

The Epistle to the Hebrews

Introduction

This Epistle presents many problems. Some refuse to call it an Epistle and look upon it as a treatise, but the leading question is about the author of this document. It is anonymous; the writer has carefully concealed his identity. It is the only portion of the New Testament of which this can be said. What was a possible motive for doing this? We may answer that He who inspired this great message guided the pen of the instrument to put himself out of sight. Dr. Biesenthal, in a very learned work on Hebrews, advances an interesting theory why the writer did not mention himself. He shows that the teaching of Christianity that animal sacrifices, once foreshadowing the great sacrifice and now completely ended and no longer necessary, was being felt in heathendom. In consequence the many sacrifices used in heathen worship at births, marriages and different other occasions were being more and more neglected. The priestly class which lived by these sacrifices and the very large industry of cattle raising was being threatened with utter ruin, on account of which a bitter antagonism was being stirred up against Christianity and its advocates. On account of this, Dr. Biesenthal, concludes, the writer of Hebrews kept his name a secret. Furthermore, this scholarly Hebrew Christian, advancing the strongest arguments for the Pauline authorship, shows additional reason why the Apostle Paul had very valid reasons to keep himself in the background. (This work, "Das Trosts Schreiben an die Hebraer--The Message of Comfort to the Hebrews," has, as far as we know, never been translated into English.) His heart was filled with such burning love for his Hebrew brethren that he was constrained to send to them a special message of love and entreaty. At the same time he was deeply concerned about those who had believed. Under heathen persecution, as well as through ignorance concerning the full meaning of Christianity, a tendency towards apostasy threatened these Hebrew Christians, especially those who lived in Jerusalem before the destruction of the temple and the Jewish worship. And Paul knowing how he was disliked by the Jews, and how he had been discredited by the judaizing teachers, whose evil work he had exposed and so severely condemned in the Epistles to the Galatians and Corinthians, feared that if his name was made prominent, the message would at once be discarded. He therefore omitted his name.

The Question of Authorship

The question of authorship of Hebrews is of much interest. Many volumes have been written on it. Origen wrote, "The thoughts are Paul's, but the phraseology and composition are by someone else. Not without reason have the ancient men handed down the Epistle as Paul's, but who wrote the Epistle is known only to God." The question is then, did Paul write Hebrews and if he did not, who wrote this Epistle? Some are very positive that Paul did not write Hebrews, as will be seen by the following statement:

"The only fact clear as to the author is that he was not the Apostle Paul. The early Fathers did not attribute the book to Paul, nor was it until the seventh century that the tendency to do this, derived from Jerome, swelled into an ecclesiastical practice. From the book itself we see that the author must have been a Jew and a Hellenist, familiar with Philo as well as with the Old Testament, a friend of Timothy and well-known to many of those whom he addressed, and not an apostle but decidedly acquainted with apostolic thoughts; and that he not only wrote before the destruction of Jerusalem but apparently himself was never in Palestine. The name of Barnabas, and also that of Priscilla, has been suggested, but in reality all these distinctive marks appear to be found only in Apollos. So that with Luther, and not a few modern scholars, we must either attribute it to him or give up in the quest" (Weymouth).

This is very sweeping, and quite incorrect and superficial. It is not the final word. To follow the

controversy in our brief introduction is quite impossible. All that has ever been written on it may be condensed as follows:--1. There is no substantial evidence, external or internal, in favor of any claimant to the authorship of this Epistle, except Paul. 2. There is nothing incompatible with the supposition that Paul was the author of Hebrews. 3. The preponderance of the internal, and all the direct external evidence, go to show that the Epistle was written by Paul. The Pauline authorship can hardly be questioned after the most painstaking research.

Origen's words, that only God knows who wrote this Epistle, has been taken as final by many. But to whom did Origen refer when he said, "not without reason have the ancient men handed down the Epistle as Paul's?" He undoubtedly referred to the Greek Fathers, who, without one exception ascribed this Epistle to Paul. It appears that in no part of the Eastern church the Pauline origin of this Epistle was ever doubted or suspected. The earliest of these testimonies, that Paul wrote Hebrews, is that of Pantaenus, the chief of the catechetical school in Alexandria about the middle of the second century. This witness is found in Eusebius, the church-historian, who quotes Clement of Alexandria that Hebrews was written by Paul originally in the Hebrew language and that Luke translated it into the Greek. Clement of Alexandria was the pupil of Pantaenus and had received this information from him. Pantaenus was a Hebrew Christian and in all probability living only a hundred years after Paul, received what he taught Clement, by tradition. Apart from other similar testimonies that of Pantaenus and Clement is quite sufficient to show that the early church believed Paul to have written Hebrews.

And the internal evidences are overwhelmingly for the Pauline authorship. As to doctrine the parallels with his other Epistles are numerous and some of the peculiarities are also in full harmony with the teaching of the Apostle Paul. The personal allusions are altogether Pauline. These likewise show that Paul is the writer. The writer was a prisoner for he writes, "ye took compassion of me in my bonds" (10:34); and he hopes to be liberated "but I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner" (13:19). Here is the same thought as expressed in Philippians (Phil. 1:25); in Philemon (verse 22). And this prisoner is in Italy for he writes "they of Italy salute you." It was probably written from Rome. The writer also was well acquainted with Timothy whom he mentions in the Epistle (13:23). All these personal words have a decided Pauline stamp.

But some have said that Christ is not mentioned in Hebrews as the head of the body, not a word is said of that union with a risen and glorified Christ, one Spirit with the Lord, that cardinal doctrine so prominent in the great Apostle's testimony. From this omission it has been argued that another than Paul must be the author. But this inference is without foundation. For though Paul alone develops the mystery concerning Christ and the Church, it is only in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, with the First to the Corinthians practically, and in that to the Romans allusively. In the rest of his Epistles we find "the body" no more than in that to the Hebrews, and this is as distinctly in the ordering of the Holy Spirit, as in those which contain it fully. Each Epistle or other book of Scripture is prepared for the purpose God had in view when He inspired each writer. As the main object is that to the Hebrews in Christ's priesthood with its necessary basis, due adjuncts, and suited results, and as this is for the Saints individually, the one body of Christ could not fall fittingly within its scope, if it were a divinely inspired composition, whether by Paul or by any other. Its central doctrine is, not as one with Him as members of His body, but the appearing before the face of God for us (William Kelly).

Peter's Significant Statement

At the close of his second Epistle the Apostle Peter wrote "and account that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you" (2 Pet. 3:15). Now Peter wrote to those of the circumcision, to believing Hebrews in the dispersion. He does what our Lord commanded him "to strengthen his brethren." And in the above words he speaks of the fact that Paul also wrote unto them. We do not hesitate to give this as an argument of the Pauline authorship of Hebrews. No other Epistle of Paul answers to

this statement of Peter. There is but one Epistle addressed to the Hebrews and Peter no doubt meant this Epistle, and he also knew that Paul was the writer. So that this in itself is quite conclusive. As another has said "Where do we find beside the apostle a man who could have written this Epistle? Who beside him would have ventured to write it with such decided apostolic authority? And who had greater reason to write anonymously to Israel than the apostle who loved his people so fervently, and who was so hated by them that they refused to listen to his voice and to read his writings?" (Mallet)

His Last Visit to Jerusalem and this Epistle

It seems to the writer that Paul's last visit to Jerusalem also explains this Epistle. As we learn from the book of Acts, Paul went up to Jerusalem against the repeated warnings given by the Spirit of God. His arrest was the result of having gone into the temple to purify himself with the four men who had a vow on them. This he was asked to do and to show that he walked orderly and kept the law. He did wrong in this. It is true he acted through zeal and love for his brethren; yet he also knew that a believer, be he Jew or Gentile, is dead to the law and that all the ordinances of the law were fulfilled and ended. Yet the Jewish believers in Jerusalem still clung to the law, were zealous for the law, went to the temple and made use of the ordinances. When in Rome as prisoner the Spirit of God moved him to write this letter in which the greater glory and the better things of the new covenant are unfolded with solemn warnings not to be drawn back into Judaism. And at the close of the Epistle the final and important exhortation is given "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp (Judaism), bearing His reproach" (13:13). May not this Epistle have been written in view of Paul's failure in Jerusalem, showing these Jewish-Christians the necessity of separating from the shadow things of the Old covenant?

To Jewish Christians

That this Epistle was addressed to Jews who professed the name of the Lord Jesus is shown by its contents. This fact and their peculiar state must not be lost sight of in the study of this Epistle. We may assume that the Epistle was especially addressed to the Church in Jerusalem. As already stated these Jewish believers were all zealous of the law. They observed the ordinances of the law with great zeal; they went daily into the temple and were obedient to all the ceremonial law demanded of a good Jew. Then there arose a persecution against them. Some of them were stoned and they suffered great affliction and humiliation. The Epistle speaks of this. They were made a gazing stock both by reproach and afflictions; they endured joyfully the spoiling of their goods (10:33-34).

They were being treated in a shameful way by their brethren and looked upon as apostates. They were excluded from the temple worship and the ordinances, unless they abandoned faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and forsook the assembling of themselves.

"We can scarcely realize the piercing sword which thus wounded their inmost heart. That by clinging to the Messiah they were to be severed from Messiah's people was indeed a great and perplexing trial; that for the hope of Israel's glory they were banished from the place which God had chosen, and where the divine presence was revealed, and the symbols and ordinances of His grace had been the joy and strength of their fathers; that they were to be no longer children of the covenant and of the house, but worse than Gentiles, excluded from the outer court, cut off from the commonwealth of Israel,--this was indeed a sore and mysterious trial. Cleaving to the promises made unto their fathers, cherishing the hope in constant prayer that their nation would yet accept the Messiah, it was the severest test to which their faith could be put, when their loyalty to Jesus involved separation from all the sacred rights and privileges of Jerusalem" (A. Saphir).

They were under great pressure. They loved the nation, their divinely given institutions, their traditions and their promised glory. They did not possess the full knowledge of the better things of

the new covenant; that they had as believers in Christ, the substance of what the old covenant only foreshadowed. There was grave danger for them to turn back to Judaism and therefore the repeated warnings and exhortations to steadfastness. They needed instructions, teachings, to lead them on to perfection, and they needed comfort in their trying position. Both are abundantly supplied in this Epistle.

The Vision of Christ

Hebrews gives a wonderful vision of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is revealed as the Son of God, and Son of Man; as the heir of all things; higher than the angels. We can trace His path of humiliation to death and what has been accomplished by the death on the cross. All the blessings put on the side of the believer are made known in Hebrews. But above all the great message is the Priesthood of Christ. This is the great center of this sublime Epistle. It is an Epistle of contrasts. There is the contrast between the Lord Jesus Christ and the angels; between Him and Moses, between Him and Aaron, between the Priesthood of Melchisedec and that of Aaron; between the offerings of the old covenant and the one great offering of Christ. This was the supreme need of these Jewish-Christians, to know Christ in all His fullness and glory. This knowledge would make them perfect, steadfast and fill them with comfort. And this is still our need. May the Lord bless us in meditating on this wonderful document.

The Division of the Epistle to the Hebrews

"Commencing in the style of a doctrinal treatise, but constantly interrupted by fervent and affectionate admonitions, warnings, and encouragements, this grand and massive book concludes in the epistolary form, and in the last chapter the inspired author thus characterizes his work: "I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation; for I have written a letter unto you in few words."

"We are attracted and riveted by the majestic and sabbatic style of this epistle. Nowhere in the New Testament writings do we meet language of such euphony and rhythm. A peculiar solemnity and anticipation of eternity breathe in these pages. The glow and flow of language, the stateliness and fulness of diction, are but an external manifestation of the marvellous depth and glory of spiritual truth, into which the apostolic author is eager to lead his brethren."

With these well chosen words Adolf Saphir, the Hebrew Christian scholar, begins his exposition of this Epistle.

The division of Hebrews is difficult to make because the different sections of this document often overlap and form a solid unity. It has been well said that "one feels as if he were endeavoring to dissect a living organism when he seeks to sever part from part in this marvellous Scripture."

The Lord Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, in the fullness of the glory of His Person as the living and eternal realization of Jewish promise and type, is the most blessed theme of this Epistle or treatise. This necessitated the various contrasts in which this document abounds and which we shall point out in the annotations. The glory of Christ, all He is, as well as His sympathy, grace and power as the true high priest who has entered heaven itself, is so fully made known to help, first of all, the weak faith of the Jewish Christians who received this message, that by it they might be established in their heavenly calling and become completely separated from Judaism, which was about to pass away. The two opening chapters introduce the great theme of the Epistle and are the foundation of the doctrine developed. The first chapter reveals the glory of the Person of the Messiah, that He is the Son of God. The second chapter unfolds His glory as the Son of Man. He, who is above the angels, was made a little lower than the angels to suffer and to die. He partook of all sufferings and temptations and is now as the glorified Man in God's presence, crowned with glory and honor, awaiting the time when all things are put under His feet. The fact that He suffered, and was tempted opens the way for the development of the central truth of the Epistle, His

priesthood. He is called the Apostle and High Priest and shown to be greater than Moses and Joshua. Then follows the main section of the Epistle, which reveals Him as the true priest who has opened the way into the Holiest, where He is exercising now His priesthood. The contrast is made in this portion (4:14-10) between Him and the priests and sacrifices of the Jewish Dispensation. With the eleventh chapter begins the practical instructions and exhortations to walk in faith, to be steadfast and to leave the camp of Judaism. We divide, therefore, this epistle in four sections.

I. CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD AND HIS GLORY (1:1-2:4)

II. CHRIST, THE SON OF MAN, HIS GLORY AND HIS SALVATION (2:5-4:13)

III. CHRIST AS PRIEST IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY (4:14-10)

IV. PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS AND EXHORTATIONS (11-13)

The analysis which follows shows the different subdivisions, parenthetical sections and contrasts, found in these main sections.

Analysis and Annotations

I. CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD AND His GLORY

CHAPTER 1-2:4

1. The Son in whom God hath spoken (1:1-4)

2. So much better than the angels (1:5-14)

3. Admonition and warning (2:1-4)

Verses 1-6

Sublime is the beginning of this precious document. God who in many measures and in many ways spake of old to the fathers in the prophets, at the end of these days hath spoken to us in a Son, whom He constituted heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the effulgence of His glory and the expression of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, having made (by Himself) purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance a name more excellent than they."

it is an abrupt beginning with no words of introduction, no salutations or words of thanksgiving and prayer. Only one other Epistle begins in a similar way; the First Epistle of John. The foundation upon which all rests, the Word of God, is the first great statement we meet. It tells us that God has spoken of old to the fathers in the prophets. The prophets were not, as so often stated by the deniers of divine inspiration "Jewish patriots and visionaries," but they were the mouthpiece of Jehovah "holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). The words they uttered are the words of God. And this is true of Moses, the author of the Pentateuch and of all the other instruments used in the production of the Old Testament scriptures. And He spoke in many measures (or parts) and in many ways, in histories, ordinances, divinely appointed institutions, visions, dreams and direct prophetic utterances, which have a fragmentary character; they are not in themselves complete and final. And therefore we find in this epistle the law, the prophets and the Psalms more frequently quoted than in any other portion of the New Testament.

It is a striking characteristic of Hebrews that the names of the prophets, like Moses, David, Isaiah, etc., are omitted. God is the speaker. He spoke in the prophets concerning Him, who is now fully revealed in His glory, that is His Son, the promised Messiah. Our Lord declared of the Old

Testament scriptures "they are they which testify of Me." (John 5:39). Before He ever came into the world He also bore witness of this fact "in the volume of the Book it is written of Me" (Heb. 10:7). God's speaking in the Old Testament culminated in the manifestation of this Person. "At the end of these days hath spoken to us in a (or the) Son." The end of these days is the present dispensation as distinguished from the preceding Jewish dispensation. The words "to us" mean primarily in this epistle the children of the fathers to whom God spake by the prophets. (In a general way it applies, of course, to all believers during this dispensation. The opinion of some that Hebrews, the Epistle of James, the Epistles of Peter have no meaning and no message to the Church is pernicious.) "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. 15:8). It was to the Jew first. He came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and manifested in their midst the power of the kingdom promised to that nation. The Promised One came and God spoke in Him, who is God the Son. The original has no article in connection with the word "Son." It is simply "in Son." The reason for this omission is because the character of the One in whom God hath now spoken, and not so much the person, is to be emphasized. The prophets were servants, angels were servants, but He in whom God speaks now is Son; such is His relationship, one with God.

The declaration of the glory of His Sonship follows. He is eternally Son of God, the Only-Begotten, very God in eternity. He is Son of God in incarnation, taking on the form of man, making purification of sins and He is in resurrection the first begotten, declared Son of God by resurrection from among the dead. It is a marvellous revelation of Himself, corresponding to the similar statements in the beginning of the Gospel of John and the first chapter of Colossians. He is constituted the heir of all things as He created all things and is the creator. All things in heaven and on earth are His. He possesses all things which exist. This is God's eternal purpose concerning Him. All things are by Him and for Him. By Him the worlds were made. (Literally "the ages"; Hellenists understood by it the universe. Its meaning then is equivalent to creation. It is used thus in the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint.) The vast universe is the work of His hands and He himself as very God is "the effulgence of His glory and the expression of His substance." He makes the invisible God visible. He is the perfect impress of God; God is fully revealed in His person who came from glory and dwelt among men. Furthermore, He is upholding all things by the Word of His power.

And He who was all this, and is all this, became man, appeared on earth, assuming manhood, to accomplish the work which He alone could do. By Himself He made purification of sins. The Son of God alone did this and none was with Him. What a blessed, sure, eternally secure foundation of our salvation! The passage shows the personal and perfect competency of the Son of God to effect this mighty work. It was done on the cross, in the death in which He glorified God and which has glorified Him forever. And therefore He arose from the dead and "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." It is significant that nothing is said in the text of His resurrection, in the sense as it is spoken of in other scriptures, that God raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory (1 Pet. 1:21). Nor is it said that He was told to sit down, but He sat down and took Himself the exalted place at the right hand of God. It is presented in this way because His character as Son is here in view. The place He has taken at the right hand of the Majesty on high is only proper and possible for a divine person. The fact that He took this place and sat down attests the perfection, the completeness and acceptance of the work He undertook and finished on the cross. He is now on the throne of God. David's throne and His own throne He will receive when as the First-Begotten He returns from the glory. Such is the Messiah, the Christ, promised to Israel; He is God, the creator and upholder of all things, the heir of all things, come down from heaven, in whom God spoke on earth and is still speaking from heaven, who made purification of sins and has gone back to heaven.

Constituted now heir of all things, destined according to God's eternal decrees to be head of all things, He, as the glorified Man, has "become so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance a name more excellent than they." The contrast between Him and angels is now made.

The Epistle being addressed to Hebrews explains this comparison and contrast on Christ with angels. In the estimation of a Hebrew, next to Jehovah Himself, angels were looked upon as the highest and holiest beings. Then furthermore the law was given through angels (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19), and other angelic ministrations had been prominent in Israel's history, so that these beings occupied a high place in the Jewish mind. But Christ, the man Christ Jesus, has become so much better than the angels; He is above the angels. His name is above every other name. He is on the right hand of the Majesty on high in the form and likeness of Man. As the Only-Begotten He is the creator of angels. In incarnation He was made a little lower than the angels, and now having finished the work for which He became man, He has received by inheritance that highest position and a more excellent name than angels. Into this wonderful place He takes His own people for whom He suffered and died. In Him all believers are above the angels. Angels are but servants, never said to occupy a throne, for they cannot reign. But Christ has a throne and His redeemed shall reign with Him.

Verses 5-14

Upon this the Spirit of God quotes seven passages from the Scriptures in which He speaks of Christ and His exaltation and glory in contrast with angels. All seven are taken from the book of Psalms. Psalms 2; 89; 97; 104; 45; 102 and 110. The destructive criticism declares that there are no Messianic predictions in the book of Psalms. That blessed portion of the Old Testament has suffered much from the hands of these destroyers of the faith. They say that the Second, the Forty-fifth, and the One hundred and tenth Psalms have nothing to say about Christ, that the King mentioned in these psalms was some other unknown King, but not the King Messiah. How significant that the Holy Spirit quotes now from these very psalms telling us that the Messiah, Christ, is predicted in them. The Hebrews had no difficulty in accepting this for they know these psalms speak of the promised Messiah. (The Lord Jesus used the One hundred tenth Psalm in confounding the Pharisees. He showed that that Psalm speaks of Himself and that it is the testimony of the Spirit. Such is "higher criticism"; it sets aside the testimony of the Son of God and the Spirit of God.)

The first quotation is from the Second Psalm. Never did God address angels in the way He is addressed of whom this psalm bears witness. "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee." This psalm reveals the royal glory and world-wide dominion of Christ, the one whom the people (Israel) and the nations reject. He is to be enthroned as King upon the holy hill of Zion. As Son He will receive the nations for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. The title here refers to His incarnation, and, secondarily, to His resurrection from the dead (Acts 13:33-34). It is therefore not the fact of His eternal sonship which is before us in this statement; it speaks of Him as Son of God in time. The eternal Son of God became incarnate; but this did not lower His eternal Sonship. It is therefore His birth, His entrance into the world of which this psalm bears witness. "But it is of all moment for the truth and His own personal dignity to remember that His Sonship when incarnate as well as in resurrection is based on His eternal relationship as Son, without which the other could not have been."

Psalm 89:26, 2 Sam. 7:14 and 1 Chron. 17:13 are mentioned next. It brings out the relationship in which the incarnate Son of God, the promised Messiah, is with God. God accepts and owns Him. "I will be to Him a Father and He shall be to me a Son." And this relationship was audibly declared and confirmed at His baptism and when on the mount of transfiguration. Such a relationship could never be the portion of angels. In Psalm 89:27 His future glory is made known as it is in the second psalm. "Also I will make Him, my Firstborn, higher than the Kings of the earth." He is the Firstborn; He will have the preeminence.

The next quotation and argument is from Psalm 97:7. "And again when He brings in the Firstborn into the habitable earth, He saith, let all the angels of God worship Him." This no longer refers to His incarnation, but to His second coming. He is to be brought into the world and then He will receive the worship of the angels of God. Some have applied this to His first coming. But then He

came as the "Only-Begotten" and was sent into the world. Here it is said that as the First-Begotten (from the dead) He will be brought into the world. He, who was cast out from the world and rejected by man, will reenter it in power and glory; God will bring Him back into the habitable earth. When this event takes place the angels will bow in worship before Him, for He comes with His holy angels. It is therefore not His first advent, but His second, which is here contemplated. When He was born, angels praised the sender and not the sent One, but when He comes again He will be the object of angelic worship. This shows His glorious superiority to all the angels.

Psalm 104 speaks of angels as servants. "He maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire." They are spirit and not flesh. They are made to do His will and can never be anything else but servants. And then the contrast is shown what the Son is by the quotation from the Forty-fifth Psalm. Angels are servants and cannot reign nor can they ever occupy a throne, "but unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom." He is addressed as God in this psalm in which He is revealed as the coming King Messiah. He has a throne which is forever and ever, and as Messiah, and the promised King, He will have an earthly throne and rule with a sceptre of righteousness, He loved righteousness and hated iniquity when down here and therefore He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Thus we learn from this psalm His deity. He has a throne forever and ever. His humanity: He was on earth and loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Who are the fellows mentioned? Angels are not His fellows and could not be. His fellows are all they who are made one with Him through grace and who will be ultimately conformed to His image. It includes the believing remnant of Israel and all who put their trust in Him.

"This is a remarkable passage, because, while on the one hand the divinity of the Lord is fully established as well as His eternal throne, on the other hand the passage comes down to His character as the faithful man on earth, where He made pious men--the little remnant of Israel who waited for redemption, His companions; at the same time it gives Him (and it could not be otherwise) a place above them" (Synopsis of the Bible).

Still more remarkable is the sixth quotation from Psalm 102. Wonderful as His glory is in the Forty-fifth Psalm, the One hundred second Psalm surpasseth it. No human being would have ever known the real meaning of this psalm if it had not pleased the Spirit of God to give it in this chapter. The little word "and" shows that in verses 25-27 the Son of God is addressed by God as the creator of all things. It is Jehovah's answer to the prayer of His Son suffering as man and dying. "He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days, Thy years are throughout all generations." These words as well as verses 1-11 in this psalm are the expressions of the Man of Sorrows, the suffering Messiah. And Jehovah answers Him and owns Him in His humiliation, approaching the death of the cross, as the Creator. He was ever the same; His years cannot fail. He, the Son of God, had laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the works of His hands. And He will do, as the Sovereign One, what God attributes to Him. "They shall perish, but Thou abidest; they shall grow old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou roll them up, and they shall be changed, but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail." Such is He, whose glory the Spirit of God reveals in the Holy Scriptures, who became Man, suffered and died, and risen from the dead, sits at the right hand of God. He is the unchangeable One, creator and sustainer of the universe.

The final quotation is from the One hundred and tenth Psalm, which is more frequently quoted in this Epistle than elsewhere. The preceding psalm, the One hundred and ninth, predicts His rejection by His own. In the opening verse of this psalm the Messiah is seen again in His deity and humanity. He is David's Lord and David's Son. His work is finished on earth. He has taken His place of rest (the symbol of the work done) sitting down at His right hand and waiting for the hour when God makes His enemies the footstool of His feet by bringing in again the First-begotten into the world. To no angel did God ever say, "Sit on My right hand."

Once more are angels spoken of as ministers. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to

minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" They minister now to those who are the heirs of salvation, who bear the title of sons in His Son and who possess His life. How little God's people make use of this comfort. An active and simple faith is needed to perceive in what men carelessly regard as accidents of time and place, the positive workings of angels' ministry. They minister to God's people now in a way unknown to us. "It is a truth which brings the shadow of God's majesty with a peculiar nearness over the believer's soul. That we are seen of angels is an assurance to which the Spirit elsewhere practically bids us heed (1 Cor. 11:10). A happy thought, yet one of sobering effect to be thus seen; to be the objects of near gaze, and very contact, to those holy visitants of watchful love, who, standing as the bright apparitions of heavenly majesty beside the throne on which the Son of God now rests, are sent forth to speed upon their way the pilgrim brethren of the Lord" (A. Pridham).

Chapter 2:1-4

This is the first parenthetical exhortation of this epistle, well suited to the condition of those Hebrews to whom it was first addressed. They are exhorted to give more earnest heed to the things which they had heard, that is, the gospel of salvation in this Christ, whose glory is displayed in the opening chapter. This salvation was at first spoken by the Lord when He was on earth. He began its proclamation. It was continued by those who heard Him, that is by His apostles, and finally God the Holy Spirit had put His witness to it with signs and wonders and gifts. If then the word spoken through angels (the law dispensation) was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just retribution, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" It is a warning to Jews who were halting between two opinions and to those who had in a measure accepted outwardly the truth of Christianity without having laid hold in earnest and in faith of that salvation. If this great salvation, which God offers now not through angels, but in His Son, is rejected or neglected there can be no escape.

II. CHRIST, SON OF MAN, His GLORY AND His SALVATION

CHAPTER 2:5-18

1. The Man crowned with glory and honor (2:5-9)
2. His humiliation, suffering and the results (2:10-18)

Verses 5-9

Angels are once more mentioned and the fact is stated first of all that angels are not called of God to reign: "Unto the angels hath He not put in subjection, the world to come whereof we speak." "The world to come" is not heaven or the eternal state. The literal translation is "the habitable world to come"; it is the existing earth, inhabited by human beings in the dispensation which will follow the present age. The world in the dispensation to come, called in Ephesians "the dispensation of the fullness of time" is not put in subjection to angels. A quotation from the Eighth Psalm follows, from which we learn that man is to have dominion and to rule over this world to come. Dominion over the earth was given to Adam (Genesis 1:28), but sin coming in, and death also, this dominion and rule was lost; the glory and honor which rested upon Adam was changed into shame and dishonor. Through man's fall Satan became the usurper, the prince of this world. Adam was the figure of Him that was to come, the Second Man in whom and through whom the lost dominion is restored.

It is interesting to study the order of the psalms with which the book of psalms begins, divinely arranged by an unknown instrument. The righteous Man in Psalm 1 is the Lord Jesus; the Second Psalm shows Him as the Messiah-King. Then Psalms 3-7 show the suffering, sorrows and soul-exercise of the godly during the time when He does not yet reign, especially the suffering of the

Jewish remnant during the tribulation and then comes Psalm 8, Christ, the Second Man set over all things. The Annotated Bible on the Psalms follows this more fully.

The Eighth Psalm reveals this Second Man, the Lord from heaven, the Creator in creature's form. He was made a little lower than the angels. The Son of God took the position of man to make peace in the blood of His cross "to reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven" (Col. 1:20). All things are therefore put in subjection under His feet and nothing is left that is not put in subjection under Him. He will have dominion over all and His name will be excellent in all the earth. Satan knows that the dominion of the earth will not be left forever in his horrible grasp. He offered the kingdoms of the world and their glory to the Son of Man, attempting to keep Him from going to the cross, in which, through the death of Christ, the devil, who has the power of death, is brought to nought.

The work is done. Christ is the Second Man; He will have dominion over the earth in the world to come, the dispensation to come. He will reign and rule and His fellows, the partakers of His salvation, will reign with Him. "But now we see not yet all things put under Him." The time is not in this present age in which Satan is god and ruler. Only when the First-begotten is brought back from the glory, in His second coming, will all things be put under Him. Faith knows this from the unfailing promises of God. But faith also has another vision; while Satan is not yet dethroned and Christ enthroned, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, who was made a little lower than the angels on account of the suffering of death; so that by the grace of God He should taste death for all things." Glorious vision! He suffered death. He perfectly glorified God on the earth where God had been dishonored. He came down and took the lowest place and now He is exalted to the highest. The Man who suffered and died fills the throne and is crowned with glory and honor. And as surely as He is there now, so will He in God's own time occupy His own throne with all things put under his feet. He tasted death for that--for all things--for a ruined creation which He has redeemed and will restore.

Verses 10-18

This salvation work is now more fully mentioned in the second part of this chapter. He is spoken of as the captain (author) of the salvation of the many sons He is bringing to glory. And as the originator and leader of their salvation He had to suffer and die. Not His person was to be perfected, for He is perfect; but He had to be perfected through suffering as a Saviour. "For it became Him for whom are all things and by whom are all things in bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." Here God's eternal purpose is wonderfully revealed. He purposed before the foundation, knowing the coming ruin of man, to bring many sons unto glory. This is divine love. But God's holiness had to be vindicated, and therefore the Son of God became man to suffer as the captain of their (the many sons) salvation.

As disobedience had led man from life to death, so, by obedience unto death the sinless Lamb of God had to win in righteousness the path of endless life for those who trust in Him as the originator and captain of their salvation. And those who accept Him are the many sons, whom God is bringing through Him, to glory everlasting. And both He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. It is a wicked perversion of the truth when it is taught, that He, and all the human race are of one. This is the common error taught so much in the so-called theory of "The Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man." The statement shows the wonderful relationship which divine grace has established between the captain of salvation and those who are saved by Him. He, Christ, is the sanctifier, setting those apart unto God, who accept Him as Saviour. Such are born of God and become children of God, destined to be brought by Him as sons to glory. In this sense He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified by Him are of One, that is, of God. Higher still is the truth revealed in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, that believers are not only "of one" but are one with Him.

Again quotations from the Scriptures follow. The first is from the Twenty-second Psalm. "For this

cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying I will declare Thy name unto my brethren in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee" (Ps. 22:22). This Psalm shows first Christ on the cross as sin-bearer. In verses 20 and 21 is the prayer of the Suffering One. And He was heard. God's answer was His resurrection from the dead. That resurrection and His exaltation are revealed in the second portion of this Psalm (verses 22-31). The beginning of this section is quoted here. And when He was risen from the dead He gave this blessed new message at once. "But go unto My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (John 20:17).

Here we learn the blessed identification of Him that sanctifieth and with them that are sanctified, and that on the ground of resurrection. And therefore He is not ashamed to call us brethren, which, however, does not authorize believers to call Him "brother" as it is done so often. (Never before His death and resurrection did He address His disciples as "brethren." Only once did He hint before His death at this relationship to come, in Matthew 12:48-50.) And by His Spirit He is in the midst of those who are gathered unto His name, the Church, and sings praise unto God, as they praise God in His blessed and worthy name. The Twenty-second Psalm also speaks of "the great congregation," Israel, gathered unto Him and of the ends of the earth and the nations who shall remember and shall worship before Him. It is His coming glory when all things are put under Him in the age to come.

The next quotation is from Psalm 16. (It may also be brought in connection with Is. 8:17. The Septuagint has it "I will trust in Him" 2 Sam. 22:3.) "I will put my trust in Him." It is the prophetic expression of His personal faith on earth. As man He trusted in the Lord and waited for Him (Isaiah 8:17). "The Seed of David, and the object of the promises, is thus represented as awaiting, in perfect confidence, the righteous award which in due time should be made to Him who alone is worthy, by the God whom He had glorified in perfect obedience; although for an appointed season His gracious labor might seem to have been spent for nought and in vain, while man and Satan appeared only to prevail" (Isaiah 49).

The last quotation is from Isaiah 8:18. The children, which the Lord had given to Isaiah, were for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord. The two sons of Isaiah had received their names of significant meaning from heaven. Believers are children, belong to Him and are signs and witnesses both to unbelieving Israel and the world. In a special sense this passage, no doubt, applies to the believing remnant of Israel, which owned Him, while the nation rejected Him. And some day, the day of His glory, He will declare triumphantly "Behold I and the children which God gave unto Me." Then He will be glorified and admired in all that believed (2 Thess. 1:10) and the redeemed will be for signs and wonders in a still more blessed way.

Then follows a restatement of the fact of His incarnation and its special bearing on the calling of the children, God has given Him, the many sons He brings to glory. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also in like manner took part of the same (His incarnation) that through death He might bring to nought him who hath the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver as many as through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." It was for the children's sake, all who accept Him and whom God brings through Him to glory, that He took on flesh and blood and by doing so He arrayed Himself for death. He took on flesh and blood apart from sin. Satan's work is perfected in death. "That the Lord Jesus might enjoy the children as the gift of God, He must first take away the yoke of the oppressor. But because the right of Satan to destroy was founded on the victory of sin, which made man the lawful prey of death, He, who loved the children though as yet they knew Him not, took also flesh; that in their stead He might undergo that death which should forever spoil the devil of his claim" (A. Pridham). The limit of this work of the Lord Jesus to the children as its object, should be carefully observed.

Jewish saints in the Old Testament, believing the promise and expecting the Messiah, were in bondage and in fear of death. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law," but the death of Christ once for all to sin has received the sting and brought to nought him who has the

power of death. A believer is delivered from the fear of death, for he no longer dies the sinner's death, but falls asleep in Jesus and that with the promise to awake in due time in His likeness. "For verily it is not angels upon whom He taketh hold, but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham." And who were they whom He took hold on? Not angels, but the seed of Abraham. Those are the children for which He came, took on flesh and blood and wrought His work on the cross. The expression "seed of Abraham" is as a generic term, descriptive of the whole family of faith. Believers of Jews and Gentiles are comprehended in this term. They that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

His priesthood is next introduced for the first time in this Epistle. He was made like unto His brethren in all things "that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted," and thus in suffering and temptation (apart from sin) in His humanity, He was fitted to be the priest to sympathize with His own in all their trials and conflicts.

"He suffered--never yielded. We do not suffer when we yield to temptation: the flesh takes pleasure in the things by which it is tempted. Jesus suffered, being tempted, and He is able to succor them that are tempted. It is important to observe that the flesh, when acted upon by its desires, does not suffer. Being tempted, it, alas! enjoys. But when, according to the light of the Holy Spirit and the fidelity of obedience, the Spirit resists the attacks of the enemy, whether subtle or persecuting, then one suffers. This the Lord did, and this we have to do. That which needs succor is the new man, the faithful heart, and not the flesh. I need succor against the flesh, and in order to mortify all the members of the old man" Synopsis of the Bible.

CHAPTER 3

1. As Son over the house of God, greater than Moses (3:1-6)
2. The danger of unbelief (3:7-13)
3. The need of faith (3:14-19)

Verses 1-6

He now addresses believing Hebrews as "holy brethren and partakers of the heavenly calling," and exhorts them to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus." Hebrews address each other as "brethren" (Acts 2:29, 7:2, 22:1). Believing Hebrews are here addressed by the Spirit of God as "holy brethren." Trusting in Christ they were sanctified and belonged to those whom He is not ashamed to call brethren. They are called "partakers of the heavenly calling" in contrast with their former "earthly calling" of Israel. The two titles of the Lord Jesus, Apostle and High Priest, correspond to the preceding opening chapters of the Epistle. As Apostle (a Sent One), the Son of God came from God to man. And then as Man who suffered and died, He has gone from man to God as High Priest, typified by Aaron. As the Lord Jesus Christ is in this Epistle called the Apostle, the Spirit of God may have, for this reason, kept the pen of the apostle, who wrote this document, from calling himself an apostle.

Then follows the contrast with Moses. Moses was faithful in all his house (the tabernacle) but only as a servant. Christ is over God's house, which He has built, for He is God. And in this house He is not a servant, but a Son. Both the universe and the Church, as the House of God, are here blended together. The house in the wilderness, the tabernacle, was a type of the universe. "And every house is built by some one, but He that built all things is God." Christ is the builder of the universe, the house, and the upholder of it and so He is counted worthy of greater honor than Moses, inasmuch as He who hath built it hath more honor than the house. The Apostle of our confession, the Sent one of God, the Son of God, is also the High Priest. After His finished work on the cross, having made propitiation for the sins of the people, He passed through the heavens into the Holiest

not made with hands. (The three parts of the tabernacle, the outer court, the holy part, and the Holiest typify the first, the second and the third heaven.) Ultimately in virtue of redemption, all having been cleansed by the blood, God will dwell in the house. "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3).

"And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after." And those things have come and are given through Christ, who is Son over His house, whose house are we. This is His spiritual house, the house of God composed of living stones, the sanctified, the holy priesthood. The Son of God, the builder of all things, has now as High Priest, His own house, which are we "if we hold fast the confidence (boldness) and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." It is a warning to those Hebrews who had confessed Christ, who were facing trials and many difficulties, not to give up the confidence and the rejoicing in the hope. They are urged to hold it fast and are solemnly warned against unbelief. They were in danger of forsaking Christianity, and turning back to Judaism. And these words of warning are also given to us, for they are needful for the exercise of the conscience. A true believer will continue in confidence firm to the end. Such a continuance is the proof of the reality of our confession.

("it is clearly not our standing which is in question; for this being wholly of God and in Christ is settled and sure and unchanging. There is no "if" either as to Christ's work or as to the gospel of God's grace. All there is unconditional grace to faith. The wilderness journey is before us (as the next verses show). Here it is that "if" has its necessary place, because it is our walk through the desert, where there are so many occasions of failure, and we need constant dependence in God.")

Verses 7-13

The danger and calamity of unbelief is next called to their remembrance. Psalm 95 is quoted. The Holy Spirit saith "Today if ye will hear His voice harden not your hearts." Such was the word of warning addressed to Israel in the past, but it also has its application in the present. The word "today" expresses God's wonderful patience and long suffering towards Israel as well as towards all during this age of grace. The "today" is now; the great morrow comes, when the "today" ends and the kingdom of power and glory with its attending judgments upon those who did not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ comes, and the once rejected King Messiah appears. The fathers of the Hebrews had tempted God in the wilderness. He was wroth with that generation and swore in His wrath "they shall not enter into My rest." It was God's solemn sentence of exclusion from His rest. They hardened their hearts, did not obey His voice and their unbelief shut them out from God's rest.

Even so these Hebrews, professing Christianity were in the same danger. "Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the living God." But while it was "today," God still waited to be gracious and so they were to exhort each other daily, lest any of them be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Danger surrounded them on every side. "The heart of unbelief which barred the land of Canaan from their natural fathers was yet within their flesh. Not only were the lusts of nature in their ordinary shape forever combating against the will of God, they were exposed also to a more specious, and therefore a more dangerous form of evil in the still existing rivalry which they who made their boast in their traditions were opposing to the cross of Christ. Of all the evils with which Satan can afflict the heart, atheism, religion without faith in God, is by very much the worst. For it lulls the conscience, while it weaves its web of unblessed, unsanctifying exercises about the heart's affections so as effectually to exclude the light of God. It was to this peace-corroding yet seductive evil that these Hebrew Christians stood practically exposed."

"Now the remedy and safeguard of all evil is the truth of God. It is only by listening to the word of Him who speaks to us as children with a knowledge of our need, that believers can be kept in their true place. The possession of truth in the way of doctrine is not enough. God daily speaks and must be daily heard if we would really know Him" (A. Pridham).

All this is true of God's people at all times, for faith and obedience are the essential conditions of blessing and the tests of profession. God is faithful and will certainly not permit that any of His own perish. Faith reckons with this, but also heeds the warning, knowing and owning the tendency of the flesh to depart from God, and hence the need of His constant and never-failing grace is recognized and a walk in godly fear is the blessed result. There are teachers who claim that these solemn exhortations have no meaning for Christians today and even have made the statement that this epistle was not for the church at all. Such claims show a deplorable ignorance of the truth of God. All believers must heed the warning "that none of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

("Sin separates us from God in our thoughts; we have no longer the same sense either of His love, His power, or His interest in us. Confidence is lost. Hope, and the value of unseen things, diminish; while the value of things that are seen proportionately increases. The conscience is bad; one is not at ease with God. The path is hard and difficult; the will strengthens itself against Him. We no longer live by faith; visible things come in between us and God, and take possession of the heart. Where there is life, God warns by His Spirit (as in this epistle), He chastises and restores. Where it was only an outward influence, a faith devoid of life, and the conscience not reached, it is abandoned" J. N. Darby.)

Verses 14-19. The need of faith, the holding fast of the beginning of our confidence unto the end, is now more fully presented. All Israelites came out of Egypt. But with whom was he wroth for forty years? it was with them that sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. Their sin was unbelief. And those who believed not were kept out of His rest. "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" What the rest of God is we shall follow in the annotations of the next paragraphs.

CHAPTER 4

1. What the rest of God is (4:1-11)

2. The power of the Word of God (4:12-13)

Verses 1-11

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left of entering into His rest, any one of you might seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them, but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." These words of exhortation belong properly to the preceding chapter.

What is the rest of which these verses speak? It is generally explained as the rest which the true believer finds and has in the Lord Jesus Christ in believing; that his conscience has rest. It is frequently identified with Matt. 11:28-29. While it is blessedly true that all who come to the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour find rest in Him from the curse of the law and the burden of sin, while it is equally true that those who follow Him in obedience and learn of Him find rest day by day for their souls, yet it is not this present rest which is before us in these verses. The rest which is meant is called by God "My rest"; it is the rest of God and is future, the rest in coming glory, an eternal rest. It is God's rest, because He made it Himself and He will enjoy it in glory with those who have believed in Christ, in whose perfect work God has His rest, because it satisfies His holiness and His love. Into this rest the believer enters at His coming. Then work will be over and all burdens cease. Righteousness reigns and groaning creation is delivered and all the promised glory will be accomplished. God rests then in His love and rejoices (Zeph. 3:17). Till that day God works, for sin and the curse is unremoved, but all will be changed when His Son appears in glory and all things are put in subjection under Him. The perfect, complete rest of God is in the new heaven and earth, when God dwells among men and sin and death are forever gone. He then is all in all. This is the rest which remains for the people of God.

"God must rest in that which satisfies His heart. This was the case even in creation--all was very good. And now it must be in a perfect blessing that perfect love can be satisfied with, with regard to us, who will possess a heavenly portion in the blessing which we shall have in His own presence, in perfect holiness and perfect light. Accordingly all the toilsome work of faith, the exercise of faith in the wilderness, the warfare (although there are many joys), the good works practised there, labour of every kind will cease. It is not only that we shall be delivered from the power of indwelling sin; all the efforts and all the troubles of the new man will cease. We are already set free from the law of sin; then our spiritual exercise for God will cease. We shall rest from our works--not evil ones. We have already rested from our works with regard to justification, and therefore in that sense we have now rest in our consciences, but that is not the subject here--it is the Christian's rest from all his works. God rested from His works--assuredly good ones--and so shall we also then with Him.

"We are now in the wilderness; we also wrestle with wicked spirits in heavenly places. A blessed rest remains for us in which our hearts will repose in the presence of God, where nothing will trouble the perfection of our rest, where God will rest in the perfection of the blessing He has bestowed on His people.

"The great thought of the passage is, that there remains a rest (that is to say, that the believer is not to expect it here) without saying where it is. And it does not speak in detail of the character of the rest, because it leaves the door open to an earthly rest for the earthly people on the ground of the promises, although to Christian partakers of the heavenly calling God's rest is evidently a heavenly one" (Synopsis of the Bible).

The argument and exhortation of verses 3-11 is therefore easily understood. God had rested in creation on the seventh day from all His work. But that rest was broken and is also the type of another rest of God to come. Those who believe not cannot enter into that coming rest and it is shown that Joshua (verse 8, not Jesus, but Joshua) and the rest in Canaan is not the true rest of God, for if it had been why would David, long after Joshua, have spoken of it again? Nor has this rest come now for the people of God; it is still in the future. A Sabbath-keeping remaineth for the people of God. We are on the road toward it, beset by dangers and difficulties as Israel was when passing through the wilderness. And therefore the exhortation to be diligent to enter into that rest and not to be unbelieving and disobedient. Entrance into the rest is by faith. We who have believed do enter into rest. While the believer is assured of this future entrance into the rest of God, he also uses diligence and earnestness while on the way, watching and praying. True faith is evidenced by such a walk.

Verses 12-13

The Word of God and its divine living power is here introduced by the Holy Spirit. It is the method of God, to use His Word, to bring to light and judge the unbelief and workings of the heart. It judges everything in the heart which is not of Him. Its use, its constant use, is the supreme necessity of those who believe and are on the way to the rest of God, for it is His divine Word which brings us into God's presence. It is a searching Word and under its power the conscience becomes aroused and the blessed and needed work of self-judgment begins. Life, power and omniscience, three great attributes of God, are here given to His Word. The Word also gives power and spiritual energy.

("Soul and spirit" as thus named together can only be the two parts of the immaterial nature of man; which Scripture, in spite of what many think, everywhere clearly distinguishes from one another. The soul is the lower, sensitive, instinctive, emotional part, which, where not, as in man, penetrated with the light of the spirit, is simply animal; and which also, where man is not in the power of the Spirit of God, will still gravitate towards this. The spirit is intelligent and moral, that which knows human things (1 Cor. 2:11). In the "natural man," which is really the psychic man, the man souled (1 Cor. 2:14), conscience, with its recognition of God, is in abeyance, and the mind itself becomes earthly. Important enough it is, therefore, to divide between "soul and spirit." "Joints and marrow"

convey to us the difference between the external and the internal, the outward form and the essence hidden in it" Numerical Bible.)

III. CHRIST AS PRIEST IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

CHAPTERS 4:14-10

The Great High-Priest (4:14-16)

With this statement the main section of the Epistle begins, and the great theme, the priesthood of Christ, is introduced. This section covers six chapters, ending with the tenth. Here we learn that Christ, the true priest, has passed through the heavens and is now in a heavenly sanctuary, the way into which His own work has blessedly opened. The different contrasts with the priests and sacrifices of Judaism, the old covenant and the new, are made in these chapters. The concluding verses of the fourth chapter one might say, contain all the truth of His priesthood which the succeeding chapters develop and expand.

He is the great high priest who is passed through the heavens. He has entered heaven itself, the third heaven, the holiest. The earthly tabernacle in which Aaron and his successors ministered had three parts. Through these Aaron passed as he entered into the holiest and these parts are typical of the heavenly things. Christ also passed through, but not through the places made by hands--He passed through the heavens and into the holiest. "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figure of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (9:24). And He who passed through the heavens is Jesus, the Son of God; He who was made a little lower than the angels and after His sacrificial death arose, is now clothed with a glorified human body in the presence of God. His priestly ministry there is in behalf of His people. He is, as high priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities; He was in all points tempted as we are, apart from sin. ("Yet without sin" is an incorrect translation and is responsible for the very erroneous teaching that our Lord, while He did not sin, might have sinned. It was absolutely impossible for Him to sin, for He is the Son of God and God cannot sin.) He lived on earth and passed through life; He suffered and was tempted; He experienced all the trials His people have to pass through in their lives and infinitely more than His saints can ever suffer, and therefore He sympathizes with all our infirmities. In all the difficulties, perplexities, trials and sorrows, the saint of God finds perfect sympathy in Him as priest. His heart filled with that love which passeth knowledge, is touched, beyond our finite comprehension, with the feeling of our infirmities.

As to sin, temptation from within, the lust of an evil heart, He knew absolutely nothing. He knew no sin. He was tempted in all things, apart from sin. Sin, therefore, is excluded. Nor does a child of God desire sympathy with indwelling sin. It must be judged, put into the place of death, and not sympathized with. And this fact that He is the great High Priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities, our weaknesses and our trials; the knowledge that He, who is exalted in glory, concerns Himself about us and our trials down here, gives encouragement to hold fast our confession. He will not leave, nor forsake, nor fail His saints.

We have evil temptations from within; Christ had none. Temptation from sin was absolutely incompatible with His holy person. By a miracle he was even as to humanity exempt from the taint of evil. It is of holy temptations this Epistle treats, not of our unholy ones. The Epistle of James distinguishes them very definitely in Chapter 1. Compare verses 2, 12, on the one hand, and verses 13-15 on the other. We know the latter too well. Jesus knew. But He knew the former as no other before or since. He was in all things tempted according to likeness, i.e. with us, with this infinite difference 'apart from sin.' He knew no sin. He is therefore the more-- not the less--able to sympathize with us. For sin within, even if not yielded to, blinds the eye, and dulls the heart, and

hinders from unreserved occupation with the trials of others" (J.N. Darby.)

And while we are not told to go to this great High Priest (He is constantly occupying Himself about us) we are told to come boldly to the throne of grace. We look to the Lord Jesus Christ, trust His love and sympathy, and knowing that He is there we can go with boldness to the throne of grace. And there we find all we need.

CHAPTER 5

1. What the High Priest is and represents (5:1-4)
2. The fulfillment in Christ made High Priest (5:5-10)
3. The spiritual condition of the Hebrew-Christians (5:11-14)

Verses 1-4

In developing the priesthood of Christ and showing how it excels the earthly priesthood and is more glorious than the priesthood of Judaism, the principles of priesthood of the levitical system are first stated. Upon this follows the comparison of the priesthood of Christ with that of Aaron. The transcendent priesthood of Christ is thus established by this contrast. These opening verses have nothing to do with our Lord. They show how the high priest was taken from among men and being merely a man who was to exercise forbearance toward the ignorant, himself clothed with infirmity, he was obliged not alone to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people, but also for himself. This can, of course, never apply to the Lord Jesus Christ, inasmuch as He is sinless. He therefore cannot be meant in these introductory words of this chapter. And the earthly priests did not take this honor to themselves. God's call was necessary.

Verses 5-10

How the priesthood, foreshadowed in Aaron, was first of all fulfilled in Christ is the theme of this section. Here we have His call to be priest. "So Christ also hath not glorified Himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee" (Psalm 2). As He saith also in another place, "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec" (Psalm 110). His call from God is to be King-Priest. The second psalm reveals Him as Son of God, King to be enthroned and to rule over the nations, and He is priest after the order of Melchisedec. This name is here mentioned for the first time. His Melchisedec priesthood the Spirit of God unfolds fully in the seventh chapter. The call of Him is according to the eternal purposes of God. He came to offer Himself as the sacrificial Lamb on the cross. This was indicated when He went into Jordan, baptized by John. It was then that the Father's voice was heard declaring His sonship. He had to pass through death and rise again to be the priest after the order of Melchisedec.

His suffering and death are therefore next mentioned in these verses: "Who in the days of His flesh having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him who was able to save Him out of death and having been heard for His godly fear, though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." These words refer chiefly to the portal of the cross, Gethsemane. There He prayed with strong crying and tears, alone with His Father in deepest agony, fallen on His face, and His sweat became as great drops of blood falling down on the ground. He went into all the anguish of death, deprecating the cup He had to drink, yet in meek and perfect submission. What a terrible weight was there upon His holy soul! And He was heard for His godly fear. He was saved, not from dying, for that would have left man in his sins and unredeemed; He was saved out of death. His prayer was answered by His resurrection. It was in that agony that He learned obedience. Though Son of God, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. Having come to obey and to suffer (which as Son of God was unknown to Him), He obeyed in everything and submitted to everything. He did not save Himself, but drank the cup and

died the sinner's death.

What He is in resurrection, the results of His sacrificial death, are next stated. "And being made perfect, He became, unto all that obey Him, author of eternal salvation; being saluted (or welcomed by God) of God as high priest after the order of Melchisedec." In the second chapter we saw that the captain of our salvation had to be made perfect through sufferings (2:10). Here we meet the same statement, that He has been made perfect. It means the completeness of His work through sufferings, in resurrection and heavenly glory. And through this finished work in which He was perfected as Saviour, He also became unto all that obey Him (all who believe on Him and own Him thus as their Saviour) the author of eternal salvation. Returning to glory, God saluted, or welcomed Him as priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Verses 11-14

Here another parenthesis begins which closes with the end of the sixth chapter. The seventh chapter resumes the instructions concerning Melchisedec and the priesthood of Christ. Their spiritual state was that of babes as still under the ordinances and requirements of the law. They clung to Judaism and could not fully break loose from the shadow things of their system. They were dull of hearing and while they ought to have been teachers (having believed in Christ) there was need of teaching them again what are the elements of the beginning of the oracles of God. They needed milk and were not fit for the "solid food." They had not gone on in the gospel, into that maturity which the Holy Spirit has revealed as to the believer's standing and perfection in Christ. As long as they were occupied with ordinances they were but infants and in danger of apostasy.

Ritualistic Christendom today corresponds to the state of many of these Hebrew-Christians of the first century, only ritualism is worthy of greater condemnation. The fearful evil of ritualism (Romish and so-called Protestant) is that it takes and imitates Jewish forms and ordinances and through these things sets aside and corrupts true Christianity. It is the bondage of the flesh.

("We may observe that there is no greater hindrance to progress in spiritual life and intelligence than attachment to an ancient form of religion, which, being traditional and not simply personal faith in the truth, consists always in ordinances, and is consequently carnal and earthly. Without this people may be unbelievers; but under the influence of such a system piety itself--expressed in forms--makes a barrier between the soul and the light of God; and these forms which surround, preoccupy, and hold the affections captive, prevent them from enlarging and becoming enlightened by means of divine revelation. Morally (as the apostle here expresses it) the senses are not exercised to discern both good and evil" Synopsis of the Gospel.)

CHAPTER 6

1. Return to Judaism the crucifixion of the Son of God afresh (6:1-8)

2. Persuaded of better things: Comfort and hope (6:9-20)

Verses 1-8

A solemn warning follows, addressed to these Hebrews who were halting and in danger of turning back to Judaism, and doing so would crucify the Son of God afresh. "Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to full growth; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and faith in God, of a teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." It is of much importance to see that these things are not "the principles of the doctrine of Christ" (as the authorized version erroneously states). These things mentioned are the elementary things which the Jews had before Christ came and as they were still occupied with them, He exhorts to leave the word of the beginning of Christ, the Messiah, and to go on to full growth. The full growth is Christianity as revealed in the finished work of Christ, the glory of His Person, His priesthood and the fact that the believer is in Christ and

complete in Him.

While these Hebrews had believed in Christ, that He had come, they had not gone on to this maturity and lacked the spiritual knowledge of what Christ had done and the blessed results of His work and priesthood. They were therefore to leave the elementary things which they had and believed in as Jews, and abandoning them, reach the true Christian maturity. And these elementary things consisted in repentance from dead works and of faith in God. This was known and taught in Judaism. But it is faith in God, but nothing is said of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When baptism is mentioned and laying on of hands it has nothing whatever to do with Christian baptism, and much less does the laying on of hands mean "confirmation." (Confirmation as practiced in the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopal, and several other Protestant denominations is a merely ecclesiastical invention without the slightest scriptural foundation.) The word "baptism" is in the plural--"baptisms"--the different washings the Jews practice in connection with the ceremonial law, and so also the Jewish imposition of hands. These Jewish washings and purifications were only shadows of what was to come. It had come; and yet these Jews, though believing that Christ had come, still lingered in these things. Resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment, the things concerning the future were likewise the teachings they had in Judaism. But Christianity gives a higher truth, namely, "the resurrection from among the dead" and that the believer is passed from death unto life and shall not come into judgment.--"And this will he do if God permit"-- that is in the coming unfolding of true Christianity, the full growth, as given in chapters 7-10.

Before the author of the Epistle does this he shows what it would mean if these Hebrews turn back to Judaism altogether, and instead of going on to full growth would abandon the Christian ground they occupied as professing believers in Christ. Such a course would make it impossible to renew them again to repentance, for they, by falling away, crucified afresh for themselves the Son of God, putting Him to open shame. They committed the crime, which was done by them through ignorance (Luke 23:34; Acts 3:17), now knowingly of their own will and choice. For such a wilful falling away there was no remedy. The things mentioned in verses 4 and 5 show the possibility that a person may be enlightened, and have tested, and even participated, by listening to the testimony of the Spirit concerning Christ, and seen miracles, the powers of the age to come--without having fully accepted the offered salvation.

"The warning here has been a sore perplexity to many who are far as possible from the condition which is here contemplated. The description of these apostates, solemn as it is, does not speak of them as children of God, as justified by faith, or in any way which would imply such things as these; and the apostle, after describing them, immediately adds, as to those whom he is addressing; 'But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, even things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.' This is the most distinct assurance that he had no thought of one who had known salvation incurring the doom of an apostate" Numerical Bible.

All the blessings offered upon Christian ground are to such outward professors like rain, which instead of bringing forth from the ground useful herbs, brings thorns and briers, worthless, nigh unto cursing, and then the end, to be burned. Of a true child of God this can never be said.

("When once we have understood that this passage is a comparison of the power of the spiritual system with Judaism, and that it speaks of giving up the former, after having known it, its difficulty disappears. The possession of life is not supposed, nor is that question touched. The passage speaks, not of life, but of the Holy Ghost as a power present in Christianity. To "taste the good word" is to have understood how precious that word is; and not the having been quickened by its means. Hence in speaking to the Jewish Christians he hopes better things and things which accompany salvation, so that all these things could be there and yet no salvation. Fruit there could not be. That supports life" Synopsis of the Bible.)

Verses 9-20, Words of comfort and hope conclude this chapter. He addresses them now as "beloved," of whom he is persuaded of better things, the things which accompany salvation. Their

true faith had been manifested by works. And God is not unrighteous "to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards His name in that ye have ministered unto the saints and do minister." These are things which accompany salvation. He encourages them to be followers of them who through patience and faith inherit the promises. He calls their attention to Abraham, the father of the faithful. He endured patiently and obtained the promise. And He gave not only the promise of His Word, but also His oath. "For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself." What assurance therefore--God's Word and God's oath. And this makes manifest to the heirs of promise (believers) the immutability of His counsel, so that we might have strong consolation. Therefore those who trust and hope for future glory have a strong and satisfying consolation. But there is more than that. There is a personal guarantee, for the Lord Jesus as a forerunner has entered into heaven, where He now is as high priest after the order of Melchisedec. He, who is our hope, is there as a forerunner and this is the anchor of the soul; it anchors in Him who hath entered within the veil. He who is seated in glory is the promised One, the object, bearer and dispenser of all the promises of God. In Him and His work all is made secure. His presence there speaks of the ultimate realization of all the promises of glory for His people.

CHAPTER 7

1. The priesthood of Melchisedec in contrast with the Levitical priesthood (7:1-19)
2. The holy and heavenly priesthood of Christ (7:20-28)

Verses 1-19

The interrupted argument concerning the priesthood of Christ is now resumed. It connects with chapter 5:10. There we find Melchisedec mentioned for the first time, and here the historical Melchisedec is first of all described. The record is given in Genesis 14:18-20. He met Abraham, who returned from the smiting of the Kings, and blessed him. Abraham gave him the tenth of all. His name means "King of Righteousness"; but he was also King of Salem, that is, "King of Peace." First righteousness and peace after-ward. This is God's order--not peace and righteousness, but righteousness and peace. It is so spiritually for the believer; it will be so in millennial times when "righteousness and peace will kiss each other."

Who was Melchisedec? Some have said he was Shem and not a few maintain that he was the Lord Himself, one of the theophanies, a pre-incarnation manifestation of the Son of God. The latter view is certainly wrong, for Scripture states that Melchisedec is "made like unto the Son of God", that is, he is a pattern, a similitude of Him; Melchisedec was therefore not the Lord Himself. It is vain to speculate on the identity of this King-Priest, for the Holy Spirit on purpose does not mention who he was. When we read, "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life," it does not mean that Melchisedec had no father and no mother, etc. But it means that Scripture gives no record of these facts; Moses being divinely guided in omitting it all in the book of Genesis, and thus making Melchisedec appear as a man without father and mother, without descent, having no beginning and end of days, who has a priesthood invested in himself. And this for the purpose of furnishing a type of our Lord as the royal priest.

Melchisedec foreshadows fully the millennial glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. See Zech. 6:9-13. He will receive His own throne and be a priest upon that throne. Significantly he appeared suddenly when Abraham was returning from smiting the allied kings. (Genesis 14 gives the record of the first war of the Bible.) And then he blessed Abraham and made known to him God as the Most-High (the millennial name of God), the possessor of heaven and earth. Even so the true Melchisedec will some day appear, and after the smiting of the kings (the battle of Armageddon, Rev. 16:14-16; 19:19) will begin His glorious rule. Nor must it be overlooked that Melchisedec brought to Abraham bread and wine, the blessed emblems of the great sacrificial work of the true Melchisedec, which points us, who are by faith the children of Abraham, to the blessed memorial feast, in which His

love and grace, as well as glory, are remembered. Christ is therefore now for His own the Priest after the order of Melchisedec; the full display of His Melchisedec priesthood arrives in the day of His coming glory.

The chief object of bringing forward the person of Melchisedec and his connection with Abraham is, to show first, the superiority of Melchisedec to Levi and his priesthood as better and higher than the Levitical priesthood. Abraham gave him the tenth part of all the spoil. The whole Levitical priesthood was then not in existence, inasmuch as Levi, unborn, was in the loins of Abraham; in Abraham, Levi, therefore, gave tithes to Melchisedec. Melchisedec, as priest, blessed the father of the nation, and therefore he was greater than Abraham, for "without controversy, the less is blessed of the greater." The priesthood of Melchisedec was therefore superior to that of the sons of Levi, the Aaronic priesthood.

After this argument another one is introduced. The question is concerning the Levitical priesthood, if it could give perfection. The one hundred and tenth psalm announced the coming of a priest after the order of Melchisedec and therefore superior to Aaron. If then perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, what need was there that this other priest of a higher order than Aaron should arise? Because perfection was not by that earthly priesthood, nor by the law, therefore this better priest had to come to bring the needed perfection and that necessitated a change of the law also. "The law, doubtless, was good; but separation still existed between man and God. The law made nothing perfect. God was ever perfect, and human perfection was required; all must be according to what divine perfection required of man. But sin was there, and the law was consequently without power (save to condemn); its ceremonies and ordinances were but figures, and a heavy yoke. Even that which temporarily relieved the conscience brought sin to mind and never made the conscience perfect towards God. They were still at a distance from Him. Grace brings the soul to God, who is known in love and in a righteousness which is for us."--J.N.D.

The law in all its ordinances was a witness of imperfection, though it foreshadowed the good things to come. The law was therefore not to abide. With the cessation of the Levitical priesthood the entire law-covenant would terminate. And He of whom these things are spoken (the Lord Jesus Christ) "pertaineth to another tribe, of which no one hath given attendance at the altar (as priest). For it is certain that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." His coming, therefore, has taken from the tribe of Levi the honor and set aside their priesthood. And He who sprang out of Judah, the priest after the similitude of Melchisedec (combining priesthood and royalty) hath been made, not after a law of fleshly commandment, but after the power of an indissoluble life. His priesthood is not a thing of time and change, a fleshly priesthood like Aaron's but it is a priesthood in the power of an indissoluble life. He has passed through death, and now in heaven, not on earth, He is the Melchisedec priest, who has no end of days, who lives eternally.

Then follows a conclusion, a summing up of the whole argument. In the stated fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec, "There is a setting aside of the commandment going before (the law and its ordinances) on account of weakness and unprofitableness (for the law made nothing perfect) and the bringing in of a better hope through which we draw near to God." The law is then set aside on account of its weakness and unprofitableness, for it could not perfect anything. All the priestly ordinances and ministrations could not make atonement, nor could bring nigh unto God. It was all imperfection. Yet perfection and bringing His children nigh unto Himself is God's gracious and eternal purpose. And God has accomplished this now in the person of His ever blessed Son, the priest after the order of Melchisedec. This is the bringing in of a better hope; by Him we draw near unto God. This truth is more fully developed later.

Verses 20-28

An additional argument is given. The priesthood of Christ was established by an oath, while that of

Aaron was not. Swearing an oath God said as to Him, who sat down at His own right hand, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec." How superior, then, this priesthood! By so much, also, hath Jesus become surety of a better covenant." And furthermore, they were many priests, for they were mortal men and died. But Christ continueth forever and hath the unchangeable priesthood. And this ever-living priest is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by Him, seeing that He always liveth to make intercession for them." He saves completely and keeps His own by His priestly, all-powerful intercession, for eternal glory. And what a high priest He is! Such a high priest! Well may His own in holy joy and praise cry out--"Such a high priest!" He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. "In His official dignity and glory He is made higher than the heavens." And He has no need, day by day, as the earthly high priests, first to offer up sacrifices for His own sins, then for those of the people. This He did once for all when He offered up Himself. What a contrast with the Jewish priests. They were sinners--He, separate from sinners and absolutely holy; they with the many sacrifices, which could accomplish nothing for man--He with the one great sacrifice which has accomplished all. And so He maketh intercession for them who have believed in Him, the many sons He brings to glory. He is holy and heavenly--even so are all His own, saved by grace, holy and partakers of the heavenly calling (3:1).

CHAPTER 8

1. Christ, the High Priest (8:1-6)
2. The old covenant and the new (8:7-13)

Verses 1-6

The new priesthood which the better priest exerciseth in heaven furthermore implies also a change in the sacrifices and in the covenant. This is now more fully developed in the last three chapters of this section. There is first of all a summary. The priest we have is not ministering on earth but "we have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched, and not man." Every high priest had to offer gifts and sacrifices, so it was of necessity that He also should have something to offer. What He has offered is brought out in the ninth and tenth chapters. As high priest He offered up Himself on the cross and then, as the high priest who had brought this perfect offering, He passed through the heavens and into heaven itself. If He were upon the earth and His priesthood went no further than the earth, He would not be a priest. He has no place among the Levitical priests, the priests who offered according to the law, whose office and ministrations were but shadows of heavenly things; but He hath obtained a more excellent ministry, because He is the mediator of a better covenant, which has for a foundation better promises.

As Christ came not from Aaron's family He could not be a priest after that pattern; His priesthood is wholly different, for it is heavenly and exercised in glory. With this more excellent priesthood, foreshadowed in the earthly Levitical priesthood, the latter has been completely set aside. This is the truth these Hebrew believers needed more fully to lay hold on, because the earthly tabernacle was still standing and the earthly priests were still exercising their empty and meaningless functions. And that which is put away, which is gone, because the one great offering was brought, and the true high priest has entered into the holiest and is in the presence of God for His people, Satan has successfully introduced and established upon Christian ground as one of the most soul-destroying inventions. Ritualistic Christendom with a priesthood patterned after the extinct Jewish priesthood, with a worship more or less after the model of Israel's worship, is the shade of the departed shadow. It is apostasy from the truth of the gospel of grace; it is a wicked denial of the gospel of our salvation. This priestly assumption of men is the worst possible corruption of the doctrine of Christ.

Verses 7-13

The preceding verse showed that Christ is the mediator of a better covenant. This leads next to a contrast between the first (the old) and the new covenant. A covenant contains the necessary principles established by God under which man may live with God, in which He deals with man. There are only two covenants. The old covenant which was established at Sinai, the law-covenant, and the new covenant which in its fullest meaning has not yet been ratified, for it also relates to the people of Israel as we shall soon learn from this chapter. Strictly speaking the gospel, the proclamation of the salvation of God, is not a covenant. Still those who accept the gospel possess all the spiritual blessings of this new covenant, and much more than Israel can ever possess, when at last as a converted nation this new covenant will be established with them.

The argument is simple. The fact that a new covenant is promised shows that the old covenant was insufficient. "For if that first one had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for the second." It could not accomplish what was in God's heart to bring His people into the closest and nearest relationship with Himself. The first covenant, the law, could not do this, and therefore "finding fault, He saith unto them, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they did not continue in my covenant, and I did not regard them, saith the Lord."

This first covenant was conditional, and the people did not keep this covenant and the Lord, because they were disobedient, did not regard them. That first covenant was unto their condemnation. And therefore the Lord had announced through the prophet Jeremiah that a new covenant was to be consummated for Israel and Judah, the same people with whom the first covenant was made. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws in their mind, and with them in their hearts; and I will be God unto them, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for all shall know me of the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins, and their iniquities I will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34). This new covenant is unlike the old one in that it has no condition attached to it. In it the Lord speaks alone in words of sovereign grace--"I will." It is the same what Jehovah promised to the nation through the prophet Ezekiel (chapter 36). And this grace covenant awaits its fulfillment for that nation in coming days.

The ground of this new covenant is the sacrificial death of Christ, His blood, as we learn from His own words when He instituted His supper. Because He died for that nation (John 6:51-52) all Israel --the house of Israel and the house of Judah --will be brought into the promised blessings through this grace covenant. In the meantime, while Israel has not yet entered into this new covenant, Gentiles, who are by nature aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise (no new covenant being promised to Gentiles), believing in Christ, are made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:12-13), enjoy every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ, become members of the body of Christ and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. When the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (Rom. 11:25) then God will turn in mercy to His people Israel, whom He hath not cast away, and this new covenant will be fully established and all the promises as to restoration, temporal blessings, as well, spiritual blessings, so richly promised throughout the Old Testament prophetic word, will through grace come upon them. Then their sins and iniquities will be remembered no more. It all comes to pass when He comes again, who alone can turn away ungodliness from Jacob. What light and joy these facts of the old covenant set aside and the promises of the new covenant must have brought to the hearts of these Hebrew believers who read first this great message.

("Modern Judaism [both rabbinical and rationalistic] is not able to account for the cessation of sacrifices and the Levitical dispensation. The former acknowledges that in the destruction of the temple and the present condition of Israel without high priest and offerings, divine judgment on the

nation's sin is expressed: the idea of atonement through a vicarious sacrifice is not quite extinct, as appears in the rite of the cock performed on the eve of the day of atonement, though devoid of all Scriptural authority. Rationalistic Judaism has departed still further from the truth. Rejecting the idea of substitution and expiation in connection with sacrifices, it regards the present condition of Israel as a more spiritual development, misinterpreting the protests of David and the prophets against a mere external view of the ceremonial law (Ps. 40:7; Hos. 6:6; Jer. 7:21-23). The old has indeed vanished; but according to the will of God, because the true light now shineth, because the substance has come in Christ" A. Saphir.)

CHAPTER 9

1. The first tabernacle and its worship (9:1-10)
2. The blood and the perfect work accomplished (9:11-23)
3. The Priest in heaven (9:24-28)

Verses 1-10

The Spirit of God now brings forth the greatest and most blessed facts concerning Christ, the offering He brought, and what has been accomplished by that offering. First the worldly sanctuary, the tabernacle, which was connected with the old covenant is briefly mentioned. It was erected by divine command, exhibiting divine wisdom and foreshadowed, like the levitical priesthood, the better things to come. Yet it was a "worldly sanctuary," that is, it was tangible according to this present world and built of materials of the earth. The antithesis to worldly is heavenly, uncreated, eternal. Everything in this tabernacle had a spiritual meaning. But it is not the purpose here to explain these things, the shadows of spiritual realities, for the apostle writes "of which we cannot now speak particularly" He does not give a complete description of the tabernacle at all. Nothing is said of the outer court, nor of the brazen altar, the golden altar of incense and other details. His object is not to explain the tabernacle but to demonstrate one great fact. He speaks of the two principal parts of the tabernacle, divided by the interior veil. Into the second the high priest entered in only once every year, not without blood--"the Holy Spirit signifying this, that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle had yet its standing." This is the truth he demonstrates. the way into the holiest, into God's presence was barred; the veil was in the way and concealed Him. All the gifts and sacrifices brought in that tabernacle could not give perfection as to the conscience--they could not lead the people into the holiest and give peace to the conscience.

Verses 11-23

With verse eleven begins the setting forth of the perfection which now has come. From here to the close of the tenth chapter we have the heart of this great epistle. The most blessed truth of the great work of Christ accomplished for His people is now gloriously displayed. The greatest contrast between the old things and the new is reached. Two little words of deep significance stand at the beginning of this section--"But Christ." The gifts and offerings, the meats and drinks, the divine washings, the carnal ordinances, all and everything could not do anything for sinful man-- but Christ. It is well for the understanding of what follows to give a summary of what is here taught. "But Christ having come, a high priest of the good things that are come, by the better and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building (creation)--neither by the blood of goats and bulls, but by His own blood, He hath entered in once for all into the holy places, having found an eternal redemption." Christ having come, perfection has come through His own precious blood. The blood of Jesus; has opened the way into the Holiest and the believer is admitted into the presence of God by that new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. The next chapter brings this out more fully, that believers on earth have a free, a full, a perfect access to God. The believer can now go in perfect liberty, not into an earthly

tabernacle, but into heaven where His holiness dwells and be perfectly at home there in virtue of the work of Christ and His own presence there. Such is the believer's position in the presence of God through the entrance of our high priest into the heavenly sanctuary.

And the believer can go in without doubt and fear, for he has no more conscience of sin, his conscience is made perfect before God through Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God. The question of sin is settled forever. "A perfect conscience is not an innocent conscience which, happy in its unconsciousness, does not know evil, and does not know God revealed in holiness. A perfect conscience knows God; it is cleansed, and, having the knowledge of good and evil according to light of God Himself, it knows that it is purified from all evil according to His purity.

Now the blood of bulls and goats, and the washing repeated under the law, could never make the conscience perfect. They could sanctify carnally, so as to enable the worshipper to approach God outwardly, yet only afar off, with the veil still unrent. But a real purification from sin and sins, so that the soul can be in the presence of God Himself in the light without spot, with the consciousness of being so, the offerings under the law could never produce. They were but figures. But, thanks be to God, Christ has accomplished the work; and is present for us now in the heavenly and eternal sanctuary, He is the witness there that our sins are put away; so that all conscience of sin before God is destroyed, because we know that He who bore our sins is in the presence of God, after having accomplished the work of expiation. Thus we have the consciousness of being in the light without spot. We have the purification not only of sins but of the conscience, so that we can use this access to God in full liberty and joy, presenting ourselves before Him who has so loved us (Synopsis of the Bible).

And thus these Hebrews (as well as we) know that the true high priest is in the sanctuary above, not with the blood of sacrifices, but He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself As man on earth, in the perfection and value of His person, He offered Himself, by the eternal Spirit, without spot, to God. And therefore every sinner who comes to God through Him is purged from dead works to serve the living God. Being therefore perfectly cleansed, perfectly brought into God's presence, in possession of an eternal (in contrast with earthly) redemption and an eternal inheritance, the believer can serve the living God. All this was unknown in the legal covenant. It is then that through the death of Christ and the subsequent bestowal of the Holy Spirit believers are constituted true worshippers in the heavenly sanctuary, a holy priesthood. Christ is the perfect mediator. And therefore no earthly priesthood is needed. The attempt to introduce priestly mediation of sinful men between Christ and His people, whom He is not ashamed to call brethren is anti-Christian, the offspring of Satan. Adolph Saphir, the author of an able exposition of Hebrews has exposed the Romish blasphemy in aping the defunct Judaism in words, which are worthy to be quoted.

"What a marvellous confusion of Jewish, pagan, and Christian elements do we see here! Jewish things which have waxed old, and vanished away; preparatory and imperfect elements which the apostle does not scruple to call beggarly now that the fulness has come--revived without divine authority, and changed and perverted to suit circumstances for which they were never intended. Pagan things, appealing to the deep-seated and time-confirmed love of idolatry, and of sensuous and mere outward performances; the Babylonian worship of the Queen of Heaven; the intercession of saints and angels, the mechanical repetition of formulas, the superstitious regard of places, seasons, and relics. Buried among these elements are some relics of Christian truth, without which this ingenious fabric could not have existed so long, and influenced so many minds--a truth which in the merciful condescension of God is blessed to sustain the life of His chosen ones in the mystical Babylon .

"This so-called church, vast and imposing, opens its door wide, except to those who honor the Scriptures, and who magnify the Lord Jesus. It can forgive sins, and grant pardons and indulgences, extending the astounding assumption of jurisdiction even beyond the grave; yet it

cannot bring peace to the wounded conscience, and renewal to the aching heart, because it never fully and simply declares the efficacy of the blood of Jesus, by which we obtain perfect remission, and the power of the Holy Ghost, who joins us to Christ. This community speaks of sacrifice, of altars, of priesthood, and stands between the people and the sanctuary above, the only High Priest, who by His sacrifice has entered for us into the holy of holies. And in our day this great apostasy has reached a point which we would fain regard as its culminating point, when it places the Virgin Mary by the side of the Lord Jesus as sinless and pure, and when it arrogates for man infallible authority over the heritage of God."

(Dr. M. Luther describes the Romish harlot in these excellent words: "The Church of Rome is not built upon the rock of the divine word, but on the sand of human reasoning." It is a rationalistic church. And Lutheranism, Episcopalianism and other sects are turning back to it and support the Satanic counterfeit of a man made priesthood.)

Verses 15-23

These verses introduce once more the question of covenant. The covenant of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the mediator is now identified with a testament of which He is the testator. When there is a testament there must also of necessity be the death of the testator, before the rights and possessions acquired in the testament can be possessed and enjoyed. The first covenant was inaugurated by blood. "For when Moses had spoken every commandment to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of bulls and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop (Lev. 14:4, Num. 19:6) and sprinkled both the book and the people, saying, this is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you." So also the tabernacle and the vessels were sprinkled with blood. Yea, almost all things are according to the law purified with blood "and without shedding of blood is no remission." The blood was used in a threefold manner. The covenant itself is founded on the blood. Defilement is washed away by the blood and the guilt is taken away through the blood that hath been shed. And all this is only fully realized through the blood shed by the Lord Jesus Christ, He died and all the blessings of the new and better covenant are righteously willed to the believer.

Verses 24-28

"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." After His great sacrifice He entered heaven itself, where He now is, appearing in the presence of God for His people. "Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world, but now once in the consummation of the ages hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." The sacrifice He brought needs not to be repeated, it is all-sufficient for all eternity. If He were to offer again it would be necessary also to suffer again. Both are impossible. (The Romish assumption of the Lord's Supper being a sacrifice and that the blasphemous mass is an unbloody sacrifice are completely refuted by verse 26, by this entire chapter and by the teaching of the New Testament.) At the completion of the ages of probation (the age before the law and the age under the law), when man's utter ruin and hopeless condition had been fully demonstrated, He appeared in the fullness of time (the completion of the ages) and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And here let us remember that the full and complete results of this work are not yet manifested. Sin will ultimately be blotted out of God's creation. The blessed words which came from His gracious lips, when He gave Himself on the cross--"It is finished"-- will find their fullest meaning when all things are made new, when the first heaven and earth are passed away and a new heaven and new earth are come, when all things are made new. Then His voice will declare once more "it is done" (Rev. 21:1-6).

But now for those who believe sin is put away. It is appointed unto men--natural men-- once to die and after this the judgment. From the latter the believer is exempt. His own words "He that heareth

my words, and believeth in Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24) assure us of this. And when the believer dies, it is no longer as penalty. A day will come at last when it will be fulfilled "Behold I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." And He who was once offered to bear the sins of many (those who believe in Him) shall appear the second time. "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, apart from sin, for salvation." It is His second coming. When He comes again He has nothing to do with sin, as far as His people are concerned. This was settled forever in His first coming. But He comes for their salvation their complete deliverance from all the results of sin, and His own will be changed into His image.

("Without sin" is in contrast with "to bear the sins of many." But it will be remarked, that the taking up of the Church is not mentioned here. It is well to notice the language. The character of His second coming is the subject. He has been manifested once. Now He is seen by those who look for Him. The expression may apply to the deliverance of the Jews who wait for Him in the last days. He will appear for their deliverance. But we expect the Lord for this deliverance, and we shall see Him when He accomplishes it even for us. The apostle does not touch the question of the difference between this and our being caught up, and does not use the word which serves to announce His public manifestation. He will appear to those who expect Him. He is not seen by all the world, nor is it consequently the judgment, although that may follow. The Holy Ghost speaks only of them that look for the Lord. To them He will appear. By them He will be seen, and it will be the time of their deliverance; so that it is true for us, and also applicable to the Jewish remnant in the last days" Synopsis of the Bible.)

CHAPTER 10

1. The all-sufficiency of the one offering (10:1-18)
2. Exhortations (10:19-25)
3. Warning (10:26-31)
4. Encouragements (10:32-39)

Verses 1-18

The precious truth the apostle has unfolded in the preceding chapters concerning Christ, His one offering He made, His own blood by which He entered once for all into the holy place the one all sufficient sacrifice, which has an eternal value and can never be repeated, is now still more practically applied. This one offering sanctifieth and it hath perfected forever them that are sanctified, so that the believer thus sanctified and perfected can enter into the holiest as worshipper. The sacrifices brought in the first covenant did not make the worshippers perfect. If such had been the case there would have been no need to repeat them year by year continually. The repetition of these sacrifices in the law dispensation was a memorial of sin. "in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again of sins every year." The day of atonement was repeated every year and each time the high priest entered in the holiest with the blood of others. But the worshippers were not purged by it; the conscience as to sins remained, and those worshippers could not enter in themselves. For it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Yet the sins of Jewish believers before the cross were forgiven, not because the blood of an animal was sprinkled on the mercy-seat, but in anticipation of the one great offering, known to God in all its value and meaning.

(See Romans 3:25. The remission of sins that are past are the sins of Old Testament believers. The work of Christ on the cross declares God's righteousness in having passed over the sins of those who believed the promise.)

All is now changed. The one offering has been brought; by His own blood He entered the heavenly

sanctuary, and all who believe are purged, the conscience is cleansed, we draw nigh and enter the holiest, not by the blood of bulls and goats, but by the blood of Jesus.

Verses 5-9 are of deep interest. It reveals what passed between God the Father and God the Son. When about to enter the world these words were spoken by Him to the Father; "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me; in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then I said Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God. (What a testimony the Son of God bears as to the character of the Old Testament Scriptures! As He said on earth "they testify of Me.") it is a startling revelation, the Spirit of God acquainting us with what transpired between the Father and the Son. He comes into the world to do God's eternal will.

"He is the Son of God from all eternity, and in that mysterious eternity before the creation of the world, in His pre-mundane glory, this mind was in the Son, that He would humble Himself, and take upon Himself the form of a servant, and obey the whole counsel of God concerning the redemption of fallen man. His whole life on earth, embracing His obedience and His death, His substitution for sinners, was His own voluntary resolve and act.

True, the Father sent Him; but such is the unity and harmony of the blessed Trinity, that it is equally true to say, the Son came. The love of the Lord Jesus, the sacrifice of Himself in our stead, the unspeakable humiliation of the Son of God, have their origin not in time but in eternity, in the infinite, self-subsistent, co-equal Son of the Father. He took on Him our nature. By His own will He was made flesh. From all eternity He offered Himself to accomplish the divine will concerning our salvation, He must needs be God, to have the power of freely offering Himself; He must needs take upon Him our nature to fulfil that sacrifice. Only the Son of God could undertake the work of our redemption; only as man could He accomplish it" (A. Saphir).

He speaks of "a body hast Thou prepared Me." This means His virgin-birth. The body the Son of God took on was a prepared body, called into existence by a creative act of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35).

The sentence, "A body hast Thou prepared Me," is the Septuagint translation, or paraphrase, of the Hebrew, "ears hast Thou digged for Me" (Ps. 40:6). This reading, or interpretation, is here fully sanctioned by the Holy Spirit. The ear is for learning, and the opened ear stands for obedience (Is. 50:5). In taking on the human body He took the form of a servant. See also Exodus 21. And thus He offered Himself, as One who had the power to do so, out of love for the glory of God, to do His will. He undertook of His own free will the accomplishment of all the will of God and He took on the prepared body in incarnation in order to accomplish the eternal will of God. In this prepared body He lived that blessed life of obedience, suffering from man for God, and then He gave that body, according to the will of God, in His death, when He suffered from God for man, in being made sin for us.

"God's rights as the Lawgiver have been fully satisfied by the unsullied and complete obedience of the Lord Jesus. He magnified the law which man had taken and dishonored. Having fulfilled it in His life, He gave Himself to death, that He might silence forever its demand on the believing sinner's life. By man and for man the will of God has been fulfilled. In the life and death of the Lord Jesus the active measure of both grace and truth has been attained. God's will was the redemption of His people. But that His grace might triumph, His holiness must first be satisfied. The cross of Christ has effected this. God's will, when finished, is thus found to be atonement. Blood has been shed, in obedience to His commandment, which is of virtue to remove all sin. It pleased Him to bruise His Son for sinners. He has laid upon Him the iniquity of all His people. By making Him an offering for sin, He has finished His intention of salvation. He has established grace in perfect righteousness" (A. Pridham). And thus "He taketh away the first (the ordinances of the law, the burnt-offerings and sacrifices) and established the second (the will of God perfectly done). "By the which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

This is a great and most blessed truth. His people, those who believe in Christ, are according to the will of God, to be sanctified, that is set apart to God. And this sanctification of all who believe is accomplished by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. The will of man has no part in this; the work by which believers are sanctified is absolutely and wholly of God. It was done once for all when Christ died on the Cross; before we were in existence it was all done. In this faith rests, knowing that He hath sanctified us, that His work, not ours, nor our experience, has accomplished our sanctification. Believers belong to God for ever according to the efficacy of the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And this setting aside abides; it is as settled and permanent as the peace which was made, the peace with God, the abiding possession, of all who are justified by faith. There is also for those who are sanctified in Christ, a practical sanctification which is wrought by the Spirit of God in the believer (12:14).

Once more a contrast is made between Him and the levitical priests. The priests stood ministering, always bringing the same sacrifices over and over again. And they could never take away sins. But He having offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down forever at the right hand of God. (it is not "eternal," but continuously, without interruption; He is at rest, His work is finished.) The work is accepted and believers are accepted in Him. Those who are sanctified are perfected in perpetuity by what He has done. He is forever seated, we are forever perfected by virtue of His work. And there at the right hand of God He is also waiting in patience till it pleases God to make His enemies the footstool of His feet. That will be when He comes the second time. And the Holy Spirit bears witness to it. That witness is in the Word of God, there the Spirit of God speaks. "If we could have heard the counsel of eternity, the word of the Father to the Son, ere time began, we could have no greater certainty than now, when we listen to Scripture, the echo in time of the counsel in eternity." We see here in this chapter up to verse 15 the three persons of the Godhead in connection with redemption. The will of God is the source of the work of redemption; the Son of God accomplished it; the Holy Spirit bears witness of it. Here again is an allusion to the new covenant in verses 16-17. (See 8:10-12.) Blessed assurance which all believers have "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." This is the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Verses 19-25

And now the great truth is reached which the Holy Spirit wanted these Hebrew Christians to lay hold of and for which He so wonderfully prepared the way. He has shown that by the sacrifice of Christ the believers' sins are put away; a perfect and everlasting cleansing has been made, remission assured and an eternal redemption obtained. By the will of God believers are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; they are perfected and therefore in the eyes of a holy God, believers are without sin. This gives liberty to come into God's presence. The veil is rent and we can enter in. There is no more barrier, we have a free and unfettered access. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy places by the blood of Jesus, a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." And we do not go in alone but we find Him in the holiest who has done the work. He is there as a great high priest to welcome us and to minister in tenderness to our needs.

Upon this follow three exhortations. 1. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water (corresponding to the washing of the priests, Ex. 29:4, and typical of regeneration)." We are then a holy priesthood fit and fitted in Christ to offer up spiritual sacrifices. 2. "Let us hold fast the confession of the hope without wavering for He is faithful who hath promised." And we shall hold fast if we draw near and constantly realize our nearness, our blessings and privileges in Christ. 3. "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom is with some, but encouraging one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." It is the public confession of God's people that they are one and belong together. And they saw the day approaching which is here not the day when His people will be gathered together unto Him, caught up in clouds to meet Him in the air, but the day of His

appearing.

Verses 26-31

A solemn warning is now once more added. It warns against deliberate apostasy of those who have known the truth (though not regenerated). They are enemies, adversaries and for such wilful going astray there remaineth no longer any sacrifice for sins "but a certain fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." This was the great danger for these Hebrews who had professed faith in Christ, yet lingered around the levitical institutions as the temple with its worship was still standing. If they renounced the truth of Christianity by turning back to Judaism they trampled under foot the Son of God and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing; for such horrible, deliberate contempt there was no repentance and no remedy. They cannot escape judgment. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God-- He who hath said "Vengeance is mine, I will recompense."

("Observe here the way in which sanctification is attributed to the blood; and, also, that professors are treated as belonging to the people. The blood received by faith, consecrates the soul to God; but it is here viewed also as an outward means for setting apart the people as a people. Every individual who had owned Jesus to be the Messiah, and the blood to be the seal and foundation of an everlasting covenant available for eternal cleansing and redemption on the part of God, acknowledging himself to be set apart for God, by this means, as one of the people--every such individual would, if he renounced it, renounce it as such; and there was no other way of sanctifying him. The former system had evidently lost its power for him, and the true one he had abandoned. This is the reason why it is said, 'having received the knowledge of the truth'" Synopsis of the Bible.)

Verses 32-39

Words of encouragement and comfort conclude this main section of the Epistle. They had suffered for Christ's sake and he calls to their remembrance their former days. They had endured even with joy the spoiling of their goods, because they knew that they had in heaven a better and enduring substance. He exhorts them to be patient and not to cast away their confidence. The promise was sure. "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come and will not tarry." Hab. 2:3-4 is quoted. He was sure that they are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe (literally: of faith) to the saving of the soul. The chapter which follows describes the action of this faith through the example of their forefathers who walked and lived according to the same principle.

IV. PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS AND EXHORTATIONS

CHAPTER 11

1. Faith in regard to creation and salvation (11:1-7)
2. The patience of faith (11:8-22)
3. The energy of faith (11:23-40)

Verses 1-7

The disastrous effect of unbelief has been pointed out in the earlier part of this epistle (3:12, 19; 4:2) as well as the necessity of faith. After the great theme of the epistle, the sacrificial work and priesthood of Christ had been fully demonstrated, faith, in the closing verses of the previous chapter is mentioned once more "the just shall live by faith." To live and walk by faith is inseparably connected with the possession and enjoyment of the good things which have come, the perfection the believer has in Christ. And now the Spirit of God gives a remarkable record of the saints of old

and shows how prominent faith was in their lives and experiences. It is one of the great and marvelous chapters not only of this epistle, but of the whole Word of God.

There is a divine order here in the way the names are mentioned as well as many and deep spiritual lessons into which we cannot fully enter. (The purpose of our work makes this impossible. Saphir, A. Pridham and others will be helpful in a more analytical study of this chapter.) First three antediluvians are mentioned--Abel, Enoch and Noah. The main part of the chapter is devoted to Abraham and his life of faith, trust and patience, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph are also mentioned. That those who lived before the inauguration of the law covenant and the levitical institutions are prominently used in this faith-chapter is not without meaning. These illustrious heads of the Hebrew nation had the promise; the grace-covenant had been established with them, the covenant which was to remain. They had no law and carnal ordinances, no tabernacle, no priest and yet they pleased God by their faith. And now in possession of the promise, fulfilled in Christ, these Hebrew Christians were to live in faith and manifest the patience of faith, even as Abraham (whom they called "our father Abraham") did.

The first statement speaks of faith, not so much as a definition, but as a declaration of the action and power of faith. The Revised Version is better in its rendering than the King James translation. "Now faith is the assurance (or substantiation) of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Faith makes real to the soul that which we hope for and is a demonstration of that which we do not see. It is therefore assurance and a settled conviction respecting things hoped for, though unseen. "It is the soul's hand that grasps the promised blessings and makes them its very own. Faith lays hold on what is future, but sure, and brings it into the life of the believer, so that in the presence and power of it he lives and walks. It is far-sightedness. It sees and foresees. It pierces into the unseen, it seizes the promised riches of God and makes them a present reality, and therefore the life of the believer may become opulent with noble deeds, because ruled and stimulated by a great motive."

It is by faith we know that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. God called all things into existence. Matter is not eternal; the universe is not a producing cause. God has created all things by Him and for Him, who is the eternal Word (Heb. 1:2; John 1:1). Man is unable by searching to solve the mystery of creation. How ridiculous have been the cosmogonies of ancient nations. The evolution theories are equally absurd.

(It would be a good thing if the men of science today would give heed to such a text as this. Take Darwin's Origin of the Species, where he never gets, indeed, to the origin, and owns that he cannot prove that any species ever did originate after the fashion he decrees. And think of originating in his manner Eve out of Adam! Given even the rib, she could not have sprung out of that simply. There must have been what did not appear--the power of God. If it is not perfectly scientific to believe that in her case, we may as well give up Scripture at once, for you cannot expunge the miraculous out of it. If it be only a question of less or more, how unreasonable to measure out the power of God, and how enormous the pretence of being able to say just how much this power, or how or when it shall be fitting for it to be displayed!

(After all, Scripture is at once the most scientific and rational of books, while it is, besides, a miracle of the most stupendous kind, always ready to hand, and with its own power of conviction for any who will examine it. And this one may say in the face of all the higher critics in the world, who are simply the Darwinians of theology, and who, like them, theorize after the most stupendous fashion and then talk about the credulity of faith" Numerical Bible.)

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This we believe that the worlds were framed by the Word of God. Abel is next mentioned. The truth of salvation is seen in his case. Sin and death had come in. By faith, trusting in the promise, acknowledging his true condition, he brought a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. He approached God with that more excellent sacrifice.

He obtained witness that he was righteous. He was justified by faith. And Abel himself who died by the hand of his brother is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrifice.

Enoch was translated by faith that he should not see death. In Abel the truth of righteousness by faith is illustrated. Enoch, walking with God, believing God and prophesying (Jude 14-15) went to heaven without passing through death. The power of death was destroyed in his case; the power of that life he possessed was manifested in his translation. How blessedly Abel and Enoch show forth that by faith righteousness and life are bestowed upon those who believe. The great sacrifice, typified by Abel's more excellent sacrifice and also by his death, has conquered death, Through death Christ has destroyed him who had the power of death (Heb. 2:14).

Enoch is a type of the Church. He prophesied of coming judgment (the deluge) but did not pass through that judgment. Even so the true Church, when the Lord comes, will be taken from earth to glory without dying, before tribulation, wrath and judgment come upon this age, which ends like the days of Noah. Enoch also received testimony before he was translated that he pleased God, for he walked in faith in His presence and in His fellowship. This is the walk into which all God's people are called and which faith and the power of the indwelling spirit make possible. Without faith (a faith which clings close to Him, trusts in His word and is obedient) it is impossible to please Him.

Verse 7 speaks of Noah and his faith. In this verse we find mentioned the ground of faith (warned of God); the realm of faith (things not seen); the exercise of faith (he feared); the work of faith (he prepared an ark); the result of faith (he saved his house); the testimony of faith (he condemned the world) and the reward of faith (heir to righteousness). It is the most remarkable verse in the whole chapter. Enoch was caught up to heaven before the deluge came. Noah was warned of the unseen judgment to come (which Enoch had warned would come) and was roused with godly fear. He is a type of the godly remnant of Jews at the end of this present age, who will pass through tribulation and judgment, after the true Church has left the earth, and having passed through the judgment, as Noah did, will inherit the earth. Noah represents the faith and exercise of this Jewish remnant, which will be saved out of the judgments at the close of this age.

Verses 8-22

The obedience and patience of faith is the theme of verses 8-22. Obediently Abraham went out, not knowing whether he was going. He obeyed the voice, believed the promise of God. Faith made of him a stranger in the land of promise as in a foreign country. He had no permanent place, but as a pilgrim he dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob--"for he waited for the city which hath foundations, whose architect and maker God is." God revealed to him the heavenly city and in patience he waited for that city, and while he waited he dwelt there content in perfect reliance on God. It was by faith that Sarah received strength to conceive seed "because she counted Him faithful that promised." And then they died in faith "not having received the promise, but having seen them (by the eyes of faith) afar off and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth." This faith in its power and action is exemplified. By faith Abraham offered up Isaac. He manifested in this act that absolute confidence in God, which, at His command, can renounce even God's own promises as possessed after the flesh, confident that God would restore them through the exercise of His power, overcoming death. "Observe here that, when trusting in God and giving up all for Him, we always gain, and we learn something more of the ways of His power: for in renouncing according to His will anything already received, we ought to expect from the power of God that He will bestow something else. Abraham renounces the promise after the flesh. He sees the city which has foundations; he can desire a heavenly country. He gives up Isaac, in whom were the promises: he learns resurrection, for God is infallibly faithful. The promises were in Isaac: therefore God must restore him to Abraham, and by resurrection, if he offered him in sacrifice" Synopsis of the Bible.

By faith Isaac and Jacob acted. And Joseph, a stranger in a strange land, yet believing the promises as to the land, reckoned in faith on their fulfillment and thus gave commandment

concerning his bones (Gen. 50:25).

Verses 23-40

Faith in this section illustrates the energy connected with it which surmounts any obstacle and difficulty, and, trusting, brings forth the manifestations of God's power in deliverance. Such was the faith of the parents of Moses. They hid the child and were not afraid. "Faith does not reason; it acts from its own point of vision and leaves the result to God." And how this energy of faith is illustrated in Moses himself. His faith renounced the wealth, power, glory and splendor of Egypt. He gave up a princely position, the possibility of an earthly throne and identified himself with the people who had become slaves, because he believed them to be the people of God. Faith taught him not to fear the wrath of the king; faith fears nothing, but God and faith has nothing to fear. The secret was "he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." By faith he celebrated the passover and the sprinkling of blood, that the destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.

And what more? The Red Sea, the walls of Jericho, the harlot Rahab. "Rahab the harlot! Those who seek for proofs of the divine authorship of Scripture may find one here. Was there ever an Israelite who would have thought of preferring that woman's name to the names of David and Samuel and the prophets, and of coupling it with the names of the great leader and prophet of the Jewish faith 'whom the Lord knew face to face?' And what Jew would have dared to give expression to such a thought!" Sir R. Anderson, K.C.B.

God's power opened the way to faith through the Red Sea for the salvation of His people while the unbelieving Egyptian perished. Jericho's walls fall and Rahab's house, standing upon the wall, is preserved because she believed. And then Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets and the heroes of faith which follow. Their names are not given, but God knows them all as well as the countless thousands of martyrs who are constantly added to this list. "The strongest thing in the world is faith--it has an eagle's eye and lion's heart. It has a lion's heart to confront dangers and hardships, and an eagle's eye to descry the unseen glories and the sure victory. The heroism of faith is a wonderful thing. It may suffer indescribable tortures and agonies, as often it has, but it is unconquerable, invincible. Some were tortured (tympanized, i.e., stretched in a wheel as the drumhead), 'that they might obtain a better resurrection,' as were the mother and her seven sons who were put to death one after the other, and in sight of each other, by the Syrian monster, Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Macc. 7). Some were stoned, as Zechariah (2 Chron. 24) and Jeremiah, according to tradition. Some were sawn asunder, as was Isaiah under Manasseh. Some were slain with the sword, as Urijah, (Jer. 26:23), and James the brother of John (Acts 12). They might have rustled in silks and velvets and luxuriated in the palaces of princes had they denied God and believed the world's lie. Instead, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, themselves accounted no better than goats or sheep, nay, they like these reckoned fit only for the slaughter. The world thought them unworthy to live here, while God thought them worthy to live with Him in glory" Professor Moorhead).

"God having provided some better thing for us, that not apart from us should they be made perfect." The Old Testament saints who died in faith have not yet been raised from among the dead; their spirits are in His presence. New Testament saints constituting the Church, the body of Christ, have provided for themselves some better thing." But the Spirit of God does not here enlarge upon this and only gives the information that the perfection of the Old Testament saints in resurrection from among the dead will not be apart from us, the New Testament saints. And that will be when the Lord comes for His saints with the shout (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

CHAPTER 12

1. Looking away unto Jesus (12:1-2)
2. The Contradiction of sinners (12:3-4)

3. Chastened as sons (12:5-11)

4. Exhortations (12:12-17)

5. The end of faith (12:18-24)

6. The final warning (12:25-29)

Verses 1-2

"Therefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with steadfastness the race lying before us."

Some teach that the Old Testament saints are spectators of us and that they look upon us now from heaven. Dean Alford also states that they are lookers on and adds "Whosoever denies such reference, misses, it seems to me, the very point of the sense." Others have gone so far as to say that they not only look on but help the believer in his conflict on earth. But this view is unscriptural. We know that angels are spectators (1 Cor. 4:9; 11:10); angels are ministering spirits to minister unto the heirs of salvation, but the disembodied spirits of the righteous are neither spectators nor do they minister to the saints on earth. The preceding chapter contains "the cloud of witness"; they witness to us by their lives and the victory of their faith and this is the encouragement for us. The Christian's life is a race; the glory at His coming is the goal. The runner of the race does not burden himself with weights, unnecessary things. Everything that impedes spiritual progress must be laid aside, as well as the sin that so easily besets us, which is the sin of unbelief. Against this sin they had been emphatically warned. "It is a sin that easily besets us, because it is but the mind of nature acting, according to its instincts, against the will of God." And the runner's eyes are to be on the goal (Phil. 3). The believer runs the race with steadfastness and divests himself of every weight and the sin that easily besets, if he looks away from everything and looks away "unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith (Leader and Perfecter), who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, having despised the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." He is the great exemplar of faith. He is to be constantly before us, and His people are to follow Him in the path of faith and trust. What light these words shed on His blessed life and especially His death on the cross! He endured the cross and despised the shame, connected with it, for the joy that was set before Him. See Isaiah 53:10-12. The joy set before us is to be with Him forever. Oh, for the daily vision of that goal.

"The flesh, the human heart, is occupied with cares and difficulties; and the more we think of them, the more we are burdened by them. It is enticed by the object of its desires, it does not free itself from them. The conflict is with a heart that loves the thing against which we strive; we do not separate ourselves from it in thought. When looking at Jesus, the new man is active; there is a new object, which unburdens and detaches us from every other by means of a new affection which has its place in a new nature: and in Jesus Himself, to whom we look, there is a positive power which sets us free" J.N. Darby.

Verses 3-4

The believer's life is also a conflict, trials which come from sin in the world, a world which is always, and always will be, antagonistic to Christ. Those Hebrews had their share of it; they were persecuted and hated for His Name's sake (10:32-34). Peter also wrote about these persecutions they endured. And now they are called to consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest they would be wearied, disheartened and fainting in their minds. These persecutions were the fellowship of His sufferings; and they had not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Looking away unto Him gives strength to resist and to conquer.

Verses 5-11

In these verses the trials of the believer are viewed as chastenings from the Lord. As a loving father, who loves his children, He chastised them. They were not to forget this, that He speaks to them, not as to sinners, but as unto sons, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when reprov'd by Him, for whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." The chastening they were to endure. God, as Father, permits trials and tribulations to come to believers for their own good. Such experiences are not an evidence of divine displeasure, but evidences of sonship. "God dealeth with you as with sons; for who is the son whom the father chastiseth not. But if you are without chastening, of which all are made partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." And therefore chastisements must not be despised, nor viewed as a discouraging experience; for the chastisement is for our eternal good and He does it in love. Paul's thorn in the flesh was such an experience which was needful for Him. Grace sustains in all chastisements. Then we have a contrast between the chastising of earthly fathers and that of the heavenly Father. The one is father of our flesh; God is the Father of spirits, the Creator and source of life, spiritual and ever-lasting, as well as physical and temporal. The one for a brief period; God during our whole lifetime. The one with imperfect knowledge, in much infirmity "after their own pleasure;" God with unerring wisdom, and in pure love. The aim of the one, our earthly future; the aim of God, to make us partakers of His holiness. Yet imperfect as is the earthly father's discipline, we gave it reverence, "as was right" and according to God's will, and for our safety. How much more ought we to be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, of whom is our true life.

And when we are disciplined it is not a joyous experience; it brings heart-searching, humiliation, confession, repentance and self-loathing, but afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which have been exercised in this way.

Verses 12-17

Words of exhortation and encouragement follow. The first three exhortations refer to ourselves (verses 12-13); to others and to God (verse 14). To follow peace (pursue peace) with all men is to characterize those who have peace with God and who know the way of peace. Holiness must also be pursued, for without that none shall see the Lord. In Christ, believers are sanctified once for all, as this Epistle has so clearly demonstrated. The holiness which qualifies a man to see the Lord, is Christ, and His blessed finished work. Abiding in Him the believer pursues the way of holiness, practical holiness, separation from evil in all things. It does not mean a certain "holiness experience" by which a believer is fitted, by eradication of the old nature, or by something else, to see the Lord. In Christ the believer is sanctified; as Martin Luther used to say "My holiness is in Heaven." The exhortation here means to pursue that holiness into which grace has called us, which grace has given and for which grace gives daily power. Closely connected with this is the warning which follows in verses 15-17. The man who falls short of the grace of God, who lacketh that grace which is in Christ Jesus, his heart not resting in Him, is a mere professing believer and Possesseth not the holiness, which grace alone can give. He is a root of bitterness and a profane, and earthly-minded person, as Esau was who sold his birthright.

(The time came when he regretted that for a paltry gratification he forfeited his right. Afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected. For though he sought carefully with tears to change his father's mind he found (in Isaac) no place for change of mind. This seems to be the meaning of this difficult passage, Esau is never represented as an apostle, as one who professed and appeared to be a believer, and then fell away. So (apart from other reasons) the meaning of the apostle cannot be that Esau, as an apostate, was not able to find repentance. But we know that, notwithstanding his vehement and urgent entreaties, Isaac could not change his mind, or repent him of what he had done in conferring the blessing on Jacob, which God approved of" Saphir.)

Verses 18-24

These verses contain a great contrast. The grace of God has brought and is bringing believers to

better things than those which characterize Judaism. What the end of faith will be, the goal of glory is here unfolded. Believers have nothing now to do with Sinai, the law and its terror. Then follows a marvellous enumeration of the earthly and heavenly glories to which we have come through faith and which faith beholds. First Mount Zion is mentioned. It is the place the Lord has chosen for His rest (Ps. 132:13-14). When that promised new covenant is fully established with the house of Israel and Judah, when sovereign grace has manifested its powers in the salvation and restoration of His people Israel, then Zion will be the earthly center, and God's appointed King will establish His rule there (Ps. 2). From the glory of the coming millennium we are taken to the glory above "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem ." It is the city for which Abraham looked in faith, the eternal home of the saints of God.

"And to an innumerable company of angels, the universal gathering"; we shall know and behold all the tenants of the unseen world. "The Church of the firstborn ones which are written in heaven"--this is the Church in particular; there will be an unbroken and eternal fellowship with all the saints who constitute the body of Christ. "And to God the judge of all," whose grace in Christ has put His own beyond all condemnation and who will, in His Son, judge the world in righteousness. "The spirits of just men made perfect" are the Old Testament saints, distinguished in this way from "the Church of the firstborn ones"; they receive their perfection when the Church is gathered home (11:40). "And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than Abel." Through Him and His precious blood these earthly and heavenly glories will be accomplished. And faith looks to these. It is the blessed goal for the heirs of God, the many sons He brings to glory.

Verses 25-29

A final warning follows, not to refuse Him that speaketh. (Compare with 2:3.) He that spoke on earth (giving the law) is the same that speaketh from heaven--the Son of God. To refuse Him means no escape from perdition. His voice then shook the earth. The prophetic word predicts another shaking of earth and heaven (Hag. 2:6). That will be when He comes again. Then follows the judgment of all who obeyed not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The things that can be shaken will be removed and things that cannot be shaken remain. "Therefore let us, receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and fear; for our God is a consuming fire."

CHAPTER 13

1. The practical walk (13:1-6)
2. The call to separation (13:7-16)
3. Conclusions (13:17-25)

Verses 1-6

No comment is needed on the simple exhortations with which this concluding chapter of this Epistle begins. Brotherly love stands in the foreground. Hospitality and loving kindness to prisoners and those who suffer adversity is especially enjoined. The great high priest in glory sympathizes with such a condition of His saints and we too are to be sympathizers as well as intercessors with Him. The life is to be clean and undefiled. Walking in faith there should be not covetousness but happy contentment in view of His never failing promise.

Verses 7-16

The first exhortation in these verses is that they should remember their leaders who had spoken the Word of God to them, to follow their faith and to consider the issue of their walk. These leaders had passed away from the earthly service into the presence of the Lord. One abides the same. He must

be exalted above everything and He alone can satisfy the hearts of His people. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." He is the unchanging Jehovah who had spoken of old "I am the Lord who changeth not." What a One to follow and to trust. From Him and His gracious riches the enemy tries to lead away God's people and ensnare them. Christ is the person whom Satan hates and all wicked and strange doctrines are invented by him to dishonor that worthy name and to spoil God's children.

Then follows the call to separation, the great exhortation at which the Holy Spirit aimed from the beginning of this document and which He now presses upon the conscience. "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat who are serving the tabernacle." That altar is Christ for those who have left the shadow things behind and who have found in Him their all in all.

Those who still cling to the Jewish things have no right of access; they have no right to eat if they serve the tabernacle, for everything has passed away since the substance in Christ has come. They had put Christ outside. All had been done as foreshadowed by the legal sacrifices.

"Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate." And now all is done and the whole Jewish system has no more meaning. To remain in it and practice the old things, which are gone, is a denial of Christ and His work as the sin-bearer. The camp is the people who continued in the things of the law, who denied thereby that the new sacrifice had been brought; who still used an earthly priesthood and denied thereby that the new and living way into the holy place had been made by the blood of Jesus, the rent veil.

Ritualistic Christendom with its man-made priesthood, its so-called "saving ordinances," its legal principle, so prominent, not only in the worst form of apostate Christendom (the Romish church), but in other systems and sects, is but another camp in which the truth of Christ and His all sufficient work is denied. Outside of the camp is found the cross of Christ with all its grace and glory. And therefore the exhortation, which seems to us was the all-important message for these Hebrews (and for us as well) "let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." In other words, leave all behind, be separate from all, which denies the cross and the work accomplished there. And "outside the camp" must mean "inside the veil," to enjoy the perfection in Christ, to be in God's holy presence as a true worshipper. "For we are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3).

This priesthood of which Peter speaks (1 Pet. 2:5) is mentioned here also. "By Him therefore (not by an earthly priest or in an earthly tabernacle) let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." And besides this, which is done inside the veil, there is another aspect to the sacrifice we bring in His name--"to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Verses 17-25

They were to obey the leaders and submit themselves. These leaders watched over their souls as those that shall give account in the coming day of Christ. And by obedience and submission they honored Him who has made them the overseers of the flock of God. Well it would be if all workers would never lose sight of the fact that they are accountable to the Lord. The writer of the Epistle, no doubt the apostle Paul, requests their prayers, "pray for us." ("The fact is that none need the prayers of God's people more than those who are active and prominent in the Lord's work. Practically occupied with preaching and teaching others, how great the danger is of going on with a conscience not good about themselves! And what can more decidedly defile or harden?") In true humility, so characteristic of Paul he writes "for we persuade ourselves that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honestly." Most ask prayer because their conscience is bad. He beseeches them that they may do this, so that by their prayer of intercession he might be restored to them the sooner. (See Philemon 22.) He valued the prayers of the saints.

Then follows that blessed prayer so well suited to this epistle and its great truths. "Now the God of

peace that brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, perfect you in every good work to do His will, working in you what is pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever (unto the ages of the ages). Amen."

In the final words the apostle beseeches them to bear with the word of exhortation as contained in the letter. The mention of Timothy is another evidence that Paul wrote Hebrews. Brief salutations and the benediction closes this wonderful portion of the Word of God. "Grace be with you all. Amen."