FULFILLED THE OLD COVENANT, JUDAISM IS CLASSIFIED BY GOD’S NEW TESTAMENT AS “APOSTASY.”

To rebel against God and put God on trial by human standards IS EXTREMELY, ETERNALLY SERIOUS BEHAVIOR. To warn his “chosen” against the deceitfulness of sin and the evil of unbelief, GOD SWEARS (Deut. Heb. 3:18; Deut. 1:34-35; Psa. 95:11; Heb. 6:13; 2 Cor. 1:20-21). Sin is deceitful. The Greek word for “deceitful” in Heb. 3:13 is apate, and means “cheat, trick, scam, seduce and deceive.” It is used by Paul again in 2 Thess. 2:10 “deception” and by Peter in 2 Pet. 2:13 where RSV translates it, “dissipations” but KJV and ASV translates it “deceivings.” Sin in its very essence is delusory, cheating, deceitful. The tragedy is that some people actually choose to be deceived, deluded and cheated out of the truth (Isa. 30:10-22; Micah 3:11; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:10-12, etc.). Sin is deceitful because it is (a) showy; (b) flattering; (c) receives the acclaim of the world; (d) satisfies the urges of the flesh; (e) gives people a false sense of power; (f) is therefore “exciting, exhilarating, and daring”—BUT DEADLY! Rebellion against God the Creator of all things is intoxicating and inebriating to the ego of the human psyche! This is what Paul speaks of in Romans 1:18-32 about those who “did not give thanks to God....claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds of animals or reptiles.” THEY BECAME WORSE THAN ANIMALS (see Rom. 1:31...foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless). The primary aim of the devil is to deceive. He is the great deceiver. He has no real power, no real sovereignty, but he thrives on the illusion that he has, and he thrives on seducing others into believing that he has! Even the “self-control” that idolizes self is a subtle sin. Asceticism (i.e., monasticism) in order to promote self-righteousness is not only incapable of producing righteousness, it is sin (Col. 2:20-23)! SIN IS DECEITFUL! THE HUMAN MIND, UNAIDED BY ABSOLUTE TRUTH REVEALED FROM GOD (IN THE BIBLE ALONE) IS UNABLE TO COPE WITH IT! THAT IS WHY WE MUST SURRENDER IN FAITH TO DIVINE EXHORTATION FOR DIVINE CORRECTION! Sin even couches itself in the guise of “religion”—that is what these Hebrew-Christians were

in danger of “falling away” to—a religion instead of the Person of Christ. SO GOD SWEARS TO MAN THAT HE WILL PUNISH SINNERS WHO DO NOT REPENT, AND HE SWEARS HE WILL FORGIVE SINNERS WHO DO REPENT BY ACCEPTING IN FAITH THE VICARIOUS DEATH OF CHRIST FOR THEIR SINS. We will discuss God “swearing” at length in Hebrews, chapter 6, where Paul says “God interposed himself with an oath.” God’s greatest “YES” (swearing) was WHEN GOD BECAME INCARNATE AND INTERPOSED HIMSELF IN JESUS’S DEATH ON THE CROSS AND RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD! The Bible text to prove that is in 2 Cor. 1:20-21. Especially 1:20 where Paul writes, “For all the promises of God find their Yes (Greek nai, an Absolute, “Yes”) in him (Christ).” The same Greek word is used in Matt. 5:37 and James 5:12—it is more emphatic than taking an oath—IT IS AN ABSOLUTE “YES”. It is alright for God to swear anytime he wishes since he can bring to pass what he swears!

The ultimate objective of our heavenly call is our transformation—that we may be conformed to the image of God’s Son, Jesus (Rom. 8:29). If we are not transformed into heavenly beings, there would be no use in God transporting us into heavenly circumstances. As C. S. Lewis says in his book, *Eternal Weight of Glory*, the first glory God wishes to give us is that glorious image of his Son in us, not the glory with which he will surround us. For if we do not have his glory in us, glorious surroundings would be Paradise lost all over again. That which made the Garden of Eden so glorious was the holy innocence and complete faith of Adam and Eve. Immortality without faith and guiltlessness is Hell! So, the initial objective of the heavenly invitation is to call us to belief, faith, trust, obedience, to Jesus Christ. Hearing great sermons, following great men, being identified with a great movement are all useless unless they are united with faith (Heb. 4:2) in our individual hearts. THE HEBREWS HEARD GOD’S WORD, FROM THE GREAT MAN MOSES, JOINED THE GREAT EXODUS FROM EGYPT, BUT FELL IN THE WILDERNESS, BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF. Their unbelief was manifested in their continually asking, “Is the Lord with us or not—give us more signs.” The faith the Lord wants is not that which has to be nursed on a continual emotional high or on a repeated injection of supernatural verification; or on an absence of struggle and discipline (40 years in the wilderness!). The faith the Lord wants is not that which is dependent on the stature or image of human leaders. Notice in these verses (3:16-18) how belief and obedience are inseparably linked. Unbelief and disobedience are one and the same! The Hebrews under Moses’ leadership failed to answer the heavenly call (the call to a heavenly destiny) by murmuring for material things—thus they forfeited their opportunity to be transformed back into the image of their Creator. The objective of the heavenly call is to call us to God’s REST. To “rest” is to be settled (satisfied, made secure). The opposite of rest is to be unsettled (dissatisfied, insecure). We will discuss God’s “rest” in detail in Hebrews, chapter 4. It is sufficient to say here, there can be no “God-given rest” in unbelief! God’s rest is not to be found in any “land”—not even in Canaan if there is no faith or love or surrender to the will of God. God did put the Israelites into Canaan, and some entered into his rest by belief. But even after occupying Canaan most of the Jews never found the rest of God. Jeremiah (6:16ff) shows that in his day many Jews still had not found God’s “rest.” Jesus (Matt. 11:28-30) was still inviting the Jews to find God’s rest in his day. God’s rest is to be found in God’s “kingdom” and that is the church. God’s rest is in righteousness, holiness, faith, love, and obedience to the Lordship of Christ. Isaiah puts it succinctly, “But the wicked

are like the tossing sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked.” (Isa. 57:20). But Isaiah also says: “Thou (God) dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee” (Isa. 26:3). Isaiah doubles the Hebrew word shalom in 26:3 because shalom is translated both “perfect” and “peace.” The opposite of rest and peace is turmoil, wandering, wavering. People are unsettled and wavering over many things: (a) right and wrong; (b) guilt or innocence; (c) purpose or aimlessness; (d) security or anxiety; (e) suffering and injustice; (f) self-worth, etc., etc. **AS LONG AS PEOPLE ARE UNSETTLED ABOUT THESE (AND OTHER ISSUES), THEY CANNOT HAVE REST, NO MATTER HOW MANY MATERIAL LUXURIES THEY MAY HAVE. JESUS CALLS US TO REST BECAUSE HE CAN SETTLE EVERY ISSUE ABOUT WHICH HUMAN BEINGS ARE UNSETTLED. HE HAS THE ABSOLUTE “YES” TO EVERY QUESTION, THE VICTORY FOR EVERY DEFEAT!**

The Greek poet Homer wrote *The Odyssey*, about the voyage of one of the Greek heroes of the Trojan War, Odysseus (Ulysses), back to his home in Greece. Ulysses had to overcome many difficulties to reach home safely. Along the way, some of his sailors were lured to the island of the sorceress, Circe. By magic arts she changed them all into pigs except one. He escaped and told Ulysses, who went to Circe with the help of the god Mercury who gave him a magic potion that made him immune to Circe’s arts, and rescued his man.

But eventually, Ulysses’ ship had to pass the island of the Sirens. They were beautiful women who sang alluring, tempting songs. When ships tried to reach this island they would be destroyed on the rocks. Before approaching this danger, Ulysses blocked the ears of his men with wax so they could not hear the songs of the Sirens. Then he ordered the men to tie him to the mast. As the ship passed the island, the Sirens sang so sweetly that Ulysses begged his men to free him, but they only bound him more tightly, and rowed past as fast as they could. **THIS IS ONLY GREEK MYTHOLOGY. BUT THE THIRD CHAPTER OF HEBREWS IS NO MYTH! WE MUST TIE OURSELVES TO JESUS SO THE “SIREN SONGS” OF THE DEVIL WILL NOT LURE US TO DESTRUCTION!**

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**HEBREWS 4:1-16**

English dictionaries define “rest” as: “...abode, stopping place, a place of shelter; peace of mind or spirit; that on which anything rests or leans for support...” That is pretty much a summation of what the word “rest” means in God’s Word. Old Testament Hebrew words translated “rest” are: (a) manuchah—Psa. 132:8,14; Isa. 11:10; 1 Chron. 28:2; (b) damiy—(quietness, silence) Zeph. 3:17; Isa. 62:5; Psa. 37:7; 62:5; (c) samak—(reliance) 2 Chron. 13:18; 16:7-8; 32:8); (d) ravatz—(resting place, sheep-fold) Jer. 50:6. It is interesting that the Hebrew word Sabbath, the quintessential word for rest in the O.T., is always transliterated and not translated (that is, the Hebrew alphabet is simply repeated in the English alphabet, Hebrew “s” becomes English “s”, etc. The “Sabbath” (in Hebrew is a derivative of the word shiboth which means “seven”) was the institutionalized, legalized rest of the O.T. New Testament words used in Hebrews chapters 3 & 4 for “rest” are: (a) katapausis—(cessation, repose) Heb. 3:18, 4:1,3; and (b) sabbatismos—(“sabbath-kind-of-rest,” literally, “sabbath-sabbath”) Heb. 4:9. We shall have more to say about sabbatismos later in Question #5. In our last lesson, chapter 3, we defined “rest” as: (a) to be settled, satisfied, made secure; (b) to be at rest is to be right, free of guilt, without burdens, having reached the goal for which God made man; (c) the Hebrew word shalom (“peace”) which means wholeness, well-being, prosperous (spiritually, as well), best expresses the condition experienced in rest. We see the word “therefore” again at the beginning of Chapter 4, alerting us to the fact that chapter 4 is connected to chapters 3,2, and 1. **THIS MEANS THAT GOD’S “REST” IS CONNECTED DIRECTLY TO JESUS, GOD INCARNATE, GOD’S FINAL AND COMPLETE REVELATION; JESUS THE PERFECT MAN, RE-WINNING MAN’S PLACE IN GOD’S DIVINE ORDER; JESUS THE SON OVER GOD’S HEAVENLY HOUSE TO WHICH WE ARE CALLED.** On the basis of the first three chapters, believers in Jesus may have God’s rest! The disciples of Jesus may find settled existence, satisfaction and security. The disciples of Jesus may rely on his help, have shalom—i.e., wholeness and spiritual prosperity. The disciples of Jesus may experience sabbatismos, i.e., “a-sabbath-kind-of-life” in the here and now and eternally in the next world. Jesus said in Matthew 11:29, arate ton zogon mou eph humas kai mathete ap emou hoti praus eimi kai tapeinos te kardia kai heuresete anapausin tais psuchais humon. “Take my yoke (zogon) upon you and learn (mathete) of me for I am meek (praus) and lowly in heart (tapeinos te kardia—the word from which we get “cardio”) and you will find (heuresete, the word from which we get English, “eureka”) rest (anapausin) for your souls (psuchais).” Paul writes in Heb. 4:1, “Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it.” (ASV). The Greek present tense is used all the way through Heb. 4:1-3. The Greek present participle, kataleipomenes, (4:1) is translated “being left.” The Greek perfect infinitive,

husterekenai, (4:1) could literally be translated, “have come short of it and are continuing to come short of it.” The Greek present participle, “esmen euggelismenoi, (4:2) is translated “a promise being left” (4:2). And the Greek present tense verb, eiserchometha, (4:3) should have been translated “of presently entering into his rest.” So, in spite of what seemed to these persecuted Hebrew-Christians, circumstances to the contrary, they should have been entering, and experiencing God’s rest in their relationship to Jesus Christ. God’s rest had not passed them by. Neither was it yet to come (except in its consummated state at the Second Coming and heaven).

We may enter God’s rest: (a) by fearing that we might come short of it—in other words, we must want to have God’s rest so much that it scares us to think we might miss it!—the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom—we only fear the loss of something we count valuable; (b) by hearing the good news (the Gospel) that the rest is there; the only place to learn of God’s rest is IN THE BIBLE; all the ideologies, philosophies and religions of man’s invention do not serve to bring God’s rest—they bring the devil’s unbearable “burden” of unsettlement, dissatisfaction, insecurity and lostness; THERE IS NO REST IN REBELLING AGAINST GOD AND HIS WORD; in the Hebrew mind, the word “hearing” (Heb. shema) is synonymous with obeying; (c) by believing; what is heard which must be “united with faith” (4:2); the Greek word is sugkekerasmenous—it is a perfect-passive-participle and might literally be translated, “continuing to be mixed with, combined with, or joined with”; to hear and not obey is unbelief; to hear and not trust is to come short of God’s rest.

God’s rest was available since he instituted it from creation! As Paul says in 4:3-4 “...finished from the foundation of the world...God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” God rested from his creative work, and the seventh day (Gen. 2:1-3) began his eternal sustaining work or sanctifying work, for Jesus said, “My Father worketh until now, and I work...” (Jn. 5:17). Rest, even God’s rest, is not the cessation of work, but the provision of Divine sustenance, security, settled-wholeness. It is a matter of fact that while each of the first 6 days of creation ended (“...and it was morning and evening...”), the seventh day is not said to have ended! WHEN GOD CREATED THE WORLD, HE ALSO CREATED REST FOR HUMAN BEINGS AND HAS NEVER STOPPED REST—IT’S ALWAYS THERE, AVAILABLE FOR THOSE WHO WILL TAKE JESUS AT HIS WORD (Matt. 11:28-30). The Sabbath, every 7th day of a week, given to the Jews was not God’s spiritual rest! The Jewish Sabbath was merely a type of God’s rest which was available from the foundation of the world to all who would trust him and believe and obey his word. Moses, recording the creation account in Gen. 2:1-3, is writing proleptically (assuming a future act) or, anachronistically, (i.e., writing of an event in the past as if it were taking place when he was writing), explaining that God’s eternal rest is the reason God gave the Sabbath as a type (cf.. Genesis, Vol. I, C. C. Crawford, College Press, pp. 362-365). The Sabbath Day was given exclusively to the Israelites (we don’t find the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc., observing the Sabbath—the word Sabbath doesn’t appear until the book of Exodus!) Sabbath was given to Israel as a nation to memorialize God’s grace in redeeming them from Egypt, and as a type of the redemption to come in Christ. The Sabbath was abrogated for the NT dispensation since we are to be spiritually mature enough to realize God’s rest without the earthly ritual of a certain,

special day of the week (Rom. 14:5ff). Note—the rest Paul promises to these Hebrew-Christians is “My” (i.e., God’s) rest. It is an invitation to participate in that REST which GOD HIMSELF ENJOYS! Some may have difficulty believing that God’s rest was finished from the foundation of the world. But it is no more difficult than to believe that Jesus was “the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8; 1 Pet. 1:19-20) or that Christians were “chosen in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4), or that the kingdom was prepared “before the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34).

In order to enter the rest God finished at creation (not a Sabbath day which was only a type), we must also avoid the pitfalls of those who failed to enter through the centuries since creation. God’s rest (spiritual rest) has been available since creation to all who would trust him and obey him. They failed to enter not only the spiritual rest, but even failed to enter the physical rest of Canaan (Deut. 12:8-9) in Moses day because of unbelief (disobedience, see Ex. 33:14). Many in Joshua’s day did not find the spiritual rest, even though they entered Canaan. Many in David’s day did not find the spiritual rest (though it appears David did, Psa. 23). David’s 95th Psalm is an invitation to his people to find God’s rest then (see also Psa. 55:6; 116:7). The prophets, in their own day, insisted men and women could find God’s rest if they would only believe (Isa. 26:3-4; 28:12; 30:15; Jer. 6:16; 50:6, etc.). These failed to find God’s spiritual rest which he had prepared in eternity before the world was made, because of unbelief. The Greek word for unbelief is *apeitheian*, (Heb. 4:6) and is often translated disobedience because they are one and the same. These all had the “good news” of God’s rest preached to them. There was no excuse for their failure to enter. It was their own choice not to do so (see Jer. 6:16 where he represents his own people as saying, “...we will not...”). David even used the example of their ancestors in Psa. 95 to warn his own people against unbelief and disobedience. David warned his contemporaries (and through them all succeeding generations) not to do as the rebellious Israelites did under Moses and Joshua (and the Judges), but to PROMPTLY (“today”) enter into God’s rest whenever invited to do so. “Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts”—if you hear God’s voice of commandment or promise, today, obey it, believe it. DO NOT WAIT UNTIL A MORE CONVENIENT TIME, BECAUSE SUCH A TIME WILL NEVER COME. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Behold, now is the acceptable time, behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:1-2). “Today” is the only day we have (see Matt. 6:31-34).

The one Greek word *sabbatismos* (Heb. 4:9) is translated as two words “Sabbath rest” in the RSV & ASV but as one word, “rest,” in the KJV and as a hyphenated word, “Sabbath-rest” in the NIV. *Sabbatismos* is a word not found anywhere else in all the Greek language (or the Bible) until Paul used it here. What Paul did was “coin” (invent) this word to express or illustrate the experience of the rest he was talking about. Paul was agonizing about how to communicate to these persecuted Hebrew-Christians what the essence of the Messianic (i.e., Christian) life is. He wanted to say that the Christian life (to which they had been called in Jesus) is an emphatic Sabbath-kind-of-life; the Christian life is the fulfillment of all the word “Sabbath” means. Paul wanted to say that God’s spiritual rest, available to anyone who believes and obeys God’s word and God’s Messiah, is a “Sabbath-kind-of-rest.” God’s rest is a “Sabbath-kind-of-experience,” on its highest level—spiritual. Thus, he coined

the word, sabbatismos. To fully understand what that means we need to take a look at what the Old Testament Sabbath in the Mosaic dispensation was all about—it was: (a) to give human beings a day, an opportunity, to trust completely in God for providing all they needed for sustenance (Ex. 16:22-29)—God wants humans to live their whole lives here and hereafter in complete reliance on him for sustaining them (Matt. 6:19-34); (b) to give human beings a day, an opportunity, to sanctify themselves to God’s holy way of life (Ex. 20:8ff; Lev. 16:31) a day for “afflicting the soul in repentance” and thinking God’s thoughts—God wants humans to live their whole lives “setting their minds on things above” (Col. 3:1ff) and “bringing every thought into captivity unto obedience to Christ...” (2 Cor. 10:3-5)—TO DWELL IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND FIND REST; (c) to give human beings a day, an opportunity, to worship the Lord in sacrifice and offerings (Num. 28:9ff)—we should “continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God...” Heb. 13:15, and make our whole life, every day, a sabbatismos, of worship; (d) to give human beings a day, an opportunity, to do good to their fellow man—to let their servants and sojourners find rest and help from them (Ex. 23:12ff; Deut. 5:12-15)—the Jews had so perverted the 7th day in Jesus’ time that no help could be given anyone in need—Jesus said, “It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath”—the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Matt. 12:12). Our rest in Christ is to be found in a sabbatismos kind of life that (a) trusts completely in God for sustaining our physical and spiritual life; (b) is continually sanctifying oneself in God’s holy ways; (c) worships God in sacrifices and offerings; (d) and does good for anyone in need, as the opportunity comes

God kept predicting through the prophets that the Messianic (Christian) age was to be a “Sabbath-kind-of-life” (i.e., sabbatismos)—see Isa. 56:1-4; 58:13-14; 66:22-23; Jer. 17:19-27; Ezek. 44:24; 46:3, etc. But the people of the prophet’s days, for the most part, profaned the Sabbath, indicating they did not want that kind of life (Amos 8:4-6; Ezek. 20:21; 22:8; 22:26:23:38). They wanted to make money and forget about holiness and helping others even on their Sabbath-day. The O.T. law and the traditions of the rabbis about the Sabbath illustrates rather graphically that there aren’t enough rules in the universe to force men to live a “Sabbath-kind-of-life” if they do not of their own free choice “set their minds on things above.” IN OTHER WORDS, A “SABBATH-KIND-OF-LIFE” CAN’T BE LEGISLATED OR ORCHESTRATED OR REGIMENTED. Making “Blue-Laws” won’t make people holy. Bringing people to God’s present, but eternal, rest consists in getting them to choose a “Sabbath-kind-of-life.” Even the Sabbath-Day of the O.T. did not mean total inactivity. Actually, the Mosaic Sabbath encouraged a sabbatismos kind of activity which, because it was focused on God, resulted in satisfaction, holiness, purity, love and security. If we are in God’s rest, living a “Sabbath-kind-of-life, even our jobs, our homes, our total existence will be restful, because in those places and activities, we will be serving the Lord (Col. 3:22-24; Eph. 6:5-9, etc.). Malcom Muggeridge, famous British columnist and TV personality wrote a book, entitled, Jesus Rediscovered. Mr. Muggeridge was a socialist in his younger days, and at one time an ardent atheist (he once became so despondent he attempted suicide), but he was converted to Christ later in life. He writes of his utter disillusionment with socialistic utopianism: “Underneath, we all know how increasingly hollow and unconvincing it is...this Great Society... What then is our brief existence here on earth about? The media answer the question with the utmost clarity and gusto. It’s about being successful in terms of money, sex, and fame with violence thrown in for kicks. Anyone who has lived at all in the real world must

have understood that this fantasy of the media is a total absurdity...The parts of the world where the means of happiness in material and sensual terms are most plentiful are also the places where despair, mental illness, and other 20th century ills are most in evidence...Who that is honest surveying the happenings of recent decades...can seriously maintain that we are moving forwards spiritually, morally, or even materially...?" THIS IS WHY THE ISRAELITES MISSED GOD'S REST, EVEN THOUGH THEY HAD IT PREACHED TO THEM IN SERMONS AND IN TYPES AND SYMBOLS! They wanted to find rest in material wealth and carnal indulgence. They refused to believe that real rest, God's rest, was to be found only in faith, obedience, discipline, correction, spirituality—in fact in a "Sabbath-kind-of-life."

The Greek word translated "strive" RSV (Heb. 4:11) and "give diligence" (ASV) and "labor" (KJV) and "be eager" (NIV) is *spoudasomen*. It means "be zealous, be earnest, take care to." WE CANNOT ENTER GOD'S REST IF WE ARE FLIPPANT ABOUT IT, SLIPSHOD, CARELESS, LETHARGIC OR DILATORY! It is not enough to go through some actions, pretend to be looking for God's rest and be religious. We must search our deepest motives, examining them constantly, because we can't fool God about whether we want his rest or not (Matt. 6:1-18; 23:1ff). Paul advocates self-examination (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5). James says we need to look into the word of God for a mirror for our souls (Jas. 2:22-25). The word of God is alive! When God speaks (orally or written) and people believe and obey, something happens! The word of God is incisive and penetrating. It lays bare self-delusions and moral sophistries. It is able to penetrate into the furthest recesses of the human spirit and soul, sifting out and analyzing thoughts and intentions of the hidden being. The word of God is: (a) a fire in the bones of the believer, igniting him to go on in the face of impossible odds (Jer. 20:9); (b) a hammer breaking to pieces all sham and facades of pretension (Jer. 23:29); (c) a purifier of conscience and life (Psa. 119:9,11; 1 Pet. 1:22; Jn. 15:3; (d) a sanctifier in the truth (Jn. 17:17); (e) a provider of light and a lamp to life's pathway (Psa. 119:105; 119:130; Prov. 6:23; 2 Pet. 1:19); (f) a weapon to use against the devil's deception (Eph. 6:17; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Rev. 19:13-21). There is no creature that can be hidden...all are open and laid bare before the word of God. Paul is using a metaphor here. The ancient custom was to bend the neck of the vanquished or the criminal backward and expose his face, as he was brought before his conqueror or his judge. ALL SINFUL CREATURES ARE EXPOSED TO GOD FULLY. HIS WORD EXPOSES THEM FOR WHAT THEY REALLY ARE! Why do human beings clamor for psychoanalysis at the hands of finite, fallible, ignorant, even false and exploitative human psychologists and reject THE DIVINE PSYCHOANALYST WHO KNOWS WHAT IS IN HUMAN BEINGS BECAUSE HE MADE HUMAN BEINGS (Jn. 2:24-25)?! The divine psychoanalyst has left his living word which will do the job completely and perfectly! That is precisely why human beings are MISSING THE REST GOD HAS FOR THEM NOW AND HEREAFTER!

Jesus, our great high priest, "passed through the heavens." In Jewish rabbinical literature (the written forms of the oral traditions of the Pharisees and scribes) such as Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (A.D. 100-125), The Book of Enoch (ca. 100 B.C.----A.D. 50), and the Talmud (Beresh, rabba, c. 6; Bammidbar rabba, c. 17; and Chagiga, 12:6) there are seven heavens. In the Talmud the first heaven ("Vilon") is empty; the 2nd heaven

("Rakia") contains sun, moon, and stars; the 3rd heaven ("Shechakim") contains the mills that grind the manna for the righteous; the 4th heaven ("Zebul") contains the heavenly Jerusalem, the temple, the altar, and Michael the archangel; the 5th heaven ("Maon") contains the hosts of angels praising God by night, but keeping silent by day that God may hear the praises of Israel; the 6th heaven ("Machon") contains the treasures of the snow, hail, rain, and dew; and the 7th heaven ("Aravoth") contains the seat of judgment and righteousness, with the treasures of life, peace and blessing—as well as the souls of the righteous dead, the spirits and souls of people yet to be born, and the dew with which the dead shall be awakened—in 7th heaven are the Seraphim, Ophannim, Chayyoth, and other orders of angels, and God himself on his eternal throne. Paul is condescending to Jewish traditions here to say, Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, has passed through all the heavens human beings can invent, and sits enthroned over all the alleged "levels" of the invisible world. Jesus has taken captivity captive (Eph. 4:8); Jesus has disarmed both the visible and invisible principalities and powers (Col. 2:15) of any weapons they might have to hold anyone in spiritual bondage by bringing to earth the ETERNAL TRUTH OF ALMIGHTY GOD! Having passed through EARTH and all the heavens, to sit down at the right of the Majesty on High, JESUS IS ABLE TO SYMPATHIZE WITH OUR WEAKNESSES. The Greek word translated "sympathize" (4:15) is *sumpathesai*, and the English language transliterates it into "sympathize" (i.e., transfers one alphabet letter for another). The Greek word literally means "to have pathos with." The Greek word *pathos* means, "pity, suffer-with, feel-with." Jesus shared (i.e., participated in) our limitations insofar as he was absolutely human, except without sin. He who resists sin absolutely feels the temptation and suffers infinitely more severely than the one who gives in! The book of Hebrews argues that the experience of temptation, test, and trial is essential to sympathy, but falling into the temptation is not necessary to sympathy! The very fact that Jesus could call upon divine aid and supernatural power in the midst of his trials increased the impact of his temptations a trillion-fold over those of us who have fallen into some of our temptations! Jesus not only knows how we feel, HE FEELS WITH US AND FOR US, AND IS ABLE AND WANTS TO HELP US!

Our great high priest is before the throne of God's glory and grace with boldness FOR US. He stands there in the boldness of perfectly keeping the will of God in human flesh! He stands there in the boldness of Human perfection, human guiltlessness. He stands there as representative and advocate of all who believe, trust, obey, and accept his covenant as theirs. THEREFORE, WE MAY DRAW NEAR IN BOLDNESS THROUGH HIM, AND RECEIVE MERCY AND FIND GRACE TO HELP IN TIME OF NEED! The Jew drew near to God's "throne" in fear because of guilt, knowing he had not as a human, kept God's will perfectly—including the Jewish high priest! We shall learn more about Jesus' high priesthood in chapters 5, 6, and 7. We are invited to "cast every care upon him (Jesus) because he cares for us" (1 Pet. 5:7)—he proved it in his life on earth, his death and his resurrection. God's rest is available to everyone who will believe, right now, TODAY! Jesus gave the invitation (Matt. 11:28-30). But notice, the rest Jesus Christ offers is found in "taking his yoke" upon oneself, and "learning of him." In fact, the Greek word translated "easy" (Matt. 11:30) in Christ's "Great Invitation" is *chrestos*, and means literally, "serviceable." In other words, the rest found in Jesus is a "yoke of service," a "burden of doing good." That is the life Jesus lived in his human visit to earth. He found rest and joy, peace and contentment, satisfaction

and glory in “doing good.” WE SHALL, TOO, IF WE ONLY FOLLOW JESUS IN FAITH AND OBEDIENCE! Those who “die in the Lord” go to be at eternal rest (Rev. 6:11; 14:13). Those who worship the beast and its image (humanity, human power) will be tormented with fire and brimstone...and the smoke of their torment will go up forever and ever; and they shall have no rest, day or night (Rev. 14:9-11).

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

HEBREWS 5:1-10

The conjunction, “For” in Heb. 5:1 connects our possibility of entering in to God’s rest to the absolute need for AN ABSOLUTELY PERFECT HIGH PRIEST—A PERFECT “BRIDGE-GAPPER”! In other words, no matter how much we may want God’s rest, no matter how much God did to create that rest for us and pleads with us to enter it, MAN MUST HAVE THE INFINITE, ABSOLUTELY HOLY GAP BETWEEN HIMSELF AND GOD BRIDGED! Sinful humans cannot bridge the infinite gap of righteousness and holiness that exists between themselves and their Creator no matter how much they try. This was Job’s despairing frustration: “For he (God) is not man, as I am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trial together. There is no daysman (Hebrew, *mokicha*, “mediator, advocate, go-between”) between us who might lay his hand upon us both.” Job 9:33. When Eve and Adam committed the first sin, they “hid themselves from the presence of the Lord.” (Gen. 3:8ff). Humanity in sin and rebellion, has neither the right nor even the desire to come into God’s restful presence. Humans need someone who is authorized by God to act on their behalf to restore harmonious relations between the Almighty Creator and themselves. The Hebrew word for “priest” is *kohen*. The word is best defined by OT usage. A prophet (Heb. *navi*) is one who speaks for God to humans. A priest (or *kohen*) is one who represents human beings to God. A priest was supposed to speak for man to God! When Aaron was authorized by God to be priest, he was to take the names of the tribes of Israel into the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was, with the *Shekinah*-glory of God dwelling above it as a continual “remembrance before the Lord” (Ex. 28:12,29). Aaron went in to the Holy of Holies taking “upon himself any guilt incurred by the people of Israel..” (Ex. 28:38). Where Aaron presented himself to atone for the people’s sin was where God’s presence met the people of Israel (Ex. 29:43-45). No one except those authorized by God could do this, lest they die! The Greek word for priest is *hierous* which comes from the root word *hieron* meaning “temple.” A “priest” was a “minister” or one who serves as an intercessor between man and God in the place where God dwells! The Latin word for “priest” is *pontifex* and means “a bridge-builder.” It is the word from which we get the English word, “pontoon.” So, the priest was a man whose function was to be a bridge between human beings and God—to restore man to fellowship or provide man access into the presence of the Absolutely Holy and Just God. The Judaism of the first century A.D. had a very intricate and prestigious system of priesthood. Why should Jesus be introduced as One who was better qualified than Jewish priests, with all the seniority of centuries behind them? Why should Jesus be introduced as One who was to supplant the whole Judaic system (for the priesthood was the very essence of the whole Judaic system) which God himself had certainly ordained to Moses? The writer of Hebrews uses the very center of his treatise (chapters 5,6,7,8,9,10) to show, in logical argument, the answer to these questions! Paul desired his readers to know that in the terrific struggle to hold fast their heavenly call and destiny, they are not alone! They have One who

is both human and divine who has “bridged the gap.” He has come down from heaven to bridge the gap between God and man. He died, arose and ascended to God’s very presence to give absolute and immediate access to God. He bridges the gaps as he intercedes for man constantly. **JESUS’ HIGH PRIESTHOOD IS AS RELEVANT FOR CHRISTIANS TODAY AS IT WAS FOR CHRISTIANS IN THE FIRST CENTURY—BECAUSE THE “GAPS” ARE STILL THERE!** Human finitude and God’s infinitude form the unbridgeable gap. Human beings, the creatures, living in a created world, are rebels against the will of their Creator and find their journey to infinitude thwarted by many “gaps” which are impossible for them to bridge.

Making sacrifices is the primary thing a priest is ordained to do! Humans, the creatures, are rebellious sinners against their Creator, God, the Absolute God, who must be appeased. His absolute wrath must be “covered.” The very meaning of the Hebrew word *kippureem*, translated “atonement” in the Old Testament comes from the Hebrew root word *kophar*, translated “appease” in Gen. 32:20—where Jacob gave “offerings” to appease the wrath of his estranged brother, Esau. So, when an Israelite priest officiated at an offering on behalf of a worshiper, the priest was making “atonement” or appeasing the wrath of God upon the worshiper’s sin. Paul says in Hebrews 5:1-4 that “priests” are “appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.” The priest must so serve and so minister as to convey the idea to humans that God is absolutely transcendent from human beings. Humans must never get the idea that they can reduce God to their own finite, fallible, sinful level. So the priest must fear God. The priest must purify himself by ceremonial and symbolic rituals of washing, sanctification, etc., before he dares come into God’s presence. God is absolutely Just. The priest must so serve and so minister as to convey the idea that God must be appeased—God’s justice must be done. Mankind must never get the idea that God’s law can go unfulfilled or un-executed. God must never be portrayed by the priest as One who will excuse or overlook violation of his law without justice being done. Therefore, the priest must always serve as one attempting to placate, please, and stand for God’s justice. God is absolutely Sovereign. The priest must so serve and minister as to convey the idea that God must be implicitly obeyed. Humans must never get the idea that God’s will is optional—that it may not or should not be obeyed. The priest is appointed to deal with the problems of sin. People must know that the problem of sin is dealt with by God. They must know that the Just God is also the Gracious and Merciful God. God himself provides a way of atoning, placating, and appeasing himself. The sins for which the priest could make atonement were sins of ignorance (Lev. 4:2, 13; Num. 15:22-29). Deliberate, callous sin “with a high hand” which “despised the word of the Lord,” could not be atoned for (Num. 15:30-31; Deut. 1:43; 17:12-13). The sin of ignorance means more than simply a lack of knowledge. It includes sins committed when a person is swept away in a moment of impulse or anger or passion, when one is mastered by some seducing, deceptive temptation, for which a person in sorrow and guilt may repent—determining not to dishonor the Lord in such a way again. The sin “of a high hand” or presumption is cold, calculated, deliberate rebellion, which does not believe, and for which there is no feeling of guilt and no remorse or desire to turn away from. This is sin which presumes there is no God who will punish—for which a person is not in the least sorry, and coolly and arrogantly despises the word of God. The priest is appointed to convince people, by executing God’s sovereign directions about atonement, that God will forgive sin

when repentance is evident. It is not God's will that sin stand between him and man. He has provided a way for the sin problem to be dealt with. It is only the will of impenitent, unbelieving human beings that separates them from God (Isa. 59:1-2). So, the Israelite priest was appointed to offer sacrifices for those who were willing to build a bridge for the sinner back to reconciliation with God. The priest offered only for those who were willing to have their sins atoned. He did not, or could not, intercede for unwilling, unbelieving worshipers. The Hebrew worshiper was required, of his own free will, to lay his hand on the head of his sacrifice, and confess his sins to God alone. But it was the PRIEST who was appointed to represent and intercede for others before the presence of God. ALL THE PEOPLE WERE RECKONED AS BEING "IN" THE PRIEST. The prerogatives held by the priest belonged to all the people (Ex. 19:6) of Israel whom God called "a kingdom of priests." The consecration and privileges of the people were transferred to the priest because it was impossible that all the people should keep themselves as holy as the Lord ordained for the priesthood! So the high priest represented the whole congregation when he bore the tribal names of Israel on his breastplate into the tabernacle and Holy of Holies (Ex. 28:12,29). The priest was so completely representative of all the people that if he sinned he brought guilt upon the whole nation (Lev. 4:3ff). Whatever the priest did, the people shared in it. Whatever the priest did was reckoned as done by the entire congregation of Israel. After the high priest sprinkled the blood of atonement, he always came forth from the sanctuary and blessed the people (Lev. 9:22-24; Num. 6:22-27) signifying that as intercessor and mediator, the sin problem had been dealt with!

The priest must share the humanness of those for whom he ministers. He must have gone through a human's experiences and his sympathy must be with all human beings. The Greek word translated deal gently is metriopathein. The word means "the mid-course between explosions of anger and lazy indulgence." The high priest must be careful lest he become uncontrollably irritated at sin and ignorance—but he must also take care that he does not become weakly indulgent. The word metriopathein was used in classical Greek to describe the rational regulation of the natural passions, as opposed to the Stoic word apatheia which meant the crushing out of the passions altogether. Patheo means "feelings or passions"—metri means "measuring, or in-between"—thus the combined word means, "to feel according to measured limits." It's the word from which we get the English words, "pathos," and "pathetic." Christianity is not totally passionless—it is moderation and control of the passions in the will of God. The priest must have the virtue of being able to bear with the imperfections of humans without getting irritated and annoyed, while at the same time not indulging the weaknesses of people so as to excuse them in their sins. The priest must have this qualification because he must decide between ignorant sin and presumptive sin! The earthly, mortal priests of Israel were so "one" with their people that they were under necessity to offer sacrifices for their own sins. But the Perfect High priest must be inextricably involved in the struggles, temptations, sorrows, pains, joys, limitations, and victories of those to whom he ministers—YET WITHOUT SIN! This is absolutely necessary in building the perfect, ultimate, eternal, absolute "bridge" for bringing human beings back to reconciliation to God.

The high-priest must be appointed by God. No man of his own merit, in his right

mind, since he knows he is a sinner, would ever assume the role of bridge-builder, mediator, intercessor, between God and human beings without divine appointment! No human being ever earned or merited the right to claim the ability to be, or that he deserved to assume the position, of priesthood. The prerogative or appointment is God's alone—and he appoints according to arbitrary, divine sovereignty. There are several examples in the OT of God's displeasure with those who presumptuously arrogated priesthood to themselves (Korah and sons, Lev. 16:8-11; King Saul, 1 Sam. 13:8ff; Uzziah, 2 Chron. 26:16ff). Jesus, being Perfect Man, fulfills the ultimate goal of high priesthood. Therefore, he was appointed by God as the Ultimate High Priest. Therefore, all other high-priesthood in human beings is abrogated by the fact of fulfillment—so none other is needed! **THERE ARE NO MORE HUMAN, FINITE, ELITE PRIESTLY ORDERS SANCTIONED BY GOD!** Every Christian is his own priest (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6) and Jesus is the singular, eternal High Priest for all Christians. Modern Jews still cling to the falsehood that God has a special group of men as priests. Michael Asheri writes in his book, *Living Jewish*, pages 4 & 5, “A Cohen is a priest and a descendant of Aaron...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, Kagan, Kaganovitch, Kohn, Kaplan or Katz are almost always Cohanim (i.e., priests)...The priest...is in a sense, and for certain purposes only, the intermediary between the congregation and the Lord...privileges and obligations which set them apart from other Jews (a) a Cohen is the first man to be called up when the Torah is read publicly in the synagogue; (b) on certain occasions the Cohanim bless the congregation by saying the blessing in Num. 6:22-27—the Birchat Cohanim or “Priestly Blessing”; (c) a Cohen redeems the firstborn sons of Jewish women; (d) a Cohen may not marry a divorced woman or a cholutza (i.e., a widow who has been refused the Levirate law); (e) a Cohen may not have any contact, even indirectly, with the dead.” But contrary to Mr. Asheri's claims that modern Jews can know their ancestry into “antiquity” listen to the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 13, p. 1089: “The prevailing halakic 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...” The last historical high priest of the Jews on record was Phinehas bar-Samuel, a stonemason by profession, a relative of Hillel by marriage. He was chosen by the Zealots from among the ordinary priests after they slew most of the aristocratic high priests during the great revolt of A.D. 66-70. Jesus did not presume upon his prior relationship with God (Phil. 2:6-11). His priesthood was not an accident in history, but by divine appointment. He did not assume it but waited until the Father was satisfied that he qualified, perfectly, to represent, to intercede, to metriopathein i.e., “deal gently” with all humanity. Jesus' appointment took place after his suffering and resurrection (i.e., “Today have I begotten thee...”). See Heb. 5:5-6 and compare it with Acts 13:33! Jesus waited until he had gone through all this and had won the victory over sinful humanness, and Jesus even waited for the approval of God by the resurrection, so as to demonstrate that his high priesthood was by God's sovereign decree!

Godly fear is not a cringing, paralyzing paranoia! Godly fear is the attitude of obeisance, respect, veneration or reverence that obeys because it loves and adores God. Because Jesus had this kind of relationship with the Heavenly Father while he was in his (Greek kenosis) “humiliation” (i.e., incarnation), “he cried out with loud prayers and

supplications to be saved from death (e.g. Gethsemane). He subordinated himself, willingly (Phil. 2:5-11), so that he would experience godly fear, reverence, dependence upon, and obedience to God the Father. Before he became human, he was equal with God. After he became human, he had to call upon God and obey God just like all humans do if they wish to be saved! Had Jesus never experienced godly fear (awe, respect, reverence, obedience) to the will of God the Father as a human, he would not have been “tempted (i.e., tested) in all points as we are tempted.” Jesus learned (Greek, *emathen*, from the word translated disciple) obedience from the things he suffered. Wherever there is test, temptation, suffering—there is something to be learned—really, actually, humanly learned! Wherever there is room for a goal to be reached (i.e., perfected), there is room for testing, temptation and suffering. Jesus’ goal was to learn, experience, and partake of human inadequacies, human limitations, human weaknesses (without sinning) so as to qualify himself for the ultimate high priesthood. Had Jesus thought of himself only, he might, like other sufferers, played the stoic. But he thought of the weak of all ages; therefore, he did not hide his weaknesses, but gave full vent to them in prayers and tears and loud cries and prostrations. One who is to intercede for man in seeking forgiveness from God must possess the confidence of his constituents. If he is not trusted to know how humans feel, it is in vain that he represents humans. Jesus makes us holy by reproducing in his own life the lost ideal of human character, and bringing that ideal to bear on our minds and characters. But the ideal can be brought to bear with full effect only when realized amid circumstances as like as possible to those in which human beings are situated. Paul represents Christ’s weakness or humanity as going to the utmost limits short of actual disobedience and sin. Thus Paul magnifies the merit of Jesus’ obedience as perfected, by going to the utmost, in the most trying circumstances any human will ever meet. Jesus learned suffering from perfect obedience; other human beings learn obedience from suffering!

Jesus had to “learn” or experience obedience so that he might “bear gently with the ignorant and wayward.” (Heb. 5:2). THAT IS A MIND-STAGGERING THOUGHT! The Almighty God, Creator, Sustainer, and Judge of all that exists, was willing to come to earth as “The Son” in human form and suffer all the indignities and limitations of humankind just so he could “bear gently with the ignorant and wayward.” William Barclay writes, “...the Christian idea of God as a loving Father is interwove into the very fabric of our mind and heart; but in the first century it was a new idea...To the Jew God was holy and indivisible; God was completely different than human beings and could never become human and in no sense could he share man’s experience. To the Greek Stoics, God was *apatheia* (English, “apathetic”), meaning unable to feel anything at all, or unwilling to do so. Stoics argued that if a person can feel sorrow or joy it means that some other person is able to influence that person...if one can affect another it must mean that, for that moment, he is greater than the other...he has been able to do something to him. Greeks argued, no one must be able in any sense to affect the gods; no human can ever be greater than the gods. Therefore, the gods must be completely and essentially incapable of feeling. To the Greek Epicureans the gods lived out in *intermundia*, the spaces between the worlds, where there was complete detachment and they were not even aware of the world. Into this world (philosophically much like the modern world) comes the Gospel with its incredible conception of a God who has deliberately undergone every human experience and has ascended back into the eternal

realm there to intercede for weak humanity.” So, it is almost impossible for us to realize the revolution that the Gospel brought about in human beings’ relationship to God in the middle of the first century. For century after century they had been confronted with the idea of the untouchable, unapproachable, unsympathetic God. Then, beginning about A.D. 30, a few human beings are confronted with God in the flesh who went through all that humans go through, without sinning, and in whom they could have unreserved confidence that his word was divine because it was proven or validated by his resurrection from the dead. This gave Jesus the quality of mercy through understanding. There is nothing arbitrary, cold, unfeeling, “dished-out” about Jesus’ mercy—it is from One who knows testing and trial. Today, as humans in different circumstances, we do not often experience to the full what others do; some live sheltered lives; some are hardly ever touched with physical or psychological hardships. These usually condemn what they do not understand. **BUT JESUS KNOWS! HE UNDERSTANDS! HE KNOWS AND SYMPATHIZES TO THE FULLEST WHAT ALL HUMANS EXPERIENCE SHORT OF ACTUALLY SINNING. BUT TO UNDERSTAND ALL IS TO FORGIVE ALL.**

Jesus is the author (Greek *aitios*, “cause, source, creator”) of salvation to all who obey him! By completing the work of redemption of humanness through his incarnation, death and resurrection, **JESUS CAUSED SALVATION TO BE AVAILABLE TO ALL WHO OBEY HIM.** The RSV translates 1 Cor. 1:30—“He (God) is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption...” See also Luke 2:30; 3:6; 2 Cor. 5:21, etc. We have already learned from Hebrews 2:10 that Jesus became our “Pathfinder” (Greek *archegos*, “leader, way-finder”). The path of eternal salvation was one of perfect human obedience. Jesus walked that path first, fully and completely, and caused God to give salvation to human beings who come, “into Christ” by obeying his gospel plan of salvation (see Acts 2:38, etc.). Human beings are reckoned by God as “in Christ” when they believe Christ and do his will in trusting obedience as revealed in the New Testament scriptures. Jesus warned, “not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” Matt. 7:21. **JESUS HAS “BRIDGED THE GAPS” BETWEEN SINFUL HUMANITY AND THE INFINITE HOLINESS OF GOD!** Those gaps are: (a) an understanding gap: there has always been and always will be an understanding gap between human beings and God when humans insist on separating themselves from God’s revealed will—and this, in turn, creates an “understanding gap” between one human and another human; Jesus said it succinctly, “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Matt. 11:27; of course, the Son has chosen to reveal the Father to anyone who will read and believe the NT scriptures—this involves “learning of Jesus, taking his (easy, “serviceable”) yoke upon them and become as little children; Jesus is the Way the Truth and the Life and no one comes to the Father except through him (Jn. 14:6); Jesus is the Bread of Life and except a person assimilates his word and is taught by Jesus, there will be no eternal life in that person (Jn. 6:63); (b) a sympathy gap: when humans take over from God and try to do the bridging of gaps, they depersonalize themselves because they refuse to think of humanness in terms of the spiritual—of the image of God in man; when the spiritual image of God in humans is denied, humans lower themselves to become like animals, to be used, manipulated, exploited, and destroyed for the

physical, material gratification of themselves and others; the theory of evolution depersonalizes humanness; all forms of human government do; hedonism does; any philosophy or ideology that does not reach for the goal of humanness re-created in the image of the will of God, inevitably tends to be unsympathetic to humanity's limitations and weaknesses—in fact, tends to exploit human weaknesses; (c) a credibility gap: what or whom can human beings trust??—is there any person, or ideas or philosophies, or things which can be trusted to have the absolute truth about existence??—the Psalmist wrote, “I said in my consternation; men are all a vain hope” (Psa. 116:11; 118:8). Jeremiah wrote, “Cursed is the man who trusts in men...” and even in self, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt...” (Jer. 17:5-9). All ideas, philosophical systems and practices of right and wrong—all moral codes of human invention, unless they are surrendered to the authority of God's revealed will (the Bible) are relative to some pragmatic end. They CANNOT be trusted or believed to contain ALL THE FINAL, COMPLETE TRUTH CONCERNING EXISTENCE IN THE HERE AND NOW AND THE HEREAFTER! But there is One who can always be trusted—there is a historical record, called the Bible, recording his promises, his actions and they document the fact that One who claimed to have all the truth, DID IN FACT HAVE IT! He claimed to have power over life and death and proved it; he claimed that obedience to the will of God brings eternal life and proved it; he came to experience the frailties and tests and trials of human beings so he might become a merciful and faithful high priest for humans, AND HE DID! (d) an obedience gap: this is the greatest “gap” of all between human beings and God. Jesus became the “author” (cause) of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him because he obeyed God perfectly as a human—HE HAS BRIDGED FOREVER, THE GAP BETWEEN ALL THAT HUMANS REBEL AGAINST AND ALL THAT GOD CAN DO TO PERFECT HUMANS THROUGH HIS PERFECT OBEDIENCE. Jesus now intercedes or bridges the gap for all those who trust his way to perfection—because, you see, Jesus was brought to the goal of perfection through perfect obedience which God accomplished through his suffering. Simone Weil, a writer from France, died an untimely death at age 35 when she starved to death during World War II. She refused to compromise with the Germans in order to get food. In her writings she sees affliction as a “nail driven into our souls fastening us to the very center of the universe—God....For when human thought is confronted with affliction, it most often takes immediate refuge in lies, like a hunted animal dashing for cover. To deal with affliction, therefore, we have to go beyond thought and beyond self, into the realm of faith in Christ, who conquered the world simply because he, being Truth, continued to be the Truth in the very depth of extreme affliction.” In other words, affliction, to which our mortal eye is intolerable and even ridiculous, is the way—and the only way—to understanding and being fully alive (Rom. 5:3), and, what is more, to being able to help the afflicted (2 Cor. 1:3-11). God pressed his heart to ours in Christ who suffered affliction and was obedient to the divine will—PERFECTLY. Christ now presses our hearts to God as we suffer affliction in his name and remain faithful and loyal to Christ. THE GAP HAS BEEN BRIDGED...NO STORM CAN EVER WASH THIS BRIDGE AWAY. NO LOAD IS EVER TOO HEAVY TO BREAK THIS BRIDGE DOWN. NO CHASM IS EVER TOO WIDE FOR THIS BRIDGE (JESUS) TO SPAN!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

HEBREWS 5:11—6:8

Apathy leads to apostasy which leads to perdition. That's the message of this text. Every sentence, paragraph and illustration of the book of Hebrews is directed toward warning against a return to the abrogated system of Judaism. The indication in this text (and in 10:39) is that some Hebrew-Christians had already "shrunk back" to Judaism. The immediate context (5:11—6:8) is speaking of the contrast between Jesus as the ultimate and final High Priest after the eternal office of Melchizedek, and the temporary priests after the office of Levi (Aaron). Paul is upset because his readers (and fellow Hebrew-Christians) are apathetic toward the perfection that is in Jesus. There is grave danger in their apathy and dullness. They will lose their souls if they do not avail themselves of the High Priesthood of Christ (they will go to perdition, Latin for "destruction") or kataras, as the Greek text puts it in 6:8. They were thwarting the higher purpose God had for them in their new-found relationship to him through Christ which was spiritual redemption, growth, fruitfulness and reaching perfection (the goal of regeneration) in Christ. They were expected to be teaching this to other Jews! This is NOT an exhortation to Christians to go on and leave the fundamentals of the message of Christ's gospel. The gospel must never be left behind! It must be preached and taught over and over and over. It is NOT saying that when a Christian sins and back-slides he can never repent through Christ again—or that once a Christian falls he can never be saved. This IS a warning against renouncing the efficacy of the blood of Christ in order to return to a visible, outward and self-exalting system of ceremonies. It is a warning against renunciation of the other-worldly for a return to this-worldly because the other-worldly requires faith in the invisible (Heb. 11:1) and endurance (Heb. 10:36; 12:1-11). This text has a very significant lesson for Christians in the 21st century. Every Christian faces the danger or the temptation to become apathetic toward walking by faith instead of by sight. We all would prefer to take the easy way, the broad way, the way that does not require faith and endurance. We all would like to make up our own little "religious-systems" (or laws) by which to live. But that way leads to apostasy, which leads to perdition ("the curse of God"). "Therefore" 6:1 shows that Paul is drawing a conclusion from something said previously. It goes all the way back to the discussion of the fulfillment of the Old Testament in Christ and especially his High Priesthood as it was prefigured in Melchizedek in the OT. They have need of someone to teach them again that the Old Testament is merely the beginning doctrine of the Messiah. They would not fully accept the fact that Judaism was temporary and only prophetic of the eternal and final High Priesthood confirmed in Jesus Christ. Oh, they were Christians; make no mistake about that. Some commentators try to make them out as non-Christians. This is in order to defend their denominational doctrine of "once in grace, always in grace" (which is, in turn, a necessary rationalization of the doctrine of "predestination"). But look at what the writer says about his readers (6:4-5), they: (a) having been once enlightened (Greek photisthentas, an aorist participle meaning

“enlightened” in the past); (b) having tasted (Greek *geusamenous*, aorist participle) the heavenly gift of salvation; (c) had become (Greek *genethentas*, aorist participle) partakers of the Holy Spirit; (d) having tasted (Greek *geusamenous*, aorist participle) the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age (Hebrew *olam habba*) to come—i.e., the Messianic age. Every participle in this passage (Heb. 6:4-5) is AORIST and means “past-tense.” How could this be any other than a Christian? This is what the OT prophets predicted would be the nature of the Messianic kingdom. So in one brief sentence Paul is trying to tell these Hebrew-Christians that by accepting Christ they had become beneficiaries of all that God planned and prophesied from the beginning of time!

Paul uses the Greek word *dusermeneutos*, a compound word of *dus* meaning “difficult, hard” and *hermeneuo* meaning “interpret, explain.” It wasn’t that Paul found the subject difficult to grasp himself; nor that he could not find appropriate language with which to express it. It was because the subject was unpalatable to these Hebrew-Christians who did not want it anymore. They had no taste for it. It was too strong for them! The Greek phrase Paul uses is *epei nothroi gegonate tais akoais*. The word *gegonate* is a perfect, indicative, active verb which means they “had become dull (Gr. *nothroi*) of hearing (Gr. *akoais* from which we get the English “acoustics”) and were continuing to become dull of hearing.” They were desirous of returning to the milk of the OT (outward, visible) which was easily perceived, assimilated and required little effort of faith. Chewing and digesting the meat of the Messianic gospel (mostly invisible) was difficult to comprehend, requiring a great amount of faith. In the OT law, every moral and spiritual act was legislated. They didn’t have to make many decisions of love and faith, on their own. **BUT THEY DIDN’T GROW SPIRITUALLY, EITHER!** All they had to do was be spoon-fed like religious babies! They had need to be taught again the rudimentary or elemental (OT) doctrines about the Messiah and the Messianic age (Greek *stoicheia*—see Col. 2:20 where this word *stoicheion* is translated, “elemental” and refers to the OT doctrines, i.e., “the beginning doctrines of God.” They were unskilled (Greek *aspeiros*, “without experience, not really practicing”) in the word of righteousness because they wanted to return to the “milk” of the Old Testament. They could not, or would not, grasp the solid, firm, perfect and complete High Priesthood of Jesus because they didn’t want to have their thinking exercised. The Greek word in 5:14 *gegumnasmena* is the origin of the English word “gymnasium” and is translated “trained” to distinguish or judge (Greek *diakrisin*, compound word meaning “to be critical through”—i.e., to make reasoned judgments) between the good and the bad! Some of the Hebrew-Christians of the first century were unwilling to pay the price necessary to have Jesus as their High Priest. They should be teaching other Jews, since they had become Christians, that they, too, should become Christians, and find the true, perfect High Priest in Jesus—but Paul says those, to whom he wrote, needed to be brought to that point themselves! The perfect, final, only access to God has to be purchased at a price. Truth has to be bought (Prov. 23:23). It is the “field with the buried treasure,” and “the pearl of great price.” We must sell everything we have (of self) to buy it. Some of these Hebrew-Christians were apathetic, indifferent, unconcerned. Faith in Christ was difficult; it was easier to return to the non-persecuted, visible ceremonial religion of Judaism. They would not have to exercise their consciences to discern between good and evil—in Judaism some priest or rabbi would give them the “rabbinic tradition” as to what was good or evil and all they would have to do was what they were told. In the Judaism of that day they would not be told exactly

what the law of Moses said, so they could make up their own mind. That lets them off the hook, morally. The greatest themes of the Christian life could not excite them. That Christ was sinful man's Intercessor; that the Son of God had come to earth, learned obedience to its fullest, experienced the whole gamut of man's frailties, and had entered into heaven there to plead man's case before the throne of grace—this they would give up for a visible high priest offering animal sacrifices in a gold-overlaid temple, none of which would satisfy in the ultimate sense, the Absolute God.

The main cause of their apathy toward Christianity was their unwillingness to endure persecution (Heb. 10:32-39). They (a) endured great sufferings since becoming Christians; (b) were publicly exposed to abuse and affliction; (c) were imprisoned; (d) had their property plundered; (e) and were becoming bitter because of God's chastening (12:15). It did not appear to many of them that Christianity, with all its invisible, intangible, relationships was the fulfillment of the promises made to "father" Abraham (6:13-20), SO THEY DECIDED TO GO BACK TO JUDAISM (6:1-2). All the things listed in Heb. 6:1-2 are practices of the Mosaic law. "Dead works" is what they were to repent of. Repent means to turn away from. Note, it is not "repentance from sins," per se. The expression "dead works" is found again only in Heb. 9:14, where a contrast is drawn from what is said in 9:13. If the blood of animals sanctified to the purifying of the ceremonial (fleshly) uncleanness, how much more should the blood of the Perfect Lamb, Jesus Christ, cleanse the conscience from "dead works." Thus the statement "dead works" in Heb. 6:1 refers to the always-incomplete, never-satisfying works of the Levitical service of the entire OT law (see Heb. 10:1-8). Those works of the law of Moses were denominated "dead works" because they were performed by people never fully reconciled (thus, "dead") to God until the death of the Messiah (see Heb. 9:15; Isa. 53:1-12). The blood of animals never fully satisfied the absolute justice of God (Rom. 3:21-26), nor could they make the worshiper (Jew) conscientiously complete, and fully reconciled to God (see 2 Cor. 3:1-18). There is nothing "dead" about Christian works (see James 2:14-23). As a matter of fact, Christians are a people purified for God to be zealous for good deeds (Titus 2:11-15). Christians are not to repent of ("turn away from") godly works—not even the least of them, such as a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus—for they will be judged according to their good works (Matt. 25:14-46). THE POINT IS THIS: this 6th chapter of Hebrews is not telling Christians to "leave the elementary doctrine of Christ" in the New Testament. It is telling Hebrew-Christians to leave the elementary doctrine of Christ in the Old Testament! When Jews became Christians it was imperative that they "turn away from" (i.e., repent of) the "dead works" of the Levitical system of animal sacrifices and other such incomplete and inadequate "purifications" and turn only to Jesus' vicarious death on the cross. THERE IS A CLARION CALL HERE FOR 21ST CENTURY CHRISTIANS TO "TURN FROM" DEPENDING ON THEIR WORKS (i.e., THEIR OWN "RELIGIOUS-SYSTEMS") TO PURIFY THEM. CHRISTIANS ARE TO HAVE TOTAL FAITH IN THE EFFICACY OF CHRIST'S ATONING DEATH—WHICH WILL MOTIVATE THEM TO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS!

They were to leave the instruction about ablutions or washings (Greek phrase is: baptismon didaches). The Greek word baptismon is a plural noun. Everywhere else in scripture the word is used this way, it is clearly referring to the ceremonial ablutions (i.e.,

“washings”) of the Mosaic dispensation. The plural is found only 3 times in the entire NT (Mk. 7:4; Heb. 6:2; 9:10). In each of the other two instances besides the text here in Heb. 6:2 (i.e., in Mk. 7:4; Heb. 9:10) the word baptism is translated “washings.” Note, Heb. 6:2 speaks of doctrine (Greek *didaches*) of washings. There was a definite teaching connected with the ceremonial “ablutions” of Judaism. These references in Heb. 6:2 and 9:10 look back to such passages as Ex. 30:18-19; Lev. 16:4; Num. 19:1ff; etc. They foreshadowed that perfect and eternal cleansing from sin which the atoning blood of Christ was to provide (see also Ex. 40:12,30,32; Lev. 6:24-28; 11:39-40; 14:1ff; 15:1ff; 17:15-16; 22:6; 1 Kings 7:23-37; 2 Chron. 4:6; Psa. 51:2,7; Isa. 1:16, etc.). They had no intrinsic efficacy in themselves; they were figures and types and “sanctified only to the purifying of the flesh.” The final, ultimate, complete cleansing came only when the blood of Christ became a fact (Heb. 9:15-22). The OT washings effected nothing but an external and ceremonial purification; they could not make the worshiper perfect (complete, reach the goal) as pertaining to the conscience (Heb. 9:9; 10:1-25). Contrast the “washings” of the law of Moses with the one baptism into Christ which is the “answer” (appeal, request for) of a good conscience toward God (1 Pet. 3:21). Surely no member of the Christian Church would think this text is telling Christians to “leave the elemental” doctrine of baptism “unto the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38; 22:16, etc.). That is proclaimed throughout the book of Acts and the epistles as needing to be preached to sinners and saints alike! **INDEED! IT ISN'T PREACHED ENOUGH TODAY IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH!** The apostles never thought it was to be “left behind” for they wrote about it in their letters to Christian churches (Rom. 6:1-10; 1 Cor. 1:13-16; 12:12-13; 15:29; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21).

The “laying on of hands” in the New Testament church was never a doctrine to be practiced by everyone as a Christian “first principle.” Laying on of hands in the NT church was done especially to impart supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit by a selected few (the apostles) to a selected few members of the 1st century church. The key which unlocks the real meaning of this expression Heb. 6:2 is to be found in the Old Testament in Lev. 16:20-22. This “laying of hands” on the sacrificial animals was an essential part of the ritual on the annual Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). It was to be practiced by all Jews. Individuals (Lev. 4:27-30); priests (Lev. 4:3-5); rulers (Lev. 4:22-25); the whole congregation (Lev. 1:4; 4:13-17). So far as the NT documents go, it was only the apostles (who were also called “elders” 1 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 5:1) were authorized by Christ to “lay hands on people” to impart the supernatural powers of the Holy Spirit on people. The powers the apostles had to impart supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, would cease with their deaths. And in the death of the generation to whom these powers had been imparted such supernatural powers would die out because they would not be needed once the New Testament Scriptures were completed (see 1 Cor. 13:8-13). **SO THIS IS NOT AN EXHORTATION FOR CHRISTIANS TO “LEAVE THE DOCTRINE OF “LAYING ON OF HANDS” BECAUSE NO SUCH DOCTRINE EXISTS IN THE N. T.!** While there is no scripture prohibiting it, there is not even a “doctrine” in the N.T. that the “laying on of hands” at ordinations of preachers and missionaries must be practiced. The passage in James 5:14 specifies only “anointing with oil” (Greek *aleipsantes*, “external, physical application of oil”) and not necessarily “laying on of hands” upon the sick! It should be apparent to any Bible-reading Christian that this text is not talking about “leaving the first principles” of Christianity behind, such as “the resurrection of the dead” and “eternal

judgment.” THESE ARE DOCTRINES PREACHED IN EVERY APOSTOLIC SERMON IN ACTS AND PROCLAIMED IN EVERY EPISTLE OF THE N.T. In fact, Paul says that all the troubles of the Corinthian church were because someone had come among them teaching that there was no resurrection from the dead and that Christ had not been raised! GOD FORBID THAT THE N.T. CHURCH SHOULD EVER “LEAVE” OFF PREACHING THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD AND ETERNAL JUDGMENT AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE!

Paul writes (Heb. 6:4), “For (connecting conjunctive to all that has been said about leaving the elementary doctrines of Judaism) it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the (Messianic) age to come, if they then commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt.” That word impossible (Greek *adunaton*, means “powerless, incapable, unable, impossible”) is categorical and irreversible! Anyone who seeks to be justified before God through Judaism, after Christ has come and abrogated it, is in an impossible state! GOD DOES NOT ACCEPT ANY EFFORT OF HUMAN BEINGS TO REPENT OF THEIR SINS EXCEPT THROUGH FAITH IN THE VICARIOUS DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST! Jesus said it himself, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one comes to the Father except by me” (John 14:6). Jesus also said, “He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father” (John 5:22). Peter said, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name (except the name of or authority of) under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12). This passage is not talking about the Christian who falls into sin and repents, calling on the atoning death of Christ! But it would apply to any Christian or non-Christian who seeks to find justification before God by any way except by faith in the efficacy of Christ’s death in his place (e.g., Islamic, Buddhist, Hindi, atheist, agnostic, “good-ol’-boy-Americanist,” upstanding-moralist, and Jew—orthodox or otherwise). For a person to seek acceptance from God through any system of works without faith in the efficacy of Christ’s atonement, that person is in the state of impossibility of repentance before God. Even Gentiles, who did not have the law of Moses, were a law unto themselves, and when they tried to be justified by any law they might devise on their own, they were condemned by their own consciences (Rom. 2:12-16). LAW, ALL LAW, EVERY SYSTEM OF LAW, CONDEMNS! BY THE LAW SHALL NO FLESH BE JUSTIFIED (Gal. 2:16). THERE AREN’T ENOUGH SHEETS OF PAPER IN THE WORLD, AND NOT ENOUGH INK, TO WRITE ENOUGH LAWS BY WHICH A MAN MIGHT SAVE HIMSELF BY KEEPING THEM! In fact, the more law, the less likely he is to be saved. Man can only be saved by grace through faith in Christ the grace-giver. Faith that does not submit to the revealed will of God, when it is recognized, is not faith! The Greek word *paradeigmatizontes* (a loooooong word, eh!), means, “open shame.” It is the word used to describe the public exposure of criminals as they are set forth to be examples of what happens to social outcasts. It is translated “...hold him (Christ) up to contempt” in the RSV and “...put him to an open shame” in the KJV and ASV. For the Hebrew-Christian to turn away from Christianity and turn back to Judaism was to say publicly that they had judged Jesus to be the same kind of imposter, criminal, blasphemer the rulers did when they crucified him. Jesus was crucified because he insisted that people prepare to give up the law of Moses

in exchange for his Way because he was the fulfillment of Moses and the prophets. They crucified him (a) because they didn't want to give up their ego-pleasing ritualism and ceremonialism; (b) because they didn't want to give up their worldly-oriented concept of the Messianic kingdom; (c) and because Jesus demanded love, repentance, morality and that was too hard for them to mentally and spiritually ingest! TODAY, IF WE SHOULD MAKE ANYTHING WE DO, RELIGIOUS, BENEVOLENT, MORAL, OR ANY OTHER THING, THE BASIS OF OUR ACCEPTANCE BEFORE GOD, WE CRUCIFY THE SON OF GOD AFRESH AND PUT HIM TO AN OPEN SHAME! What we do must be the result of the trust we have put in Christ's vicarious and efficacious death on the cross 2000 years ago! We dare not depend on our own goodness—if we do we shall be lost BECAUSE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO REPENT BEFORE GOD IN SUCH A STATE OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS!

Paul is using a parable of the land, rain and vegetation to illustrate that the one who turns away from Jesus to any system of justification by law (anyone's law—even one's own "law") IS USELESS TO GOD! THAT IS A STARTLING STATEMENT, TO SAY THE LEAST! Yes—there are some human beings who are USELESS TO GOD! Those who seek justification outside the vicarious death of Christ do not serve the purpose for which God made them, which is "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29; 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10, etc.). Such a person "bears thorns and thistles" in his heart (see Matt. 13:22) and chokes out the word of God. Such a person does not produce righteousness, goodness, and holiness after having received all the spiritual blessings of the Father in the atonement of Christ. His end is to be cursed and burned! Shade trees that bear no leaves in the summer time—a fruit tree that bears no fruit—they are WORTHLESS—FIT ONLY TO BE BURNED! LEARN A LESSON FROM JESUS'S PARABLES OF THE BARREN FIG-TREE (Matt. 21:18-22) AND THE TREE IN THE MAN'S ORCHARD THAT "CUMBERED" THE GROUND (Lk. 13:6-9)! The stark reality of this passage is not easy for many people to accept—i.e., THAT THOSE WHO REJECT CHRIST AS ATONEMENT FOR THEIR SINS ARE WORTHLESS AND USELESS! BUT THAT IS WHAT IS SAYS! God cannot use them here, in this life, nor can he use them there, in the next life—they will be burned forever in the tormenting lake of fire and brimstone!

The lesson is imperative for Christians in the 21st century. APATHY LEADS TO APOSTASY! When Christians become lethargic about their spiritual thinking and about their spiritual living, they become insensitive, apathetic and seek an easy system of spiritual justification. They seek a way that can be seen, a way where faith in the unseen will not have to be exercised—a way where moral growth will not have to be made. They turn to a "religion" or "law" less demanding of trust than the Way of Christ or make up their own "religion" (i.e., "law") and try to live before God for justification that way! AND THIS IS APOSTASY! A person does not have to be a communist or an atheist to be an apostate. A person may be very "religious" and be an apostate! If a person trusts in his "religious activity," he no longer trusts in Christ, and he is an apostate. On the other hand, if we walk by faith in Christ alone, and not by sight, we will be justified, reconciled, and vitally alive in Christ—now and forevermore! "For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised. For yet a little while, and the coming one shall come and shall not

tarry; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls” (Heb. 10:36-39). — “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**HEBREWS 6:9-20**

Those things that did not belong to salvation were the Old Testament things mentioned in 6:1-6 because they could not provide final, absolute, perfect access or reconciliation to God (i.e., “dead works, ablutions, laying-on-hands on animal sacrifices, the O.T. teachings about resurrection and eternal judgment.”). Better things that DID belong to salvation were, thus far denominated by Paul in this Hebrews treatise: (a) God’s incarnation in Jesus Christ (ch. 1); (b) human sanctification and glorification in Christ (ch. 2); (c) unfettered access to Almighty God through Christ’s imputed boldness (ch. 3); (d) a “Sabbath-kind-of-life” (sabbatismos) in Christ (ch. 4); and (e) an infinitely sympathetic high-priest in Christ (ch. 5). Now, in this section (6:9-20) Paul includes in the “better things” (e) having the right concept of God, i.e., “...God is not...unjust as to overlook your work and the love which you showed for his sake in serving the saints...” (Heb. 6:10). What we think about God’s nature determines whether we feel saved and secure or not! If we think of God as a figment of man’s imagination we will conceive a god of imperfection and impotence—we will enthrone humanness or some other transitory element as “god” (see Rom. 2:18-32). Think of God as almighty, powerful, omniscient but unmerciful (i.e., operating only through law and not grace) and we will become discouraged, despondent and filled with dread. In Heb. 10:26-31 where Paul describes what will happen to a Hebrew-Christian for going “back” to Judaism—apostasy. These Hebrew-Christians had been doing works of love (see Heb. 10:32-39), in the name of Christ, but they were being persecuted! No one was complimenting them; no one seemed aware of their faithfulness; Christ was not there to say, “Well done...” and God seemed to be indifferent—he was certainly not blessing them with material prosperity for their faith in Christ. These 1st century Hebrew-Christians were, toward Christ, much like the Jews of Auschwitz (and other “death camps”) during the Nazi holocaust—they declared “God was never in Auschwitz, or he would not have let us suffer like we did.” **IS GOD UNJUST? DOES HE FORGET HIS PROMISES? WHAT IF OUR FAITHFULNESS TO CHRIST NEVER RECEIVES PRAISE, OR REWARD IN THIS LIFE? CAN WE STILL FEEL SECURE AND SAVED?** One of the most reassuring passages to the faithful, unassuming Christian is Matthew, chapter 25. There we are told that Christ remembers all the little insignificant deeds forgotten by the world—visiting prisoners and the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked (remember how Christ pointed out the “widow’s mite”?). Men may forget—even the Christian himself forgets—**BUT CHRIST KEEPS ABSOLUTELY ACCURATE AND JUST ACCOUNTS!** God keeps perfect records. Not even a cup of cold water given in the name of Jesus will go unnoticed or unrewarded! If we do not have the right concept and trust in God’s faithfulness we will be spiritually insecure. Spiritual insecurity will manifest itself in a desire to be constantly rewarded by visible human applause—or, by returning to a system of “dead” works whereby we hope to be rewarded, or try to reassure ourselves of our worthiness to be rewarded, or get our “spiritual euphoria” from religious emotionalism.

Paul wanted to dispel the feelings of insecurity the Hebrew-Christians were having by urging them to: (a) Have the right motive for serving God—**LOVE FOR HIS SAKE THAT REASSURES**—is the “same earnestness” toward their hope Paul is referring to in 6:11. John wrote, “Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and truth. By this we shall know that we are of truth, and reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything” (1 John 3:18-19). Human beings were created, you see, with consciences that tell them whether their motives are really what God wants or not so they cannot have assurance of salvation unless their motives conform to God’s standard. But whatever is done from true, agape, God-like love, brings God’s mercy and grace, and assurance for we know that such love is of God (see Rom. 12:1-2; Dan. 9:18; 1 Chron 29:10ff). The right motive for evangelism, benevolence, preaching, worship is not approval and applause of people—not even primarily for the sake of people—**BUT FOR THE SAKE OF THE NAME OF GOD AND CHRIST!** (Ezek. 20: 1-49; Dan. 9:17-19; Matt. 6:1ff). Selfish motives condemn—a loving motive, no matter what the deed brings assurance and spiritual security. The Greek word in 6:10 for “serving” is diakonesantes—from which we get the English word “deacon.” (b) Having the right hope is also necessary for security of the soul, so hang on to **THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD OF JESUS CHRIST** as necessary for assurance of salvation. When all is said and done, the anchor for our soul is not our works, however properly motivated and however much they may be. Paul wrote these Hebrew-Christians that they should give the same earnestness toward full assurance of hope in the high priesthood of Christ as they had toward good deeds! While they were experiencing despair and insecurity from no visible rewards of their good service to the saints, Paul says that if they will be diligent to take their assurance from the high-priesthood of Christ, they will not be “sluggish” and fall away. Ministering to the saints is good and right, but we do not get our spiritual security from that. Ministering is a result of our spiritual security which comes from having Jesus as our high priest—our access to God, our Reconciler before God. If we hope in Christ and Christianity in this world only—we are of all men most to be pitied (1 Cor. 15:19). Our hope, our faith, is in the work of Christ—not our works “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent” Jn. 6:29. Merely saying one believes in Jesus is not enough, however, because faith is made perfect (made complete, reaches its goal) in obedience and doing Christ’s will (James 2:22). The Greek word for “promises” in Heb. 6:12 is epaggelias, the same word from which we get “gospel, good-tidings.” “Promises” from God are not things humans have negotiated with him—they are things God has arbitrarily announced, proclaimed and declared. God’s promises are gifts graciously bestowed. The Greek word for “imitators” is mimetai, from which we get the English word, mimic. Those we are to “mimic” or imitate will be mentioned later by Paul in Hebrews, chapter 11—perhaps also some Christian saints being martyred in our own lifetime.

Paul first deals with “oaths” generically. The general principle is that honest and righteous promises are usually affirmed by “oath-taking.” The oath was a very solemn and binding experience to the Jew. The making of oaths and vows cut through the entire experience of Jewish life (marriage/engagement oaths, business oaths, religious oaths). Jews were very conscious of the Old Testament admonition that it was better not to vow than to vow and not keep it. Pharisees exploited the matter of “oath-taking” by their traditions (Matt. 15; Mk. 7). The making of oaths is a matter that cuts across all civilizations and

cultures—even ours! When we sign a contract for a loan, or swear an oath in civil court, or take marriage vows, these oaths are the supreme court of appeal for personal integrity. A man's oath is supposed to end all controversy and doubt. Fallen humans have a necessity for taking oaths by something or someone Greater than themselves to confirm their integrity. The thought of God doing so is staggering and awe-inspiring. Is not God's veracity unimpugnable? Should not men believe God when he makes a statement or a promise? **CERTAINLY! BUT GOD IS SO LOVING AND CONDESCENDING TO MAN'S WEAKNESSES, THAT HE NOT ONLY PROMISES—HE ALSO TAKES AN OATH TO CONFIRM THAT HE WILL KEEP HIS PROMISE!** God made "promises"s to Abraham, but God did not swear an oath to Abraham until Abraham met the ultimate test of faith! God called Abraham out of Ur and promised him a personal blessing, a national blessing and an international spiritual blessing. All three of these blessings were focused in a son to be born—a son of promise—Isaac. Amid trial and disappointment, Abraham hoped against hope until 25 years later, when it seemed impossible for him to have a son, Sarah gave birth to Isaac. Abraham's "journey to faith" was a rough road—he faltered more than once.

Then when Isaac—the son of "promise"—was about 17 God asked him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. This was the test of tests! Hebrews 6:15 simply calls it "patient endurance!" It is to this day the symbol of the highest possible faith! Now, God did not desire the death of Isaac; **BUT GOD DID WANT ALL OF ABRAHAM!** God wanted Abraham's whole heart. God wanted to be the object of Abraham's first priorities. Abraham would gladly have died for Isaac, but when God asked for the son, he touched Abraham more deeply than he could possibly have by just asking for Abraham's death. Abraham must learn to hope in God's promises with an extreme test of faith. When Abraham obeyed and trusted completely in God's promise (in spite of appearances), **IN THAT HOUR GOD AFFIRMED HIS PROMISE TO ABRAHAM WITH AN OATH—GOD SWORE BY HIMSELF** (Gen. 22:16-17). Read these scriptures about God's oaths (Num. 23:19; Psa. 89:35; 95:11; 110:4; Isa. 14:24; 62:8; Luke 1:73; Titus 1:2). Thus Abraham became one of the "heroes of faith" (Hebrews chapter 11:8-12) which Paul wants the Hebrew-Christians of the first century to "mimic."

The significant Greek word in Heb. 6:17 is *emesiteusen*, an aorist verb, active, indicative 3 person singular form of *mesiteuo*, which is defined, "to perform offices between two parties; to intervene, interpose." And the personal pronoun which precedes this verb, *autou*, is intensive, setting apart the subject from all others, i.e., "I myself." The KJV Thompson Chain Reference Bible has in its margin at Heb. 6:17, "...interposed himself by an oath." The subject of the text in Heb. 6:13-18 is God. **GOD INTERPOSED HIMSELF AS AN OATH!** Delitzsch comments: "God intervened with his oath (Jesus Christ), as it were, between himself the Promiser and men the receivers of his promise, thus giving them strong assurance. The meaning is similar to that bold word of prayer in the OT, "Be a surety for me with Thyself" (Job 17:3) (cf. also Isa. 38:14; Psa. 119:122). God, in thus swearing by himself, descends, as it were, from his own absolute exaltation, in order to look up to himself after the manner of men, and take himself to witness, and so by a gracious condescension confirm the promise for the sake of its inheritors." **HOW COULD GOD "INTERPOSE HIMSELF?"** How could God mediate himself between man and himself? **THERE IS A WAY! GOD COULD**

BECOME MAN AND INTERPOSE HIMSELF! AND THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT GOD DID! 2 Cor 1:19-20 explains it----“For the Son of God, Jesus Christ...is always Amen (Yes). For all the promises of God find their Amen (Yes!) In him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God.” Jesus Christ the Son of God was the immutable oath that gave immutable affirmation to the immutable promises of God. Every promise of God’s word has confirmation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ! All that we are, all that we hope for, impinges upon whether God absolutely keeps his promises or not. God keeps his promises, and we believe it with all our being, because he has sworn to it, once and for all, in history, at a time, at a place, seen by eyewitnesses—THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST (Heb. 13:20-21). This is the foundation of Christian faith and hope (1 Cor. 15:1-58)—not human science, philosophy, psychology, political ideologies, not “feelings” or any other human efforts, aspirations or experiences. “Let God be true though every man be false....” (Rom. 3:4). It would almost seem that God demeans himself by making an oath so human beings will believe him. God cannot lie. Yet he interposed himself with an oath! It does not seem right. But it has been demonstrated to human beings within human experience (history). God interposed himself as an oath through his Son as a concession to our weakness, so that we might trust him. That is what God wants above everything else—OUR TRUST IN HIM! God has said it, proved it, I believe it, that settles it!

Two things in which it is impossible that God should prove false: (a) first, God will do anything that is consistent with his nature—he cannot do anything that is inconsistent with his nature—HIS NATURE IS ABSOLUTE TRUTH— HE CANNOT LIE (2 Tim. 2:13), AND HE DOES NOT CHANGE HIS MIND (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17); (b) second, no opposing power in heaven, earth, or hell can ever nullify or set aside a decree or promise of Jehovah God, GOD’S WORD IS OMNIPOTENT, OMNISCIENT AND ABSOLUTELY FAITHFUL —the OT prophets demonstrated historically that it is impossible to prove God false, especially Daniel who predicts 600 years of world history in minute detail (from the return of the Jews from exile to the coming of the Messiah) all fulfilled exactly as predicted. Emperors and empires, deliberate schemes of even heavenly powers of wickedness to thwart God, are all conquered and defeated by the word of God become incarnate in Jesus Christ (Col. 2:13-15). God’s word does not return unto him void! (Isa. 55:11) it is forever firmly fixed in the heavens and his faithfulness endures to all generations (Psa. 119:89). When he speaks it comes to be and when he commands, it stands forth (Psa. 33:9; 148:6). THE TWO IMMUTABLE THINGS ARE GOD’S TRUTHFULNESS AND GOD’S FAITHFULNESS (PROMISES). And we know they are immutable because God became incarnate in Jesus who became God’s oath to mankind that he keeps his word—implicitly, explicitly and immutably. God promised that the Messiah, would die on the cross and he did. God promised that the Messiah would be raised from the dead on the third day, and he was! The greatest, most pagan power on earth (the Roman empire—the “beast, the false prophet and the harlot” all combined in one human power) could not stop God’s word from coming to pass!

PRAISE GOD—FOR HIS WORD INCARNATED AND INSCRIPTURATED—HE (THE WORD John 1:1-18) IS THE ONLY IMMUTABLE PERSON AND FORCE IN

EXISTENCE—AND WE HAVE THE IMMUTABLE OATH OF GOD IN CHRIST THAT WE WILL BE SAVED FROM ETERNAL DAMNATION BY BELIEVING CHRIST IS GOD'S "OATH"! We presently live in a world and an existence (bodily) that is decaying and doomed to extinction—the 2nd law of thermodynamics or “entropy” and history, i.e., the flood-fossil record, confirms God's warning about this (see Rom. 8:20 and 2 Pet. 3:1-7). Anyone who does not seize the IMMUTABLE promise from God of eternal life confirmed by his “oath”---- Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead----is a fool! GOD IS THE ONLY UNCHANGEABLE, IMMUTABLE, ABSOLUTELY FAITHFUL, ABSOLUTELY TRUTHFUL, ABSOLUTELY LOVING AND MERCIFUL PERSON! He will not turn away from those who honestly and faithfully seek him. Jesus proved that here on earth, in time, in history, at a place, seen and ministered to by other human beings who have left us a record of what they saw and heard and handled (1 Jn. 1:1-4).

J. B. Phillips translation of Hebrews 6:18: “So that by two utterly immutable things, the word of God and the oath of God, who cannot lie, we who are refugees from this dying world might have a source of strength, and might grasp the hope that he holds out.” This is the stark reality of human existence—the world is doomed; it is dying; it is hopeless. Without Christ human beings are “refugees” adrift on the spiritual sea of ignorance, uncertainty and impending doom. Anything that is of this world order is hopeless; therefore nothing of this world order can bring stability to the spirit in human beings. But human beings by the billions continue to take all kinds of flight from this reality—grasping at all kinds of things to find an anchor, to find stability, to find hope. Hope in Jesus is the only ANCHOR that will transcend this perishing world. HOPE IN JESUS KEEPS THE SOUL FROM DRIFTING AND BECOMING DERELICT. HOPE IN JESUS GIVES STABILITY TO DOOMED AND INSECURE HUMAN BEINGS. Paul likened hope unto a helmet (Eph. 6) that protects the “head” or mind of human beings. The idea is similar to that of the anchor which symbolizes endurance, sober-headed confidence, steadiness, perseverance. When hope in Christ reigns, men do not despair and drift away from truth and love and righteousness. When Christian hope anchors the soul, it is not dashed asunder and destroyed in the storms of doubt, temptation and trial. The Christian is “born anew unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3-5). The Christian's hope is anchored, not in self, not in human potential, not in circumstances, not in subjective experiences (“feelings”), not in the power of a state, not in the authority of an ecclesiastical system, BUT IN THE PROMISE AND OATH OF GOD—BOTH OF WHICH ARE PERSONIFIED IN JESUS CHRIST, WHO DIED FOR OUR SINS, AND WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN HIM! It is tragic to watch the world foundering, adrift, being driven upon the reefs of rebellion against God to its self-destruction. In 1970 the Washington D.C. public school system proposed a program to put Bible study back in the schools. The plan had a very good chance, at that time, of passing said Director of Curriculum, Mrs. LuVerne C. Walker. “Our ideal heroes have been wrong—somehow we have to reverse this process,” stated A. J. Fowler, chairman of the committee of 100 ministers, which originated the proposals as part of an anti-crime campaign.... “Unless we can do that, they may as well stop talking about more police. We produce more criminals than the guards can arrest.” Senate chaplain, Edward L. R. Elson observed, “My mail indicates a great host of people across the land are fed up with battles going to the minorities. They want a return to the theistic (Biblical)

presuppositions on which they feel our country was founded.” EVIDENTLY THAT PROPOSAL GOT LOST IN THE POLITICAL “SHUFFLE” OF OUR NATION’S CAPITAL. Indeed, human beings are refugees, fleeing from a dying and doomed world, and they need an ANCHOR, STEADFAST AND SURE!

Our hope will outlast this world. Our hope is located in heaven—in eternity, with Jesus Christ. Jesus has entered alive forever into the Holiest of Holies—into God’s immediate, eternal presence. “We have died (with Christ), and our life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then we also will appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:3-4). The functional value of an anchor depends upon that which it grips. Not every place provides good anchorage. Many are the spiritual wrecks along the shores of history that speak eloquently of that tragic fact. OUR ANCHOR IS FIXED IN THE VERY HEART OF GOD. IT IS STEADFAST AND SURE BECAUSE IT IS FIXED IN THE VERY CHARACTER AND PERSON OF THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD. As long as the Son exists—so long shall our anchor hold! Where the Son exists—there our anchor grips! “And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee...” Psa. 39:7. People are waiting for all sorts of fulfillment; waiting and hoping in—science, philosophy, welfare programs, education, space exploration, in mankind, the alleged evolutionary process of “upwardness,” for the church to get rid of the hypocrites, for a new revelation from God, etc., etc., ad infinitum. But human hope is not in something yet to be done by God—it is in something that has already been done by God—IT IS IN THE ATONING DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE ENTHRONING HIGH PRIEST-HOOD OF THAT SAME RESURRECTED AND GLORIFIED JESUS CHRIST!

Horace G. Spafford, an influential lawyer in Chicago, was a Christian and a Sunday School teacher. Into his class, one Sunday, came a beautiful girl from Norway whom, eventually, he married, and to this union were born four lovely daughters. The Spaffords entertained many well known ministers and musicians, among whom were Major Whittle, Dwight L. Moody, P. P. Bliss and Ira Sankey. Following the great Chicago fire of 1871, their spacious home became a refugee center for many homeless victims. All this took a toll on Mrs. Spafford’s health until, to save her from a complete breakdown, her husband sent her and the girls to Europe, planning to meet them later in Paris. Tragedy of tragedies, the ship on which the women sailed was rammed by another vessel, and sank almost immediately. Hundreds of passengers, including the four sisters were drowned, and Mrs. Spafford, who was severely injured, was taken to Wales from where she wired her husband this sad, simple message: “SAVED ALONE.” The grief stricken father, sailing to join his wife, was called one morning to the captain’s cabin. Told they were at the place where the ship had sunk, he went directly to his stateroom where, out of the depths of sorrow, he composed a beautiful poem which later was put to music by his old friend P. P. Bliss—it goes like this: “When peace like a river, Attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul.” WE HAVE AN ANCHOR THAT KEEPS THE SOUL, STEADFAST AND SURE WHILE THE BILLOWS ROLL.....AND AS CHRISTIANS WE’VE ANCHORED OUR SOUL IN THE HAVEN OF REST AND WE WILL SAIL THE WILD SEAS NO MORE!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

HEBREWS 7:1-28

God is a Person. God is love, but love is more than mere emotion. Love is character; character is made of likes and dislikes, attractions and repulsions in relation to the character and conduct of those with whom the Person comes in contact. God is a Person, not a force. He can and does discriminate between what he likes and dislikes. God's love is capable of hostility. HOW COULD GOD LOVE US FOR OUR GOOD WITHOUT SHOWING HIS HOSTILITY TOWARD WHAT WOULD DO US HARM? When we force back his divine love by our rebellion, or refuse his love by our hatred so that it cannot flow forth to bless as it wishes, it chafes against the rebellion out of sheer love. Love is goodness in earnest to make others good (Rom. 15:1-2). When it is deliberately and maliciously thwarted, it is angry. When love cannot have its way to make others good, it is grieved. We are free to choose his love or spurn it. Our own selfishness has created a barrier between us and our God. We have declared ourselves enemies of God and his only response—or the only course left for him—is to be our enemy.

Some might argue with this. Some who do not believe the Bible would say there is no such thing as man being estranged from God. The universe itself, frustratingly imperfect, transient, coupled with the constant frustration of naive idealism inherent in the mind of man demands a realization that man is estranged from his Creator (Rom. 1:18-32; 8:20-21). The human conscience constantly reminds us that our Heavenly Father is angry with us (Rom. 2:12-16). Every tribe under the sun has some sort of system attempting to appease the Creator. Man, if he is a moral being, must have the possibility of knowing and feeling estrangement and reconciliation. Man feels the need of love, understanding, help, sympathy, harmony peace. Estrangement cries out from human art, music, poetry, philosophy, psychology, etc., etc.

Remember the carefree days of childhood? Carefree, that is, until you rebelled against Dad's loving direction. Then there was hurt, anger, fear, stricken conscience, loneliness, insecurity, unhappiness, and disharmony in everything you attempted. Then you wanted to "make friends" again with your father—so you called your most sympathetic, best known friend, Mom! She helped bring you together. She appeased the anger, took away the fear, because she plead your case. She was the go-between, the mediator.

Eugene Nida in his book *God's Word in Man's Language*, relates that the Eskimos of Barrow, Alaska, describe the word reconciliation in the simple terms of "making friends again." But how is man to make friends with God? And if he makes friends with him how is this friendship to be sustained? WE MUST HAVE A MEDIATOR, AN INTERCESSOR, FULLY QUALIFIED AND CAPABLE OF REPRESENTING BOTH PARTIES OF THE

ESTRANGEMENT. HE MUST BE FULLY MAN, AND FULLY GOD. Jesus, our great high priest, provided the ultimate, spiritual reconciliation with our Heavenly Father, AND IS STILL PROVIDING IT IN A CONTINUING MINISTRY IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD RIGHT NOW! We have discussed his human capabilities and qualifications in chapters 2 and 5 for representing man. Now, in chapter 7, we shall consider his divine qualities.

Melchizedek's name is from a compound Hebrew word melekh meaning "king" and tzedekh meaning "righteousness." He was also "king of Salem" which means, "king of peace"—thus Melchizedek was "king of righteousness and peace." Melchizedek was a Gentile! There were no Hebrews before Abram was circumcised! Abram (later called Abraham, Gen. 17) received God's promise of justification and reconciliation before he was circumcised—while he was still a "Gentile." Thus Abram was the typical representative of "all who believe without being circumcised..." (Rom. 4:9-25) as well as the ancestor and representative of all circumcised believers. Jesus Christ, THE singular seed of Abraham, was the singular, ultimate fulfillment of the promises made to Abram (Gal. 3:16-18). To become an heir of the promises made to Abram, one must be in Christ whether Jew or Gentile. Genetic genealogy means nothing as far as inheriting the covenant God made with Abram is concerned! (Rom. 9:6-13). Melchizedek was God's appointed high priest and king in the land to which Abram was called before Abram was an Hebrew (Gen. 14:17ff). Melchizedek did not inherit his priesthood. So far as his priesthood was concerned he had no family—he was "without father or mother or genealogy" (Heb. 7:3). That does not mean he did not have parents—it simply means his parentage was not important to or necessary for his priesthood. MELCHIZEDEK'S PERSONAL QUALITIES WERE PRIMARY! The whole Hebrew system after Moses had a priesthood founded on genealogy. Personal qualities had little to do with it. If you were descended from Levi, you were a priest! The Mosaic dispensation took great care in preserving Levitical pedigree (Ezra 2:61-62). Melchizedek's priesthood was also perpetual. It had "neither beginning of days nor end of life...." (Heb. 7:3). The "order of Melchizedek's priesthood" was without the restrictions of the Mosaic order. It was so unusual to speak of any Hebrew priest without genealogy, Paul "coined" another Greek word—agenealogetos—a word no Greek writer ever used before Paul in Heb. 7:3! Jewish priests began their apprenticeship at age 25; at age 30 they began regular priestly duties (Num. 8:25; 4:3); at the age of 50 they were "retired." No such restriction was placed on the priesthood of Melchizedek. Melchizedek began his priestly appointment without receiving it from family ties and he continued his priesthood to the very end of his earthly existence. Thus he becomes the quintessential type of the high priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is King of Righteousness and King of Peace because he conquered sin in the flesh—totally and completely. He did not compromise by rationalizing or hedging on truth (which, according to the OT prophets, many of the ancient Levitical priests did). He did not shrug it off with divine transcendence—he subjected himself to sin's most powerful tests, in human form, and won. Having remained sinless, he then offered himself as the only qualified one to satisfy the wrath of an Absolute God—thus making absolute peace for mankind (Heb. 9:14). JESUS CHRIST IS KING OVER RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE. HE GIVES "ORDERS" ABOUT RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE AND THEY ARE OBEYED.

HE DISPENSES THEM TO WHOMSOEVER HE WISHES. AND HE WISHES TO GIVE THEM TO ALL WHO WILL TRUST HIM AND FOLLOW HIM. Jesus' high priesthood does not depend upon descent (Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, not the tribe of Levi) nor does it end. Jesus is not bound by provincialism, race, time in years, or human bias. His priesthood is not bound by ANY limitations—it is forever. THEREFORE IT IS FINAL, COMPLETE AND PERFECT.

Melchizedek was superior to Abram because Abram paid him tithes. There are two Greek words in Heb. 7:4, *dekaten* and *akrothinion*. The first word, *dekaten*, means “tenth or tithe” and the second word, *akrothinion*, translated “spoils” in the RSV and “chief spoils” in the ASV, means, “from the top of the pile.” Abram gave Melchizedek 10% of the top—the very best of the spoils of war from his battle with the “kings of the East.” This demonstrates the superiority of Melchizedek to Paul’s readers. In addition, Paul uses the well-known Biblical principle of “federal representation” to show that even the Levites, being “in the loins of Abram” at that time, also paid tithes to Melchizedek. Melchizedek “blessed” Abram. In the mind of the Jew it might be thought that Abram would bless Melchizedek. But it was the other way around, proving that Melchizedek was superior to Abram and to ALL Abram’s descendants! Since Jesus Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, ALL Abram’s descendants are inferior to him and must submit to his high priesthood! This text says NOTHING, by the way, about tithing as a Christian obligation. The whole chapter says nothing about the way Christ exercises his priesthood. Its whole point is simply to show the excellency and superiority of the Messiah’s high priesthood and prove the dignity of it—thus demonstrating the fulfillment of and abrogation of the Levitical priesthood. The phrase “Here tithes are received by mortal men; there, by one of whom it is testified that he lives...” Heb. 7:8 means, “Here (in the persons of Levites) tithes are received by mortal men; there (in the person of Melchizedek), by one (i.e., Melchizedek) of whom it is testified that he lives.” The “one” does not refer to Christ! The Christian’s financial obligation is stewardship (accountability) of 100% of what God has given him. 10% for God and 90% for self is not Christian; not even 50% for God and 50% for self is Christian! What a man gives of his total stewardship of things toward the “work of the kingdom” is to be decided by the giver on the basis of New Testament principles of love and faith, and not on OT law (see 2 Cor. chapters 8 and 9). This text (Heb. 7:1-17) does argue logically and persuasively that the priesthood of Melchizedek proves the Levitical order was never intended to be God’s final, perfect solution to man’s need for an Intercessor! Since the Messiah was high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, it necessarily sets aside the Levitical order (Psa. 110:4). Where there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. Christ’s priesthood was after the power of an indestructible life! Since God would not be the author of two separate and different priesthoods, the former and inferior must give place to the superior. Melchizedek was God’s OT “picture” (type), almost a 1000 years before Moses and Aaron to show that God had in mind for humanity an eternal high priest—a “king of righteousness and peace.” Melchizedek’s very existence proved the Levitical priesthood was only temporary or parenthetical. Aaronic priests 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 “friendship” with God. To appreciate the length and logic that Paul applies in

arguing for the abrogation of the Levitical priesthood, one must think Jewish. A Jew would cling tenaciously to the Levitical system because it involved his very identity; furthermore the Levitical order was ordained by God and God had punished them severely in history for defaulting on it; the Levitical order had been in existence for some 1400 years at the time of Christ and the NT church; the final exhortation of the OT was “remember the law of Moses” (Mal. 4:4-6). So Paul appeals to the OT scriptures of the Jews in Heb. 7:17. God had not only given the Jews a hint in Genesis 14 that there was a priesthood superior to the Aaronic, but God emphatically addresses the future Messiah in Psa. 110:4 (which even some Jewish rabbis admit was a Messianic prophecy) as a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. At the very time Israel was enjoying the epitome of the Levitical priesthood, the Holy Spirit of God informed them through David the Psalmist that a Priest was to come and be independent of any line of Levitical descent!

God set aside the former, weak and incapable system of priesthood and instituted a better hope (Heb. 7:18-19) through which access to God is effected. The Levitical system made nothing perfect (complete and final). OT sacrifices and OT priesthood was not sufficient; neither God nor man could be satisfied with the OT system. It did not pay the perfect price and could not satisfy the justice of God nor the conscience of man (Heb. 10:1-10). The RSV translates the Greek word *anopheles* as “useless.” That is not a good translation for the Law was not useless. God had a use for it (Rom. Chs. 3 & 7). A better translation of *anopheles* would be “unprofitable.” The law was instituted to prove to human beings they could not be justified by human merit! The Law condemned; Grace sets free—completely free. The Law separated man from God because man could not keep the Law; Grace gave access to God—only Grace gives access and we have that grace not through any merit of our own but through faith in the merit of Christ. **THAT IS THE BETTER HOPE. THAT HOPE IS MADE AVAILABLE THROUGH COVENANT RELATIONSHIP—ON THE COVENANT TERMS OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. BUT THOSE N.T. COVENANT TERMS ARE NOT WORKS OF HUMAN MERIT...THEY ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR US TO EXPRESS OUR FAITH!** Faith to be real and mean anything to us and to God must be expressed. God knows that. He made us that way. He gives us divine directives by which we may express that faith because he knows we grow into what we can be by expressing our faith in him. Now if we do not want God’s grace, we simply reject the terms by which he makes it available. Then we have to try to find a way to merit his Absolute forgiveness by being absolutely worthy, which is impossible!

Jesus’ priesthood was confirmed with an oath of God. We discussed in the last lesson that it is impossible that God should ever be proven false or faithless. To the logical, unbiased, non-presupposing mind, history proves God’s word to be immutably true and where possible to check it (e.g., prophetic predictions, archaeology, etc.) always accurate and fulfilled. Of course, if men have some moral bias against God’s word, then they can think of all kinds of rationalizations why they do not accept it as true. **BUT GOD’S WORD IS TRUE IF EVERY MAN IS FALSE** (Rom. 3:4). God does not have to swear by an oath to confirm the integrity of his word. Therefore, whenever God confirms a word of his with an oath, that word must be of unique and extraordinary importance! God confirmed with an oath

that the Messiah was a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek—and God’s oath was Jesus Christ’s resurrection from the dead (Acts 13:33 and 2 Cor. 1:20-21). THAT IS UTTERLY UNCHANGEABLE! This not so with the Levitical order of priesthood—no oath of God was made when it was instituted, inferring that God reserved the liberty to make an alteration when he saw fit. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the friendship (priesthood) of Jesus remains as true today as it was to the apostles, to Mary and Martha, to the sick and sinful, the despairing and downtrodden 2000 years ago. HE IS JUST AS ALIVE TODAY AS THEN, WE ARE MORE FITTED NOW THAN THEN TO OBTAIN ACCESS TO THE FATHER!

Jesus was made the surety (Heb. 7:22) of the better covenant in his priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek at the time of and upon the basis of his resurrection from the dead. The Greek word for surety is *eggous* which in our society would mean, “going someone’s bail.” The idea is seen clearly in Genesis 43:8-9; 44:32-33; Philemon v. 18-19. Jesus “bailed us out.” An *eggous* is someone who guarantees that something will be paid; some undertaking will be assuredly honored. How do we know God’s law has been kept perfectly—fulfilled and abrogated? How do we know that access, free and unfettered, has been made possible back to God? How do we know man does not have to present to God his own absolute obedience to God’s law in order to have that access? JESUS CHRIST GUARANTEES ALL THAT! Jesus guarantees the love of God—he guarantees the debt for mankind has been paid, he guarantees that we can find acceptance from God, that God looks upon us as well-pleasing servants. If you can prove that Jesus never died and rose again, then you can prove all the above is false. BUT IF YOU CANNOT DISPROVE HIS RESURRECTION, YOU ARE OBLIGATED BY REASON AND LOGIC TO ACCEPT HIS GUARANTEE OF ALL THE ABOVE! Jesus stakes all the above on his indestructible life, and the oath of God, which is his resurrection, too! All positions and programs of humans cease when they die. One ruler is supplanted by another; one civilization and culture is supplanted by another; man is at the mercy of constant change and incompleteness (Rom. 8:18-23). Institutions, circumstances, humans, even marital unions all come and go and nothing is certain except decay and death in this world. But our friendship with God is established as certainly and powerfully as the life of Jesus Christ who is alive and all powerful (Matt. 28:18) forever more. There is no power on earth or in heaven that can come in the way of that, except our own unbelief (Rom. 8:31-39). There is power in permanency. It is only the Absolutely Permanent and Eternal that puts hope into anything done on earth (1 Cor. 15:58). Even a “Christianity” for this world alone is pitiable (1 Cor. 15:19). There were many high priests of the order of Aaron (according to Jewish historians, some 83 from Aaron to A.D. 70). But God, to show the imperfect and impermanent nature of that priesthood unto the people of Israel, and to manifest that there must be an Everlasting Priest yet to come commanded Aaron to die in the sight of all the congregation (Nu. 20:25-29). Jesus died, but rose again in the sight of eyewitnesses (the Roman soldiers guarding his tomb and later the apostles, and 500 brethren at once) and ascended to the very throne of God, there to minister to his body, the Church, through the Holy Spirit.

It was “fitting” that Jesus became our High Priest. The Greek word *eprepen* means,

“to be conspicuous, to be exactly the right or best thing.” Jesus was exactly the right Person needed by all sinful men. NIV says, “Such a high priest meets our need....” J. B. Phillips translates, “Here is the High Priest we need....” Why is Jesus EXACTLY the High Priest we need? Jesus is Holy. He has his holiness after having lived here on earth in the flesh. He demonstrated that it was possible to live in the world but to be separated from this world. To be “separated” from the world does not mean one must become an ascetic, a monk or a hermit. It means to not trust in what is perishing or what brings eternal death. It means to be separated from worldly-mindedness; to be separated from the deception of the devil. JESUS DID THAT AS A MAN! NOW HE PRESENTS THAT HUMAN HOLINESS IN PERFECT FORM BEFORE GOD ON OUR BEHALF WHO BELIEVE IN HIS WAY! Jesus was blameless—Greek *akakos*, “without evil.” No sin at all could be charged against him by anyone. The devil could not tempt him to sin even though it meant hunger, loss of human acclaim, death on a cross. To be blameless does not mean that evil men will not ever accuse, falsely, but it means evil men will hate you without a cause. JESUS WAS BLAMELESS AS A MAN. NOW HE PRESENTS THAT HUMAN BLAMELESSNESS IN ABSOLUTE FORM BEFORE GOD ON OUR BEHALF WHO BELIEVE IN HIM AND HIS WAY! Jesus was undefiled, unstained. Greek—*amiantos*, pure, unmixed, true. He was totally pure in thought and deed; totally pure in conscience. Not an iota of guilt attached to his being. He was not in the least soiled or dirty, he was absolutely clean in heart and soul. JESUS WAS PERFECTLY CLEAN AS A MAN. NOW HE PRESENTS THAT HUMAN CLEANNESS IN PERFECT PURITY BEFORE GOD ON BEHALF OF THOSE WHO TRUST AND FOLLOW HIM! Jesus was “separated from sinners.” It means he was different than sinners. It does not mean that Jesus was not really a man. He came to earth in the likeness of sinful flesh, lived among sinners, received sinners, ate with sinners, was known as the “friend of sinners,” yet he was different. The difference between him and sinful men lies not in the fact that he was not fully man, but in the fact that he WAS TRUE MANHOOD AT ITS HIGHEST AND BEST—MAN WITHOUT SIN! Thus his body did not see corruption, but he was raised from the dead. “Separated from sinners” probably refers primarily to his resurrection—BEYOND THE REACH OF SIN’S CORRUPTION, both here on earth and there in the tomb. “Made higher than the heavens” stresses his Godhead—His deity. He is co-equal with God the Father.

Everywhere we turn we find people as desperate as we were—people impotent and stained as we were. We look all about us for a friend to bring us back to God—to find our true orbit. We look to other people, human clergymen and priests, but they are as lost as we are! They are as imperfect as we are. There is One who has his ability and office not from appointment but from WHO HE IS AND THE LIFE HE LIVED. That is the basis of his priesthood, friendship, intercession. Jesus is PERFECT MANHOOD, ACCEPTABLE TO GOD IN THE ABSOLUTE DEGREE. And he cares for you and for me. He showed that while he was here on earth. He is right now ministering our needs before our Father in Heaven. Right now he is doing what is necessary to make those of us who want it acceptable to God—pleasing to God and God pleased with us. Aaronic priests, human priests, should they inadvertently sin, brought guilt upon the people. Aaronic priests, human priests, sinned themselves and so had to offer sacrifices constantly for their own sins (Lev. 16:6). Jesus, however, has no need to present any more sacrifices than the one, once-for-all

sacrifice of his own life. Not even for the sins of his people does he need to continue sacrificing. HE PRESENTED A PERMANENTLY EFFICACIOUS, COMPLETE AND FINAL OFFERING FOR ALL SIN, AN OFFERING SO PERFECT IT NEEDS NO REPETITION. Much less does he need to offer for any sin of his own. He needed none since he did not sin.

Unless they are Christians, human beings are lonely. Unless they are Christians they face, at best, oblivion after death—at worst, an eternal loneliness since they can find no association or circumstance in this life to give them relief from their cosmic, deep, abiding loneliness. Albert Camus, the existential philosopher and author, in his book, *The Stranger*, gives an opening line to the hero that is deliberately shocking—almost brutal in its simplicity: “Mother died today. Or, maybe yesterday; I can’t be sure.” The hero is completely detached from everyone and everything. He is unrelated even to his own mother! Alone, his life is geared to the immediate, the here and now, devoid of transcendence, devoid of significance. Over and over again we are told by Marjorie Holmes in her essay, “I’ve Got To Talk to Somebody, God!” that “despite all the talk that swirls around us, we are locked in a lonely prison. It is a secret and special place, a place for our own protection, yet a place of anxieties and fears, where the loneliness can be intolerable, unless we find God there.” The late Bertrand Russell, philosopher and mathematician (unbeliever) in his autobiography speaks of “that terrible loneliness in which one in shivering consciousness looks over the rim of the world into the cold, unfathomable, lifeless abyss.” Russell continues 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 one 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.” WHAT DESPERATION! WHAT HOPELESSNESS! WITHOUT GOD AND CHRIST!

Why are unbelievers lonely? Because they have rejected the only One who can supply an Absolute, Eternal Friendship—Jesus Christ. When people turn away from God they want to be alone; they want to be autonomous (self-ruled). Dissatisfied to reflect the divine image and be conformed to the image of God’s Son, Jesus, they are anxious to display their own glory, they long to be the substance, not the image. They are not willing to rule and have dominion in the name of and under the authority of God, but they want to control everything in their own name and authority. And God gives them their wish!!! Selfishness can triumph—but selfishness can only result in loneliness and lostness. Nothing in this whole universe can appease the infinite hunger for glory and perfect friendship in the soul of man. The God-given glory and friendship cannot be replaced by man-made honor and friendship. Man remains alone, without God. This is the origin of loneliness on the deepest level. Man is a stranger, cut off from God and others, divided within himself.

Loneliness is universal because man is indissolubly linked to God, His Creator, but man disregards God's way to be linked to him which is----FAITH.

What is the remedy? By faith accept the word and will and priesthood of Jesus Christ. By faith let him be your Friend, through his word and his Spirit. He will "make friends for you with God." His life lived in you will please God and you will be presented by him as reconciled. When man turns to God through Jesus Christ, he disavows the lie, the falsehood of human self-rule, and no longer finds himself alone. In Christ man admits that the foundation and root of life is in divine friendship. Man admits he cannot go it alone. Biblical truth is presented as a Person. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." When Pontius Pilate asked Jesus "What is truth," Pilate was looking for a human system of finding reality (logic, ethical code, science, etc.), BUT TRUTH AND REALITY IS A PERSON, JESUS CHRIST!

Everyone knows the story of the widow who cast in two mites into the temple treasury. She was a widow—ALONE. But Jesus saw the poor, lonely widow and called his disciples to him. He calls them to focus their attention on the widow. They ignored the widow. They exclaimed, "Master, look at the beautiful stonework and the wonderful buildings." At best their attention might have been aroused by some dignitary, a member of the Jewish council, or a distinguished foreign visitor. Responding to their admiration of the magnificent stones, Jesus announces the destruction of the temple. "The temple with all its pomp and glory will be destroyed; the soul of the widow lives on forever. The things which you disciples see—but you fail to see the widow, humble, poor, alone." She was remarkable and should have been noticed. JESUS SAW HER AND HAD COMPASSION ON HER!

Perhaps an overwhelming feeling of loneliness had gripped her in the midst of the crowd, perhaps the heroic act of faith was her response to the trials of life. But if she assumed that no one cared, no one observed, no one sympathized—SHE WAS MISTAKEN! JESUS SAW THE WIDOW, EVEN AS HE SAW ZACCHAEUS, THE WOMAN OF ILL-REPUTE IN THE PHARISEE'S HOUSE, THE PARALYTIC, THE OUTCAST, THE LONELY, THE LOST.

The loneliness of godly men and women can never be overwhelming, nor absolute. Regardless of our situation—regardless of doubt which might temporarily eclipse God or holiness which might alienate from some people, in spite of the presence of death and the tests of life, WE HAVE A FRIEND WHO CARES—HE IS A PERPETUAL, POWERFUL AND PERFECT FRIEND! NOTHING CAN SEPARATE FROM HIS CARE AND CONCERN. NO ONE IS LOST IN A CROWD OR INSULATED IN SPACE IF THEY BELONG TO JESUS! JESUS SAW THE WIDOW AND HE SEES YOU AND ME!

"When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned and the flame shall not consume you." Isa. 43:2. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Psa. 23.

“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.” John 15:13-15

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

HEBREWS 8:1-13

8. The author of Hebrews says, “Now the point is this...the Ultimate High Priest of God’s people ministers in the Ultimate Dwelling Place of the Ultimate God.” **THAT’S THE POINT—THE “REAL” SANCTUARY WHERE THE ULTIMATE HIGH PRIEST MINISTERS IS THE HOLIEST OF HOLIES—HEAVEN!** The Ultimate High Priest has already been contrasted with the non-eternal priesthood of the Levites. If the Messiah was declared to have his High Priesthood according to an order superior to the Levitical, it proves the Levitical was not the ultimate, real, priesthood—Aaron and his descendants were only a shadowy type of the real which was realized in Jesus Christ. The Messiah confirmed his appointment with an indestructible life. This being true, the Messiah’s High Priesthood must have **AN INDESTRUCTIBLE (REAL, ULTIMATE) SANCTUARY IN WHICH TO MINISTER!** The current malaise affecting all strata of society is evidence that what man is driven to long for, search for, and need is reality or, **THE ULTIMATE!** The very willingness of some to sacrifice principle and truth for peace at any price in the world is a search for the ultimate (utopia); the drug scene (tune-out, mind-expanding, euphoric) is an attempt to find something real and ultimate. Sexual promiscuity is a sign that people have not found the ultimate personal relationship and so they try to find it in multiple sexual adventures. Science and education and all their human philosophies and technologies are searches for the ultimate reality! **ALL THESE ARE MERE SHADOWS OF THE REAL, AND THE DEVIL USES THEM TO DECEIVE AND DIVERT MAN’S MIND AWAY FROM WHAT IS TRUTHFULLY REAL—GOD AND THE ULTIMATE MEDIATOR, JESUS CHRIST, AND THE WORD OF GOD.**

The Ultimate Sanctuary for the Ultimate High Priest is **HEAVEN—THE HOLIEST OF HOLIES!** The Holy of Holies in the OT tabernacle contained the Ark of the Covenant where the Shekinah Presence (Glory) of God dwelt in symbolic glory. But it was not the Ultimate—only a shadowy representation. God does not dwell in temples made by the hands of men (Isa. 66:1-2; Acts 7:48-50). The Ultimate Being, God, cannot be restricted to a place on this earth nor can he, in his ultimate presence, be approached by imperfect men—only representatively or typically! The temporary sanctuary must give way to the eternal sanctuary. So the eternal and absolute Holy of Holies is in Heaven, invisible to the human eye, **THE ONLY REAL ABIDING PLACE OF ALMIGHTY GOD.** There is where the Perfect Man, Jesus, is enthroned and ministering as the Perfect High Priest of those who believe in him. That Sanctuary (Heaven) cannot be destroyed by invading armies; Almighty God, its occupant, cannot be carried off to another temple and melted down and refashioned. The “Holy Place” (not the Holy of Holies) in the OT tabernacle foreshadowed the church of Christ on earth. Yes, the church is universal and eternal. Not even the gates of Hades (death) can prevail against it. The church is part of the heavenly sanctuary for Jesus has made Christians now (present tense) “to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” Eph.

2:6. We are “blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” Eph. 1:3. So, Jesus, enthroned in the Holiest of Holies (Heaven), also abides and ministers daily, constantly, in the church and to the church. He stands in the midst of the churches (Rev. 1:13) and holds the “messengers” of the churches in his right hand (Rev. 1:20). The prayers of the saints are answered from heaven (Rev. 8:1ff). The church is the habitation (temple) of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:21-22). The body of believers is symbolized as God’s temple (Rev. 11:1ff). Wherever two or three are gathered in Christ’s name, there he shall be in their midst (Matt. 18:20). The church is part of God’s ultimate sanctuary. We shall discuss this more thoroughly in the next chapter (Heb. 9). The church cannot be confined to one place—it is universal and eternal. People in covenant relationship to God through Christ are the church—NOT BUILDINGS. Buildings are tools—they shall perish just like the Hebrew temple. God does not dwell in buildings!

Millions are trying to find the Ultimate Residence of God in that which is visible to the human eye, sensate to the human touch—in their emotions or rationalizations. Many prefer to think of God dwelling in buildings so they can keep God isolated from the rest of their lives—from meddling in their thoughts and deeds at home, on the job, or in leisure time. The Jews fell into this trap of the devil—believing that as long as they had a temple-building God would stay with them no matter what they believed or did (see Jer. 7:1-34 and Ezekiel chapters 8,9,10,11). Pagans (Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, etal.) believed they could keep their gods out of their indulgences or could manipulate them to suit their fancies as long as they could keep their gods in earthly sanctuaries. NONE OF THESE EVER SATISFIED (NOT EVEN JEWISH) THE DEEPEST LONGINGS AND NEEDS OF THE HUMAN MIND AND HEART BECAUSE GOD HAS PUT ETERNITY IN THE HUMAN HEART (MIND) (Eccl. 3:11). Mankind can only find reality, the Ultimate Sanctuary (heaven and the church) through FAITH in Jesus’ word! The Ultimate is “set up by the Lord” not by man—therefore, not appropriated or entered into on human, earthly, levels of sight and touch! What a blessed revelation in Hebrews 8 & 9, that Jesus now ministers both in heaven and in the church. It would seem that we should expect nothing more from Jesus after he endured so much on earth and on the cross for us. It seem only right that he should return to heaven and revel selfishly in the glory he rightfully earned. But the Blessed Redeemer, in his exalted glory, still condescends to exercise the office of a minister, a High Priest, on our behalf. The marvelous grace and love of the Savior is boundless! And it is dispensed every moment of every day through his ministry as High Priest in the Sanctuary made by God. His attention is still concentrated on his persecuted and struggling church as it travels through the wilderness tribulations of this world (Rev. 12:12-17).

It is necessary to prove that Christ has a “place to minister as a priest” so it can be proved that he “is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices.” Christ could not minister in the earthly tabernacle or temple (Heb. 7:13-14) because he was of the tribe of Judah. Had Christ tried to minister (officially) there he would have flagrantly broken the law of Moses—and God (in the flesh) does not break his own law! Every high priest is ordained to offer offerings in the Holy of Holies, therefore, Christ being the Ultimate High Priest, offers the Ultimate Offering—

HE WAS APPOINTED HIGH PRIEST AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK FOR THAT VERY PURPOSE! The very fact (confirmed by his resurrection and ascension and his Holy Spirit sent back as he promised) that Jesus is there in the Heavenly Sanctuary (at the right hand of God the Father) is PROOF that the Ultimate Sacrifice has been offered, once for all (see Heb. 9:1—10:18). The Ultimate Sacrifice is his Perfect Manhood given up in death as the only suffering that would appease the perfect wrath of the perfect God. The continual, never ceasing, offerings of earthly high priests signified their offerings were never ultimately pleasing to God (Heb. 10:1-18). Jesus' offering was made once-for-all and pleased God for all time because it was Perfect—it lacked nothing—was not tainted by sin. Believe that Jesus has ascended to God's presence and is enthroned there, and the fact of his ultimate offering and priestly ministry follows logically! YOU SEE, ALL WE BELIEVE ABOUT JESUS' PRIESTHOOD DEPENDS ON THE HISTORICAL FACT OF HIS RESURRECTION (Heb. 13:20-21). If Christ (the Messiah) were on earth he would not be a priest since there were priests that offered gifts according to the Law of Moses. If the Messiah were on earth, in an earthly sanctuary, he would not be able to function as a priest because in so doing he would violate the law of God in the earthly, typical sanctuary. The Sanctuary where the Messiah is to function as a Priest MUST CORRESPOND IN DIGNITY TO THE SUPREME EXCELLENCE OF HIS CHARACTER AND HIS SACRIFICE. So the Messiah's absence from earth was not something for which the Hebrew-Christians should be ashamed, but was the necessary consequence of his Being, who he is and of what he has done!

The OT priests of the Levitical order served “a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary...” From God's viewpoint, Judaism was set aside when God rent the veil of the temple (Matt. 27:51; Heb. 9:6-14); but from the human viewpoint (see comments at 8:13), it was not accepted as abolished until the Roman emperor, Titus Vespasian, destroyed Jerusalem in A. D. 70. Israel's priests still served when the book of Hebrews was being written (ca. A.D. 66)—but against the will and wishes of God! Hebrews 8:5 indicates (along with 9:9 and 10:1) that practically all the ritual and buildings were typical of the realities (ultimates) to be realized in Christianity. The exhortation to Moses to make all things according to the pattern shows very definitely that God planned the tabernacle and the whole Mosaic system for a purpose which was not to be fulfilled in the Mosaic system itself! God revealed to Moses a pattern of the heavenly and commanded Moses to give material expression in earthly forms. THE NEW COVENANT DISPENSATION IS THE PATTERN MADE INTO REALITY—THE HEAVENLY-ULTIMATE! The OT is an earthly replica of God's actual, real sanctuary. The NT dispensation, which includes both the church and heaven, is what God intended all along, but immature, sinful, worldly-minded man had to have a visual, touchable replica to prepare him for the ultimate. THE CHURCH IS NOT A COPY OF ANYTHING—IT IS THE REALITY OF THE PATTERN, THE INTENDED, THE REAL! the high priesthood of Jesus Christ is “better” (actually the Ultimate) because it has been legislated (decreed by God at the resurrection of Christ Acts 13:33; Heb. 5:5-6) upon the immutable oath of God (Heb. 7:20-25). The Greek word in Heb. 8:6, *nenomothetetai* is translated “enacted” (RSV) or “established” (KJV). It is a perfect-passive tense verb and means “something legislated in the past with a continuing legislation.” It literally means, “something standing as legally established already and continues to be legally established.” Jesus' ministry (high priesthood) is established as the Ultimate relationship with God because

of the “better” surety explained in Heb. 7:22. The “better” priesthood of Jesus is guaranteed by the terms and promises of the Ultimate surety—Jesus’s sinless and indestructible human life! Please NOTE: The superiority of Christ’s relationship (mediator) on our behalf is not based on anything subjective—not on our feelings or the feelings of others—but on the covenant terms and promises WHICH ARE OBJECTIVE! Our subjective appreciation of Jesus’ high priesthood for us comes only AFTER we have been mentally “convinced” of the objective facts of its reality and superiority. FACTS, TESTIMONY, FAITH, FEELING—IN THAT ORDER—(this last sentence excerpted from *The Christian System*, by Alexander Campbell).

First, what is a covenant? The Hebrew word for covenant is berith from the root word bara which means “to bind, fetter, oblige.” Berith is the generic word in the OT and was used of both human and divine covenants. Human covenants were usually made between two equal parties, deciding themselves on the terms and agreeing to mutually satisfactory arrangements. However, when God gives his covenant to humans the two parties are on unequal levels. God announces his holy covenant (will) and extends his grace to human beings who are willing receive it by faith—a faith expressed in obedience to the particular terms dictated by God for a particular dispensation of his will. God unreservedly gives (or binds) himself to his people, and they in turn give (bind) themselves to him and belong to him as they trust him and enter this relationship through the terms he has stipulated. The Greek language has two words for “covenant”—suntheke and diatheke. The normal word for a covenant between two human beings is suntheke (marriages, business deals, treaties, etc.). However, the Greek word diatheke was used for a “last will and testament.” The term kata diatheken is the regular term for “according to the terms of the will.” In an ancient Greek papyrus paper a testator “leaves houses and gardens in accordance with the dispositions (diatheke) which are deposited in the temple of Aphrodite, with Eunomides the governor, with Ctesiphon the lawyer.” Every time you see the word “covenant” or “will” in Hebrews ch. 8 or 9, the word in the Greek text is diatheke! God’s New Testament diatheke-covenant was always extended on the terms of the testator! Our relationship with God is not something into which we entered on our own terms—it is something given to us solely and completely on the initiative and in the grace of God—on God’s terms! We are “in debt” to God because our covenant relationship to him is due to the approach of God and to nothing that we could ever have done. But a “covenant” is also a binding relationship of person to person wherein we receive his blessings and he is glorified in our acknowledgment of his divine sovereignty as we submit to his terms for the relationship.

God has always related himself to man by covenants. Even Adam and Eve’s relationship to God before they sinned was through a covenant (Hosea 6:7). In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve were to be related to God by grace through faith, expressed in obeying the terms (“thou shalt not eat of this tree”) given by God. There were also positive terms such as eating of the tree of life, tilling the ground, multiply, exercise dominion over the earth, etc. But Eve and Adam sinned and all Adam’s progeny since have sinned, so God set his plan in motion to produce a Perfectly Obedient Man and atone through him for all the sins of sinful mankind. Mont Smith writes in *What The Bible Says About Covenant*, pp. 29-30. “A Hebrew dictionary of theological terms or a dictionary of religion could be created by using covenant

as core. Every major philosophic and theological idea in the Bible is related in some way to covenant. It is a rare religious idea in the Bible that is not tied in some way to an aspect of a covenant.”

God gave the promise of grace through faith again to the patriarchs—especially to Abraham. But all the patriarchs sinned and broke God’s covenant terms with them. The covenant (or promise) given to Abraham contained the very nature and essence of what we have in Jesus Christ because Jesus is said to be “a Mediator of the circumcision, for the truth of God to confirm the promises made to the fathers” (Rom. 15:8). Jesus’ office as Mediator of the “new” covenant does not rescind the promises made to Abraham (and the fathers) but it ratifies and establishes these promises of “grace through faith.”

The Mosaic covenant was God’s continued redemptive program of grace through faith, “tutoring” mankind toward the actualizing of the Ultimate covenant of Grace through faith located in (the Messiah) Jesus Christ. The Law of Moses did not replace grace. Law was intended to drive men to seek grace through faith. Most of the Jews, from pride and desire for self-righteousness, took the ceremonies and ordinances and sought salvation in their ability to keep the Law. They even built up traditions to insure themselves that they had done all the Law said. But God does not, because he cannot, justify man through Law. Humans cannot keep any law—not even one they make for themselves! God justifies by grace, by sending the Perfect Human who did keep the Law and died to suffer the penalty of the Law in man’s place.

SO, GOD DID NOT FIND “FAULT” WITH WITH ANY OF THE COVENANTS HE MADE IN THE SENSE THAT HE MAY HAVE MADE A MISTAKE. GOD DOES NOT MAKE MISTAKES! All covenants prior to the New one in Christ had divinely inspired, intentional, “defects” in them and they were “short of the mark,” and didn’t “reach the goal” (were imperfect in that sense) that God ultimately had in mind in Christ, the Perfectly Obedient Human. These earlier “covenants” COULDN’T reach God’s ultimate goal because there were no perfect human beings to keep them!

9. Jeremiah said, “God found fault with them....” (the people) and predicted that God would establish or legislate, or decree, a “new covenant.” It is predicted in Jer. 31:31-34; 32:36-41; Ezek. 37:14-28; Hosea 2:16-23; Rom. 9:22-33, etc.). The “New” Covenant (i.e., New Testament) is not “new” in the sense that God formerly had some other way to save man. We repeat, God’s covenant(s) with humanity before humans ever sinned and ever after have always been—DIVINE GRACE APPROPRIATED BY HUMANS THROUGH THEIR FAITH AND OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S TERMS OF HIS COVENANT! God’s “new” covenant in Jesus Christ is new in the sense that it is the actualization of, the realization of, the finish of, the perfection of, the goal reached in, “Grace through faith.” Jesus was the Perfect Human Being who actualized God’s grace to mankind. He was the “Suffering Servant” predicted by Isa. ch. 53. All that God was doing before Jesus was in type, symbol, prophecy and indubitably incomplete. There was always the lingering, haunting, incompleteness in the “covenant” terms given to the “fathers.” The “new” covenant in Christ

is a “better” administration of God’s grace through faith, because it is enacted upon absolutely realized promises and appropriated through once-for-all and sufficient ordinances. The absolutely realized promises are the forgiveness of sin in the Perfect Man, crucified and risen from the dead, eternal life given by him and all the other promises that accrue thereto. The once-for-all sufficient ordinances or covenant terms are belief that Jesus is the Christ, repentance about sin, immersion in water according to his command, and discipleship governed by the law of love for Christ (2 Cor. 5:14ff).

The “new dispensation” (or “new covenant”) of God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ is better because (a) God’s final will, testament, or covenant is written not on tables of stone but on the heart of humans who believe. The “new” is the ultimate one because it has the power of love to impress it or make it reach into the heart of man, whereas the “old” covenant was enacted through fear and force and it made humans stand back, away from God, through guilt, uncleanness, estrangement. The “old” never gave complete peace, security, guiltlessness in the heart. A small minority of the OT “saints” had the law of God written on their hearts (Psa. 37:30-31; 48:8; Isa. 51:7, etc.) but that was after they had been physically born and a member of the “covenant” without choice; (b) the “new” covenant is totally spiritual, has nothing do with genetics, and is universal. It is appropriated through knowledge, teaching, learning, discipleship and comes to those who objectively know and do Christ’s covenant terms—its emphasis is intimacy. In the “old” covenant God dealt with man through angels, prophets, dreams, laws—in the “new” he deals with man incarnately. The Hebrews were “born” into the “old” covenant physically and not by choice. The “new” is based totally on choice, physical birth, nationality, station in life are irrelevant in the new relationship to God—it comes by spiritual rebirth. Everyone who wishes covenant relationship with God may now have it through Jesus Christ by faith; (c) the “new” provides for the actual, ultimate, “once-for-all-time” forgiveness of sin. In the “old” the worshiper could never have the knowledge, and feeling which follows knowledge, that their sins were ultimately, perfect, once-for-all forgiven at the point in time when they gave their animal sacrifices. God merely “passed over” their sins in anticipation of the ultimate sacrifice, Christ (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:15). This left the mind of the true worshiper longing for the ultimate solution (see 1 Pet. 1:10-12). It is reported that the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates said to Plato, “It may be that God can forgive sin, but I do not see how.” NO MAN HAS EVER BEEN ABLE TO UNDERSTAND HOW! GOD HAS SIMPLY SAID THAT HE HAS DONE IT; GOD HAS PROVED THAT HE DID IT BY THE LIFE, DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST; MAN MUST, ON THAT DEMONSTRATED BASIS, BELIEVE THAT GOD HAS! God’s dealing with the sin problem is all of grace. God in the Person of his Son provided a way to satisfy his holy justice, and, in love, to forgive sin. Thus, the love of God is the answer to Socrates dilemma. In the “old” satisfying the terms required sinless obedience to God’s law which was never accomplished—until Jesus Christ, the Perfect Human did “what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. He condemned (conquered) sin in the flesh and offered his sinlessness for the sinfulness of all who will love and trust him and enter into his “new covenant.” William Barclay puts it: “The new covenant puts man into a relationship with a God, who is still a God of justice, but a God whose justice has been swallowed up in his love.”

Hebrews 8:13 is a transitional verse. It becomes a closing statement to the discussion of covenants; and an opening statement in the discussion (in chapter 9) of the perfection and the once-for-allness of the redemptive work of Christ. The Greek word *pepalaioken*, translated “he treats...as obsolete...” is a perfect tense verb (i.e., “he has made and is continuing to make....obsolete”). This indicates God had been making the “old” covenant “obsolete” all along. The Greek word *palaioumenon*, translated, “what is become obsolete” is a present tense participle, indicating that the “old” covenant was still being practiced as the author wrote (i.e., many Jews were still trying to keep the Law after Christ had died and risen from the grave). But the “old covenant” was “old” from its beginning! The prophets predicted the demise of the “old” (Jer. 3:15-18; Dan. 9:24-27, etal.). Jesus upbraided some of his disciples for not anticipating the abrogation of the “old” (Lk. 24:25-27). John the Baptist’s message and ministry (i.e., baptism of repentance unto remission of sins) forecasted the end of the Mosaic system (Lk. 16:16). The Greek word *geraskon* in 8:13 is translated “growing old” and is the word from which we derive the English words geriatrics and gerontology (the study of aging). Hebrews 8:13 furnishes us with an undeniable clue that, while judicially God abrogated the “old” covenant in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Jews were still practicing Judaism and the Temple was still standing when this treatise to the Hebrews was being written (ca. A.D. 66). Hebrews may well have been written as the Romans began to encircle the city of Jerusalem (A. D. 66) with their siege walls (see Matt. 25:15; Lk. 21:20-24; Mk. 13:14ff.). It would be unmistakably clear to Paul, the writer, that “the Day” was approaching which Jesus predicted of the “end” of the city of Jerusalem and the temple (Matt. 23:37—24:34) and Judaism was about to “vanish away” in its Old Testament format, forever! Judaism is still practiced today, but it is a far cry from what the OT legislates. Modern Judaism has no temple, no animal sacrifices, and, in reality, no priesthood—Jews do not go to Jerusalem to practice Passover, Tabernacles and Pentecost.

Thus, in Christ and the church, and our heavenly “citizenship” we have the real residence of God, the real religion or “covenant” with God and the real relationship or mediator-ship with God. By “real” we do not mean to imply that the OT temple, law and priesthood were not physical realities—BUT THEY WERE, METAPHORICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY, ONLY THE “COPIES AND SHADOWS” OF THE HEAVENLY! The old was simply not the Ultimate, not the Perfect, not the Complete. The New is the Ultimate, perfect, final and complete. The reality we have by faith in Christ is the only authentic, certain, vital and intimate relationship that can ever be! There is none to follow in this existence because anything following this side of Heaven could never match what we presently have in Christ. The living presence of Christ as he ministers in his high priesthood is known and participated in through his living Spirit which lives in our minds, in the church, through our response to his living word (Jn. 14:23; 15:10, etc.). We can tell Jesus things we cannot tell anyone else, because he understands perfectly and ultimately. We can ask his help when we cannot ask anyone else, because he is able to help to the uttermost. We can allow him to write his words and his image on us and we can imitate his life because he is perfectly holy, true, pure, authentic, real and eternal. Not one shred of hypocrisy is in him. Not one selfish thought is in him. Not one evil, false, destructive motive ever moved him. HE WANTS, WITH ALL HIS BEING, ONLY WHAT IS GOOD AND BEST FOR US! Every service rendered in covenant relationship to him shall abide forever (1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 14:13). This is the authentic, REAL,

relationship for mankind—this is the real thing! When all human social structures crumble with time and God’s judgment upon them (which is inevitable), man needs a real residence, an Eternal Sanctuary built by God, not one built by human hands. When one comes to death one wants a real, authentic, certain religion, based on historically demonstrated certainties; that is found in Christ and his Way. When one is disappointed or betrayed by insincere persons, or when one realizes that all human relationships are short of the Ultimate, one needs a real, authentic, vital and perfectly intimate Personal relationship—that is found in Christ. If you haven’t found the “real thing” in your life—try Jesus Christ and his word. Christ came to earth to accomplish the ultimate reality for you—he offers it to you, he proved he is able to give it to you by his resurrection from the tomb. All you need to do to have it is accept it by faith and give Christ your obedience to his covenant!

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

HEBREWS 9:1-28

The tabernacle of the Mosaic dispensation is denominated in the Greek text of the book of Hebrews in as skene, which means, simply, “tent.” In the OT Hebrew language both the words mishekkan and hohel are used for “tabernacle” and both mean, simply, “tent.” THE TABERNACLE WAS A HUGE TENT! But it was no ordinary tent! The court surrounding the “tent” was 150 ft. x 75 ft. The “tent” itself was 45' long x 15' wide and 15' high. The Holy Place in which was the menorah (lamp-stand), the table of the Presence (“shew-bread”), and the altar of incense was 30' x 15'. The Holy of Holies wherein resided the ark of the covenant (with the pot of manna, the tables of stone, and Aaron’s rod in it; with the cherubim on either side of it) was a 15' x 15' x 15' x 15' cube—symbolizing perfection. It was overlaid with gold and silver and there were precious jewels placed in it. Free-will offerings provided the materials (Ex. 25:1-9; 35:4-29; 36:5-7). In today’s dollars it would be worth \$10,000,000 or more.

Details of its construction are described twice in Exodus showing its significance to Israel. While God only used 2 chapters to tell of the Creation, he used at least 13 chapters and more to discuss the tabernacle! The O.T. tabernacle is presented as a type of the Christian religion now operative (Heb. 9:1:ff). The OT tabernacle is also an illustration of God’s heavenly dwelling (Heb. 8:1-6; 9:1ff; Rev. 11:1-19). God’s insistence that the OT tabernacle be made according to the precise pattern outlined by God himself, stresses its importance (Heb. 8:5). It was a sanctuary—the word sanctuary means a “place set apart,”—for God. God showed his presence in some form that humans might see without dying immediately, (see Ex. 33:20; 20:19; Deut. 5:22-27; 2 Cor. 3:7-11; Jn. 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16). At the tabernacle, God received the worship of his people (Ex. 29:43-46). God promised to dwell there among his people (Ex. 25:8)—especially in the Holy of Holies (Ex. 25:22). Today, God dwells in the midst of his church, just as he dwelt among the Israelites (2 Chron. 6:16; Eph. 2:21-22; Rev. 1 - 3). It is no coincidence that the human body is called a “tent” (2 Cor. 5:1ff; 2 Pet. 1:13-14) because the Spirit of God dwells in human beings which is really what the Church is—God dwelling in people-tents! The presence and worship of God give order, protection and purpose to human life. The worship of God should be as central to us as the tabernacle was central in the camp of Israel.

The OT tabernacle is called a parable in Heb. 9:9 in the Greek text. In Heb. 8:5 and 10:1 the entire OT system is called in Greek, skia, “shadows,” and hupodeigmati, “copies” of the good things coming (present tense “then coming”—not future tense), i.e., the beginning of the Messianic (Christian) age and not the “reality” (Greek, eikona, “form or substance”). In other words, the OT system was only an “outline”—like a shadow or mere representation. But it contained the essence of the reality completed in Christ and the church. The NT dispensation of God’s grace through faith in Christ, membership in his church, and high-

priesthood in heaven, is the reality, the substance, that real “religion” which the OT outlines in shadow. First Corinthians 10:11 states that all the history of Israel was typical (Greek *tupikos*) of the things reserved for us “upon whom the ends of the ages have arrived” (i.e., the Christian age). The OT tabernacle was visible and earthly. The NT church and heaven are spiritual realities, but mostly invisible and heavenly. The Christian religion is not an after-thought of God—he had it planned from the foundation of the world. But the Israelites were spiritually immature and needed a centralized shrine with all its visible, sensate trappings. God’s people were not yet ready for a relationship with him on the invisible, spiritually-assimilated level. So, God gave a parable (i.e., parable, “something cast alongside”) of what he desired and had planned for the ultimate relationship with humans which, while REALITY, would be invisible, spiritual, and other-worldly. One has only to look at the many “world religions” (and even some forms of Christianity) to see that human beings have not matured much beyond the level of the ancient Israelites in their ability to know, obey, serve, and worship God spiritually, invisibly, and heavenly. So much religion that is not according to the New Testament scriptures today survives only because it has all the trappings of cathedrals, priesthoods, images, ornate and elaborate rituals which can be seen, touched, and methodically, outwardly complied with.

The whole tabernacle is a “parable” of NT Christianity. (a) the outer court contained the altar of burnt offering and the laver (wash basin)—it was where the Israelite sinner took his animals to be sacrificed as atonement for his sins and where the Israelite priest (mediator) “washed” himself before going into the tabernacle to sprinkle the blood of the worshiper’s animal for atonement. It symbolized the “world” (Rev. 11:2) into which God has now thrust his redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross and baptism in his name by believers so that Christ may represent them in heaven with his atoning blood (see Heb. 2:1-18; 7:23-28; 9:23-28; 10:19-22; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Ga. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:21, etc.). Christ is our “passover lamb” (1 Cor. 5:7), the “Lamb of God” who takes away the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29); (b) the holy place (the first “room” inside the tent) contained the menorah (7-pronged-lamp-stand) burning constantly with specified oil (Ex. 25:37; 27:20), the altar of incense upon which incense was burned at regulated hours of prayer, and the table of shew-bread, or Bread of the Presence, containing 12 loaves of bread, replenished and eaten every week by the priests only (except on one extreme occasion, Matt. 12:3-8) as a covenant memorial of the Presence of God in the midst of his people (Lev. 24:5-9). The lamp-stand symbolized the Word of God (incarnated in Jesus) as the ONLY Light of God in the Church—inscriptured in the Bible (Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:19). The altar of incense symbolized the prayers of the saints constantly going up before the throne of God and being answered by God’s redemptive work in the world (Psa. 141:2; Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4). The table of shew-bread symbolized the Lord’s Supper participated in weekly by the “priests” (individual Christians), as a memorial of God’s covenant with them through Jesus Christ (Matt. 26:26-29; Lk. 21:14-21; Acts. 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-32); (c) the priesthood—Aaron, the high priest, was a type of Christ; the Levites and lesser priests typified the “priesthood of believers” (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6); (d) the holy of holies—was the second “room” in the tabernacle, and a perfect cube. It contained the ark of the covenant covered over by the wings of the two seraphim on either end of it, in which had been placed the tables of stone (Decalogue), a pot of manna, and Aaron’s rod that had miraculously “budded.” It was called the “mercy seat” or “the footstool of God’s throne”

(see 1 Chron. 28:2; Psa. 132:7-8; Rom. 3:25; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10—the word “propitiation” in Greek is hilasmos or “mercy seat”), where the Shekinah-glory, a Hebrew word found not in the Bible but the Jewish Targums, with perhaps allusions to it in Isa. 60:2; Ezek. 10:18; 11:23; Lk. 2:9; Rom. 9:4) where some measure of the “Presence” of God dwelt. Thus, the holy of holies is a type of heaven or the place where God the Almighty is enthroned and the veil between the holy place and the holy of holies (Lk. 23:44-45; Heb. 10:19-20) was a type of the humanness of Christ which was “rent” on the cross providing access to God’s immediate presence for us through Christ’s atoning blood and his appointment to a high-priesthood after the order of Melchizedek.

Jehovah-God was the architect who drew the pattern for Moses to follow (Ex. 25:9,40). God was also the architect for the temple of Solomon (1 Chron. 28:19—see Heb. 8:5). Jehovah has never allowed man to originate a single religious institution! Like the tabernacle, the church is built according to divine pattern (the tabernacle is an earthly, temporary pattern of the church). **DO NOT EVER LET ANYONE TELL YOU THAT THERE IS NO PATTERN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR THE INSTITUTION OF AND OPERATION OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST!** Human beings have infringed on the divine sovereignty and changed the church in many areas from the divine blueprint. This can be corrected only by going back to the divine model and the divinely recorded practice of the first century Christians as detailed in Acts and the Epistles! **THAT WAS THE RAISON D’ETRE (reason for existence) OF THE “RESTORATION MOVEMENT” FOUNDED BY THE O’KELLEYS, STONES, CAMPBELLS, SMITHS, SCOTTS, etal. IN THE LATE 1700’s AND EARLY 1800’s IN AMERICA—NOW CALLED THE “CHRISTIAN CHURCH/CHURCHES OF CHRIST.”** Even the workmen on the OT tabernacle (the “type”) were divinely selected and inspired for the work (Ex. 31:1-11; 35:30—36:2). No mistake dared to be made because the structure was to be an exact copy of heavenly things,” i.e., the Church (Heb. 8:5). In the same way the NT Church was built. Jesus selected his apostles and qualified them for the work by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:13; 20:21-23; Acts 2:4). Thus the apostles constructed the spiritual sanctuary of God in harmony with the “type” (i.e., the tabernacle) and gave the world a perfect institution for salvation, for service and for worship.

SO LONG AS THE OT TABERNACLE STOOD (WHICH WOULD INCLUDE THE TEMPLE AS IT CAME LATER UNDER SOLOMON), GOD MEANT MAN TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE WAY INTO THE REAL, ULTIMATE, SPIRITUAL HOLY OF HOLIES WAS NOT YET OPEN (HEB. 9:8). Because the sacrifices had to be made continually, there was imperfection, dissatisfaction, and always the feeling by the worshiper of incompleteness (Heb. 10:1-10). Even the high priest had to offer blood for his own sins. The ceremonies were concerned with food and drink, various ablutions (washings) and rules for bodily conduct. God had to start with the Israelites on the “bodily” level because of their hardness of heart, hoping all the time some would see that the ultimate need was spiritual cleansing by God’s grace and their appropriation of that grace by simple, completely committed faith. Some never did graduate from the “bodily” level! Some today never seem to get past “outward” forms to the “inner man.” All along, as God desired it, the true Jew was one who was inwardly-spiritual (Rom. 2:28-29; 4:9-12; 9:6-13). There were 3 things the OT tabernacle

and its “bodily” ordinances could not do which the remainder of our text tells us the NT relationship (the Church) does do, because in the Church we have the REAL, ABIDING, ONCE-FOR-ALL, ULTIMATE PRESENCE OF GOD IN THE HOLY SPIRIT AS HE DWELLS IN INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS. The three things the Old system could not do, which the New does, are: (a) give ultimate purification; (b) give ultimate power; (c) give ultimate perfection.

Didn't the blood of animals make atonement for the sins of the Israelites? YES AND NO! YES, TEMPORARILY, AND ONLY THROUGH THE FAITH OF THE ISRAELITE'S ANTICIPATION OF A PROMISED PERFECT HUMAN BEING SACRIFICED AS THE PROMISED “SEED” (SINGULAR) OF ABRAHAM (GAL. 3:16-17) i. e, THE “SUFFERING SERVANT OF JEHOVAH” (SEE ISA. 53:1-12; DAN. 9:24-27) FOR PERFECT, COMPLETE, FINAL ATONEMENT FOR SINS. A “remnant” of Israelites DID “long” for what the OT prophets predicted (see 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Mt. 11:2-6; Lk. 2:25-38; 3:15-17) NO, ANIMAL SACRIFICES COULD NEVER CLEANSE THE CONSCIENCES OF SINFUL HUMAN BEINGS. Human beings need purifying; they are sinners and they know they are dirty in their consciences before Absolute Purity and Absolute Power. Humans, when honest, know they can't cleanse themselves. That is evident in Paul's description of the realization of guilt by the whole human race, Gentile and Jew, in Romans chapters 1 & 2. There is a sentence of eternal condemnation upon humankind for its rebellion against God and it is clearly evident from all the human “religions” that construct human systems of “purification” and “atonement” or “appeasement of the gods,” that all humankind knows it stands condemned. Unredeemed man is at war (enmity) with God (Rom. 5:10; 8:5-8; 11:28; Eph. 2:3; Col. 1:21; Jas. 4:1-10. Unredeemed man is estranged and God has judged him (Eph. 2:11-22). His conscience is burdened with guilt and remorse; his potentiality is paralyzed by all his sin and rebellion. Unredeemed man's spiritual nature is eternally enslaved and penalized in sin. In his ignorance and self-deception he seeks to appease God and relive his guilt by a system of works which, ironically enough, only tends to sink him more deeply into guilt because in his innermost heart he knows he can never do enough to atone for the sin of his soul. The ceremonies of the OT tabernacle were incapable of cleansing the conscience of the worshiper (Heb. 9:9 & 10:2)—Greek, *suneidesin*, literally, “know-within” or “conscience”—another form of the same word is used in 1 Pet. 3:21). J. B. Phillips translation of Colossians 2:20-23 is interesting: “So, if, through your faith in Christ, you are dead to the principles of this world's life, why, as if you were still part and parcel of this world-wide system, do you take the slightest notice of these purely human prohibitions—Don't touch this, Don't taste that and Don't handle the other? This, that and the other will all pass away after use! I know that these regulations look wise with their self-inspired efforts at worship, their policy of self-humbling, and their studied neglect of the body. But in actual practice they do honor, not to God, but to man's own pride.” The blood of animals could neither satisfy the perfect justice of the Perfect God, nor the conscience put in the human being by his Creator. The animal sacrificed was a dumb, amoral being—it could never substitute for the deliberate, moral offense of a human being against an Absolute God. It could never relieve the guilt of the human soul to have a dumb, amoral animal killed in the human's place.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, however, obtained purification because it was Jesus'

own perfect, human, moral life (blood) that he willingly offered in exchange for our sinfulness. Jesus entered once-for-all into the Holiest of Holies having won for us eternal reconciliation to God. Here, in Jesus Christ, was Man, as man was intended to be, in the flesh, suffering all the trials and tests of the flesh, but victorious over them all by a perfect faith and obedience to God the Father. Then, voluntarily, rationally, willingly, lovingly, omnipotently (no one took his life from him), he accepted the punishment of God's wrath (the second death) on our behalf. In "his eternal spirit he offered himself to God as the perfect sacrifice..." (Heb. 9:14). To know that it was through eternal spirit that Christ offered himself heightens and intensifies the value of his offering. It was the sacrifice of his perfect humanity, sustained and supported by his own deity, that gave to his offering its infinite value. In other words, to know that Christ was Absolute Man, Absolute God, and Eternal Spirit, and that he still willingly, unbounded by any conditions, laid down his life (when he didn't have to, unlike transitory, amoral animals, or other sinful humans) makes his sacrifice AMAZING GRACE! (See 2 Cor. 5:14-21). What Christ did satisfies God's wrath upon sin and relieves the burdened conscience of man. So, if man is not proud, and if, by faith, he will accept God's new covenant terms, man may be cleansed, purified and actually declared, "not guilty." By faith, believing human beings accept Christ's death for theirs and by faith they are raised to a new life in him and in the act of baptism this is initiated (Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12-15, etc.).

Notice J. B. Phillips translation of Heb. 9:15: "Christ is consequently the administrator of an entirely new agreement having the power, by virtue of his death, to redeem transgressions committed under the first agreement: to enable those who obey God's call to enjoy the promises of the eternal inheritance." I have underlined the significant words here. The two key words are power and enable. The OT tabernacle with its Holy Place with the altar of incense, the shew-bread, and the menorah, was entered by the priest regularly to maintain communion with God through prayer, remembrance of God's sustaining Presence, and to light the menorah-lamp to dispel darkness within the sanctuary. All this gave the Israelite a point of physical contact with the Presence of God. It aided him, through a separated priesthood, to have a veiled, typical fellowship with Jehovah. But it was all so distant, veiled and circumscribed by Law, there was little power for regeneration. It was a relationship based on fear, burden of law, guilt rolled forward year by year, reminding man of his still unreconciled relationship. But the NT Holy Place, or "sanctuary" is the Church. And God has "blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3)—the Church is that "heavenly place." In the death of Christ there is power, enabling power. An animal sacrifice was made because the regulations and ordinances of the Law decreed that it should be. Animal sacrifice was entirely the product of law; the sacrifice of Jesus is entirely the product of love. We pay our debts because we have to; we give a gift to our loved ones because we want to. It is not law but LOVE that lies behind the sacrifice of Christ—and this is the enabling power, the drawing power, the "controlling power" (2 Cor. 5:14).

Forgiveness, the power that enables, is a costly thing. For Jesus to bring us back into covenant relationship cost him his life. No covenant or last will and testament (diatheke) can be ratified without the death of the testator ("shedding of blood")—especially if it has to do with redeeming life itself. The covenant (testament) of forgiveness or mercy means the

forgiver or the one showing mercy must, in some way, assume the penalty of the one forgiven—the forgiver must bear the burden of the wrong done in order to forgive. Divine forgiveness is costly. If God truly, ultimately forgives man, God must bear the ultimate burden—the penalty for rebellion—death in the ultimate sense (the “second, eternal, death”) so as to ratify our covenant of eternal life through “exchange” or “ransom paid.” William Barclay writes: “God is love, but God is also holiness. God, least of all, can break the great moral laws on which the universe is built. Sin must have its punishment or the very structure of life disintegrates. And God alone can pay the terrible price that is necessary before men can be forgiven....Forgiveness is never a case of saying: ‘It is all right, it doesn’t matter.’ Forgiveness is the most costly thing in the world. Without the shedding of heart’s blood there can be no remission and forgiveness of sins....There is nothing which brings a man to his senses with such arresting violence as to see the effect of his sin on someone who loves him in this world, or on the God who loves him forever, and to say to himself: ‘It cost that to forgive my sin!’” Where there is Divine forgiveness, there must be a Divine Someone dying to self!

The blood of Christ atoned retroactively in the ultimate sense for the sins of all the faithful who were under the first covenants (and I say “covenants” plural for Christ’s atoning death covered the sins of all Gentiles under the original covenant of “grace accessed through faith” in the ages before the Mosaic dispensation of God’s covenant). Remember, Abram was “reckoned to be righteous” by his faith when he was a Gentile (before he was circumcised) in Genesis 15:6. Those OT saints who offered animal sacrifices, in faith, that God would some day deal with the sin problem with an Ultimate Human Sacrifice (the Messiah, God’s Anointed One) were justified by that faith (Rom. 4:4; Jas. 2:21-23, etc.). Romans 3:25-26 states that God, as it were, passed by the sins of those faithful humans for a time, and that in the end of the ages he set forth Jesus Christ as an Ultimate Propitiation (mercy seat) for all sin. No sin was ever forgiven absolutely, without the blood of Christ! Just like no debt is ever paid absolutely by mere paper currency. Those paper dollars we have are only “promissory notes” based on an ultimate deposit (it used to be the gold in Ft. Knox, now it’s the GNP) that is supposed to be available. That is what animal sacrifices were—promissory notes—based on God’s Anointed who was coming at a specified time (Gal. 4:4). As Milligan says, “...no one could read his ‘title clear to mansions in the skies,’ until by the blood of Christ his sins were all canceled absolutely, and the notes and bonds that had been issued in behalf of the sinner were all redeemed by the one great atoning sacrifice.”

This new covenant, founded, paid for, administered by Christ and his Holy Spirit, is administered through the written word of the Spirit and through the work of the ministry of the Church in communicating that word (Eph. 4:11-16). Here in the fellowship of his death and his resurrection we share in the redemption he has won for us. Here we serve and worship him and edify one another, building one another up in the most holy faith primarily by the teaching of God’s word. Human beings cannot be in covenant relationship with Christ and God outside the church of the Lord Jesus Christ! The church is absolutely necessary to salvation. Man’s salvation is in the power to be changed into the image of his Creator—that is done only in God’s Presence—His Presence is only in the church! Give attention to these words of L. Nelson Bell (Billy Graham’s father-in-law) writing in Christianity Today, July 31,

1970: “Accused of being irrelevant and anxious to remedy a situation that threatens to lead to national and world disaster, the Church reacts by preaching and teaching what the world wants to hear—food for the hungry, population control, peace at any price, economic security, political realignments, an end to pollution, and a 1000 and one other matters of man’s physical welfare. The Gospel was never intended to please man; it is to save him. For the believer it requires humility, while for those who will not believe it is foolishness. We must face up to the reason that God’s Son came into the world. If his PRIMARY mission was to make the world a better place in which to live, then the Church should design its message and activities according to the humanistic concept. BUT THAT IS NOT THE GOSPEL! If on the other hand Christ came into the world PRIMARILY to solve the sin problem with its resulting estrangement of man from God and man from man, if he came to enable those who repent and believe in him to become new creatures through regeneration, if he came to present men an alternative to perishing in their sins, then the most relevant thing the Church can possibly do is to preach Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, as man’s one hope for eternity and his assurance of inner peace right now.”

The things “purified” by Christ’s blood (death) would definitely include the church—its “citizens” or members and its ministry. But Heb. 9:24 says Christ entered into heaven itself! Milligan, after saying that we do not really know, suggests, that perhaps the reason Christ had to purify something in heaven itself was due to the fact that many of the saints of the OT were admitted into heaven in anticipation of the death of Christ, and that though justified by faith, through the grace and forbearance of God, they nevertheless required the purifying application of the blood of Christ when shed, in order to make them absolutely holy. That sounds a lot like part of the doctrine of one of the “Christian cults” in existence today—not that Milligan would have believed this modern-day “cult.” All our text (and the rest of Scripture) says is that Christ entered once for all—not repeatedly—and took away sin once for all at the end of the age. That is quite contrary to Roman Catholic doctrine which states: “I profess that in the Mass is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead; and that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist there is truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ...” The Creed of pope Pius IV, cited from Roman Catholicism, by Lorraine Boettner, op.cit. The Council of Trent (Roman Catholic) declared: “The sacrifice (in the Mass) is identical with the sacrifice of the Cross, inasmuch as Jesus Christ is a priest and victim both. The only difference lies in the manner of offering, which is bloody upon the cross and bloodless on our altars.” *ibid.* It is amazing how many people (and many of them members of the Roman Catholic church) do not understand the alleged significance of the Roman Catholic “Mass.” Some think of it as merely a church ritual and dismiss it as just another form of the Lord’s Supper—it is not so for the Catholic, for him it is a sacrifice, and that is the most important element of the mass for him—in fact the mass is the central point in their whole worship program. Jesus is sacrificed again at every “mass.” THIS ROMAN CATHOLIC DOGMA IS A REVERSION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT REPETITION OF SACRIFICES!

In the OT nothing was ever complete or perfected (Heb. 10:1-10). Continual offerings of blood had to be made. Atonement had to be made every time an Israelite

became “unclean” and on a special day (Yom Kippur) every year, even for the priests, and their sins were always in their consciences. There was a barrier remaining between man and God—the commandments had not yet been fulfilled, obeyed perfectly—the ordinances were still against man—the way into heaven was still incomplete. But the sacrifice of Christ was the perfecting sacrifice. It paid the whole debt, once for all time. Christ’s death fulfilled the sentence of the law and the barrier was torn asunder. Christ has dealt with the sin problem ONCE-FOR-ALL! When he comes the second time it will not be to deal with sin (Heb. 9:27-28). There are only TWO “COMINGS” of Christ—the first time to deal (once for all time) with sin when he came incarnately, born in a manger in Bethlehem, and dying on Calvary. His only OTHER “COMING” will be his “second” and final “coming” to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. This is what Heb. 9:27-28 clearly, unequivocally, and plainly teaches! His second coming will also be for judgment upon those who “know not God and have not obeyed the gospel” (2 Thess. 1:5-10). Just as Jesus was sacrificed only once, he will come only once more. Just as it is appointed for men to die (physically) once, and after that comes judgment, so it was appointed that Jesus die once for sin and come back one more time to save those eagerly waiting for him. William Barclay notes: “the idea of judgment after death” (though inwardly realized, Rom. 2:14-16) was shocking teaching to the Greek mind.” Some Greek philosophers believed that man died and that was final—nothing after death. Some didn’t! Aeschylus wrote, “When earth once drinks the blood of a man, there is death once and for all and there is no resurrection.” Euripides said: “It cannot be the dead to light shall come. For the one loss is this that never mortal maketh good again—the life of man though wealth be re-won.” G. Lowes Dickinson points out, that when the Greek faced death, the first and last word was “Farewell!” for death was the end. Tacitus writing the tribute to the great Agricola could only finish it with “If....” “If there be any habitation for the spirits of just men, if, as the sages will have it, great souls perish not with the body, mayest thou rest in peace.” Marcus Aurelius can only say that when a man dies, and his spark goes back to be lost in God, all that is left is “dust, ashes, bones and stench.” **“IF” IS ALL THAT IS LEFT TO THE MAN WITHOUT THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST! “IF” IS THE BEST ANYONE CAN DO OUTSIDE OF CHRIST!** The significant thing about our whole text in Hebrews 9 is the basic expectation that man will rise again. Christ comes a second time, not deal with sin, but to bring to full salvation those who eagerly await him. Then shall God’s “tabernacle” (Presence) be with man in all its consummate reality (Rev. 21:1-4). There’s NO “if” with Christ!

Now if the sacrifice of Christ has been made and never needs to be made again, what of the theories of the dispensational premillennialists that the Jews will rebuild the Jewish temple and re-institute the Jewish sacrifices so they can please God? **IT IS RIDICULOUS, OR THE NEW TESTAMENT IS NOT THE FINAL REVELATION OF GOD!** Clearly there are not going to be three and maybe four “comings” of the Lord as the dispensationalists have it at the “rapture” and then at the “millennium” then at the end of time. The way into heaven, the way into the actual, real presence of God, is forever open and can never be closed again. Nothing need ever be added to what Jesus has done to open and to keep open the way to God’s love for sinning men and fellowship with him daily in his sanctuary (the church). Most certainly, God would not have us going back to animal sacrifices, an earthly temple, priesthood, and ceremonies! We shall deal at more length with the perfecting nature of Christ’s work in the 10th chapter. A tale of two tabernacles—the old,

imperfect, unable to remove the barrier to man's eternal longing for the complete, finished work of God. The other, the new, able to beget man anew to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (Heb. 13:20-21).

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**HEBREWS 10:1-39**

Human beings have long had ideals of the “perfect human.” To some he is a sort of comic-strip Superman, with super-human powers, never tempted to do evil, always wins over physical circumstances, and fights to uphold truth and justice. Walter Lippman in his book, *A Preface to Morals*, said the ideal man would be “transpersonal—able to transcend the immediacy of desire by sheer will-power—a stoic.” Friedrich Nietzsche (the philosopher who became insane) wrote about the brutal, biologically-pure superman, a Caucasian, without belief in God or forgiveness which is a sign of weakness. Nietzsche called his ideally perfect man, *Übermensch* (German, for “superman”). He believed the theory of Darwinian evolution (struggle for existence, survival of the fittest) would produce a Germanic super-race. His philosophy spawned the “Third Reich” and Nazi Germany. Nietzsche was idolized by Adolph Hitler, Darwin was idolized by Joseph Stalin. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), the Greek philosopher and tutor of Alexander the Great, thought the perfect man would be an aristocratic, erudite philosopher, contemptuous of the servant mentality and self-reliant. Every generation of mankind has idealized its perfect man—epicurean, ascetic, playboy, soldier, intellectual, etc. But like Dr. Frankenstein’s perfect man, they have all turned into monsters.

In the Old Testament there are two Hebrew words used most frequently and translated “perfect.”—*tamim*, translated, “perfect, whole, entire, full” (Lev. 3:9; 23:15); and *shalom*, translated most often, “peace” but also means, “whole, entire, uncut, perfect, full” (Deut. 25:15; 27:6; Isa. 26-3, etc.). In the New Testament (especially in Hebrews) we have the Greek adjective *teleios*, most often translated “perfect.” In 2 Tim. 3:17; Jas. 1:4) it means, “equipped”; in 2 Cor. 13:9,11; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 4:10 it means “put in proper condition by equipping or training for a purpose”; in 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 1:22; 1 Cor. 2:6; 13:10; 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15; Col. 1:28; 4:12; Heb. 5:14; 10:14; 11:40). it means something or someone is finished, fulfilled, completed, matured reaching a desired purpose, goal, or end.

Dr. Elton Trueblood, in his book, *The New Man For Our Time*, said, “The three necessary elements in any genuine Christianity are, first, the experience of inner vitality, second, the experience of outer action in which the Christian carries on a healing ministry, both to individuals and to social institutions, and third, the experience of careful thinking by which the credibility of the entire operation may be supported.” The tenth chapter of Hebrews presents essentially the same view in different terms. The perfect human for our time or any time is one who is perfected (i.e., brought to the end or goal or purpose for which God made him) through: (a) Christ’s sacrifice, which God accepted as the perfect substitute for all humans who will receive it by faith; (b) Christian service, a result of loving thankfulness for the perfect sacrifice given out of perfect love; and (c) a Conquering Suffering, or Maturation, a willing surrender to the moral maturation processes God has divinely and

providentially deemed necessary for our good and provided only through the instrumentality of his word..

Chapter 10 is the climactic chapter of Hebrews. The theology about God's nature & character is presented in Hebrews 1:1—9:28; the practical application, or what we do concerning what we learn "about God" is presented in Hebrews 10:1—13:24 Chapter 10 is the crowning chapter in the theology of the perfecting of mankind. The first part of Hebrews, chapter 10 (10:1-18) is a resume of what Christ has done in the perfecting process (detailed in Hebrews chapters 1:1—9:28); the second part of Hebrews chapter 10 (10:29-39) is a resume of the human's responsibility in his perfecting. Chapters 11 through 13 amplify in detail this second part of human responsibility in accepting and living the perfection Christ has made available.]

]In spite of the destruction of the Jewish temple and the consequent cessation of all blood sacrifices, modern Jews who take the Bible seriously, cannot get around Lev. 17:11... "for it is the blood that maketh atonement." A few orthodox Jews today still observe (on Yom Kippur—"Day of atonement") the ceremony of Kapparot ("means of atonement") when chickens (a rooster for men and a hen for women) are ritually slain on the Eve of Atonement (source, *The Hebrew Christian, periodical, Winter 1976, Vol. XLIX, No. 4, pp. 166-167*). Zeh Kapparati is said, "This fowl goeth to death whereas I am entering and going to a long life of goodness and peace." The Jew is to take the bird in his right hand and placing his left hand on its head (cf. Lev. 16:21), he waves the kapparah (chicken or means of atonement) three times over himself, saying, "This be my substitute, this be my exchanged sacrifice, this be my atonement." Then the chicken is slain. In this ceremony is also a prayer for restoration of temple and sacrifices, the declaration, nephesh tachat nephesh (i.e., "life for life"), recitation of Psa. 107:14-21, and Job. 33:23-24, "I have found a kopher" (i.e., an atonement or ransom). Some say, "...the ransom which is acceptable is the chastened mood of the afflicted person, induced in him by his experience," while other say it is the slain chicken which is the actual kopher ("ransom") or vicarious atonement for the worshiper (source, *Living Jewish, by Michael Asheri, pp. 144-145*). An American Jew relates part of his experience as a Jew before he accepted Jesus as the Messiah and became a Christian: "As Yom Kippur approached in the year of my Bar Mitzvah (Bar "son of " Mitzvah "the commandment" at age 13), I wanted really to know that I would be forgiven for my sin. To realize that as I became a 'Son of the Law' I would be fully responsible and would have to answer to God personally for my sin, frightened me. Thus that Yom Kippur stands out in my mind. Just before I became Bar Mitzvah (son of the commandment, i.e., at age 12-13 and held responsible for keeping the Torah) I was in the synagogue with my parents for Yom Kippur and saw an old man two or three rows ahead of me. He had a long tallith (prayer shawl), and he was praying to God and beating his chest and weeping. He had been fasting as we all had, and he was praying for the forgiveness of his sins. I thought, 'This man knows all the ritual, all the prayers; he must know all there is to know about forgiveness. I am going to ask him whether he has the assurance that his sins are forgiven.' I waited until the end of the service. As the sun was going down and we were leaving the synagogue, I went over to him and said, 'Sir, do you have the forgiveness of your sins? Do you know that your sins are forgiven?' I can still see

the tears coursing down his face; he had been crying the whole day. Looking at me, he replied, ‘Son, I only hope so; I only hope so.’ I thought to myself, ‘What chance do I have? I don’t know all these prayers and rituals. I don’t know all the traditions. If he doesn’t know that his sins are forgiven, how can I know?’ Thinking that I could never have an answer to these questions, I tried to put them out of my mind. As I grew older I realized that merely following traditions and going through the rituals did not satisfy the need and longing of my heart.” (We have underlined this last statement). Eventually, through a Christian wife, this Jewish man was urged to read the New Testament, and when he did, it drove him to the prophecies (esp. Isa. 53) of the OT concerning the atoning Messiah, and he found faith in Jesus. But notice the spiritual vacuum even before he read the NT—the longing in his heart unsatisfied with OT types and Jewish traditions! (Source, *The Hebrew Christian*, periodical, Winter, 1976, Vol. XLIX, No. 4, p. 172).

Christ’s sacrifice fulfilled the foreknown plan of God (Heb. 10:1-4). God’s purpose for man was fellowship with his Creator—complete, full, and absolute. In order for this to be possible, humanness must be free of guilt, pardoned from sin, cleared of any enmity, and justified before an Absolute God (Judge). In order for this to be possible, since humans did sin, there must be a penalty paid which would be commensurate with the Absolute, Perfect, nature of God. The shadowy, typical sacrifices of the OT were not the end of the plan of God for humans. The dumb animals sacrificed were not sufficient for either the Absolute justice of God, or for the cleansing of the consciences of sinning humans. Their very repetition indicated they were not the realities—they were not the full purpose of God.

It takes a Divine Scheme of Redemption for man to be cleansed of sin. It requires a Divine Edict of God, which edict is made possible by the fulfillment of the Divine Scheme of Redemption. The Divine Scheme of Redemption for sinful humanness demanded the Vicarious Death (second death) of a Perfect Human Being. Christ’s vicarious death, suffering the penalty of human disobedience to God’s will, abolished the first (incomplete) covenant or will in order to establish the second (complete) covenant or will. Christ did it in a “body”—as a human, as The Perfect Human. This was “written in the roll of the book,” (Heb. 10:7) i.e., it was planned and revealed in writing, long before it happened, in God’s book, the Bible, the O.T. e.g. Isa. 53; Dan. 9:24-27. It was the “will” of God which Christ came to do. It was God’s will that sin be atoned for; it was God’s will that only a Perfect Man could atone for man’s sin. Christ came to be a man, to live man’s life as a Perfect Man. It was something Jesus actually did for 30 years—through childhood, boyhood, and manhood. He did the Father’s will perfectly. William Barclay says, in his commentary on Hebrews, p. 127, “God does not want animal sacrifices; he wants obedience to his will. The only sacrifice God desires from man is obedience.” Animal sacrifices were only temporarily (and prophetically) acceptable to God. But man perverted even their temporary purpose by thinking of them as a way of meriting or buying the forgiveness of God. What God wants is not the blood and flesh of animals, but the loving, perfect faithful obedience of humanness (1 Sam. 15:22; Psa. 50:14; 51:16-17; Hosea 6:6; Isa. 1:10-20; Micah 6:6-8). That is why Jesus is the perfect sacrifice, because he perfectly did the will of God (Mt. 26:36-39; Mk. 14:35-36; 22:42-44). Barclay, again, “He (Jesus) brought for men the sacrifice that no man had been able to bring. He brought the

perfect, complete obedience, and therefore the perfect, complete sacrifice.” Christ’s sacrifice was once for all; it opened the way to free and constant access to God because it was the whole, full, equipping purpose of God realized in Perfect Manhood. It left nothing to be desired as far as God was concerned.

Christ’s sacrifice (a perfectly obedient life and atoning death) is imputed (i.e., credited, given) to all sinful humans who will receive it by faith (Heb. 10:10). After Christ had lived the life of perfect obedience, there was still the penalty for sin to be paid—that involved shedding of the blood (taking the life) of that Perfectly Obedient Human—Jesus Christ of Nazareth! This takes us back to Heb. 9:14...”how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience...” Jesus was human and eternal spirit, just like all of us. So there was no justifiable way God could have demanded Jesus’ life as a penalty for Jesus’ life, because Jesus did not sin. So the amazing grace of it all is that Jesus WILLINGLY LAID DOWN HIS LIFE FOR OUR SIN, NO ONE TOOK IT FROM HIM (Isa. 53:1-12; Matt. 20:28; 26:28; Jn. 10:17-18; 15:12-17; 19:11; 2 Cor. 5:14, 21; Phil. 2:7-8; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Titus 2:14; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-21). It is by the perfect sinless willingness of Christ to die the “second death” (see Rev. 20:6) in our place that we have this imputed perfection and are freed from the eternal, second death. It is by Christ’s will that we have been sanctified and justified. It could never be by our will for our will is imperfect (see Rom. 7:13-25). And God could never have imputed justification to us without Christ’s perfect will because God’s Absolute Justice had to be executed and sustained. HOW UNSEARCHABLE CHRIST’S LOVE. THERE WAS NO WAY CHRIST’S LIFE COULD BE DEMANDED. THERE WAS NO REASON HE SHOULD OFFER IT. HE DID IT BECAUSE HE LOVED HUMANKIND—ALL HUMANKIND! It is in this “will” of Christ, lovingly offered, that humans find power to be bound to Christ in love, faith and goodness (2 Cor. 5:14-21) and thus motivated “by the mercies of God” to have the human mind and spirit transformed and reborn (Rom. 12:1-2). This “will” of Christ has the power to cleanse the guilty conscience and bring peace, joy, and fulfillment to human beings and to bring them to the goal, end, or purpose God intended men to have when he created man (perfection)—redeemed and regenerated into the image of his Son Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29).

What we must stress is that if man wants this imputed perfection he must accept by faith the efficacy of Christ’s death in his place. Faith necessitates knowledge! Imperfect humans cannot have Christ’s imputed perfection without using their minds to know the objective facts of what God has done, and what God has decreed humans must do. Humans must know these things in order to believe them. Too often, the Church has lost this perspective. Too often, the Church assumes people can be given a “feeling” of salvation from an emotionally charged testimony by someone about what Christ means to their life. We must get people to read, understand and believe the mind of God which is revealed nowhere else except the Bible! Faith is what makes it possible for God to impute Christ’s perfection to human beings. Dr. Elton Trueblood: “It has been commonly said that it is what people do that matters most, but we have frequently neglected the further observation that what people believe determines, in large measure, what they do...the way we treat other people depends ultimately upon what we believe about them....The Christian who wishes to be truly modern

will have to pay the price of rigorous thinking, for cheap modernity is transparently ineffective and really deludes nobody. Does anyone really believe that the gospel is better received if its presentation is accompanied by the use of a guitar? If contemporary prophets wish to make their maximum contribution to the improvement of society they should try to deal, not with organizational tricks, but with exciting truth! People certainly don't respond affirmatively when they are directed to religion, but sometimes they respond powerfully when they are directed to God. Men are not brought into Christ's orbit, ordinarily by being recruited as ushers, but only by becoming deeply convinced of Christ's truth. The hope lies, not in new activities, but in new convictions...Preachers can make a tremendous difference in our civilization if they cease to be operators of clubs and become arousers of conviction...The Christian faith cannot perform a redemptive role in the modern world unless it gives strong leadership on the central issues of faith."—The New Man For Our Time, op.cit. (The underlining is mine, PTB's)

If we eliminated poverty, disease, work, even physical death, we would not have perfected humanness. If we do not persuade human beings, convince and convict them, of what God has done and is able to do through faith in Jesus Christ, human beings will never reach the perfection God planned and provided in the atoning death of Jesus no matter how much we entertain them, thrill them and organize them! "The Christian, if he understands his faith, is the genuine radical of his generation in that he is willing and able to challenge the widely accepted assumption that truth is only relative to one's self and one's wishes...the Christian must be sufficiently tough-minded to see that if reason is discarded, and if two contradictory positions can be held at the same time, the human search for excellence is at an end...The new man who will be able to provide leadership in our confused and confusing time must be a true intellectual in the sense that he is a rationalist..." Trueblood, *ibid.* The idiotic proposition that two contradictory positions can be held at the same time is the very essence of what today is called "postmodernism" or "reductionism." It is also a basic tenet of Zen Buddhism and Hinduism.

We have got to lead people to think before they "feel," to be convinced and convicted before they accept some superficial, emotionally-charged feeling as "real" Christianity. Christ repeatedly insisted that Christian discipleship must be based on deliberate, reasoned commitment! Faith in the Absolute, Complete, Perfection offered to us by God through Christ is something we must exercise constantly. The Greek verb in Heb. 10:15, translated, "perfected" *teteleiokēn* is a perfect tense verb, meaning, God has perfected us at a point in time in the past (at our surrender to faith and baptism) with a continuing result. Perfection which God gives human beings in Christ is once-for-all; it never has an end so long as we continue to exercise faith in Jesus and his word. The Greek verb in Heb. 10:15, translated, "sanctified" *hagiazomenous* is a present-tense participle, meaning, "the ones continuing to be sanctified." Sanctification is a continuing thing. We are set apart in perfection so long as we continue to exercise faith in Jesus. Sanctification is not a "second work of grace," but a first work of grace. And perfecting is a life-long experience of faithful discipleship—which leads to the next teaching in Hebrews chapter 10.

The confidence or boldness (Greek, *parressian*, "free, unfettered, courage") is the

meritorious work of Christ which gives us the courage to speak in the presence of higher authority and by which we enter the “sanctuary” (see Acts 4:13,29,31, 28:31; Eph. 3:12; 1 Jn. 2:28; 3:21; 4:17; Heb. 4:16; 10:35 for examples of parresian “boldness” and “courage”). Without that we dare not even look to find God and his throne—we should be trying to hide from him without the vicarious death of Jesus Christ. However, it takes not only a vicarious death to suffer the penalty for sin to perfect humanness. It also takes a response from the forgiven sinner in humble, loving service dedicated to the One Redeeming humanness from sin. If forgiven humans would be perfected, i.e., reach the goal God has for them in their redemption, they must give themselves in service to their Redeemer. The service which perfects is, first of all, drawing near in reverent adoration, in surrendered dependence upon the Redeemer. How is the fire of service to be ignited? The Christian is a person who, regardless of the century in which he lives, knows the answer—he knows that the way to become ignited is to approach the Source. **WHOEVER IS NEAR TO CHRIST IS NEAR TO THE FIRE OF SERVICE—DRAW NEAR!** The drawing near is man’s responsibility—notice, it says, “let us draw near.” God has made all the provision, taken away all the obstacles, given the ultimate motivation (his mercies, Rom. 12:1-2), and extended a divine invitation—but man has to RSVP! Man’s RSVP is to “be washed” (baptized in water unto the remission of sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). God and his Son will not force themselves on any man or woman. Entering the sanctuary, having the new and living way, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, is left to our choice. It is not something God gives automatically to all human beings. Drawing near involves a “true heart”—self-honesty. Jesus said in the Parable of the Soils that only the “good and honest” heart will receive his word. God will not make people be honest—people have to be honest on their own! People must have a “love for the truth.” If a person wants to be deceived, God will allow him to have a strong delusion so that he may believe a lie if he does not love the truth (2 Thess. 2:9-12; Rom. 1:18-32). Drawing near involves “full assurance of faith.” The Greek word, plerophoria literally means, “fully-carrying, full of.” We must draw near to God exercising complete faith in him. There can be nothing reserved of self-dependence. We cannot trust God partially while trusting partially in our own self-righteousness. We must draw near as servant to Master, child to Father, branch to Vine. **SERVING GOD IS QUALIFIED ACCORDING TO FAITHFULNESS** (i.e., being “full of faith”)—**NOT AMOUNT OF DOING!**

We draw near and enter the sanctuary by “provoking” (“stirring up”) one another to love and good works. James has a great deal to say about the perfecting, fulfilling, completing aspect of Christian service (see James 1:22-25). James also says, “Faith is completed (Greek, eteleiothe, “perfected”) by works” (2:22). Faith reaches its goal in loving works of righteousness! Jesus said to the rich, young ruler, “If you would be perfect, go sell all that you have and give it to the poor and come, follow me” (Matt. 19:21—Jesus used the word teleios, the same word as James used in 2:22, meaning, “completed, reached the goal set by God”). The “me-cult” Christianity is off-center of the true Christian way. The “me-cult” is expressed today in euphoric religion as a “drug” and in the tongues or charismatic experience (so called), or the modern “praise service,” because they are essentially self-centered. Any religion that seeks to produce inner feelings, and no more, is addressing itself to only an illusion of what is really needed for the abundant life and the perfection of the whole man as God intended him to be completed, i.e., conviction (2 Cor. 5:14-21). Smoking peyote,

or speaking in tongues, may provide an ecstasy, but they have really contributed nothing to altering the moral structures of society. Neither one have led men or women to become more dedicated in feeding the hungry or in taking care of the widows and the sick, nor in changing repressive, unjust societies. The Greek word *paroxusmon* is translated, “stir up one another” in Heb. 10:24. It is a very intense word—we get the English word *paroxysm* from this Greek word. If preachers of the word get excited and intense and even ferocious about exhorting to good works, they are only doing what is scriptural! Doing good works is absolutely necessary to the perfecting process.... “For the grace of God has appeared...training us...in Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds...” Titus 2:11-15. We are to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, and that was said at the conclusion of a text about doing good to all men (Matt. 5:43-48). Good works are not only the ones we do through the organization and committees of the church-visible. Good works are those every-day deeds of kindness to neighbors and strangers all around us, wherever we meet them—and even those good deeds done to our families!

We draw near by exhorting one another. Mutual exhortation is absolutely necessary to our being “perfected” i.e., reaching the goal God has set for Christ-like humanness. The goal or end or purpose for which God created human beings cannot be reached without exhortation. “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We are “sanctified” in the truth, Jn. 17:17. It is through the knowledge of Christ that God has granted to man all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-5) and through his precious promises human beings may escape the corruption that is in the world and become partakers of the divine nature. The popular position of those who claim that words are not needed, because deeds are everything, have missed the important truth that **THE BEST DEEDS ARE WORDS OF TRUTH. IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO GIVE A CUP OF COLD WATER—IT IS NECESSARY TO TELL WHY** (“in Jesus’ name”). When critics complain that the church does nothing, they often betray a most naive conception of what the church is. The church is the pillar of truth. Its mission is to try to feed the world on the Bread of Life. “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. The Greek word translated “exhort” is actually *parakalountes* which means encourage, strengthen...it is the same Greek word from which we get *Paraclete* or “Comforter.” in reference to the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14,15,16,17). It is the word of God’s grace that is able to build us up and give us an inheritance among the saints (Acts. 20:32).

The phrase “...and all the more as you see the Day drawing near...” 10:25 CANNOT refer to the Second Coming of Christ, because no one is going to see that day drawing near. Jesus emphatically said so, about 10 times, over and over both prosaically and metaphorically in Matthew chapters 24 and 25. He said that **NO ONE, NOT EVEN HIMSELF**, knew the day

nor the hour of his Second Coming. Jesus did plainly say to the Jews of that first century (in Matt. 24:1-35) that there would be signs which THEY could SEE, if they believed his predictions of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism. (See our lessons on Matthew 24; Mark 13 and Luke 21). The “Day drawing near” applied to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 fits the whole context of the book of Hebrews which is a treatise to show the abrogation, and soon literal obliteration, of the Jewish system (Heb. 8:13, 12:25-29). Only by faith do we as believers in the 21st century “see” the Second coming of Christ, and we do not see it physically, gradually drawing near. Christians are warned to look for the Second Coming immediately, every minute of every hour of every day! Maranatha!

We know loving, willing, loyal service is necessary to our perfection because Jesus, the Perfect Human, served the Father. Jesus in his humanness was Perfected obedience (remember Heb. 5:8-9). Furthermore, these statements from the NT add verification to this concept: “...for I always do what is pleasing to him (the Father)” Jn. 8:29; “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” Jn. 15:10-11; My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work” Jn. 4:34; Although he was a Son, he learned obedience by the things he suffered; and being made perfect....” Heb. 5:8-9; “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them...” Jn. 13:17.

The “deliberate sin” of which the Hebrews author speaks in 10:26-31 is the apostasy already spoken of in Heb. 6:1-8. Both these passages are aimed at keeping Jews who had become Christians from going back to the OT law for justification before God! Seeking perfection through any other sacrifice or system than the Christian is deliberate, blasphemous, unforgivable sin! Should these Hebrew-Christians, to whom Paul is writing in the first century, because of the pressures of persecution or their carnal-minded desire for a “seen” religion, go back to Judaism, they no longer have a Perfect Sacrifice for sin—they will have only the prospect of a fearful judgment under the unattainable Law of Moses! **THE ONLY PERFECTION GOD OFFERS TO MAN IS THROUGH THE IMPUTED SACRIFICE OF CHRIST, AND THE LOVING RESPONSE OF WILLING SERVICE OF BELIEVERS IN A NEW COVENANT WHICH IS ACTUALIZED IN THE SINNERS RESPONSE TO THE MERITORIOUS WORK OF JESUS CHRIST, THE PERFECT HUMAN BEING!** There is NO perfection in any other religious system devised by human beings—not even in the Old system devised by God himself! All other “beliefs” or “feelings” or “systems”—no matter who or what brought them about—do nothing but condemn human beings to eternal judgment! The rejection of Jesus Christ as atonement for sin is the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:31-32). In Matt. 12:31-32, Jesus said that if people spoke against his claims that he was God incarnated, the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Suffering Servant, the vicarious sacrificial Lamb as the Son of God that takes away the sin of the world so long as he was on earth, men might eventually be forgiven if they repented once he proved empirically, historically, and factually **THAT HE WAS WHO HE CLAIMED TO BE BY THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD!** But once he died, arose and ascended to heaven and returned as the Holy Spirit and established his church by the preaching of apostles and other

eyewitnesses, those who “spoke against the witness of the Holy Spirit” could not be forgiven, either in the Christian age or in the world to come. THE “UNPARDONABLE SIN” IS TO RENOUNCE JESUS CHRIST AFTER HE HAS COME AS THE HOLY SPIRIT AND VERIFIED HIS CLAIMS, ESTABLISHED HIS CHURCH, AND DELIVERED THE “FAITH” ONCE FOR ALL UNTO THE SAINTS. Take away Jesus and there is no atonement for sin! The “deliberate sin” of Heb. 10:26-31 is the “mortal sin” (or sin unto death—the second death) of which John speaks in 1 John 5:16-17 (if you read 1 Jn. 5:16-17 in light of the context of the whole book of 1 John)! All other sins may be forgiven by faith, confession and repentance (turning away from).

Paul wanted these Hebrew-Christians to remember their former days when they were being persecuted for the faith and were being confidently (i.e., courageously, faithfully, lovingly) loyal to Christ 10:32-35. THEY NEEDED TO REMEMBER THEIR FORMER “CONFIDENCE” AND NOT THROW IT AWAY! Remembering what one suffers for the sake of righteousness and for the sake of being a Christian and for the sake of glorifying the name of Jesus makes the believer compassionate just like the Perfect Father and Perfect Son. Being “publicly exposed to abuse and affliction” (10:33) is a translation of the Greek word *theatrizomenoi*, and we get the English word “theater” from it. The suffering of these Hebrew-Christians was a theatrical spectacle seen by the world of their day! Just read the book of Acts and the Epistles about the Judaizers! Their “being partners with those so treated” is a translation of the Greek word *koinonoi*, from which we get the English word, communion. One of the things which the early Christians (and many succeeding generations of Christians) had as a “communion” was suffering! The phrase, “...with those so treated...” is a translation of the Greek word *anastrephomenon* which literally means, thrown down. Probably, it refers to Christians being thrown into dungeons, or at least trodden down by oppressors! And the phrase, “...had compassion...” is a translation of the Greek word *sunepathesate*, from which we get the English words, pathos or pathetic or sympathy and literally means, “having pathos with...” or “commiserate with.” So, suffering has its work to do on each of us if we wish to be perfected, or brought to the goal for which God made us. Part of the goal for which he made us is that we be sympathetic with, and for, the needs of others. It leads us to commune, share with, and help, others who suffer. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort who comforts us in all our afflictions, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor. 1:3-4). NO CHRISTIAN CAN BE A WHOLE CHRISTIAN, AN EQUIPPED CHRISTIAN, A COMPLETE CHRISTIAN WHO HAS NOT SUFFERED AND/OR SHARED IN THE SUFFERINGS OF OTHERS! IT JUST IS NOT POSSIBLE! EVERY CHRISTIAN MUST BE “EDUCATED” OR “TRAINED” IN THE SCHOOL OF AFFLICTION, IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER! It was the great longing of the apostle Paul that “he might know him (Jesus) and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I (Paul) may attain the resurrection from the dead” (Phil. 3:10-11). AND PAUL CERTAINLY GOT HIS WISH! Suffering the plundering of worldly goods drives us to look forward to the “better possession and an abiding one.” WE WOULD CHERISH THE IMPERFECT IF WE DID NOT SUFFER ITS LOSS!

CHRISTIANS NEED ENDURANCE SO THEY MAY DO THE WILL OF GOD AND RECEIVE WHAT GOD HAS PROMISED THEM! You can't do God's will or have God's promises unless you endure! (Matt. 10:22; 24:13; Mk. 13:13). The "saints" are called to endure (Rev. 13:10; 14:12). Paul wanted to emphasize to the nth-degree how valuable the power was gained through endurance-brought-by-suffering, so he used the Greek words *megalen misthapodosian*. *Megalen* means "great, big, large, massive" and *misthapodosian* is 3-words-in-one, each of which speaks of reward! Literally, Paul says, "great reward-reward-reward" is the outcome of enduring suffering and not throwing away one's boldness in Jesus Christ! Endurance is from the Greek word *hupomones* which means, literally, "remain or abide under." It is the same kind of "patience" Job had (Jas. 5:11). Job was no stoic. He wailed, lamented, prayed, and practically chided God for his suffering, but he endured! Furthermore, the prophets (e.g., Elijah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, etc.) were men of God who were *hupomones*, "hangers-on." (See Jer. 20:7-18—then read Lamentations, ch. 3). "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" James 1:4. THERE ARE THOSE WORDS, "PERFECT & COMPLETE" AGAIN! CONNECTED TO SUFFERING! "...for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead..." (2 Cor. 1:9). "Three times I besought the Lord about this ("thorn in the flesh") that it should leave me; but he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness...when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor. 12:8-10)—THERE'S THAT WORD "PERFECT" AGAIN—CONNECTED TO SUFFERING! "If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you" (1 Pet. 4:14). "...suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope..." Rom. 5:4. THEREFORE, CHRISTIANS HAVE NEED OF SUFFERING BECAUSE SUFFERING IS THE ONLY WAY TO GET ENDURANCE! What if God did not allow us to suffer for sin, for mistakes? What if God did not allow us to suffer the loss of the things of this perishing world? God wants us to learn to "not look back" like Lot's wife did! God wants us to set our minds on things above—not on things on the earth. Endurance, learned through suffering, brings us to a faith that preserves our souls. The Greek word *peripoiesis* is translated, "keep" in 10:39, and means literally, "a making around," i.e., "building a fence around, encircling, setting up a guard around." Paul quotes from the prophet Habakkuk in Heb. 10:37-38 (see also Heb. 2:3-4). Habakkuk prayed for God to punish the evil of his own people thinking to save them from exile. But when God told the prophet he was going to do so through the captivities by the Babylonians, Habakkuk protested that to punish the covenant people by the hands of pagans was incredible, hard to understand. God told Habakkuk he did not expect him to understand it—just believe and trust God's way! When something happens to a saint of God that he cannot understand, he believes and trusts God. THIS IS THE WAY GOD PERFECTS US—BRINGS US TO THE GOAL FOR WHICH HE CREATED US! THIS IS THE WAY GOD PRESERVES OUR SOULS! Even the Lord Jesus saw nothing reasonable or desirable in the Cross, but for the joy that was set before him, he endured! EVEN JESUS, THE PIONEER OF OUR SALVATION, WAS MADE PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERING (Heb. 2:10; 5:8-9; 12:2).

So-----THE PERFECTED HUMAN BEING! One who is judicially and experientially justified before God by the Perfect Sacrifice of Christ. One who, by what Christ has done, is motivated to service for others. One who, by what God promises, endures suffering, conquers it, and does the will of God—he is brought to that wholeness of character for which God made him. IF YOU WOULD BE PERFECT, SELL ALL THAT YOU HAVE, EVEN YOURSELF, AND FOLLOW CHRIST (Matt. 19:21). Or, as the great apostle Paul wrote, “...whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect (there’s that word again); but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal (there’s that word again) for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Philipians 3:8-14

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

HEBREWS 11:1-40

Archimedes's maxim, "Give me a place to stand and I will move the earth" is applicable to the more important world of the Spirit as well as to the physical world.. The crucial matter in "moving" anything, whether a physical object, or an invisible, immortal, human soul/spirit, is, "a place to stand" where leverage may be applied, or as a sea-faring man might say, "a place to make a 'purchase.'" When we are thinking about "moving" the autonomous, free-willed, soul of the human being (created in the image of God with the awesome power of choice), it is infinitely more important that "a place to stand" be found adequate for the job. Always, human beings have cried out spiritually and morally for "a place to stand" to get leverage against their hopelessness. The search for certainty—an absolute ground—is nothing new! What is new is the acceptance of a "ground" to the effect that there really is no objective truth (no ground absolute) about what human thinking and conduct ought to be. The new "ground" is that there is no ground—human conduct is to be based on subjective relativism. The new "ground" is that there is no room for logic, history, empirical evidence, or singular meaning for words (language). The new "ground" is "whatever feels good or right," "whatever suits the end or goal one seeks," "whatever each individual has subjectively decided is good and proper for that individual." The incredible, but tragic oddity of it all is that those who are crying out in moral outrage and protest and demanding action, are the very ones who reject any certain basis or absolute place to stand in order to get leverage for the action they want. They insist that logic, history, empirical evidence, and absolutes cannot bring about change—these "post-modernists" insist on using force and violence to protest against force and violence! That is attempting to think with three logical fallacies—(1) *petitio principii*, i.e., begging the question; (2) *non-sequitur*, i.e., an inference that does not follow from the premise; (3) *oxymoronic*, i.e., contradictory, incongruous, and acutely foolish.

People everywhere are looking for "a place to stand"—the evidence is among your neighbors and mine—among your loved ones and mine. There are kinds of "mountains" and "rivers" standing as obstacles against people reaching the potential for freedom, security, purpose, fulfillment, and satisfaction for which God created them. People are saying, "If I only had some certain ground on which to stand, I could overcome this problem in my life." "If there was only some One, or some Thing, I could absolutely trust, I could overcome my problems." People are even saying, "This certain ground has to be something outside myself, because I've tried self and it doesn't give the certainty I need." Some have tried "uncertain" riches and found them to fail (1 Tim. 6:17). Some have tried "uncertain" status in life and found it to fail. Others have tried "uncertain" sounds (false and incomplete religious doctrines, inadequate political ideologies). One wag said, "Nothing is certain but death and taxes..." Philosophers have said cynically, for centuries, "The only certainty is uncertainty."

BUT HEBREWS, CHAPTER ELEVEN, ANNOUNCES, “THERE IS A PLACE TO STAND, AN ABSOLUTE GROUND OF CERTAINTY FOR MOVING THE HUMAN SOUL FROM HOPELESSNESS AND DREAD, TO HOPE, JOY, AND EXPECTATION OF ETERNAL BLISS! THAT “PLACE TO STAND” IS FAITH IN GOD, IN HIS SON, AND IN HIS WORD!

The word pistos, “belief” or “faith” in both classical and Koine (NT) Greek usage means, “trust, certainty, reliability.” Edward John Carnell wrote in his book, *The Case for Orthodox Theology*, p. 23-24, “Faith is the capacity of belief or trust. This capacity relieves the mind of a critical desire to reassess the grounds of settled judgment.” Thus faith is based on “grounds of settled judgment” i.e., reason, evidence, logic. Alexander Campbell said, in a speech, Dec. 7, 1834 in New York City’s “Concert Hall,” “Reason deciding that the testimony is true, is believing (faith); reason deciding that the testimony is false, is disbelieving; reason unable to decide is skepticism.” The sane, orderly and honest and established conduct of a person can be traced to a mind settled and resting in the sufficiency of evidences—in other words, to faith. Every time we get into our automobiles to go to the grocery store we do not say, “Will this automobile come to pieces when I turn on the ignition” or, “I must get out and trace the way to the grocery store again, to see if that is the right way”...etc., etc., etc. WE CONTINUE TO ACT IN THESE MATTERS ON “FAITH” BASED ON PREVIOUS EVIDENCES, EVERY DAY OF OUR LIVES! That’s what “faith” is! A wise man may be critical about many things, but not about all things. He does not believe contradictions or trust a fool. When he gets in his car, turns the key and the motor doesn’t start, he doesn’t believe he is going to get to the grocery store in that car as it is! But he does honestly believe or trust whenever he confronts sufficient evidences (i.e., the car starting and moving) and acts upon that trust. The capacity to believe or trust (i.e., to have faith) belongs to humans because they are humans—it is not necessarily a religious “virtue” alone! Faith is exercised in every facet of life—non-religious and religious alike! Faith is confidence and assurance; and that state of confidence continues as long as the mind is satisfied with the sufficiency of the evidences. Some liberal theologians have insisted that faith requires a “leap in the dark—a risk of the intellect.” BUT FAITH IS A WALK IN THE LIGHT! To believe anything on insufficient evidence is to believe what may not be true! To believe in insufficient evidence is incredulity, skepticism, and naivete—worse yet, stupidity! (Read Isaiah chapter 44 for a humorous example of the stupidity of believing in idols). But faith in anything cannot be forced upon any human heart by the sheer historicity, logic, or number of accumulated evidences. Personal prejudice may put up a wall around the mind. A man of faith is a man of character, and character implies a mental willingness to be honest in the face of the facts! Pride says, “Believe what is congenial with my personal interest and ambitions.” Honesty says, “Believe things as they are!” THIS IS WHY NO ONE SHALL SEE OR ENTER THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST UNLESS HE BECOMES LIKE A LITTLE CHILD! Children are honest with reality; a child uses common sense in what he believes. It is not true that religious people have faith while men of science have knowledge. Faith spans the entire human experience. Scientists have to have faith to do scientific experiments. A scientist’s faith that his mind is not deceiving him has to be based on evidence that it has not in previous experiments! Whether we believe the word of man or the Word of God, we believe because we are satisfied with the sufficiency of the evidences—and the evidences are no less objective in Scripture (history) than in science! In truth, historically recorded facts are

probably more valid for trusting than immediately observed physical phenomena because historically recorded facts have stood the test of the scrutiny of honest and, in many cases, dishonest searches for centuries, and are proven by cumulative, corroborating evidence, or disproved by the lack of it!

Hebrews 11:1-3 is not so much a definition of faith as it is a statement of faith's results! The results of faith are three-fold: (a) assurance of things hoped for; (b) conviction of things not seen; (c) understanding of things beyond the reach of human experience. Four Greek words in this text are important: (a) The Greek word *hupostasis* is translated "substance" KJV and "assurance" RSV, and "is being sure" in NIV. Literally, *hupostasis* means, "something standing under" i.e., a support, a foundation. Faith makes real that which is unavailable to be seen, touched, tasted, etc (see 2 Cor. 4:16-18). Faith gives expectation that promises (not wishes) will be kept. Faith assures with firmness and certainty that what is hoped for (what has been promised) really exists and will be possessed in due time. Faith gives actual substance to hope. An object hoped for at a future period, becomes, by faith, a present reality as if it is already possessed; (b) The Greek word *elegcho* is translated "evidence" KJV and "conviction" in both RSV and NASV, and "certain of" in NIV. It was a word used by Greek philosophers in classics to speak of their philosophical arguments as they "persuaded" and "convinced" others of the validity of their ideas. *Elegcho* means, "to convince by demonstration." Faith gives a conviction or persuasion of the reality of unseen things, based on demonstrable evidence (see 1 Jn. 1:1-4; 2 Pet. 1:1-20). Peter said the word of prophecy was made more sure because he had been an eyewitness to the Divine Glory and Majesty of Jesus Christ in the "Transfiguration" (Matt. 17). So Peter was persuaded he was not following cunningly devised fables when he followed the doctrines of Christianity (the Incarnation, the Death & Resurrection) and the teachings of Jesus Christ of Nazareth! Dr. Elton Trueblood writes, "...one of the most urgent tasks of contemporary Christians is to express a faith which can be made credible for modern man. Enthusiasm is not enough¹ it will do something for a while, but it will soon evaporate unless the faith which is espoused can be so stated that those who do not share the enthusiasm can be convinced in their minds..."; (c) the Greek word *nooumen* is translated "understand" in all versions. It means, "to perceive, to judge, to determine, to discriminate, to know." The creation of the world was done by God with no human beings present. Faith, based on the other creative works of God which were done when human beings were present (especially the creative miracles of Jesus Christ), gives the evidence upon which we judge that the account in Genesis 1 & 2 is true! (d) The Greek word *hremati* (without the definite article) means, God created the world "with word(s)." That also is something that must be known understood, and judged as true reality, by faith, because it does not conform to the human experience to "make something out of nothing by merely "saying-so." No one but God, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, ever made anything by just speaking a word! We believe God brought the cosmos into existence by just speaking words, because we have an authentic, credible, eye witnessed record (the New Testament) of Jesus who could bring dead bodies back to life with a word, create human limbs with a word, make wine and fish and bread with a word!

It is impossible to please God without faith in God because it is in the "faith"

relationship to God that man receives God's approval. Note in in this very chapter: (a) by faith man does what God says is acceptable to God (Abel); (b) by faith our acceptable deeds testify to God's sovereignty (Abel); (c) by faith we do what is pleasing to God (Enoch); (d) by faith we take heed and obey God (Noah); (e) by faith we choose (condemn) against the world and in favor of God (Noah); (f) without faith and trust it is impossible to please any person. Without faith it is impossible to love any person.

Christian faith has as it's object, the Triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." 11:6. If we want access to God we must come by way of his revelation of himself (i.e., the Bible). If we want God as the object of our faith, we must have fellowship with him; we must know him and want to abide with him where he is—i.e., in his will. When we talk about trust or faith in a Person, we are talking about knowing that Person. To know another person is to either trust him or distrust him. Fellowship is a union of life with life. The essence of one person passes into that of another. All mankind has the capacity to believe or have faith—having faith is not crucial—IT IS THE OBJECT OF ANY PERSON'S FAITH THAT IS CRUCIAL! The only way to actually touch, contact, know a person is by faith and love. We do not touch persons when we merely touch bodies! Do you realize that the gospel records do not give one incident where Jesus "hugged" someone! After Thomas had "touched" the body of Jesus and said, "I believe," Jesus replied, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." TO REALLY BELIEVE IN JESUS IT IS NOT NECESSARY THAT EVERY INDIVIDUAL TOUCH THE BODY IN WHICH HE TEMPORARILY DWELT! (See 1 Pet. 1:8-9). But it is necessary to know his personality, his will, his mind, his feelings, and his deeds! We are not Christians until we commit ourselves to Christ's will. We are not committed to him until, by faith, we go beyond acknowledging his existence to the point we trust his revealed will and do it! Commitment to Christ, in faith, does not take away our trials—to the contrary, it adds new trials (it produces a holy disturbance inside; and it often brings a sword or a club or fire on the outside). Like Archimedes, we still have the weight to be strained against, but IN CHRIST WE HAVE THE ABSOLUTELY PERMANENT AND SOLID POINT FROM WHICH TO STAND AND GET LEVERAGE AND MOVE THAT WEIGHT! Too much of what is called Christianity or faith in God today is superficial and shallow. It is sickening sentimentality or indecisive inner-ness. G. K. Chesterton expressed it vividly: "Of all horrible religions, the most horrible is the worship of the god within. That a Mr. Jones shall worship the god within him turns out ultimately that Mr. Jones shall worship Mr. Jones." Real religion has to do, of course, with the inner life, but if that is all there is, even the inner life will, itself, wither and be inadequate. BECAUSE EVERY HUMAN SOUL KNOWS THERE IS "SOMETHING" OR "SOMEONE" OUT THERE BEYOND HIMSELF! As Francis Schaeffer called it, "The God Who Is There!" Romans chapters 1 & 2 make it clear that EVERYONE knows (from the objective evidence of creation and conscience) that "God is there" but most are unwilling to act honestly upon what they know! Too much modern Christianity is "faith in faith." Christians do not believe in faith—they believe in God and Jesus Christ, objective Persons, Divinely Omnipotent, greater than their faith! It is even short of the mark for a Christian to say, "I believe in prayer." We don't believe in prayer—if we did we would soon stop praying! WE BELIEVE IN A DIVINE PERSON WHO HEARS AND ANSWERS PRAYER! The kind of religion described above is nothing more than psychology. William

James (1842-1910) proposed: “Men often find themselves in crucial situations in which, lacking adequate empirical evidence to resolve the issue, they should will to accept certain beliefs (such as, for example, belief in God) and put them to the test in everyday living; if they lead to favorable consequences, they should be accepted as valid whether empirically warranted or not.” That is secular, pragmatic psychology—IT IS NOT FAITH! Christianity, “put to the test in everyday living” will often not lead to “favorable consequences” (at least, not seen, physical, consequences). For example, should we continue to believe in God and Christ if: (a) we become ill and pray but never receive healing; (b) we tithe and never become rich; (c) preach, or be a good disciple of Jesus, and never become famous or “successful?”

The problem with believing because of favorable consequences is---what are “favorable consequences”? And who is to say what is favorable? Who is to say what “works” and for whom it works? Does suffering work? Is persecution ever a favorable consequence of believing in Jesus? Is sickness something that works? Is poverty a favorable consequence of believing in God? Does our trust in God depend on always having a religious “high”? Is the only favorable consequence of believing in God the absence of “valleys of shadows”? Must we be constantly euphoric before we can say we truly believe in God? NOT IF THE PEOPLE CALLED BELIEVERS IN THE BIBLE ARE EXAMPLES OF FAITH! Think of Job, Jeremiah; think of Paul and his thorn in the flesh; even God’s Anointed (the Messiah, Jesus) was “despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...” Isa. 53. Christian faith is just the opposite of William James’ “pragmatic acquiescence.” Christian faith believes in spite of the consequences, because such belief is warranted by the empirical evidences! GOD IS, AND GOD REWARDS (SPIRITUALLY) THOSE WHO DILIGENTLY SEEK HIM—AND THERE IS EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE (NOT INNER FEELING) FOR THOSE TWO PROPOSITIONS. THIS IS THE ONLY ABSOLUTE PLACE MAN CAN STAND TO MOVE HIS ETERNAL SOUL FROM LOSTNESS TO SALVATION. CHRISTIAN FAITH IS BELIEF IN A GOD WHO IS AN ABSOLUTELY HOLY AND LOVING PERSON, A PERSON GREATER THAN MAN’S FAITH, GREATER THAN MAN’S PRAYERS, A GOD WHO IS ABSOLUTELY FAITHFUL TO KEEP HIS WORD, GREATER THAN ANY HUMAN CIRCUMSTANCES.

Christianity has, of course, both an objective and a subjective aspect. Our relationship to God is both objective and subjective. But the objective relationship is absolutely necessary and must PRECEDE the subjective. It is like marriage. There must be someone to love and marry objectively before we can be married and “feel” married. It won’t do to say, “I believe in marriage” hoping that as a consequence we will “feel” married. Apart from objective Christianity there is not, and cannot be, anything that can properly be called subjective Christianity. God exists, whether we “feel” like he exists or not. He has revealed himself in his word and in Jesus Christ, whether we “feel” like it or not. Actually, we only have “feelings” toward him because he does exist and has revealed himself objectively, in history, in time, at a place, in a Person! This discussion is extremely relevant to a place to stand. Have you noticed how often people today keep dealing with their problems by saying, “I just don’t feel like God is telling me what to do...” or, “Somehow I feel this is the right thing to do...” or, “I think if you just have faith, you will always do what is right.” BUT THEY NEVER

GET AROUND TO FOCUSING THEIR “FEELING” OR THEIR “FAITH” ON AN OBJECTIVE PERSON, GOD, AND JESUS CHRIST, WHOSE WILL IS REVEALED IN THE BIBLE, THE TRUSTWORTHY, OBJECTIVE, WORD OF GOD! Faith in feelings and faith in faith, or faith in consequences, is no certain place to stand...all these things change and vacillate with circumstances, moods, and desires. BUT GOD NEVER CHANGES! JESUS CHRIST IS ALWAYS THE SAME! TOTAL AND PERMANENT TRUST CAN BE RESTED IN JESUS! His love doesn't change with circumstances or moods. His justice cannot be changed by desires of men; his honesty and truthfulness is not subject to consequences. He is always there, always loving, always truthful, always powerful, always just and honest and fair.

We cannot, of course, know whether a person (even ourselves) is lying when he says, “I believe in God,” because belief is intrinsically internal and personal. But the evidence of peace, security, morality, goodness and overcoming-victory in changed lives is something which other people can observe. IF YOUR LIFE IS BEING CHANGED FROM ONE DEGREE OF GLORY TO ANOTHER AFTER THE IMAGE OF THE CHRIST COMMUNICATED IN THE GOSPELS (SEE 2 COR. 3:18) THEN YOU HAVE FAITH IN CHRIST—YOU ARE UNDER CONVICTION AND HIS LOVE CONTROLS YOU (2 COR. 5:14). The Christian has two means of convincing others that faith in Christ is the solid “place to stand.” (a) Always, first, asking his neighbor to really look at the historical revelation of God's existence and character (Heb. 11:6)—the objectiveness of God in Christ; and (b) then, second, demonstrating in his own life, or pointing to the demonstration in the lives of others, the moral and spiritual power that comes from this ground of certainty.

Faith in God does provide certainty for life—look at these examples: (a) Abraham and Sarah allowed God, by their faith in him to accomplish through them things that would have otherwise been impossible. Impossible obstacles which seemed to stand in the way of their receive what God promised them were removed by God because of their faith in him. If Abraham and Sarah had not believed God, God would have found someone else through whom to work who did believe in him. Yes! Indeed! That's the very point! God can and will work in everyone who believes in him and his Son! (b) Moses, “seeing by faith him who is invisible,” gave up what would be impossible to give up without trusting God's promises. By faith Moses shared ill-treatment, suffered abuse, gave up wealth and pleasure, challenged an emperor, freed a whole race of people, wrote God's laws, administered a government for 40 years in the wilderness to a complaining, carping, ungrateful, ungodly people. (c) Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, the people of Israel, Rahab, David, etc. all said and did things that flew in the face of experience—that were contradictory to worldly values and worldly expectation, BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED THAT WHAT GOD PROMISED HE WOULD FULFILL—maybe not in their own lifetimes always, but ultimately he would keep his word. They believed God would keep his word, either in this life or the next. These are real people. They are not mythological or “make-believe” people and events!

A witness to the power of faith in God is the urgent need for today. Everywhere there is defeat and despair and disillusionment. Men and women say they have no power to keep their marriages intact, their homes from coming apart. Men and women say they find

no satisfaction or purpose in their life's vocations. Men and women have lost faith in civil government, in marriage, in friends, in philosophy and science—all is vanity, they are saying! Even some of the hard-line utopians are losing confidence in innate human nature, communism, evolutionism, One-World-Government, "a new-world-order", etc. The history of human nature opposed to the will of God or out of contact with his will is one long history of bloodshed, hatred, perversion, self-destruction, exploitation and decadence. Faith in God is the answer! **FAITH IN THE GOD OF THE BIBLE IS THE ONLY CERTAINTY!** It brings reality into perspective—it shows what is real, true, and abiding! Faith gives power to endure temptation. Faith gives purpose, vitality, satisfaction to everything one does according to God's will! Faith gives personal identity. The person who believes in God knows God cares for and provides for him as a unique individual (different from all other individuals). The person who believes in God understands that God knew all those other people, Moses, Abraham, Sarah, Rahab, David, as unique individuals and did not deal with them as a conglomerated mass of people. Faith develops the uniqueness of each believer in love, courage, honesty, goodness, and usefulness. Faith is what brings each believer to the character or person-hood God intended him/her to have when created. **BY FAITH IN GOD, MAN NO LONGER LIES TO HIMSELF ABOUT THE TRANSITORY DISAPPOINTING, DEGRADING EFFECTS OF MATERIALISM AND SELF-CENTEREDNESS!** Human beings, by faith, face up to the reality that their destination is not this fleeting, failing world. By faith, people face up to the reality that "things" do not make them better people—riches of this world do not satisfy those deepest longings within the human heart! "Things" do not love man and man cannot really love things. And above all else, human beings were made to love and be loved! But none of this can be "felt" or "reasoned out"—it has to be believed because God has promised, and God is **ABSOLUTELY** faithful to keep his promises—that we know from the documentary evidence in history, called, The Bible! Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!

Faith in God removes obstacles. Jesus said, "...if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed (doesn't mean "little or tiny"—it means a living, working faith like a seed is "alive and will work when planted") you will say to this mountain (the impossible), Move hence to yonder place, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you." Matt. 17:20. (See also Zech. 4:7; Matt. 21:21; Mk. 9:23). Every obstacle to a person's development into the person God in his infinite wisdom and love wants that person to be can be moved, removed, or put to use **BY FAITH IN GOD!** Jesus' promise here is not a "blank check" to be cashed for selfish, misdirected, indulgent, destructive human whims or desires. Jesus doesn't mean that faith in God will always keep us from pain, persecution, poverty and other trials. He does mean that by faith in God we will be able, not only to keep from letting them destroy us, but that we will be able to put trials and obstacles to use as a conqueror uses his conquests to serve his highest goals (Rom. 8:31-39). What Jesus means is that every obstacle to the blessed relationship of people to God is able to be removed by faith. No circumstance, no idea, no "thing" can stand in the way of all the infinite blessedness of the love of God if we only believe in him.

Faith in God is the fulcrum (axis) that gives God's people the leverage to do even greater works than those of old. Jesus promised his disciples they would do greater works than any of his miracles over nature and demons if they believed in him (Jn. 14:12). If we step into life's impossible seas with faith in God, he will take us over the impassable, unnavigable waters of doubt, fear, and hesitancy which separate us from our inheritance, just as he did in olden days. If we assault the kingdoms of materialism, sensuality, prejudice, falsehood, and unbelief with faith in God, he will cast them down and they will be brought into captivity to obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5). If we preach in faith, we will accomplish righteousness. If we would bring about social justice, the ground of certainty from which to move it into existence is faith in God. If we wish to bring about peace—the ground of certainty is the absolute, unchangeable word and will of God. If we would be protected from the fiery darts of Satan, we must take up the shield of faith in God (Eph. 6:16). If we make faith in God our personal ground of certainty, in our everyday lives, we will with Abraham, “consider that God is able to raise men even from the dead...” When death knocks at our door, when our loved ones die in the Lord, we will have the assurance of conviction that they are in a far better place (Phil. 1:21-23)—they are in their ultimate homeland. Death is the greatest obstacle standing in the way of human beings to realize their potentialities—their true happiness. If only people might find a certain, sure and absolute place to stand from which they might move aside the ghastly specter of death, the black veil that obscures the uncertainty of the unknown they could remove their frustrations and doubts which paralyze their potentialities and live securely, satisfied and purposefully.

Those who believe in God are all that God deems worthy to be saved out of this whole created universe (Heb. 11:38). The world hates, persecutes, kills and counts all believers unworthy of it. But, in fact, the whole created universe is not worth one believer. Isn't that a startling statement from God! “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul....? Faith in God is the ground of certainty that makes possible the fruit of God's love to be produced in human beings—without the production of that fruit in a person's life, such a person is worthless to God (remember Heb. 6:1-8!). Paul illustrates this point (in 11:32-38) with a long list of warriors of the faith (see the following) who: (a) subdued kingdoms (Judges 4:6ff; 6:1ff; 11:1ff; 13:24ff; 2 Sam. 5:ff); (b) wrought righteousness (acts 20:35); (c) obtained promises (2 Sam. 7:11); (d) stopped the mouths of lions (Dan. 6:18ff); (e) quenched the violence of fire (Dan. 3:19ff); (f) escaped the edge of the sword (1 Sam. 18:11; 1 Kings 19:2); (g) out of weakness were made strong (Judges 16:26ff); (h) became mighty in war (Psa. 18:34ff); (i) turned to flight the armies of aliens (Judges 7:21); (j) were women who received their dead raised to life again (1 Kings 17:17ff; 2 Kings 4:8ff); (k) were stoned to death (1 Kings 21:13); (l) were sawn asunder (traditional death of Isaiah by Manasseh); (m) were slain with the sword (Jer. 26:23); (n) wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins (2 Kings 1:8); (o) were being destitute afflicted, and tormented.

In addition to this list of Biblical heroes, the author cites two examples from the history of the inter-Biblical trials of God's people.... “...others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection (Heb. 11:35). This is no doubt in reference to an incident recorded in 2 Maccabees 7. Antiochus IV dictator of Syria had set

himself to a program designed to break the tenacious resistance of the Jews by introducing among them Greek culture and religion. On a given day every Jew was to be forced to sacrifice upon the pagan altars of the Syrians. When the emperor's agents sought to get the old priest Eleazar to do so, he refused. They pled with him simply to toss some incense into the altar fire, saying that because of his great influence the younger people would be willing to do likewise. Again he refused. Then they sought to get him to eat swine's flesh; again he refused. Indignant, they sought to force him to swallow some. Each time he spat it out. Finally, they cut out his tongue, the organ with which he spoke his refusal. Finally he was tortured to death for his faith.

An even more gruesome ordeal was that of a mother and her seven sons. When the first son refused to forsake his loyalty to God by eating swine's flesh, the agents cut out his tongue; then first one ear and then the other. With each repeated refusal they cut off his arms and legs, leaving only the torso. This they placed in a large pan over a fire and fried him alive. Throughout the ordeal his mother and brothers were exhorting him to be faithful to God, for God would raise him up in the resurrection. Then each son in turn, and finally the mother, suffered the same fate, in each case being exhorted to faithfulness. Each refused physical deliverance (2 Maccabees 6:21ff) believing in a better life in the resurrection.

The "saints" of the Old Testament, though well attested by their faith, did not enjoy the accomplishment or completion of the promises as we do in the New Dispensation 11:39-40 (see also 11:13-16). The OT "saints" were "promised" but didn't receive what was promised—they had to "see it and greet it from afar." Milligan says Paul is not talking about something the OT saints lacked in heaven until Christ died and rose again—but Paul is talking about the lack the OT saints had while they were here on earth exercising faith before the death and resurrection of Christ and the institution of the church. In other words, Paul is pointing out the relative blessedness these NT Hebrew Christians had, and we have now, that God has fulfilled (filled up full) his promises of atonement and redemption, as compared with the fact that the OT saints never got to see it completed (except by faith). Thus all on the completed side of redemption should be equally as faithful (and more so) than those OT saints! THIS IDEA FITS THE CONTEXT BEST. Another commentator has put it this way: "All that has gone before not only has meaning as an example, but it is not complete without the present. God is engaged in the salvation of the world and each part of his plan fits into the whole and is incomplete apart from the whole. Our day is rooted in the past and has meaning for the future and will not come into its completeness apart from that future. All is moving to the final day of consummation. In this day of fragmentation how we need to meditate upon the oneness and the solidarity of the entire plan of God." PRAISE GOD, MAN HAS FOUND THE CERTAIN GROUND FROM WHICH TO PRY AWAY ALL THE IMPENETRABLE CURTAINS OR OBSTACLES IN HIS WAY TO HOPE FOR ETERNAL LIFE WITH GOD. If God is for us, who can be against us? (Rom. 8:32-38); Eph. 6:10ff). Paul, who wrote this treatise, also wrote from his own prison—awaiting death by beheading, that he had an absolute ground upon which to stand to pry away the fear of death (2 Tim. 1:9-12).

Many years ago, a Frenchman, a brilliant mathematician and philosopher was reading his Bible and meditating upon the message of the Book as it spoke to his mind and heart—it was the night of November 23, 1654. The man was Blaise Pascal. He discovered in his heart of hearts for the first time that God was Someone very different than the “god of the philosophers.” It was so startling and thrilling a realization, the famous scientist and Christian wrote an account of his conclusions and sewed it into the lining of his coat so he might refer to it often. It went like this: “The God of Christians is not a God who is simply the author of the elements; that is the view of heathens and Epicureans. He is not merely a God who exercises his providence over the life and fortunes of men, to bestow on those who worship him a long and happy life. That was the portion of the Jews. But the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of Christians, is a God of love and comfort, a God who fills the soul and heart of those whom he possesses, a God who makes them conscious of their inward wretchedness, and his infinite mercy, who unites himself in their inmost soul, who fills it with humility and joy, with confidence and love, who renders them incapable of any other end than himself.”

Years ago “science” was deified. People optimistically looked forward to a utopia created by man and science. Bertrand Russell said in his book, *What I Believe*: “Science can, if it chooses, enable our grandchildren to live the good life, by giving them the knowledge, self-control, and characters productive of harmony rather than strife.” Since the “atomic age,” however, and since two “world-wars” and the German holocaust upon the Jews, the Cambodian holocaust, the many holocausts in Africa, the Saddam Hussein holocaust, numerous African genocides, even those who believed that the God of the Bible made sense, have come to almost hysterical despair. Jewish Rabbi, Richard L. Rubenstein, in his book, *After Auschwitz*, 1966, p. 224ff, wrote, “The death camps helped me to understand the religious meaning of our era. Ours is the time of the death of God. That time which Nietzsche’s madman had said was too far off has come upon us...God really died at Auschwitz....We are alone in a silent unfeeling cosmos...there is nothing left but ultimate futility, for omnipotent Nothingness is Lord of all Creation...”

BUT THE CHRISTIAN DOES NOT DESPAIR. HE BELIEVES AND HOPES. The Christian is a person who, with all the honesty of which he/she is capable becomes convinced that the fact of Jesus Christ is the most trustworthy fact that is available in this “futile cosmos”—in the entire universe of human experience—past, present and future. Christ thus becomes both his central postulate and the Archimedean “place to stand” which, because it is really solid, established in history and testified to by eyewitnesses, firm and certain, enables him/her to operate with confidence in all other areas of human experience.

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

HEBREWS 12:1-29,

Hebrews 12 might be subtitled, The Pursuit of Excellence. English words “excellent” and “excel” are from Latin and French and mean “rise out from, go beyond or surpass in good qualities.” The Lord Jesus said to his disciples, “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” Matt. 5:20. Matthew’s gospel uses the Greek word *perisseuo* which means, “over and above—superabundant.” Other scriptures which indicate the Christian is to pursue excellence should be consulted (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:12; Phil. 1:10; 3:8). The implication of Hebrews 11:39-40 is that since God has provided something more excellent for us than those heroes of faith in the Old Testament—we ought to look to the One (Heb. 12:1-6) who has excelled all and pursue His excellence. The pursuit of excellence requires us to disencumber ourselves of easily besetting hindrances (sins). Sin is lawless rebellion against the will of God (Rom. 8:6-8; 1 Jn. 3:4). All lawless rebellion (not just deeds, but thinking as well) against God’s will must be surrendered! How that shall be done is discussed in the three fundamental points of Chapter 12: (a) discipline; (b) strategy; (c) and goal.

THE DISCIPLINE involved in THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE is outlined in Heb. 12:1-11. The pursuit of excellence requires the Christian to get actively involved in the Christian “Contest.” The Greek word translated “run” is *trechomen*, meaning, “to strive to advance, to exert oneself racing, to run rapidly”. It requires perseverance. The Greek word *hupomeno*, translated “perseverance” means “remain steadfastly, stick-to-it, struggle, strive, toil.” It requires a race, a contest, a participation—not merely being a spectator. The Greek word for “race” is *agona* from which the English words “agony and agonize” come. It is what athletes, artists, craftsmen, and all professionals in any vocation do in the pursuit of excellence. **ATHLETES AND ARTISTS EXERT THEMSELVES TO THE POINT OF AGONY. THEY DISCIPLINE THEMSELVES, THEY SACRIFICE PERSONAL WHIMS AND FANCIES BECAUSE THEIR GOAL IS EXCELLENCE IN THAT TO WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN “CALLED.”**

The Captain (Heb. 12:2) of our team, upon whom we are to “fix upon” or “look upon” (Greek *aphrontes*, “give total attention to”) is Jesus Christ, the Perfect Human, the archegon, “Pioneer” and teleiotes “Finisher” of faithfulness (the “race”). Archegon is the same word used of Christ in Heb. 2:10 which KJV translates “author” of our salvation. Jesus endured or persevered even unto shedding of his blood (death) on the cross in order to pursue and attain the goal of excellence (see Phil. 2:5-11). Jesus “despised” (Greek *kataphronesas*, “thought-nothing-of-it, scorned, disregarded”) the shame of the cross and stuck to the

agonizing contest faithfully to the end and earned excellence. Thus he was highly exalted and given a name above every name in heaven and on earth. Jesus did it in the same human body and experience in which all humans live. Jesus had, or at least used, no power that we do not have to earn his excellence and finish his course. There is not one incident in the Gospel records to indicate Jesus used any power the rest of humanity does not have in order to overcome temptation, fear, doubt, physical deprivation and sin. What Jesus did use was the power of faith in the faithfulness of God the Father, faith in God's Scriptures, and prayer to God. Every one of those sources of power are available to every believer in his/her pursuit of excellence. No other power than this is needed to attain the Christian's goal. Striving ("running the race") in the pursuit of excellence does not mean the Christian will ever, by his own works or goodness, earn sinlessness and thus earn his own salvation. **BUT IT DOES MEAN THE CHRISTIAN WILL TRY WITH EVERY OUNCE OF ENERGY HE HAS TO ALLOW GOD (BY OBEYING GOD'S REVEALED WILL IN THE SCRIPTURES) TO REMOLD HIM INTO THE IMAGE OF JESUS CHRIST!**

Baker's Dictionary of Theology defines "discipline" thus: "discipline implies instruction and correction, the training which improves, molds, strengthens, and perfects character. It is the moral education obtained by the enforcement of obedience through supervision and control." The primary Greek word for discipline is paideuo and is used throughout Hebrews ch. 12 except in 12:6 where the Greek word elegchomenos is translated, in KJV "scourgeth, or put to the test to prove" but is translated "chastises" in RSV and ASV, and "punishes" in the NIV. The Greek word paideuo meant to the Greeks, "to train and to chasten a child by inflicting blows..." (See Luke 23:16,22; Acts 7:22; 22:3; 1 Cor. 11:32; 2 Cor. 6:9; Rev. 3:19, and numerous Proverbs). In 2 Tim. 3:16, the Greek word epanorthosin is translated "correction" and comes from the root word, ortho which means "straighten up or out" and we get the English medical prefix, "ortho-" from it. In 2 Tim. 3:16, the Greek noun paideian, related to the verb paideuo is translated, "instruction." Clearly, the words for discipline in the NT carry with them the idea that physical or psychological pain may be necessary to bring about the "instruction" or "correction" that is desired.

Discipline is absolutely necessary for the pursuit of excellence, both in the individual and in the community. Human beings have free wills to exercise. Without discipline or control (see 2 Tim. 1:7 for the Greek word sophronismos translated "self-control" and means, "sound-mindedness") the human will tends to swing to extremes and psychological and spiritual integration is destroyed. Even the thinking process itself must be disciplined to logic or it becomes anarchistic, irrational and chaotic. Without discipline interpersonal relationships cannot exist. Without discipline people, families, and communities become unstructured, insecure, uncontrolled, and self-destructive. Psychologically we must have discipline to feel needed and cared for. "If you are left without discipline...then you are illegitimate children and not sons..." Heb. 12:8. Bill Curry who played football for Vince Lombardi, coach of the Green Bay Packers teams that won four "World Championships" between 1961 & 1966 and then won the first two "Super-Bowl" games in 1967 & 1968, said, "A good bit of the time I hated him, but since he became so gravely ill, I've thought a lot about him. And I now can look back and realize that the reason I resented him was that he was

making me grow when I didn't want to. I know now that what maturity I have I owe mostly to Lombardi. I'll always be grateful for that. He was a master of self-discipline and bringing discipline to others. I was allowed to see him in the hospital a few weeks ago and was privileged to tell him I had come to realize he had made me grow up and how much he had helped me." **AND THAT'S WHAT GOD IS TRYING TO DO WITH US THROUGH CHASTENING, DISCIPLINE, CORRECTION, YES, EVEN BY PUNISHMENT—MAKE US "GROW UP INTO THE MATURITY AND STATURE OF CHRIST" (Eph. 4:11-16).**

Discipline conditions or equips the Christian to meet the agonizing circumstance and tests of the "race" or "battle" for eternal life. Often there is a need for purifying or cutting away of excessive hindrances. In the scriptures it is called "circumcision of the heart/mind" (Rom. 2:29; Col. 2:11). Pride, lust, greed, fear, doubt, anxiety, self-righteousness, all hinder us from reaching the highest potential for which we were created, and, of which we are capable. With the help of God's Spirit (through his word) we must "cut" these hindrances from our minds. Often there is a need for building up strength and courage to do what we know is good. "Solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil" Heb. 5:14. **DISCIPLINE, CORRECTION, CHASTENING IS MOST OFTEN THE ONLY WAY TO ACCOMPLISH THIS IN OUR LIVES!** It is by chastening and suffering that God helps cut away those things and attitudes which only hinder our pursuit of excellence. Any "thing" or "attitude" which diverts our attention and energies away from the new nature and the glory of God has to be cut away! Sometimes it can be done by exhortation, sometimes by meditation, but more often it has to be done by some more drastic measure—pain. Paul had to endure a thorn in his flesh to keep him from becoming proud (2 Cor. 12:7ff).

Discipline conditions the Christian to put complete trust in his Captain (Jesus Christ). Otto Graham, NFL Football Hall of Famer, former quarterback of the Cleveland Browns, said, "My days as a pro football player were thrilling, realizing my teammates trusted me. They were not always in a position to understand how I would direct the play as quarterback—but they disciplined themselves on the playing field into unquestioning obedience. They were convinced that I would always act in their best interests." **"GOD DISCIPLINES US FOR OUR GOOD, THAT WE MAY SHARE HIS HOLINESS"** Heb. 12:10. We have need of endurance (which only comes through discipline) so that we may do the will of God and receive what is promised (Heb. 10:36). This is precisely why we are chastened or disciplined. This is why by our Heavenly Father permits us to suffer—in order that we will learn to trust him completely as a Father (Quarterback) who always has our best interests at heart! Jesus knows well that discipline, obedience, chastening is the only way to victory, for he, himself, in the flesh, as the Son, endured suffering and won the victory. Jesus as genuinely Man, allowed the Heavenly Father "to call the plays" and trusted him implicitly to have his best interests at heart (Jn. 15:10). Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 1:8-9 that in Asia he had experienced affliction that utterly, unbearably crushed him until he despaired of life itself. But he said that was to make him rely not on himself, but on God who raises the dead. Discipline is designed to produce the Father-son relationship between God and human believers. Discipline builds character (Job 5:17; Rom. 5:3-4; Rev. 3:15; Prov. 29:15; 29:17, etc.). Joseph, Moses, David, and Paul all grew in

character as a result of pain in the Lord's correction and chastening. Even the Lord Jesus, accepting the limitations of the flesh, "increased in wisdom, stature and favor with God and man" (Lk. 2:51-52; Heb. 5:8-9).

Holiness is good because that is what God created humans to be—holy. Holiness is essentially the state of being separated from all that is not true, not right, not good, not edifying, not abiding, not of use to God, and not heavenly! WHO WOULD REALLY WANT A LIFE OF FALSEHOOD, WRONG, EVIL, DESTRUCTION, TEMPORARINESS, USELESSNESS, AND TOTALLY OF THIS EARTH ("FROM DUST YOU WERE TAKEN AND TO DUST YOU SHALL RETURN" Gen. 3:19). Discipline fits or equips people as vessels for use in God's service (2 Tim. 2:20-21; 2 Cor. 1:3-11). Discipline causes believers to bear the fruits of holiness (Jn. 15:1-2; Heb. 12:10-11). One of the main characteristics of the Holy Spirit is self-control. What does God want as the result of his discipline in our lives? He wants us to share his holiness! Do we really understand how glorious that can be? Paul says it is "beyond all comparison" (2 Cor. 4:16-18). There is nothing in this world with which to compare it! There is nothing higher, better, more enjoyable or more satisfying than a share of God's holiness! God has as his goal that we might become his sons—transformed into the image of his only unique (Greek, monogenes, Jn. 1:18) Son, Jesus Christ. Sons enjoy the companionship of their fathers; sons trust, love, and reflect the nature of their fathers. Most sons inherit the estates of their fathers—ALL THIS AND MORE IS WHAT OUR HEAVENLY FATHER PROPOSES TO DO FOR US THROUGH DISCIPLINING US AS SONS! This text, Heb. 12:1-11, contains a 7-fold blessing out of Christian suffering: (a) proof of the Fatherhood of God (12:5a, 6b, 7b, 8—see also 1 Pet. 4:14); (b) proof of the love of God (12:6a); (c) produces trust in the goodness and infallibility of God's wisdom (12:10a); (d) recognizes the ordered hand of the all overruling government of God (12:7a); (e) produces surrender to the sovereign authority of God (12:9); (f) produces the education necessary to bring our lives into the holiness of God (12:10); (g) produces trust in discipline as God's means of reaching the bright, eternal goal of God (12:11b).

"For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" Heb. 12:11. Human beings have a stubborn tendency to refuse to postpone blessings—THEY WANT TO BE BLESSED RIGHT NOW! Human beings have a stubborn tendency to cringe from suffering as if it were always something evil, judgmental, and stigmatizing. The Greek text of Heb. 12:11 might literally be translated thus: "On one hand, all discipline, indeed for the present, seems not of joy to be, but of grief; on the other hand, however, at the last (later) a peaceable fruit to the ones through it having been exercised, it gives back righteousness." The Greek word *lupes* is translated "painful" and is the word from which the English word *lupus* probably originates. C. S. Lewis wrote in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, "You would like to know how I behave when I am experiencing pain, not writing books about it. You need not guess, for I will tell you; I am a great coward. But what is that to the purpose? When I think of pain—of anxiety that gnaws like fire and loneliness that spreads out like a desert, and the heartbreaking routine of monotonous misery, or again of dull aches that blacken our whole landscape or sudden nauseating pains that knock a man's heart out at one blow, of pains that

seem already intolerable and then are suddenly increased, of infuriating scorpion-stinging pains that startle into maniacal movement a man who seemed half dead with his previous tortures—it ‘quite o’ercrowds my spirit.’ If I knew any way of escape I would crawl through sewers to find it. But what is the good of telling you about my feelings? You know them already; they are the same as yours. I am not arguing that pain is not painful. Pain hurts. That is what the word means. I am only trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made ‘perfect through suffering’ is not incredible. To prove it palatable is beyond my design.” (p.105). THE MAJOR REASON THAT PEOPLE TAKE SO LONG TO REALIZE THE “FRUIT” OF DISCIPLINE IS THAT “PAIN HURTS” AND NO ONE ENJOYS “HURTING.”

Joseph’s time in Egyptian prison was painful—but it prepared him to be a ruler and save his people. Moses’ 40 years in the wildernesses of Midian was painful—but it prepared him to lead a nation to freedom from slavery and through a wilderness trek of another 40 years to the promised land. David’s years in exile from Saul were painful—but they yielded the fruit of righteousness, compassion, and self-control that would be demanded of his anointing as king of Israel. The OT prophets knew suffering like almost no other human except Jesus—but they saved a “remnant” that produced the Messiah! HOW DID THESE MEN ENDURE? HOW WERE THEY ABLE TO LOOK PAST THE LONG YEARS OF PAIN AND DISCIPLINE AND WAIT FOR THE “PEACEABLE FRUIT”? BY FAITH! “This slight, momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen...” (2 Cor. 4:17). Human beings do not learn this lesson quickly because faith does not come quickly—there is no such thing as “instant faith.” Sometimes God has to use drastic measures to exercise us (Greek *gegumnasmenois*, English, *gymnasium*, Heb. 12:11, translated, “exercised” KJV & RSV and “trained” NIV). Quoting C. S. Lewis again, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains; it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world....No doubt Pain as God’s megaphone is a terrible instrument; it may lead to final and unrepented rebellion. But it gives the only opportunity the bad man can have for amendment. It removes the veil; it plants the flag of truth within the fortress of a rebel soul.” *op.cit.* p. 81, 95. David wrote, “Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I observe thy word...It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I may learn thy statutes...” Psa. 119:67,71. That great hymn we sing, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” comes directly from a context written by one of God’s OT saints who suffered probably more than any other—Jeremiah wrote about the blessings that had come to him in the midst of his suffering (Lamentations 3:19-39)—READ IT!

Discipline is produced by: (a) the fear of God —Paul wrote, “knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men (1 Cor. 5:11; see also 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:17; Deut. 10:12; Josh. 24:14; Eccl. 12:13; Matt. 10:28). C. S. Lewis wrote, “It is hardly complimentary to God that we should choose him as an alternative to Hell; yet even this he accepts. The creature’s illusion of self-sufficiency must, for the creature’s sake, be shattered; and by trouble or fear of trouble on earth, by fear of the eternal flames, God shatters it....” *op.cit.* p. 97; (b) by the love of Christ —Paul wrote, “The love of Christ constrains (or controls) us...” (2 Cor. 5:14, see also Jn. 14:21,23; 1 Jn. 5:2-3, etc.). An interesting story of a few years ago about another man in

professional football exemplifies what love can do as motivation in the pursuit of excellence—Frank Keegan was “water boy” for the Philadelphia Eagles for 28 years. He was 70 years old in 1970. Someone asked him if it wasn’t humiliating for a 70-year-old man to be a “water-boy” to players 50 years younger than he. His reply was, “No, I’m doing it to repay a debt of love and gratitude to an old Eagles team of years ago who visited day after day with my son who had been severely burned and almost lost his will to live. The Eagle players saved my son!”; (c) by the power of the Holy Spirit of God in us —by his power in us we put to death the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:12-13); his fruit in us produces “self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23); the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh to prevent you from doing what you would (Gal. 5:17). God created human beings with awesome powers and capacities of choice and will and desire (i.e., self-preservation, procreation, domination, submissiveness, acquisitiveness, creative, aesthetic, etc.). God has put these desires into our personality to give us the character of his image, but they are also the very targets of Satan’s most subtle and deceptive temptations. Discipline and control within the will of God is absolutely essential to producing out of these desires a conformity to the image of God’s Perfect Human, Jesus Christ.

This portion of text, Heb. 12:11-17. involves the STRATEGY involved in THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE. Vince Lombardi, venerable coach of the Green Bay Packers (circa. 1960-67) stressed two basic strategies in his approach to winning football— FUNDAMENTALS & TEAMWORK. Players on Lombardi’s teams said, “He believed that football was basically a game of blocking and tackling, with no fancy frills intruding...He won 5 NFL and 2 world championships with Packer teams that ran the fundamental power sweep and off-tackle plays with monotonous regularity—and with flawless execution.” Look at our text here and find the same two emphases to the winning strategy in the spiritual pursuit of excellence. The first is FUNDAMENTALS. “Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet...Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” 12:12-14. This is a quotation from Isa. 35:3-4—Isaiah wrote these words in a context of appealing to his Israelite brethren to return to the fundamentals of the Word of God for strengthening (see also Isa. 34:16, 33:6). The apostle Peter wrote, “...beloved, knowing this beforehand, beware lest you be carried away with the error of lawless men and lose your own stability...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:17-18). Jude wrote, “Contend earnestly for the faith (Christianity) that was once for all delivered to the saints.” Jude 3. Paul wrote “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman that has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth...” (2 Tim. 2:15, see also 2 Tim. 3:15-17). IN THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE THE CHRISTIAN MUST CULTIVATE STABILITY AND FIRMNESS IN THE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS OF GOD’S WORD! Excellence in the spiritual person comes through continual, repeated, diligent learning and practice of the fundamentals of the Christian faith—i.e., WHY WE BELIEVE (evidences & apologetics); WHAT WE BELIEVE (correct interpretation, exegesis and exposition of the scriptures), AND WHAT TO DO WITH OUR BELIEF (evangelism, worship, edification, benevolence, etc.). These are the fundamentals that need to be repeated and practiced, over and over and over. We do not need new and fancy doctrines to produce excellency in spirituality—we need to learn and practice the fundamentals. The fundamentals of God’s game-plan for producing spiritual excellence do

not need revision—they never need up-dating—they fit every age, every culture, and every need! Fran Tarkenton (Hall of Fame quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings) once said, “I believe God enables those who trust him, to do their best. As a rookie quarterback I had to memorize approximately 100 running plays and 100 passing plays...and when we came out of the huddle, the opposing team could shift into any of 10 or 12 defensive line-ups which I also had to memorize. These line-ups could cancel the play I’d called in the huddle and necessitate the immediate selection that had to be made in a matter of 4 or 5 seconds. Time and again I came out of the huddle fighting the temptation to go blank.” Tarkenton had to practice these fundamentals literally thousands of times, year after year, to become the excellent quarterback he was. SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE LESS DILIGENT WITH THE FUNDAMENTALS OF GOD’S WORD???????

The “root of bitterness” we are to avoid is the “bitterness and jealousy” aroused in Christian people and congregations stemming from worldliness. This question has to do with the second basic strategy in the Christian’s pursuit of excellence—TEAMWORK. Live at peace with all men—especially your brethren in Christ! “See to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness spring up and cause trouble, and by it the many become defiled.” 12:15. Nothing is more disastrous to the pursuit of spiritual excellence than bitterness and jealousy springing up in families (congregations) of Christians brought on by “irreligious” people like Esau. Esau gave priority to the material things of life over the spiritual—he despised the spiritual birthright and willingly exchanged it for a “mess of pottage” (i.e., a bowl of lentil soup) (Gen. 25:29-34; 27:41-46). Then when his father gave the spiritual birthright to Jacob, his brother, Esau hated his brother. That bitterness has continued in successive generations of the families of these brothers (Israelites and Edomites, i.e., Arabs) until this very day—nearly 4000 years! (see Num. 20:14-21; 1 Sam. 14:47; 2 Sam. 8:14; 2 Chron. 8:17-18; 2 Kings 8:20-22; 17:7; 16:6; Obadiah 1-21; Isa. 34:5-17; Jer. 49:17-22; Ezek. 25:12-14; Malachi 1:1-5). What great things might have been accomplished for God’s kingdom and spirituality had the Israelites and the Edomites cooperated in the will of God? Dave Robinson, great line-backer for the Green Bay Packers, said of Lombardi, “I feel there has never been another man who has had as much influence on the game as Vince Lombardi. I think Coach Lombardi was the greatest, most complete coach I’ve ever come in contact with. I think his influence on his team, even now, is immeasurable.” The “Packers” with all their stars (e.g., Bart Starr, Paul Hornug, Jim Taylor, Carroll Dale, Ray Nitschke, et.al.) were a team and Lombardi was strong enough to make them sublimate selfish ambitions for the whole team’s pursuit of excellence.

Jealousy, selfish ambition, worldliness will bring spiritual defeat. James writes that “war” (hostility) among brethren is always a consequence of worldly-mindedness (James uses the Greek word *hedonais*, translated “lusts” in KJV and “desires” in NIV; it is the word from which we get the English word hedonism meaning “sensualism, debauchery, excess, fleshliness, etc.”). *Hedonais* does not always have to be associated with sexual promiscuity or perversion—it may also describe the lust for power, lust for riches, lust for gluttony, lust for simply excessive pleasure or selfishness! The Christian pursuit of excellence demands brotherhood, unity, oneness (Jn. 17:20-26; Eph. 4:11-16, etc.). No Christian is an island! No

Christian can reach the “goal” God has for the whole body of Christ by himself. If he tries he will not only suffer personal defeat but he will also defile many others on the same team and bring about defeat for them. The Corinthian church of the first century is a classic example of a congregation headed for spiritual defeat because of worldly-minded pursuit of selfish ambition, and the lusts of the body! They were “bitter” over who their leaders should be; they were arrogant about being “sophisticated” when one of their members was living sexually with his father’s wife; they were wrangling and taking one another to heathen courts to settle their civil affairs; they were divorcing their spouses; they were quarreling over whether to eat meat sacrificed to idols or not; they wrangled over the gender roles in the church; they arrogantly got drunk at their “love-feasts” and were so when they partook of the Lord’s Supper; they counted some of their members (probably slaves) as hardly fit to be members of the body (i.e., they were not discerning the body); they were arrogant and jealous of one another over miraculous spiritual gifts; and finally, they argued about and doubted the resurrection of Christ and of dead saints. The 12th chapter of 1 Corinthians states in the most unequivocal language possible that every Christian is a most necessary part of the one whole team—and when one member suffers, all suffer, if one is honored, all rejoice together. **TO ATTAIN SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE IT TAKES TEAMWORK—A TEAM WORKING TO SACRIFICE INDIVIDUAL, PERSONAL, GLORY SO THE WHOLE TEAM MAY BE EXCELLENT—A TEAM WORKING AT OBEYING THE DIRECTIONS OF JESUS CHRIST (IT’S COACH OR QUARTERBACK—THE ONE CALLING THE PLAYS!**

There will be some who question why Esau could not “find repentance.” This must be interpreted in the light of all the Scriptures teach about repentance! God will always accept the man who sincerely changes his mind and submits to the divine will. Some people are “sorry” about their mistakes—only because they are forced to suffer the consequences and they become bitter and despondent (e.g., King Saul, Judas, etc.). But they never change their mind and will. This is the sorrow that is worldly not godly (2 Cor. 7:8-13) and it does not work repentance. Esau’s subsequent life shows his sorrow as not a penitent one. He sought a change in his father’s actions with tears because he felt the loss of something worldly. Esau apparently never valued the spiritual preciousness of the birthright like Jacob did! Although Esau and Jacob were reconciled as brothers (Gen. 33), Esau and his descendants (the Edomites) never considered the “birthright” (i.e., the Messianic heritage) of significant importance. The Edomites became idolaters. So Paul is exhorting these Hebrew-Christians to go all-out in discipline, fundamentals, and teamwork to pursue their “spiritual birthright” in the Messiah. He is trying to keep them from going back to Judaism which is profane, irreligious apostasy in which they will find no place of repentance (remember Heb. 6:1-8 and 10:26-39). These Hebrew-Christians must not “cry” over the loss of the “mess of worldly pottage” of Judaism! They must have true repentance; they must value the spiritual heritage of Christianity above all the fleeting pleasures and comforts of worldly ease. The “repentance” Esau could not find was in his father’s (Isaac’s) decision. In other words, Esau could not get Isaac to change his decision even though Esau sought it with tears. The same principle is still true—Isaac could not give Esau the blessing because Esau had despised his birthright and apparently (though he shed tears) he continued to look upon it as an earthly loss, and not a spiritual loss. That is the fundamental cause of “bitterness” and hatred and disunity within so-called “Christendom” now—carnal-mindedness about the “birthright” (i.e.

Messianic destiny of the church). Much of Christendom has despised its spiritual birthright and considers Christianity simply one of many world-religions which are primarily to deal with earthly things; much of Christendom scoffs at “other-worldly” faith as “pie-in-the-sky-by-and-bye.” If Christ is for this world only, we are of all men most to be pitied. We should eat and drink, for tomorrow we die! (See 1 Cor. 15). Thus, Paul is led to logically discuss next in order, the Goal in the pursuit of excellence.

“Mount Zion” is the GOAL of the pursuit of Christian excellence! Some people have no goals life. They just aimlessly and passively drift along with events and circumstances, trying, stoically, to survive (I suppose their goal is “survival”). The Christian, like the apostle Paul, says, “Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14). Paul used the metaphor of the Greek Olympic games more than once in his writings (see also 1 Cor. 9:24-26; Heb. 12:1; Gal. 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:5; 4:7-8). In Phil. 3:13-14 he used the Greek words *skopon* which means “a goal in an athletic contest” and *brabeion*, translated “prize,” and means “a wreath or victor’s crown who has won in an athletic contest.” Peter, James and John all occasionally use the metaphor of an athletic contest to depict the Christian’s sanctification in Christ as the goal in a “race” or “contest” to be won. Carroll Dale (Hall of Fame pass-receiver) for the Green Bay Packers, said of Vince Lombardi, “I remember his first talks after I came here that he stressed winning—that there was no second place...He always told us that our church and God should come first with us, then our family, and then Green Bay Packer football, in that order.” An Olympic track star, Rafer Johnson writes, “It is sometimes said that winning is not important, that the important thing is competing. But when we have to go to a hospital for an operation, we expect more from the surgeon than a ‘good try.’ We expect him to win! The same is true in sports and all of life. If the athlete thinks he will lose, he has lost already.” Paul, the apostle, wrote, “Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it! Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable...I do not run aimlessly...” 1 Cor. 9:24-26.

The goal of the Christian is the eternal, ultimately-spiritual, dwelling with God. The goal of the Christian is eternal victory. This is illustrated with the comparison between Judaism and Christianity in Hebrews 12:18-24! The Old Covenant (OT) is allegorized as “Mt. Sinai” 12:1-21. It was there God instituted Judaism (Ex. 19:16-25; 20:18-26; Deut. 5:5; 5:22-27, etc.). The Old Covenant was temporary—i.e., “could be touched” etc. It had its temporalness built into it. The Jews were reminded over and over by their prophets that Judaism was not God’s ultimate goal. THERE COULD BE NO SENSE OF FINALITY, COMPLETENESS OF VICTORY IN JUDAISM. The Old Covenant was a constant reminder to human beings that they were separated from God and they could not come into God’s presence in sin or they would die! (Die forever, the second death). There was the constant reminder of man’s defeat in sin. The exact statement of Moses in 12:21 is not found in the Pentateuch (something similar is in Deut. 9:19 or Ex. 19:12-13; see also Acts 7:32 and 2 Cor. 3:1-18), but Paul’s record of it is sufficient for our acceptance as being historically accurate.

The point of this passage (Heb. 12:18-24) is to add another exhortation to the many that have already been given in the Hebrew treatise—Judaism was not God’s ultimate goal for man! These Hebrew-Christians of the 1st century were in danger of going back to Judaism—THEY MUST NOT DO SO! Christ and Christianity is God’s ultimate, final, exclusive relating of himself to mankind. The Greek verb in 12:18 *proseleluthate* is plural, perfect-tense, giving the meaning, “...you did not come, and are not coming” to Mt. Sinai (i.e., Judaism) when you come to Christ (the Messiah).

The New Covenant is allegorized as “Mt. Zion” (12:22-24). It was in Zion (Jerusalem) that God instituted Christianity (Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8; 2:1-47, etc.). See also the allegory between Judaism and Christianity in Galatians 4:21-31. The whole city of Jerusalem is often referred to as “Zion” although Zion was only one of the mountains upon which the city was built. “Zion” in Hebrew means “citadel.” “Zion” is used by the O.T. prophets to symbolize the New Testament church (Isa. 2:1-4; Joel 2:30—3:3; 3:17; 3:21; Micah 4:2-7; Zech 9:9-13, etc.). The NT also uses it—1 Pet. 2:6; Rom. 9:33; 22:26, etc. Paul uses the Greek verb *proseleuthate*, again, in 12:22, and it is plural, perfect—meaning, these Christians “had come and were continuing to come” to Mt. Zion. The “Mt. Zion” of the OT is not some millennial 1000 year Jewish restoration yet future. “Mt. Zion” was, and is, the church of the NT! This, clearly, must be the proper interpretation of “Mt. Zion”—the immediate context and the context of the whole book of Hebrews demands this interpretation! “Mt. Zion” is the final, ultimate, exclusive goal which God has for humankind. It is the city of the living God—the “heavenly Jerusalem,” i.e., the pre-eminent Jerusalem (see Gal. 4:26). It is God’s eternal abode—not temporary like the earthly Jerusalem (Judaism). Christians have come to a city (“Mt. Zion”) which is partly in heaven now and partly on earth now (i.e., it is composed of those were coming to it in the 1st century, those Hebrew-Christians, and of that “great cloud of witnesses,” heroes of the faith, already in heaven and those yet to enter heaven—“Zion” will some day be altogether in heaven. All the attributes characterizing those who “were coming” in the 1st century could be said of Christians while they are still on earth—in the church—i.e., the church has angels in festal array “ministering” now to those who are inheriting salvation (Heb. 1:14); the church is the assembly of the “first-born” who are “enrolled in heaven” (Rev. 3:12; 21:11-15); the church is the “spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 10:10-18); the church has come to “Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel” (Heb. 4:14—5:10; 7:1-28). Now, however, there are citizens of the Zion in heaven such as are denominated in Rev. 7:9-12...BUT “ZION” IS ALL ONE “ZION”—just as portrayed (symbolized) in Rev. 7:1-12 where the “twelve tribes of Israel” was the church on earth in the 1st century and “the great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, tribe, people and tongue, were standing before the throne” was the church in heaven. While Christians on earth praise God and have communion with Christ, so do those in heaven; while Christians on earth serve God and Christ, so do those in heaven (Rev. chs. 4,5,7,14). Christians have come to the mediator of a new covenant and to the blood of Jesus which has better things to tell than the blood of Abel. Abel’s sacrifice said there shall be a way of forgiveness; JESUS’ SACRIFICE SAID, “I AM THE WAY....” The new covenant, the mediation, the vicarious death of Jesus is the ultimate answer to all that humanity cries out to hear. Everything in human experience, especially sin, cries out for solution—for ultimate

relationship to the human's Creator....JESUS IS THE ANSWER TO ALL THAT! The point of this passage is to add another exhortation to the many already given in the book of Hebrews: Christ and the Church is God's ultimate goal for human beings! These Hebrew-Christians had come and were continuing to come to it—coming to that which all their OT law and prophets predicted when they gloriously told of the “Mt. Zion” God was going to prepare. They dare not turn back to Judaism.

The “kingdom that was to be shaken” was Judaism! Turning away from Christ for Judaism or any other “kingdom” (religious system—even one's own) will result in being “shaken” to destruction—eternal destruction. If those of the OT covenant perished when they rejected God's covenant promises and terms, how do these Hebrew-Christians think to escape perishing if they reject the New and Perfect and Final Covenant in Jesus Christ?! That is the proper interpretation of Hebrews 12:25-29. Jesus Christ is the King, and his Church is the Kingdom that has come to “shake down” and supplant all other kings and kingdoms! Hebrews 12:26 is a quotation of Haggai 2:6-7. Haggai's prediction is a Messianic prophecy. He predicts that the “second temple” will be glorified by the coming of the Messiah, whom Haggai calls, “The Desire of all nations” (in the Hebrew language, hemeddath kal-haggoim), or as RSV translates, “the Treasure of all nations.” The Jews certainly believed the Messiah would come with the “Golden Age” (i.e., olam-habbah) and supplant all earthly kings and kingdoms with a Jewish earthly kingdom. Even some of the Gentiles (e.g., Tacitus, in his Histories 5:13, and Seutonius, in Vespasian, 100:4) expected a future “Golden Age” about the time Jesus was born. This “Golden Age” they predicted would be brought to all the world by some potentate who was to be born in the “East” (Judea) and he would become “master of affairs.”

The “shaking of the world” and the defeat of all worldly systems or governments is chronologically connected with the coming of the Messiah by Daniel the prophet (Dan. 2:44ff; 9:24-27, et.al.). The OT prophets do not say explicitly how long this “shaking of all things” will continue—they do indicate it would begin in the days of the “fourth” world-wide empire (Rome). And so, it did! The “shaking” will continue until all false systems of religion and humanistic philosophies are destroyed and until all the kingdoms of the world become the Kingdom of our Lord and Christ (1 Cor. 15:24-25). The word for “shake” in Greek is seismos from which we get the English words, “seismic, seismicity, and seismograph”—in other words, “earthquake.” God has nothing better to offer to any man than salvation through Christ. The Church is God's eternal institution. It shall never be shaken. It is the final solution! This passage (12:25-29) is the climactic argument of the entire book. THE ULTIMATE WORD OF GOD BROUGHT UPON THE SCENE IN CHAPTER ONE HAS SPOKEN FINALLY AND COMPLETELY. GOD HAS NOTHING FURTHER TO SAY! Hold fast to the Messiah and his kingdom or expect the God who is a “consuming fire” to destroy you along with everything else that is not of his kingdom and the destruction will not be annihilation—but “eternal torment” (Rev. 14:9-11; 20:10).

The human being's whole relationship to God, as God wishes it, is summed up (Heb. 12:28-29) in one word—WORSHIP! The word translated “worship” is the Greek word

latreuomen which comes from latris meaning a hired servant.” **WORSHIP OF GOD IS SYNONYMOUS WITH SERVICE TO GOD.** The writer of Ecclesiastes said that the whole duty of man was to fear (reverence) God and keep his commandments. Our whole life should be worship to God—we do not worship God merely on Sunday, in a church-house, with just a set order of ceremonies. Worship is a whole life—a “sabbath-kind-of-life” (remember Hebrews, ch. 4?). The Greek word eulabeia is translated “reverence” and means, “caution, holy fear, great deference, respect, veneration.” Our “veneration and deference” to God has its source in gratefulness to him for giving us citizenship in an unshakeable, eternal kingdom. “We love him because he first loved us” (1 Jn. 4:19), and “This is the love of God that we keep his commandments” (1 Jn. 5:3). “By (because of) the mercies of God” we should present our bodies living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2).

Human beings were never intended for sin and separation from God. They were never intended to be defeated by Satan. They were intended for dominion and glory in partnership with God (Gen. 1:26-31; 2:1-25). But Satan, because of the condemnation of God for his pride has arrayed himself against God and human beings (humans are God’s apex of creation). Satan would have us believe that the momentary glitter of this earthly existence is the goal of human life. But the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the vain-glory of this earthly life are all passing away—going to defeat. The victory that Jesus Christ, the Perfect Human accomplished and which overcomes the defeat of the world is appropriated through our faith (1 Jn. 5:4-5). He who does the will of God abides forever (1 Jn. 2:17). Many of the great athletes, like Vince Lombardi, are spoken of as “immortal,” but true immortality can only be assured to those who are citizens of the eternal kingdom, the church of Jesus Christ, which cannot be shaken. **LET US THEN FOLLOW AND TRUST OUR DIVINE CAPTAIN (COACH) OR “PIONEER” OF OUR SALVATION—JESUS CHRIST!** Jerry Smith, another of the Green Bay Packers, said of Lombardi, “All the things a man searches for all his life I found in Coach Lombardi. He gave me a deeper meaning of life. He justified hard work, dedication, pride and love. His teachings and ideals, which he gave us all, both in football and life, will stay with us forever.”

But “Vince” is gone, the grim reaper has called again, and, as Charley Taylor of the Green Bay Packers said, “I just can’t believe it. It seems like all the people whom I loved and admired and gained so much from in my life aren’t with us anymore...and now coach Lombardi.” But death could not hold the Christian’s “Captain”! He not only talked about the pursuit of excellence and ultimate, complete victory over sin and death—**HE ACCOMPLISHED IT!** He has promised to deliver unto the same excellence and complete victory all who will trust and obey him. Jesus won the victory by discipline, strategy and by keeping his eye faithfully on the goal. **IT CAN’T BE SAID ANY BETTER THAN PAUL SAID IT AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS 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, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1-2). **GOD GIVE US ALL THE GRACE AND COURAGE AND DISCIPLINE TO “COUNT ALL THINGS BUT LOSS FOR THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST JESUS.”**

TEACHER'S NOTES

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

HEBREWS 13:1-25

Hebrews 13:20-21 is one of the greatest benedictions in all the Bible. “Benediction” is from Latin, bene, “good,” and dictio, “a plea for”—thus “a statement of blessing.” Paul is saying in Hebrews 13 that because of the redemptive work of Christ, culminated in the resurrection of Christ, our lives as Christians ought to be BENEDICTIONS---- living statements of the blessedness found in Christ. Paul is saying that everything God has done for us through Christ (Perfecting our Humanness, Atoned Absolutely for Sin, Gave Us a Perpetual “Sabbath-kind-of-life,” Ordained an Eternal High Mediator for Us, Instituted a Better Covenant for Us) equips us to do good, and thus glorify him and share in his glory!

The end God sought in redeeming us in Christ’s perfection is that we shall become doers of good, even as God does good. Redemption is not an end in itself—its end is to create for God a people zealous of good works (Titus 2:11-14). This is the goal for humanness that God prepared in his redemptive program before we were created (Rom. 8:29); Eph. 2:10). Redemption is to equip human beings to do good works. There really can’t be any “good” works which will please God or be acceptable to him unless they are done in Christ, by redeemed people! In other words, all the “good works” done in the world today that is not “in the name of Christ” are for naught in the perspective of eternity! ISN’T THAT FRIGHTENINGLY AWESOME TO CONSIDER?! Through our faith and obedience to Christ, God supplies or equips us to do good as he does good (2 Cor. 9:8; Col. 1:9-10; 2 thess. 2:16-17; 2 Tim. 2:21; 3:15-17, etc.) Goodness is essence of the work of the Holy Spirit in us (Gal. 5:22; Eph. 3:20). What we do as doctors, nurses, artists, musicians, salespersons, farmers, school teachers, policemen, mechanics, carpenters, housewives, secretaries, parents, children, “bakers and candlestick makers,” IS GOOD WHEN DONE BY FAITH IN, AND ACCORDING TO, THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD!

Too often exhortations for Christian spirituality are focused on the crisis experiences of living. Hearing exhortations for courage in crises repeated and repeated, the Christian either becomes insensitive to the constant “ringing of the alarm” or he associates spirituality only with crisis situations. Certainly, spiritual principles and actions should be applied to the crises of life. But it is equally true that since most of our time is spent in the routines of life we ought to apply spiritual principles and actions in the “routines of living.” Since it is true that most Christian activities are comprised of routine affairs, it is urgent that we remember it is mostly in the area of the commonplace and mundane activities of living that faithfulness is needed. Faithfulness is the source of Christian happiness. If you want happiness in the everyday, ordinary routines of living, be faithful to the will of God in these routine areas of living and you will have it. These “routine” actions of living are where Paul exhorts us to “do good” in Hebrews 13. Paul summarized Christian conduct in 1 Cor. 10:31

and related it to the ordinary activities of living—“So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all the glory of God...” It is faithfulness in the “routine” matters of life which is often the most difficult task for the Christian.

Sometimes we get so “spiritual” we forget to “do good” in the here and now! Ordinary good works are the Lord’s work (Acts 10:38). Jesus came “not to be ministered unto, but to minister...” (Matt. 20:28). There were times when even the Lord’s “select” Twelve (apostles) were so busy being “spiritual” about the kingdom of God, they forgot the most obvious, humble doing of good (washing the guest’s feet, Jn. 13). So Paul’s exhortation to us in Hebrew 13 is: our lives, because of God’s redemption, should be benedictions (i.e., living statements) of goodness in (a) Christian Living; (b) Christian Doctrine; and (c) Christian Worship.

Paul begins by saying, “Let brotherly love continue!” The Greek noun philadelphia is translated, “brotherly love.” The Greek verb meneto, translated, “continue” in 13:1 is in the imperative mood—meaning it is not merely a suggestion but an apostolic command. There are many exhortations to “brotherly love” in the NT (e.g., Rom. 12:10; Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Pet. 1:7; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 Pet. 3:8; 1 Jn. 3:14-17). Agape is the Greek word most often used for “love” in the New Testament scriptures. It is used of God’s love. It is love that cares regardless of feelings. It is a love that cares for ones enemies. Philadelphia is a warm, affectionate, emotional kind of love, that insists that we like one another. Philadelphia is a love based on personal association and enough intimacy that it is like the intimacy known by families (brothers/sisters of the flesh). It is apparent that these Hebrew-Christians had been practicing “brotherly love” (Acts 2:44-47; 12:5,12; 15:22,25; Heb. 6:10; 10:32, etc.) PAUL WANTS THEM TO CONTINUE SUCH LOVE TOWARD ALL CHRISTIANS. If they go back to Judaism—they can’t (because according to Judaism, Christians would be apostates, condemned to death under the law of Moses).

The venerable Dr. Francis Schaeffer wrote in Christianity Today, 1970, an article entitled, the Mark of the Christian: “In Jn. 13:35, the point is that, if an individual Christian does not show love toward other true Christians, the world has a right to judge that he is not a Christian...We cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus’ claims are true, and that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the oneness of true Christians. Now that is frightening. Should we not feel some emotion at this point? Look at it again. Jesus is not saying that Christians should judge each other (as to their being Christian or not) on this basis. Please notice this with tremendous care. The church is to judge whether a man is a Christian on the basis of his doctrine, the propositional content of his faith, and then his credible profession of faith. If for example, a church is conducting a heresy trial (the NT indicates there are to be heresy trials in the church of Christ), the question of heresy will turn on the content of the man’s doctrine. The church has a right to judge, in fact, it is commanded to judge a man on the content of what he believes and teaches. But we cannot expect the world to judge that way, because the world cares nothing about doctrine, and that is especially true in the second half of the 20th century, when, on the basis of modern epistemology (philosophy of knowledge) men no longer believe

in the possibility of absolute truth. And if we are surrounded by a world which no believes the concept of truth, certainly we cannot expect people to have any interest in whether a man's doctrine is correct or not. But Jesus did give the mark that will arrest the attention of the world, even the attention of the modern man who says he is just a machine. Because every man is made in the image of God and has, therefore, aspirations for love, there is something at every point of time which cannot fail to arrest his attention. What is it? The love that true Christians show for each other."

C. S. Lewis, in his book, *The Four Loves*, describes *phileo* (or *philadelphia*) as an affinity of the one human spirit for another human spirit. He calls it Friendship. Lewis says it is where two or more people have "in common some insight or interest or even taste which others do not share." The typical expression of *phileo* (Friendship) would be something like, "What? You too? I thought I was the only one." "You see the same truth I do?" Lewis says this *phileo* love is free from instinct (sensuality), free from all duties but those which love (care) has freely assumed, almost wholly free from jealousy, and free without qualification from the need to be needed, is eminently the kinship of human spirits. It is a kinship based on a common ground or goal—the higher the goal, the better the affinity and relationship. In other words, if *philadelphia* (brotherly love) is to be what it ought to be it must have as its common ground *agape* (love of God), or it will deteriorate into human clique-ishness or Pharisaism. So what Paul is really saying here is, "let Christian (a love that has its source in God's *agape* love) brotherly love continue." True story! Many years ago an hospital volunteer worker became acquainted with a little girl names Liz who was suffering from a rare and serious disease. Her only chance of recovery appeared to be a blood transfusion from her 5-year-old brother, who had miraculously survived the same disease and had developed the anti-bodies needed to combat the illness. The doctor explained the situation to her little brother, and asked the little boy if he would be willing to give his blood to his sister. I saw him hesitate for only a moment before taking a deep breath and saying, "Yes, I'll do it if it will save her." As the transfusion progressed, he lay in bed next to his sister and smiled, as we all did, seeing the color returning to her cheeks. Then his face grew pale and his smile faded. He looked up at the doctor and asked with a trembling voice, "Will I start to die right away?" Being young, the little boy had misunderstood the doctor; he thought he was going to have to give his sister all of his blood in order to save her. You see, after all, understanding and attitude are everything!

Now to the question, "What is hospitality?" 13:2. Hospitality to strangers! Now we have another compound Greek word—*philoxenias*. Again, it incorporates the Greek word *phileo* and this time the Greek word *xenos* is added. *Xenos* is often translated, "aliens, strangers, foreigners." So the compound word is translated in English, "entertain strangers" in KJV and NIV and "show hospitality to strangers" in RSV. Again, the Greek verb, *epilanthanesthe*, preceded by the negative particle *me* is an imperative verb and is a command that Christians must not forget to show *philoxenias* love to strangers. The NT says a great deal about hospitality to "strangers" (a) "practice hospitality" (Rom. 12:13); (b) "a bishop (elder) must be hospitable" (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8); (c) "practice hospitality ungrudgingly toward one another. As each has received a gift, employ it for one another as

good stewards of God's varied grace." (1 Pet. 4:9). THIS IS NOT "BROTHERLY LOVE"—THIS IS LOVE TOWARD STRANGERS! True story! One night at 11:30 p.m., an older African American woman was standing on the side of an Alabama highway trying to endure a lashing rain storm. Her car had broken down and she desperately needed a ride. Soaking wet, she decided to flag down the next car. A young white man stopped to help her, generally unheard of in those conflict-filled 1960s. The man took her to safety, helped her get assistance and put her into a taxi cab. She seemed to be in a big hurry, but wrote down his address and thanked him. Seven days went by and a knock came on the man's door. To his surprise, a giant console color TV was delivered to his home. A special note was attached. It read: "Thank you so much for assisting me on the highway the other night. The rain drenched not only my clothes, but also my spirits. Then you came along. Because of you, I was able to make it to my dying husband's beside just before he passed away. God bless you for helping me and unselfishly serving others. Sincerely, Mrs. Nat King Cole.

It has always been God's will that those who believe in him should love or be kind to strangers (Gen. 18:2-3; Lev 19:33-34; Ex. 22:21-24). Early Christians exercised hospitality (Acts 1:13; 9:8; 10:1-48; 12:12; 16:15,34; 18:3,7; 20:8; 21:8; 28:30; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15). The letters to Philemon, 2 and 3 John exhibit and exhort hospitality. Julian the apostate, ca. A.D. 356 was a nephew of Constantine and became Roman emperor, and although he was reared with a Christian education, he became an unbeliever. As an unbeliever he remarked in his 49th Epistle, "...kindness to strangers" was one of the means by which Christians so rapidly spread their religion." "Some have entertained angels unawares" probably has specific reference to Abraham and Lot (Gen. 18:2-10; 19:1-3). But it is intended for us also. Our guests may often be messengers sent to us from God for our own special benefit to bless our lives in one way or another. God's "angels" (messengers) do not all have to be sent from heaven's throne room—God can use any human being he wishes as "a messenger (angel)." Thomas Middleton, English dramatist (ca. 1580-1627) wrote, "Charity is never lost; it may meet with ingratitude, or be of no service to those on whom it was bestowed, yet it ever does a work of beauty and grace upon the heart of the giver."

Then Paul commands, "Remember those who are in prison...." (Greek imperative verb mimneskesthe "Remember!"). This probably has primary reference to fellow Christians who were being imprisoned or ill-treated because of their Christianity (see Heb. 10:32ff). But it should include all prisoners of all kinds and for all kinds of reasons (Matt. 25:36; Jas. 1:27; Psa. 102:20). The Bible never advocates release of prisoners who have been legitimately and honestly convicted and incarcerated for criminal action against society! In fact, in God's "ideal" society, under the Law of Moses, there were no prisons! People paid for crimes by execution, retaliation, and restitution (as the gravity of the crime might dictate). Human governments are ordained by God to punish evil doers and reward those who do good (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). The Bible permits capital punishment for capital crimes and retaliation and restitution for less than capital crimes. But the Bible's general spirit would advocate humane treatment of those incarcerated—there should be no malicious torture of criminals. The parable of the Good Samaritan is the classic illustration of Jesus about

helpfulness to those being ill-treated, Lk. 10:25-37). The Samaritan saw the need of the beaten man as a priority above any other urgency in his life. The Samaritan did his good deed personally—he didn't leave it to a benevolent institution. The Samaritan was unafraid of what it might cost him in personal reputation, safety or money. Reader's Digest, in 1970, published an article describing the terrifying ordeal a fellow went through on a Californian freeway trying to save the lives of two women injured in an auto accident. He not only could not get people to stop or go around the accident, or help, but they cursed him and some tried to run over him. Not one tried to help!

The Bible has much to say about marriage—in both the OT and the NT! God ordained marriage from the very beginning of creation—before man and woman sinned! God has expressed his will about it in no uncertain terms (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-12; 1 Cor. 7:1-40; Eph. 5:21-33; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; 5:11-14, etc.). Marriage is the union of a man and a woman—not two people of the same sex. Marriage is sanctified by God and declared as set aside to serve the holy purposes of God. Humans dare to profane marriage at the risk of their eternal souls!!! The Greek word Paul uses in Hebrews 13:4 is *timios* and is translated “honor.” The Greek sentence begins in 13:4, *Timios ho gamos en pasan...* translated literally, “Honor, the marriage be in all!” Hebrews 12:4 makes honor emphatic! *Timios* is sometimes translated, “prized or cherished.” Marriage is to be prized by all as the Greek grammar explicitly states. This does not mean that all have to get married (Matt. 19:10-12). But it does mean that all human beings should respect marriage, protect marriage, honor marriage, and support marriage. Marriage is absolutely necessary in order to procreate society and to maintain order in society. By marriage the Bible means physical, sexual, spiritual cohabitation of one man with one woman for life whatever the civil or religious ceremony may be that validates it. Society disintegrates when the sanctity of marriage is violated without restraint. L. Nelson Bell, late father-in-law of Billy Graham, wrote in Christianity Today, 9-11-1970, an article entitled, *Poison In The Cup*: “...one highly offensive magazine, published jointly by three denominations has been defended on the basis that those who engaged in Christian education need to know what the world is like so they can help young people combat its evils—one official publication of two churches suggests to its readers...(1) could not the church encourage lonely retired persons to live together or work out whatever other relationship would provide loving companionship and sexual enjoyment? (This was so the people in question might not lose their Social Security benefits)...an official church paper printing an article by one of its paid employees actually encouraging fornication! (2) the church should point the way with compassion and wisdom to a way of life that enables those who are single to express their sexuality and to establish deep sustaining relationships with men/women who may or may not be married...such relationships between single women and married men might or might not involve coitus. The church should also show its openness to the new forms of association (homosexuality).” If the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, the pillar of truth in the world, advocates such blatant disrespect for God's unequivocal will concerning marriage, what catastrophic consequences dare we expect for society in general?????!!!! For an extensive question of marriage, divorce and remarriage, see *First Corinthians*, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press, notes on chapter 7! Marriage and home are the very foundations of all earthly order. It is from the home that churches are supplied with “members,” governments are supplied with “citizens” and “leaders,” businesses are supplied

with entrepreneurs, creation is subdued and used benevolently, and human individuals are made complete (see Gen. 2:18-19).

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have! WHAT AN UP-TO-DATE WARNING THAT IS. IT'S UP-TO-DATE IN EVERY GENERATION FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN TO TODAY! The Greek verb arkoumenoi ("You be satisfied, or content") is in the imperative mood, signifying a command! The Greek word arkeo means, "have sufficiency, be strong enough—the idea is of satisfaction, serenity, peacefulness. Again, it is not merely a suggestion that may "work" in life. DO IT WHETHER IT SEEMS "TO WORK" OR NOT! John the Baptist told soldiers not to extort or cheat but be content with their wages, Lk. 3:14. Paul said, "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content..." Phil. 4:11. Paul wrote to Timothy, "There is great gain in godliness with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world; but if we have food and clothing with these we shall be content." 1 Tim. 6:6-8. Time magazine, 9-14-1970, (in the hey-day of the mini-skirt) published a very significant article on "Women's Wear"—"Based on the fact that women still follow the leader...editor and publisher of Women's Wear Daily, is literally forcing by pressure of propaganda, etc., a complete new style change in women's wear. If hemlines go down far enough, women will have to buy complete new wardrobes; midi-dresses, skirts, coats, belts and bags, higher heeled shoes and boots...that could mean millions of dollars in sales...Look this isn't fun and games. We have a multi-million dollar business to run, and we're not laughing all the way to the bank. Our whole economy is based on planned obsolescence." (Underline emphasis ours). How a certain few people can, playing on the discontent of people over what they wear or their slavery to fad and fashion, dictate to the whole world and get rich at it would be hilarious if it were not so tragically true! THIS IS MORE TRUE OF THE TEEN-AGE MARKET THAN ANY OTHER MARKET!

The discontent of the flesh and its selfish desire for displaying its pride is exploited by almost every business or industry existing today. The Christian should be sanctified (set apart) away from the vain-glory of this world by his faith in the redemptive work of Christ. The Christian's life of contentment should be a benediction (a living statement) to the world upon the blessedness of the Christian "Way." This does not prohibit Christians from honestly, earnestly and honorably improving their physical and material conditions while living in this world. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all became "rich." Jesus was buried by a "rich man." Jesus ate in the homes of "rich people." To prohibit honest work and the rewards that accrue to such labor would go against what the Bible teaches. God wants man to subdue the earth and use his intellect and initiative to create things or work to serve others for good (see Rom. 12:11; 2 Cor. 9:6-13; Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:11, etc.). The book of Proverbs exhorts wisdom, frugality, honesty, initiative and hard work and promises rewards for such. But discontent, greed, envy, jealousy, murmuring, anxiety are all unbecoming the child of God! Be diligent in whatever you do to improve your lot for good and improve the lot of others, be honest, be true to God's word—do all you can to serve God and man, then leave the consequences to God with the determination that you will be content, satisfied, at peace with what he produces through you and provides to you.

True story! J. Paul Getty, (before Bill Gates, et. al.) was the “richest man in the world” when he died in 1976. He was richer than Howard Hughes. He was a multi-billionaire! He probably “made”—net—trillions! He made it in oil, or as they say in Texas, “awl.” But, according to a biography, *The Great Getty*, written by Robert Lenzner, 1985, pub. Signet, NY, he might have been the unhappiest man on earth during his lifetime. HE CERTAINLY WAS THE GREEDIEST AND THE MOST DISCONTENT! He could never have “enough” money and the power it brings! He cheated his own father and mother to begin his rise to fortune. He acted like “Scrooge” toward his five or more wives and mistresses. He hardly knew or even conversed with the five sons he sired by different wives. He installed a pay-phone at his mansion to keep his “guests” from making toll calls on his phones. He kept the furnace heat turned down and the air-conditioning cool turned down at his mansion until his guests had to wear coats and sweaters in the winter to dine with him, or a bare minimum of clothing in the summer. He insisted his secretaries use pencils until they had been sharpened down to a few inches, he kept a “hawk” eye on all minute incidentals spent by employees and hired servants. He paid comparatively very small taxes to the United States because he lived abroad most of his life. “Getty, in fact never had a solid loving relationship with anyone. He thought a lasting relationship with a woman was only possible if you were a ‘business failure.’ If you were a business success...then expect divorce. Actually he was a failure at marriage because he did not know how to love.” op.cit. pp. 279-280. According to his publisher and friend, Mark Goulden, Getty was “...a lecher, a miser, a womanizer whose private life was often bizarre beyond belief. He never conquered his fear of death (he never flew in airplanes unless it was a dire necessity) and he tried in vain to stay the ravages of time by frequent facelifts. He was secretly contemptuous of the sycophants who surrounded him, particularly the members of his harem. He lacked affection, yet he yearned to be loved. Throughout his adult life, love eluded him.” op.cit. pp. 281-282. He never gave to charitable causes! Just before he died he wrote at the end of his autobiography, “I cannot help but think that while there is much, very much, that money can buy or make possible, there are not enough millions in the world to make every wish and dream come true.” op.cit. p. 277 (Underline ours). While some of his children were given enough money to invest and become millionaires on their own, the last codicil to his will left his entire fortune to the J. Paul Getty Museum—an art and artifact gallery to honor him and his life! ALL HIS WIVES AND MISTRESSES—THOSE WHO HAD SERVED HIM FAITHFULLY AND UNDER “SCROOGE-LIKE” WORKING CONDITIONS—HIS SONS AND GRANDCHILDREN, WERE GIVEN NOTHING FROM HIS ESTATE AT HIS DEATH! HE CERTAINLY DIDN’T TAKE ANY OF IT WITH HIM WHERE HE WENT AT HIS (SEPARATION) DEATH FROM THIS WORLD! Then there is the story of the bizarre, eccentric, recluse multi-millionaire Howard Hughes with which almost everyone is familiar! Both of these super-rich men remind us of the “rich farmer” in the parable in Luke 12, and the “rich man who fared sumptuously” in Luke 16. IT’S NOT THE KIND OF “BENEDICTION” (STATEMENT OF BLESSING) A CHRISTIAN WOULD WANT TO MAKE TO THE WORLD!

The Greek imperative mood verb parapheresthe preceded by the negative article me means a command, “Do not be carried away...!” In other words, “Remember your leaders...and imitate their faith....Obey your leaders and submit to them....” (13:7,17). Pay attention, hear, and obey those who teach and live the true doctrine! Hearing is as much a

responsibility as preaching or teaching. Jesus emphasized that by saying often, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear...” and, “Let these words sink into your ears...” Lk. 9:44. “Faith comes by hearing...the word of Christ” Rom. 10:17. Paul told the young evangelist Titus to teach certain doctrines and live an exemplary life and to declare his message, exhorting with all authority...and no one was to disregard him! Titus 2:15. Jesus told his followers even to pay attention to what the Pharisees taught from the law of Moses (not their traditions) Matt. 23:1. Even if the Pharisees themselves did not live without hypocrisy, those who heard the Law of God from their lips were to do what they heard! **NO CHRISTIAN CAN DO GOOD IN GOD’S SIGHT IF HE IS HEEDLESS OF SCRIPTURAL ADMONITIONS BY GODLY TEACHERS!**

Our faithfulness and stability is posited on the Absolute Faithfulness and Stability of Jesus Christ. He is the same today as he was “yesterday” and he will always be the same. He has not changed one iota from what he was when he was here on earth (except he is in heaven now—in a “glorified” body). He has the same powers; he loves the same; he has the same compassion on our frailties; he hates hypocrisy and sin to the same degree. **NOTHING CAN DEFEAT HIM AND THOSE WHO TRUST HIM—NOT EVEN DEATH.** His truth is just as vital and relevant for living in the 21st century as it was in the first century. He does not need ‘updating or modernizing’ by theologians or philosophers or unbelieving preachers!

Flee false teaching and false religious practices! Doing good according to the revelation of God means the Christian must take an active stand for truth, for justice, and against falsehood. We are to test every “spirit” or religious teacher (1 Jn. 4:1ff). Any who do not conform to the apostle’s doctrine are of the spirit of error! We are to expose the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). Read what Peter says about false teachers and false doctrines (2 Pet. 2:1-22). The Christian who hears false doctrine being taught and sits back and takes no action to correct it (meekly and gently, of course) is not doing God’s will!!! The Christian’s life should be a “benediction” (a living statement) for the truth! Remember the very first chapter of Hebrews says God exalted Jesus Christ above all other human beings because Jesus “loved righteousness and hated lawlessness” (Heb. 1:9). There is a subtle hypocrisy afoot today which says since everyone is free to believe what he wishes, we should never try to teach anything as Absolute Truth. There is a plethora of ego-centric-oriented philosophy of activism against social injustice—but passive indifference toward individual, fleshly indulgence—even among some of our most high-profile political and religious leaders. The human heart is strengthened by grace (the grace that is in the unchanging Christ)—not by “meats.” By the word “meats” Paul probably means the ritual sacrifices of the Jewish temple but it would apply to any modern legalism. It is the same argument he has propounded throughout Hebrews (and his other epistles). Animal sacrifices were never God’s ultimate program for man’s redemption. Therefore, they could never clear the conscience (i.e., “strengthen the heart”). Some Jews were probably ridiculing their Jewish friends who had become Christians with the taunt that Christians had “no altar.” How could these Hebrew-Christians ever hope to be pleasing to God without “an altar?” Paul’s answer is that Christians have “an altar” (Christ) from which those who serve the “tent” (O.T.

Judaism) have no right to “eat” or to be sacrificially sustained. The Christian’s altar is once-for-all, absolutely perfect, and appropriated by faith. The Christian’s “altar” is God’s ultimate altar—there is no altar better of beyond it!

“Therefore, let us go forth to him outside the camp....” (Heb. 13:13). It means those Hebrew-Christians to whom Paul is writing (and all subsequent Christians) are to bear abuse for Christ outside the Old Covenant. Paul’s discussion of the Jewish altar and the Christian altar reminds him of the OT Day of atonement (Yom Kippur) when the animals and their blood sacrificed on that Day were taken outside the camp of Israel and burned. This “burning” or consuming “outside the camp” symbolized for the OT people that God was eventually and ultimately going to make the perfect atonement “outside” Judaism (for the whole world) and not just within the “camp” of Judaism! All people, therefore, who would partake of the ultimate atonement for sin (the death or “blood” of Jesus Christ) must do so “outside” the camp of Judaism—they must leave Judaism as an access to God, for God accepts no one who is not in Christ! Going “outside the camp” of Judaism would result in abuse for any Jew! And it results for abuse for any Christian today who would maintain that salvation is in Christ alone! Going “outside” the camp of legalistic, humanistic religions even today results in abuse for any Christian. Because if there is one thing the worldly-minded person today is sure of it is that he can find justification before God by balancing his good deeds over against his bad ones through any “religion” existing! But Judaism, or any other world-bound religion or ideology, is no “lasting city.” They are all inadequate, they shall all pass away! THERE ARE A MULTITUDE OF “CAMPS” WE HAVE TO LEAVE TO COME TO CHRIST—JESUS SPOKE OF EVEN HAVING TO “LEAVE” FAMILY MEMBERS IF THEY STAND IN THE WAY OF COMING TO CHRIST! Clearly, if we have to leave family members if they become obstacles in the way of coming to Christ, we shouldn’t be surprised that we have to REMOVE ANY AND EVERY OBSTACLE that might stand between us and belonging to Christ!

A mythological illustration. In ancient times a king had a boulder placed on a roadway. Then he hid himself and watched to see if anyone would remove the huge rock. Some of the king’s wealthiest merchants and courtiers came by and simply walked around it. Many loudly blamed the king for not keeping the roads clear, but none did anything about getting the stone out of the way. Then a peasant came along carrying a load of vegetables. Upon approaching the boulder, the peasant laid down his burden and tried to move the stone to the side of the road. After much pushing and straining, he finally succeeded. After the peasant picked up his load of vegetables he noticed a purse lying in the road where the boulder had been. The purse contained many gold coins and a note from the King indicating that the gold was for the person who removed the boulder from the roadway. Many people deem the commandments of God and Christ our King to be obstacles in the way of reaching our best— but they are really opportunities to discovering and possessing our highest potential . The peasant learned what many of us never understand—every obstacle presents an opportunity to improve our condition.

There are two fundamental “sacrifices” a Christian may give to please God. (a) **THE FRUIT OF LIPS THAT ACKNOWLEDGE HIS NAME.** By “acknowledging his name with our lips” means we speak and teach and proclaim the sovereignty of Christ and God. Many today deceive themselves when they think that “doing good” is all contained in works of benevolence. The balanced life of doing good must include personal, intimate, and corporate proclamation of the name of Christ and God. That can be done primarily in teaching the word of God, then in worship and evangelism. The sacrifice of a loyal, thankful, penitent heart expressed in knowing and teaching God’s word, and in worship and evangelism can be more doing of good in the eyes of God than thousands of physical deeds done from wrong motives (Isa. 1:12-20; Micah 6:6-8). The most significant thing about David that made him “a man after God’s own heart” was David’s proclamation of the sovereignty of God with his lips and his “pen” (Psalms). The apostle Paul is a great example of one who gave Christ the “sacrifice of the fruit of lips” as he traversed most of the known world of his day preaching, worshiping and evangelizing. King Saul was told, “Behold to obey is better than sacrifice” (see also Hosea 14:1-7). God knows that we must be new persons before what we do makes an difference to him. When Mary broke the alabaster jar of ointment and anointed the Lord’s head and feet, the disciples complained that the money for that precious ointment could have been used to feed the poor. Jesus said, “Leave her alone, she had done a beautiful thing!” (b) **SHARE WHAT YOU HAVE WITH THE NEEDY.** One of the best of all “sacrifices” to make to God is the sharing with one of his children who is in need. James says we fulfill the royal law of God when we love our neighbor as our self (James 2:8). And John says, “He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still. He who loves his brother abides in the light and in it there is no cause of stumbling” (1 Jn. 2:9-10). **THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO LOVE GOD AND THAT IS TO LOVE (AND SHARE) WITH ANYONE IN NEED** “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if any one has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children let us not love in word of speech but in deed and in truth” (1 Jn. 3:16-18). “If anyone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.” (1 Jn. 4:20). Christianity is sacrificial through and through; it is founded on the one self-offering of Christ, and the offering of his people’s praise and property, of their service and their lives, is caught up into the perfection of his acceptable sacrifice, and is accepted in him (Rom. 12:1-2; Phil. 4:18; Jas. 1:27; 1 Pet. 2:5).

True story! In the days when an ice cream sundae cost much less, a 10-year-old boy entered a hotel coffee shop and sat at a table. A waitress put a glass of water in front of him. “How much is an ice cream sundae?” he asked. “Fifty cents” replied the waitress. The little boy pulled his hand out of his pocket and studied the coins in it. “Well, how much is a plain dish of ice cream?” he inquired. By now more people were waiting for a table and the waitress was growing impatient. “Thirty-five cents” she brusquely replied. The little boy again counted his coins. “I’ll have the plain ice cream” he said. The waitress brought the ice cream, put the bill on the table and walked away. The boy finished the ice cream, paid the cashier and left. When the waitress came back, she began to cry as she wiped down the table. There, placed neatly beside the empty dish, were two nickels and five pennies. You

see, he couldn't have the sundae, because he had to have enough left to leave her a tip.

Good neighbors know the art of living
They count their blessings and gladly share.
They are the friendly, kindly folk
Who have a smile and one to spare.

They are the whistling lads we pass
Who leave their cheer on wings of song.
They may be young or very old,
Or poor, or wealthy all their days

They may be famous or unknown,
They may be people on our street;
Be any race or any creed
Or strangers that we chance to meet.

Good neighbors are about the same,
They help a brother if they can.
They look not for a personal gain,
But for the need of their fellow man.

One thing I note about them all....
They have a common trait, that part
Of man that bears the image of
God's love within a humble heart.

—Johnielu Barbar Bradford

“Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you.” Heb. 13:17. Both Greek verbs in the first clause of the first sentence, *peithesthe*, “obey” and *hupēkete*, “submit” are imperative mood verbs meaning they are apostolic commands! Significantly, *tois hegoumenois*, translated “the leaders” is a present active participle *hegoumenois*, preceded by a definite, dative article *tois*, literally translated would be “the ones continuing to lead you.” It is the same participle used in Heb. 7:3,24 and both, also, are present tense verbs. The “leading” must be active, and have continuity! In Heb. 13:20 these Hebrew-Christians were metaphorically called “sheep”—and so are all the followers of Christ called “sheep” (John chs. 10 & 21, etc.). Sheep are to know their shepherds; hear (obey) their voices; follow them; flee from the hireling shepherds (Jn. 10). Shepherds are to know each sheep by name; lead the sheep into the fold by the Door (Jesus); not to flee when the wolf comes; not to “lord it over” the flock; not to exploit or “eat” the sheep for themselves (Jn. 10:1-21; 1 Pet. 5:1-5; Acts 20:28ff; Ezek. ch. 34). Shepherds are to go after even one lost sheep (Matt. 18:10-14). Perhaps if more shepherds really shepherded, more sheep would follow! Or, if more sheep followed, shepherds would be better shepherds! The commission of the Lord to the leadership of the church is that its calling is for the equipping of the saints (Eph. 4:11-16)—that is their whole reason for being leaders! Variations of the Greek aorist, active Greek verb *katartisai* translated “equip” in Heb. 13:21, are translated in 2 Cor. 13:10 and Matt. 4:21, “mend” and in Gal. 6:1 and 1 Pet. 5:10

“restore” and in 2 Cor. 13:9 “improve” and in 1 Thess. 3:10 “supply” and in Eph. 4:12, “equip.” John, one of Christ’s “shepherd-leaders” wrote, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth” 3 Jn. 4. THE GREATEST JOY OF THE LEADERSHIP (ELDERS) IN ANY CONGREGATION IS TO SEE EVERY MEMBER ESTABLISHED IN THE TRUTH. The job of “one leading” in a congregation is to “mend, improve, equip, supply, and restore” the members (“sheep”). Elders (and other “leaders”) in Christ’s church have an awesome responsibility—THEY SHALL GIVE AN ACCOUNT FOR THEIR ELDERSHIP BEFORE THE “GREAT SHEPHERD” AS TO WHETHER THEY “ADJUSTED” THEIR SHEEP OR NOT!

Souls are built as temples are;
Sunken deep, unseen, unknown,
Like the sure foundation stone.
Then the courses, frame to bear,
Lift the cloistered pillars fair;
Last of all the airy spire,
Soaring heavenward, higher and higher,
Nearest the sun and nearest star.

Souls are built as temples are;
Here a carving rich and quaint,
There an image of a saint;
Here a deep-hued pane to tell
Sacred truth or miracle;
Every careful, careless touch
Adds charm or leaves a scar.

Souls are built as temples are;
Inch by inch in gradual rise
Mount the layered masonries;
Warring questions have their day,
Kings arise and pass away,
Laborers vanish one by one,
Still the temple is not done;
Still the completion seems afar.

Souls are built as temples are;
Based on truth's eternal law,
Sure and steadfast, without a flaw,
Through the sunshine, through the snows,
Up and on the building goes.
Every fair thing finds its place,
Every hard thing lends a grace.
Ever hand can make or mar—
for souls are built as temples are.

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1960 to 1997. He also served many years as registrar for the college.

Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

The Sound Bible Study project is a cooperative effort of Christian educators and Jordan Media Enterprises LLC to provide the serious examination of the Scriptures for the conscientious student. All the teachers are experienced educators who have spent countless hours in the classroom on both sides of the lectern. The audio recordings and written notes are made available for those who wish to learn God's Word at a collegiate level but have been unable to matriculate. There is no intention to compete with the many faithful Bible schools, but rather to serve along side and strengthen both the student and the teacher for a stronger and more effective Kingdom of God that knows how to properly divide the Word of God.

