

Johan Schep

THE LETTER TO
THE HEBREWS

The superiority of the Lord Jesus

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“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”

Hebrews 1:1-4

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Used abbreviations

Old Testament

Genesis	Gen.
Exodus	Ex.
Leviticus	Lev.
Numbers	Num.
Deuteronomy	Deut.
Joshua	Josh.
Judges	Judg.
Ruth	Ruth
1 Samuel	1 Sam.
2 Samuel	2 Sam.
1 Kings	1 Kings
2 Kings	2 Kings
1 Chronicles	1 Chron.
2 Chronicles	2 Chron.
Ezra	Ezra
Nehemiah	Neh.
Esther	Esther
Job	Job
Psalms	Ps.
Proverbs	Prov.

Ecclesiastes	Eccles.
Song of Solomon	Song
Isaiah	Isa.
Jeremiah	Jer.
Lamentations	Lam.
Ezekiel	Ezek.
Daniel	Dan.
Hosea	Hos.
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obadiah	Obad.
Jonah	Jonah
Micah	Mic.
Nahum	Nah.
Habakkuk	Hab.
Zephaniah	Zeph.
Haggai	Hag.
Zechariah	Zech.
Malachi	Mal.

New Testament

Matthew	Matt.
Mark	Mark
Luke	Luke
John	John
Acts	Acts
Romans	Rom.
1 Corinthians	1 Cor.
2 Corinthians	2 Cor.
Galatians	Gal.
Ephesians	Eph.
Philippians	Phil.
Colossians	Col.
1 Thessalonians	1 Thess.
2 Thessalonians	2 Thess.

1 Timothy	1 Tim.
2 Timothy	2 Tim.
Titus	Titus
Philemon	Philem.
Hebrews	Heb.
James	James
1 Peter	1 Pet.
2 Peter	2 Pet.
1 John	1 John
2 John	2 John
3 John	3 John
Jude	Jude
Revelation	Rev.

Other

about, approximately	c.
chapter(s)	ch., chs.
died	d.
for example	e.g.
English Stand. Version	ESV
and so on	etc.

King James Version	KJV
New Testament	NT
Old Testament	OT
page(s)	p., pp.
verse(s)	v., vv.
versus	vs.

Prefaces

Foreword by Peter Reid

I first met Johan in 1986 shortly after each of us joined the staff of Torchbearers International, he in England and I in Germany. I was immediately drawn to Johan's authenticity, his passion to preach the gospel and his infectious relationship with our Lord Jesus. He has been a friend for all seasons. Johan has been teaching in the Torchbearer schools for many years as one of our faithful Field Representatives and has had a deep influence in Christ in the lives of his hearers. It is a privilege to call Johan my friend and to write this short foreword.

I have known few believers in the Lord Jesus who have had such a radical conversion experience as Johan. Like some of God's servants, Christ met Johan in the Sinai desert when he was living there as a hippie; the desert then became his classroom! His life has had many twists and turns, but his teaching comes out of a rich walk with the Lord through thick and thin. If you were to ask Johan how long it took to write this book, the correct answer would be, a lifetime. By God's grace, he is the message he preaches.

Like so many of those blessed with the gift of understanding and communicating God's word, Johan has been learning in God's school for decades. The Bible is the only book in the world whose Author is present every time it's read; Johan teaches out of his

own deep relationship with the Author Himself. In short, what he communicates from the word of God has been given to him by the Spirit of God. When I listen to Johan teach, I gain a sense that I have been in the presence of Jesus.

It is with great joy that I recommend this book to a wider audience who want to learn of Christ. Readers will be instructed, comforted, and challenged in their walk with the Lord Jesus in the pages which follow. May the Lord Himself speak to hungry hearts through the truth in Christ He has given His servant. To Him be the glory.

Peter Reid

General Director
Torchbearers International
November, 2022

Foreword by the author

Dear readers Shalom,

With joy in my heart do I offer you this book. It has been my privilege to teach Hebrews in some Torchbearer schools. I witnessed to Jewish people for many years. I also came to faith in the Lord Jesus in Israel. My mother had put my small Bible in my backpack. I found it after I built my own hut in the desert. By reading the letter of Paul to the Galatians, all of a sudden the Lord spoke deep into my heart through chapter 5:1. It is for freedom that Christ has set you free. Therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

All of a sudden I knew that true freedom is found in a Person who gave Himself on the cross for our sins. The Lord Jesus became my life and it is such a privilege to make Him known. At the age of 54 the Lord even gave me a wife who was a widow called Linda. Alone you go faster, but together you go further. Linda has two daughters. After our wedding, I even became a grandfather. Her second daughter gave birth to a beautiful daughter. We serve together with great joy.

When you like to know more about us, then please send an e-mail to: johan.linda.schep@gmail.com We shall send you our little book which is called "The most beautiful life on earth". Let us abide in Him.

Johan & Linda Schep

November, 2022

Introduction

We are not quite sure who the author of this letter is. The Lord knows. I like it that we don't know the details about the author, for I believe the Holy Spirit wants all the light to fall on the Holy Son (2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16). We do know that it was written to a community of Jewish people. The letter was written by the Holy Spirit. So this letter is also intended for you and for me. This letter was written before the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D. The temple services went on as usual even though the big curtain was torn from the top to bottom.

Hebrews was written to three different groups of Jewish people:

1. Believers who came from Judaism. They were also persecuted by their own people for their faith in the Lord Jesus (Heb. 10:32-34; 12:4). They ran the risk of continuing to mix the new with the old, with its rituals and its symbolism (Deut. 19:19). They were weak in calling unclean what Jesus had declared clean (Mark 7:19). They should by now have been teachers of the word of God (Heb. 5:12).
2. Jewish people who were intellectually convinced, but had not yet accepted the Lord Jesus as their Lord and Savior in their hearts. They loved the glory of men rather than the glory of the Lord (John 12:42-43; Heb. 2:1-3a; 6:4-6; 10:26).

3. Jewish people who were not fully convinced (Heb. 9:11-15, 28). The first or old Covenant was not bad or wrong either! The Lord Himself had given it to them. But it was imperfect and temporary. It was dangerous for the common people to come near to God (Ex. 33:20). The people needed a perfect High Priest and a perfect sacrifice! The Lord Jesus fulfilled that 100% (Heb. 8:1). The New Covenant gives us a better hope, a better covenant, better promises, a better sacrifice and a better land, which is the heavenly Jerusalem. Everything in the new and eternal covenant is completely and totally perfect (Heb. 13:20).

It was difficult for them to say goodbye to the Old Covenant altogether. They were not allowed to enter their synagogues and were more despised than the Gentiles. Paul, who was also a born again Jew, has written the following:

He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly and circumcision is that which is of the heart by the Spirit not by the letter, and his praise is not from men but from God (Rom. 2:28-29).

We would never have known the Lord if he had not spoken to us through His Word¹ and in His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 It is important when you read this, that you first read that part in your own Bible. The Word of God gives light (Ps. 107:20). He sent His Word and healed them.

Hebrews 1

Verse 1. In this chapter the author goes directly to the heart of the matter, proving that the Lord Jesus is 100% God (v. 8) and that the Lord Jesus is 100 % man (v. 9). It is the Lord's deep longing that we know Him.

The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; For his mouth speaks, from that which fills his heart! (Luke 6:45).

Every religion tells us how people try to reach God, but the Lord Himself came down to us in His Son to seek us, because we were all lost without redemption (Luke 19:10). The Lord has spoken many times through His prophets. Sometimes through a vision, a parable, or a shadow image. They were different ways, but it was always the same Lord who was speaking to the people. The full revelation of God is in His Son. When a Jew heard about the last days, they thought of the time of the coming Messiah (Jer. 33:14-16; Mic. 5:1-4; and Zech. 9:9, 16). Even the Samaritan woman although she was not Jewish knew that also (John 4:25).

The revelation about the Messiah used to be in phases. In Genesis 49:10 it is the right tribe called Judah. In Micah 5:1-2 it is *the right city* Bethlehem. In Daniel 9:24-27 *the right timing*. In Malachi 3:1 *the right forerunner* is John the Baptist.

With Jonah we read the story of His death and His resurrection (Matt. 10:38-42). All the prophecies are fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. We may add nothing (Rev. 22:18).

The Lord reveals His secrets in at least two places (Jer. 23:18, 22 and Amos 3:7). The prophets wrote it down, but they did not fully understand it (1 Pet. 1:10, 11). There are more than 300 prophecies of His first coming and many more of His second coming. Paul writes:

As many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore through Him is our Amen to the glory of God (2 Cor. 1:20).

The Glories of Christ

We read of seven glories of the Lord Jesus in the verses 2 and 3:

1. Jesus is the heir of everything!

If Jesus is the Son of God, then He is also the heir of all that God possesses. It is prophesied in Psalms 2:6-9; 89:28. Jesus is the Creator and Sustainer of all things (Col. 1:16). To Him be the glory forever (Rom. 11:36)! This proves to us that the Son is one with His Father (John 10:30). The future also belongs to the Son (Rev. 5:6; 11:15). He is Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:36). When He came to this earth He was poor (Luke 9:58). Even His clothes were taken from Him when He was crucified. When He returns as the King, He will inherit all

things (Rom. 8:16). All those who believe in Him are joint heirs. They will inherit all things with Him for eternity.

2. Jesus is the Creator of heaven and earth

The Lord Jesus is the one through whom the Father created all things (John 1:3). The fact that the Lord Jesus as Creator can make something out of nothing is the proof that He is God. Creation longs for the original beginning (Rom. 8:32).

3. Jesus is the radiance of God's glory

No one can see God. The Lord Jesus is the light of God shining in the heart of every born again believer (2 Cor. 4:6). Without God's Son there is only darkness. The devil is the god of this world here on earth, and he has blinded the minds of the unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:4).

4. Jesus is the imprint of His presence

Jesus is the image of the invisible God and the Firstborn of all of creation (Col. 1:15; 2:9). In the Lord Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

5. Jesus is the radiance of God's glory

The universe hangs on the hands of the Lord Jesus, and He does it by His Word and effortlessly. This promise is wonderful to me (Phil. 1:6). I trust that He who has begun a good work in you, will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

6. Jesus cleanses us from all our sins

That is the first promise of the New Testament (Matt. 1:21; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Heb. 9:22; 1 John 1:7). You cannot help being born in sin, but you don't have to die in your sins (John 8:21). Jesus died for all our sins on the cross.

7. Jesus has been exalted and sits now in the highest place

There were no chairs in the tabernacle and the temple. It was the responsibility of the priests to sacrifice constantly. After the Lord Jesus cried out loudly, It is finished, the veil was torn from the top to the bottom. The way to God is open. The place where Jesus is sitting is the place of honor, authority, rest, intercession (Heb. 7:25).

What does this mean for us? If we reject the Lord Jesus, we close off access to everything He wants to offer to us, and this has eternal consequences. When we accept Him, we receive all that He is. There are two choices for us all!

Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote:

Other men had the threads of the truth; but the Lord Jesus took all those threads, and wove them into a beautiful cloak, and He put that on Him and He came forth clothed with the truth of God in Himself.

Higher than the angels

The Lord Jesus is more than the angels (Heb. 1:4-14; 2:9). Angels have a higher position than fallen mankind. Angels have no flesh and blood, but can put on the form of men (Heb. 13:2). They may also be visible in other forms (Matt. 28:3-4; 22:2). They cannot reproduce. They have emotions (Luke 15:10). They can preach (Gal. 1:8). They were created together (Col. 1:16). There are many angels who have fallen, but they still exist (as demons), for they cannot die (Rev. 12:4). Angels were created for mankind.

There are many angels (Dan. 7:10; Rev. 5:11). They are well organized and they are in different ranks (cherubim, seraphim). Some angels have names (Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer). As believers, we are in the Lord Jesus. When we put on the armor of God we overcome and are more than victors over sin (Eph. 6:10-18).

The Jewish people give the angels too high a position. When the Lord said, "Let us make man in our image," we know that the Lord was speaking of the Triune God. The Jews do teach that the Lord spoke to His angels. The Old Covenant had come to them through the angels (Acts 7:51-53).

We are not allowed to worship angels (Col. 2:18). This world is ruled by a fallen angel who is the prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30). The author is now going to explain that the Lord Jesus is more than the angels. Hebrews 1 verse 4 says: "*Having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they*".

In all areas the Lord Jesus is more important, because He is God and we worship Him as Lord and pray to Him. The Lord Jesus is also

forever a Man, and that's why we who are indwelt by Him can follow in His footsteps now. We realize that He knows where we go through in our lives (Heb. 4:14-16). We need the power of the Holy Spirit, and we need the Word of God. We also need to see the importance of the Lord Jesus as a true Man (1 Tim. 2:5). For there is one God and one Mediator, also between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.

a) Jesus is more than the angels in His title (v. 4, 5).

He has a better Name. Angel means a servant or messenger. To the Lord Jesus He says, Son (Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14). He is, was and will always be God's eternal Son by His divine nature. By His human nature, He now becomes God's Messianic Son. The eternal sonship of the Lord Jesus is different from His Messianic sonship. The word "essence" or substance in verse three is timeless and it tells what He is, because the word "become" in verse four indicates what He has obtained in time. He received that title of Messianic Son because of His finished work on the cross, resurrection, and also because of His human nature.

b) Jesus is more than the angels in His worship (v. 6).

The angels worship the Son. They have already worshipped Him as God, and now they are called to worship Him as the Son. The word Son has nothing to do with time, but it has to do with His title as God (Col. 1:15, 18). World means the place that is inhabited. The world to come has to do with His return (Rev. 21:1-4). The angels also respond in joy (Ps. 97:7; Rev. 5:1). At His return, the Lord Jesus is seen by them all as the One who is Most Exalted, and He is greater

than the angels. The title “Firstborn” speaks of His dignity. Worship is always focused on God and the Lord Jesus! Obviously, God’s Messianic Son is also 100% God’s Eternal Son.

c) Jesus is more than the angels in His character as 100% God and as 100% Man (v. 7).

The angels were created as servants described as a flame of fire (Ps. 104:4). The word spirit is also wind or breath. The flame of fire has to do with judgment (Gen. 19:13). The angels brought the message of judgment upon Sodom (Ps. 78:49). They obeyed God. The Son is also the eternal God (Heb. 1:8). The Son has also an eternal throne and He also has a royal scepter.

In Hebrews 1:9 we see the other side of the Lord Jesus: His incarnation. He is forever the glorified, sympathetic, compassionate and praying Man who sits in heaven and is also the loving Advocate for us. The Lord Jesus loves righteousness (James 1:17; 1 John 1:5; Ps. 119:117). This is the beautiful character of the eternal Son.

d) The Lord Jesus is more than the angels in His eternity as the Creator (v. 10).

We see God speaking about Jesus as the Creator (Ps. 102:25-27). Jesus was without beginning and without end (Heb. 13:8). We wear out our clothes. Heaven and earth also perish. Only the Lord Jesus remains the Same forever. Angels were created by Him, not all remained faithful, and judgment awaits them (2 Pet. 2:4).

e) The Lord Jesus is exalted over all the angels (v. 13).

In this verse it says: And to which of the angels has He ever said: Sit at My right hand, until I have made your enemies a footstool for your feet. God has never said that to the angels, but only to the Lord Jesus. And one day every knee shall bow to the Lord Jesus (Phil. 2:11; 1 Cor. 15:25). The Lord Jesus is described. The work of the angels is never finished! In sharp contrast to the exalted position of the Lord Jesus, the angels are ministers and ministering spirits (v. 14). That is why they must and can obey.

We are joint heirs, and the angels will serve believers forever. To inherit salvation means to be saved, past, present and future. As for the past, the believer is saved from the penalty of sin. As for the present, the Lord Jesus saves and preserves all who come to God through Him. He is able to do this because He always lives to intercede for them (Heb. 7:25). As for the future, there is complete salvation when the Lord Jesus comes a second time (Heb. 9:28), when the saints are with Him in heaven and He takes possession of His inheritance.

Hebrews 2

Introduction

When God expects a response from those who received the law through angels, how much more does the Lord expect a response from us all who have received such a great salvation in His Son, the Lord Jesus. Let us adore and kiss the Son as our Lord and Savior. Unification with the heart of God, from the whole book of Hebrews.

In these verses we read the first of the five warnings in this letter. Each warning also becomes more powerful the more you read this letter. It is not only important for the writer to exalt the Lord Jesus, it is also important to give an invitation with a heart full of compassion! There must be compassion for the people to respond to what is being preached and there must be a passion in every speaker to bring the people to a decision. The sinning of the believers is far worse than the sinning of the unbelievers! The people in the time of Moses rebelled ten times. Moses as their leader rebelled only once, and he was judged.

Lessons from this chapter

Verses 1-4. The word 'to drift' is like a ship that sails without a destiny (Prov. 4:20). The angels helped God to give the first five books of Moses (Acts 7:38, 53). The Lord also rebuked every man who did not keep the law (Deut. 27:26; Heb. 10:28).

Now we go from the lesser to the greater. If we are punished for not keeping the law, how much more if we reject the Good News of God (Rom. 1:1). To whom much is given, much is expected of them! The Lord confirms His message with signs (John 6:1-14, 25-29), and wonders (John 11:1-44). The purpose of those miracles was to prove the truth of the prophesies and the truth of the Gospel. We now have the whole word of God.

Verses 5-8. We saw that the Lord Jesus is superior to the angels: as the Son of God. We also see that the Lord Jesus is more like the angels: as the Son of man (Dan. 10; Eph. 6:10-18). The government of the world is in the hands of good and evil angels. The world that will end is not the world that will come! It was the purpose of man that he should reign on the earth (Ps. 8:4-9). Man was the King before the Fall. The expression "the son of man" means one who is born as a man. The Lord has a future for His people. Man is for a period of time lower than the angels, for angels cannot die (Dan. 7:18, 27; Luke 20:36). The saints will reign forever (Eph. 1:20-21; Rev. 3:21). We will reign over angels in the future. When Adam sinned, he lost his scepter and his crown (Gen. 3:14; 6:6-7). The earth rules man now. Man is constantly fighting the earth. Man always loses and he

or she dies. Eventually this world dies as well (Rom. 8:18-21), but the new world is yet to come.

Verses 9-10. The Lord Jesus became our Substitute. For a little while He became less than the angels. He did something that angels cannot. That is to die (Luke 20:36). Death was a painful experience for Him (Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21). He took the curse in our place and He drank the cup of God's wrath and suffered for all our sins. He drank it empty. I never have to drink that cup anymore. The Lord Jesus chose it and He received the grace for it! Because Jesus humbled Himself so deeply, He is also exalted in this way (Phil. 2:1-11). This has changed me and this led me to hate sin. Jesus is not only the Creator, but also is the One who designed everything.

Verses 11-14. We have been sanctified and declared righteous. He who sanctifies is Jesus, and those who are sanctified are all the believers. When God looks at me, He sees the perfect life of His Son (Heb. 10:10, 14). Our position is that we are holy. We are of one Father, and He is God. We are called brothers because we share eternal life with Christ. He has every reason to be ashamed of us. His life dwells in us. Living in fear of death is the weapon Satan uses, because it is absolute. The Lord Jesus had to die as a Man to destroy the power of death. Death can no longer intimidate me during my life, and His death is also the glorious way to heavenly glory.

Verses 15-17. He is our perfect Savior, and He is also so kind. The angels need no help. We need His help as fallen men. He helps us in our temptations and abides with us (Heb. 4:14-16; 2:18). He is our Savior. He didn't just come to die for us. He lives in us and He knows what we need and how to really help us. No one is like our Lord!

Why is the Lord Jesus not inferior in His humanity?

a) Verses 5-9. Because the Lord Jesus became a Man, He had the ability to take back the reign of man. Adam and Eve were ruling before they both sinned.

b) Verses 10-13. Because Jesus became a Man, He had the ability to bring the people to glory. The Lord Jesus Christ is not only the second and the last Adam, He is also the Captain of our salvation. He is one with us, and we are one with Him.

c) Verses 14-16. At the incarnation of the Lord Jesus, He took the weapons from Satan and delivered us from death. He took away the fear of it. The authority of death is ultimately in the hands of the Lord (Deut. 32:39). Satan can only do what the Lord allows him (Job 1:12; 2:6). The Lord Jesus did not come as an angel to save fallen angels (2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 12:7-9). He became lower than the angels. He became a servant. He chose to come as a Jew and be a part of the seed of Abraham.

d) Verses 17-18. Because Jesus became a Man, He is also our compassionate High Priest. Angels can never get into our infirmities, but the Lord Jesus can. He was hungry, tired, and tempted in everything. He knows what it's like to be helpless. He knows when people falsely accuse Him and say evil things about Him. He is merciful and faithful.

What happens when we sin? He is ready to help us. As our High Priest, the Lord Jesus can give us the grace not to sin. When we sin,

we have an Advocate who pleads for us. Jesus immediately forgives us, when we confess our sins. He is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. Are we ashamed of Him?

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is perfect in every way! He is also the Head of the body, the church. And He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have the first place in us (Col. 1:18).

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved (Acts. 4:12).

The Jewish people could not – and still cannot comprehend – that God became a Man. Even less can they comprehend that He died as a Man. That's why Paul wrote, wherever the Gospel is preached, it has to be clearly explained. For I would have you know, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached by me is not according to man (Gal. 1:11).

There are five facts which the Lord Jesus accomplished as our perfect Savior

1. The basic truth is that the Lord Jesus is our Substitute (v. 9).

He who created the angels, became less than the angels for a little while. He died so that He could be the Substitute for us. The soul

that sins will die (Ezek. 18:4b). The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Jesus, who never sinned, died in our place (2 Cor. 5:21). There is no Gospel without the death of Christ. The Creator of the angels humbled Himself and died. Angels cannot die. Jesus did for us what angels cannot do. It was not an easy death! That is why it says, 'The suffering of death'. The death He tasted was the curse of our sins (Gal. 3:13). What Moses and Paul wanted, but could not do because they themselves were sinners as well (Ex. 32:32; Rom. 9:3), our precious Lord Jesus wanted to do and also did.

2. Jesus is in all things the Leader of our salvation (v. 10).

It suited Him! That is, what the Lord corresponded to His character and to His wisdom. The cross is a masterpiece of wisdom! Through the cross God solved the problem that no angel or man could solve. The cross corresponds to His holy character. Here God showed in Jesus His hatred of sin. The cross corresponds to His power. In a few hours Jesus bore the punishment that would last an eternity for the sinners. The cross also corresponds to His love. For God so loved the world. The cross also corresponds to His grace. His death on the cross was in detail foretold (Isa. 53).

'Leader of our salvation' means pioneer or prince (Acts. 3:15; 5:31). Jesus is also the Prince of Life and the Head of the family, in which children are born again and can grow safely. The Lord Jesus is also the model of perfect obedience (Heb. 5:8-9; 1 Pet. 2:22). He alone can take us from this side of death to the other side (1 Cor. 15:55). Someone wrote on the grave of a believing family the touching words: they began to celebrate (Luke 15:24).

3. The Lord Jesus is the One who also makes us as believers holy (vv. 11-13).

It is hard to think of ourselves as saints. Sin can grip us. We may not conduct ourselves in a holy way, but we are holy, i.e. set apart to God (Heb. 10:10, 14). We are sanctified and justified by faith. The holy One and we who are sanctified also have the same Father. He is not ashamed to call us brothers. We are joint heirs (Rom. 8:17). In Him we are perfect (Col. 2:10). Our own righteousness is like filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). That brotherly relationship became a reality after the cross, when the church was born (Acts 2). The body received its Head (Jesus), and the Head received His body.

4. The Lord Jesus is the only One who conquered Satan (vv. 14-15).

“Partnering in” means to have fellowship or to be partners in the faith (2 Pet. 1:4). We have received God’s nature. That is why Satan’s power had to be broken first, for he had the power over death! Satan wants to keep man in his power until they die, for after death they cannot be saved (Heb. 9:27). No one can escape death either! Death is a powerful weapon. Jesus had a more powerful weapon: Eternal life and the resurrection (John 14:19). To die is gain for the believer in the Lord Jesus (Phil. 1:21). We have now given our lives to Him who conquered death (1 Cor. 15:55). Because Satan cannot take our salvation anymore, he will do anything in his own power so that we do not embrace our new position and grow. Augustine heard before his conversion the words: read, read!

5. The Lord Jesus is the One who can sympathize with us in everything (vv. 16-18).

The Lord Jesus did not come to save angels, but people. Jesus chose out of love to come as a Jew. He could have chosen any other race (Deut. 7:7-8). Paul reminds Timothy that Jesus was also a Man (2 Tim. 2:8). That is very important as you also go through the storms of life. As a Man, Jesus also experienced the storms of life. He is eternally human.

There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus! (1 Tim. 2:5).

Why did Jesus go through the storms of life? Jesus is God. God is almighty and holy, but not indifferent. We learn that from the history of the Jewish people (Ex. 2:23). Jesus knows when we are in pain or when we are weak. He is the One we can turn to in view of our salvation, but also to receive compassion and help.

The heart of the letter to the Hebrews is chapter 8 verse 1. We have such a High Priest! Jesus is our Substitute. Jesus is our Leader and our Sanctifier. Jesus is the One who has conquered Satan. It is Jesus who sympathizes with us in everything. *Who is she that comes up out of the desert, leaning on her lover?* (Song 8:6). That leaning on our Lover (Jesus) is with both our arms. He will carry us all the way home!

Note:

1. We want to see the Lord Jesus (John 12:21).
2. We see the Lord Jesus now by faith (Heb. 2:9).
3. And we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:4).

The first verse is the sinner's longing, the second is the believer's privilege. The third is the promise for the believer's eternal future.

Hebrews 3

The Lord Jesus is more than Moses

The Lord had done such a great work in and through Moses. Once he was a murderer, but he changed into the humblest man on earth (Ex. 2:13; Num. 12:3). Another beautiful truth about Moses which I appreciate so much is, that at the age of forty he made a decision to be a part of his ill-treated people (Heb. 11:24-25). Moses was an important person, because he grew up in the line to become the next Pharaoh.

The Lord Jesus had glorified His Father here on earth (John 17:4). The Father would have accepted Him before the cross, but He said 'not My will but Your will be done' in the garden of Gethsemane. That showed me that Jesus as a Man had His own will (Luke 22:42). Jesus denied His own will and did the Father's will and drank the cup. If He had done His own will, then we all would have been separated from God for all eternity.

This made such a great change in my own life. This act of His love gave me a holy hatred against sin. If you say: NO to your own will, you deny yourself and die to your self-life and take up His cross. Then you overcome temptation and will get the victory. Then you

will do the Father's will. It is here that we need the available power of the Holy Spirit and put our own will to death.

David could not kill Goliath without God's power. Samson could not kill the lion without God's power. We cannot put the flesh to death without God's power either. But with God's power we can. That's why we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul writes about being filled with the Holy Spirit, before he writes about the marriage of believers. I cannot, but He is able, so I can. For this I have Jesus!

It is important to know what the Jewish people think about Moses. They esteem Moses, their leader, deliverer, and lawgiver, above the angels in heaven. The Lord spoke to the prophets in visions, but with Moses the Lord spoke from face to face. He spoke directly to Moses at the burning bush from heaven, and at Mount Sinai. Moses brought them out of slavery and to the borders of their own new land. Jesus had not delivered them from the iron fist of Rome!

They also thought that Moses had given them the manna. Jesus corrected them (John 6:32). The Lord had miraculously cared for Moses when he was a baby. The Lord had miraculously arranged for his burial, and during his lifetime he showed him His own glory. It even shone from his face (Ex. 34:29). The laws are sometimes even called the laws of Moses (Luke 2:22; Act. 13:39). Moses wrote the first five books (Torah) with the plan of the tabernacle and the meeting place in the holy of holiest above the ark of the covenant. The tabernacle with its priests, sacrifices, and ceremonies were an example of the reality in heaven and the service of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus (Ex. 25:9; 39:42-43).

John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus are both more than Moses (Matt. 11:11). John the Baptist always pointed to Jesus and spoke for the first time about the taking away of our sins by the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Moses brought them out of the bondage from Egypt (Ex. 3:8). Jesus leads us out of the bondage of sin. Moses is a forgiven murderer. Jesus is without sin. Moses only fulfilled half of his task, because he brought them out of Egypt but not into the land. Jesus fulfilled His whole commission and went all the way to the cross. Most people of the first generation that came out of Egypt, could not enter their new land because of disobedience and unbelief. Neither did Miriam, Aaron and Moses (Num. 14:22-23).

Believers are in danger of not entering into His perfect rest. Whoever entrusts himself completely to the Lord Jesus and expects everything from Him, will enter into the perfect rest that He offers to us (Matt. 11:28). Our obedient faith in the Lord Jesus is the inheritance that we give to the world. I shall never forget Israel Harel, who gave his life to Jesus in Israel. He was addicted to drugs and was freed by Jesus' power. He pointed out 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 to me. The most important truth is that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. I will never forget.

Some details

Verse 1. The Holy Spirit spoke directly to the Jewish believers who looked with one eye to Jesus and with the other eye to Moses. The word "Therefore" refers to something that had just been said or

happened. Hebrews 2:9-18 explained that Jesus is our Apostle sent from God, and our High Priest who brings us to God. Always focus on Jesus!

“Holy brethren” refers to believers, because we are united in the Holy One. The Jewish people are also called brothers (Acts 2:29). We are holy brethren and we are partakers of His heavenly calling. We long for a heavenly land (Heb. 11:16). We come to the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22). All the blessings we receive are heavenly and point to the superiority of Jesus over Moses. Faith in Jesus gives us a heavenly calling and also a heavenly inheritance (Phil. 3:20; Eph. 1:3; 2:6). Believers now serve the Lord Jesus in spirit and in truth (John 4:23; Col. 2:6). As you have received the Lord Jesus as Lord, so you walk in Him. You start with the Lord Jesus and you walk with the Lord Jesus. Not Jesus plus!

Once I walked in the Sinai desert to bring water to my hut. I got a ride from an Israeli colonel called Israel². I invited him for a cup of tea and he said: I stay for five minutes. He stayed for three weeks and finally cried out ‘*Johan*, the blood of Jesus has cleansed me now from all my sins’. Ever since he reads his Bible and speaks about Jesus a lot. He became a nurse and the Lord gave him also a lovely family.

Paul’s advice to Timothy is:

Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead, descendant of David according to my Gospel (2 Tim. 2:8).

2 Go to You Tube: The amazing story of Israel Segal.

Jesus Christ is the great Apostle and the High Priest. In this way, Jesus is also more than Moses. Moses was God's apostle, but Aaron was God's high priest. What are the characteristics of an apostle? An apostle has all the rights and the power of God. He speaks only words that are given to him by God (John 12:49; 8:28, 38). A high priest is one who represents the people and brings them to God (1 Pet. 3:18).

In Latin, the word for priest is pontifex. That means bridge builder (Num. 20:26). Moses had never been a slave, but Aaron had been a slave for 83 years and knew exactly what his people had gone through when they were slaves in Egypt. When Aaron died he had to give his priestly clothes to Eleazar, his third son. The people sinned every day and could not live without a priest for one day. The Lord Jesus is the perfect Apostle and He is also the perfect High Priest. He never dies and always intercedes for us. He is sympathetic to us and understands fully where we go through in this world.

Verses 2-4. Jesus is also superior as the Builder of the house. Moses was faithful in God's house (Num. 12:7-8), but he was not perfect! He killed an Egyptian and struck the rock a second time. That rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). Jesus was beaten only once on the cross, but never to be beaten again. Most of his life Moses was very faithful! That is what the Holy Spirit emphasizes and that is so encouraging.

Jesus always did the will of His Father and He was completely faithful (John 7:18). Jesus is also faithful in His own house, the Church of God (Eph. 2:19, 1 Pet. 2:4-5). Believers are the building. Jesus is the One who takes care of us. Moses was faithful in the earthly house. Jesus is faithful in the heavenly house (John 17:4). Moses was faithful and a part of the house. Jesus made the house (John 1:3). Jesus is the

Creator of Israel and He is also the Creator and the Sustainer of His Church.

Verse 6. Jesus is first called Christ (anointed Messiah) here. Christ is mentioned no less than nine times (Heb. 3:6, 14; 5:5; 6:1; 9:11, 14, 24, 28; 11:26). It is the title of the promised Savior and King of Israel who will defeat His enemies and reign in glory (Dan. 9:25, 26). Believers have received the anointing of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:27). Whoever accepts Moses must also accept the Lord Jesus (John 5:46). His house is not a building, but the people in whom the Holy Spirit dwells (Eph. 2:22, 1 Tim. 3:15).

They that are gone out from us, were not of us (1 John 2:19). There were Jewish people whom they no longer saw. That was because they were not true believers. If you abide in My Word, then you are really My disciples (John 8:31). The proof is that Jesus does not let anyone perish. He raises up all on the last day (John 6:39). Jesus is the Messiah that Moses and all the prophets spoke about (Luke 24:25-27). John reveals to us that there is only one topic in the Bible (Rev. 19:10b). The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy. Test yourself, if you are in Christ (2 Cor. 13:5).

Verses 7-19. The Lord tells us that He does not delight in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9). The Lord did not create us in His image to send us to hell, but to live with Him in fellowship, eternally and in abundance. The hardening of the heart started from the beginning, when they came out of Egypt (Ex. 17:1-7, Deut. 9:7, Num. 14:22). Later also in David's time (Ps. 95:7-11). Every generation decides to enter into God's rest. We make that decision

now. Give yourself fully to Jesus; otherwise your heart becomes hardened (1 Tim. 4:2).

If they don't listen to Moses, they don't listen to Jesus (Luke 16:31). Someone who wants to believe, can believe (Mark. 9:24). When we reject Jesus, we reject the living God (1 John 2:23). Those who believe abide in the Lord Jesus (Heb. 10:38, 39; 1 John 2:19). Unbelief is the worst sin. The Jewish people had left Egypt, but they longed to go back to Egypt. It took the Lord one day to get them out of Egypt but forty years to get Egypt out of them. They failed to go back, but in their hearts they thought of Egypt (Deut. 9:7). The old life still had its appeal. They forgot the whip! The rest of God means that you no longer seek it in yourself, but from now on you rest in His finished work. Entering His rest means that you are no longer concerned about yourself. It means that you are constantly living with God's assurance in your heart that He has forgiven you.

He who called you is faithful and He will also do it (1 Thess. 5:23).

Hebrews 4

Entering into God's rest

God's promise to enter into His perfect rest could not be fully fulfilled in the Old Testament. The writer tells us that the promise to enter into His rest is still valid. It is so true that everyone who comes to the Lord Jesus experiences His rest. These Israelites all came out of Egypt, but they did not enter His rest because of their unbelief.

The sabbath is a shadow of the perfect rest in the Lord Jesus. When the reality came (Jesus), those shadows were gone (Col. 2:16, 17). Adam and Eve were righteous when they were created. They walked and talked with the Lord. They leaned upon the Lord and had no fears. They lived in His perfect rest. After the fall they became restless (Acts 17:26). Man after Adam is anxious. Before the fall there also existed no religions. They both walked with the Lord!

The work of Jesus is to bring us back into God's rest. The gulf between God and man had to be restored first on the cross (Isa. 59:2). Rest is another word for life. His rest is offered to us. A remnant entered into it.

Today

The next thing the writer points out is: *Today!* God's rest did not come through Moses, Joshua or David, but through the Lord Jesus. There are leaders who promise their followers peace, prosperity and health. The Bible does not promise that. There are spiritual blessings and a spiritual rest. God's rest is also reserved for the future, when we are with Jesus (Rev. 14:13). We must diligently strive to enter into God's rest.

The Holy Spirit continues to address those who have heard the gospel and already turned their backs on Judaism, to embrace that step to enter into His rest. So far, that call has been negative! His Word is seen as that of the Judge with His two-edged sword. Now the positive part. The Lord offers us more than a way out of hell. The gospel brings us spiritual life and a relationship with the living God. Jesus is not only the Judge, but He is also our sympathetic High Priest.

There are three truths that make Jesus our perfect High Priest. His perfect priesthood, His perfect Person and His perfect provision. The high priests in the Old Testament were weak and sinful, and they all died. They all were no more than shadows of the reality (Col. 2:17).

The perfect Priesthood

Jesus alone cleanses us from all sins (Heb. 5:1-3). Jesus is our merciful and faithful High Priest. Jesus is also now our Apostle, and the High Priest of our confession. The priests were appointed in Israel as

mediators between God and His people. Only the high priest could offer the sacrifice for the people once a year on the Day of atonement. All sins were laid upon the scapegoat (Lev. 16).

That had to be done every year. Jesus offered Himself up once for all (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Just as the high priest had to pass through three divisions (Outer Court, Holy Place and Most Holy Place), Jesus passed through the three heavens where God dwells. The Lord Jesus offered a perfect sacrifice and He was the first One who was allowed to sit down in the place of all authority at the Father's right hand (Heb. 9:12; John 17:4).

Note

Forty years after the crucifixion the temple was destroyed. The Jews who rejected the Lord Jesus made their own religion and used Hosea 6:6 which speaks of loyalty instead of their offerings. They also forbade the reading of Isaiah 53 and Daniel 9 in the synagogue. Jesus is still unknown in Judaism. They even call him: Yeshu, which means 'May the memory of Him be blotted out'.

Judaism is a legalistic system of works with no high priest to bring them to God. That's why Jesus said to them three times that they will die in their sins, and cannot come where He is (John 8:21). We owe to all men the Gospel of God (Rom. 1:14). We have the answer! The believers in Jesus wait for their home in heaven (John 14:3-4). They can go to God, because Jesus is our only Mediator to bring us to God. There is today a new and a living way. Jesus knows what

we can handle and what we are going through (1 Cor. 10:13). The throne of judgment has become the throne of grace. We have a High Priest, who can and will save us completely and who can and will sympathize with us.

After many years of witnessing to Jewish people, I have heard plenty of times the remark: Can Jews also believe in Jesus? In the book of Acts it was exactly the opposite. Can Gentiles believe in Jesus? The devil has always been busy, so that people do not hear the Gospel to give them salvation and a right view of God.

Hebrews 5

Jesus is more or higher

One of the first questions a Jew would ask is: Who is the high priest who stands between you and God to sacrifice for you as a mediator? We can then answer: We have a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-22; Ps. 110:1-4; Heb. 4:14-10:39).

The last of the Old Testament prophets was John the Baptist (Matt. 11:11). He cried out:

I baptize you with water, but He who cometh after me, who is mightier than me. I am not worthy to untie the strap of His sandals. He will baptize you with (a better word is: in) the Holy Spirit.

Thirteen times it says that Jesus is more or better. The climax is Hebrews 11:39-40; 12:1-2; 10:14. Jesus is the High Priest and also the sacrifice who gave Himself (1 Pet. 3:18)!

All men are sinful and cannot come to God without a Mediator. That is the work of the priest and above all of the high priest (Heb. 9:1-14; 10:14). Previously the high priest was allowed to appear before God once a year (Heb. 9:7, 11-12). He came in the most holy place with blood for the sins of the people. Aaron's sacrifices failed, for he

could not purify the people (Heb. 1:3; 9:9; 10:12). The sacrifice of Jesus forgives us, and purifies our conscience and produces eternal salvation (Heb. 9:12-14).

Aaron entered into the earthly sanctuary, which is also a picture of the heavenly sanctuary. The requirement of the Aaronic high priesthood is that he was taken from among men. He represents them before the Lord. Believers may now boldly approach the throne of grace, for their High Priest, the Lord Jesus, does meet all the requirements to appear before God both as God and as Man. That's why we now have free access. Because of His human nature, our great High Priest can sympathize with us.

Aaron's problem was that he also was a sinner and had to die. We do not need a loser, but we need a winner! No one can choose the priesthood. They must be called of God just like Aaron. That was confirmed by his staff which blossomed and bore fruit (Num. 17). Korah, Dathan, and Abiram burned incense that the Lord had forbidden, and they were all killed.

Called to the priesthood

Herod appointed 28 high priests; 25 of them were not from the Levitical families. John the Baptist was in the line to be the high priest. Joseph was in the line of David to be their king. The Judaic system was corrupt during the days of Jesus.

Jesus did not give Himself the honor as High Priest, but His Father did.

Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee! (Ps. 2:7).

Jesus is David's Son. Who is worthy to be the Priest and to be the King? Jesus has these rights. Through His resurrection He was exalted (Heb. 13:20; 5:6; Ps. 110:4). The priesthood of the Lord Jesus is after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews focuses on His priesthood being greater than that of Aaron. Jesus is not only fit by divine appointment to be the High Priest, but also because He as a Man knew human feelings – even to the deepest sorrows and the most severe pains (Heb. 5:7-8). We also know that Jesus was aware of His death (Matt. 16:21). By the words “Take this cup away from Me” (Mark 14:36), we know that He did not mean His physical death, but to be delivered from God's holy wrath against sinners. The cup points to God's wrath (Isa. 51:17-23). But not His will, but the will of His Father was the final factor for Him. He made Himself completely one with us and would taste death for each one of us (Heb. 2:9). Jesus died on the cross for all our sins! He was saved from death. His prayer was answered. Eternal death could not hold Him either. Jesus rose from among the dead after three days, and He became the great Victor for us. Hallelujah, what an amazing Savior (v. 7).

Verses 8-9. It seems strange that the Son, who like the Father is omniscient, should have to learn something. He could only learn suffering by becoming a Man. In His suffering He learned what it means to obey the Father. Becoming perfect concerns His human nature. Paul encourages Timothy: “Remember Jesus Christ risen

from the dead, the descendant of David according to my Gospel” (2 Tim. 2:8).

Verse 10. The Son returned to heaven after His work on earth was finished, where He was greeted as the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. The writer leaves that subject of Melchizedek as the priest, because the readers were still immature.

Verses 11-14. The third warning is that they, and we, should not remain immature. You are slow to hear. They are responsible for this themselves. We are called to grow. There is no end in growing. Falling behind in our development is always sad. We are called not only to be teachers, but to be able to explain the fundamental truths of our faith (1 Pet. 3:15). They did not understand that it was all and only about Jesus. They had not learned to eat themselves, because they did not know the difference between good and evil.

They seem deaf to the teaching that Jesus as the High Priest can and wants to give us all that is needed. Our teaching and behavior must always be linked together, otherwise we are hypocrites. Our spiritual maturity and our discernment are never separated. Neglecting the teaching of *‘Jesus alone’* has always consequences. The problem can be solved by surrendering to Him, looking to Him and thinking of Him constantly. *Jesus is enough!* Mature believers understand the heavenly priesthood of the Lord Jesus and they know how to approach the throne of grace. They can apply these truths in their own lives and also teach them to others.

Hebrews 6

Three stages of faith

There are three stages of faith for every believer:

1. The child stage. That is when we are born again and live with the assurance that all our sins are forgiven.
2. Doctrinal and moral growth. The believer gets to know the Bible personally and apply what he or she learns.
3. Spiritual maturity. They know the new, totally changed life. *Not I, but Christ lives in me* (Gal. 2:20). Knowing that as the Lord Jesus died, rose and went to heaven, we have been united with Him in His death and resurrection, and also have been seated in Him already in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:6-7). They know Jesus as their faithful High Priest and teach others the glorious message of grace.

The problem with these Hebrew believers was that they got stuck at stage one. They came to know and rejoiced that their sins were forgiven, but they were pressured very hard then by their families and friends to give up Christ. But we now really leave the old or the temporal, and take on the new and eternal covenant.

The Word of the beginning

The fundamental teaching of the first or temporary Testament also has the following truths:

1. *Repentance.* You turn from your sinful lifestyle, which produces only death.
2. *Faith toward God.* It does no good to have faith in God, apart from the Lord Jesus. Here is repentance that leads to *life*. It is through faith in Jesus (Acts 4:12).
3. *The doctrine of baptisms.* This is a wrong translation, they are washings (mikve).
4. *The laying on of hands.* This is in the Old Testament (Lev. 1:4; 2:8, 13). It has nothing to do with our faith. Union with Jesus Christ does not come about by laying hands on someone else, but by faith in Jesus and the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).
5. *The resurrection of the dead.* Earlier the doctrine of the resurrection was vague and incomplete (Job 19:26). In the New Testament, the resurrection is the heart of the gospel. Without the resurrection we are still in our sins (1 Cor. 15:17).
6. *Eternal Judgment.* Earlier we learned little about the judgment (Eccl. 12:14). Now it is well taught (Matt. 25:31-46). The Jewish people had to let go of the old!

Verse 3. These truths were the foundation of Judaism and they are not perfect. They must leave it behind and go forward to the better things, which are found in the Lord Jesus. Because the readers knew the Old Testament well, the writer trusts that he does not have to go back into this. They know that the basic principles have been fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. There are those who think about returning to Judaism. They believe that in spite of leaving Jesus, they will still be saved. There are those who have not made a choice. The writer is determined to wake them up and bring them to maturity. He knows that some have hardened their hearts. His words do not penetrate.

Causes of falling away

Here are the reasons why they forsook the Lord (vv. 4-6).

1. *They were enlightened.* Yes, they knew it, but they did nothing with it.
2. *They tasted the heavenly gifts.* But they did not swallow the Gospel (Acts 13:46).
3. *They have become partakers of the Holy Spirit. They noticed His presence.* It does not say that they were cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus, born again or baptized in the Holy Spirit.
4. *They tasted the word of God.* But they did not swallow it. They did not believe it.
5. *They tasted the powers of the age to come.* They were given a foretaste of the world to come (2:5).

6. *They resigned.* By disobedience and unbelief you cannot enter into His rest. It does not say it is difficult and not possible for the people. It says *impossible*.

Verse 6. It is the most absolute sentence. The author takes a field as an example, with good and bad soil. Both hearts are worked and moistened. The good fruit ripens to eternal life. The bad fruit ripens to eternal judgment (Heb. 10:26, 27, 39). Fruitlessness proves that there never was real faith. It leads to waste (Luke 8:13).

Verses 9-11. Although the writer warns them, he knows that most of them are true believers. He desires that they persevere in the hope that we have as New Testament believers. They have shown that they care about their fellow believers. He encourages them to continue with this (Heb. 6:12). He calls for an unshakable trust in the Lord Jesus. In the Bible, our hope is not wishing something, but knowing that it is true. How do we come to the full assurance of hope? By being zealous in the spiritual things (Heb. 9:11). Obtaining the inheritance is the writer's greatest wish. They can overcome their slowness by faith through love.

Verses 13-20. The writer takes them to the time from before the law. He takes them to Abraham, for Abraham is the example of persevering faith. Faith and patience can dwell peacefully in the same heart. God's promises and God's oath assure us that we are His forever. God's own character reinforces His own words. Instead of drifting away we are anchored together with Christ in heaven, where He sits and ministers in God's presence. We are anchored, so that we can move forward! In the future God's promises will be gloriously

fulfilled. The presence of Jesus as our Forerunner guarantees this. Where He is, we also shall be! Wonder of all wonders!

Hebrews 7

Christ and Melchizedek

The writer is not a cool teacher, but a shepherd with a warm heart. He knew that his readers were afflicted and that they were suffering (Heb. 10:32-34; 12:3-4). He encourages them by pointing to their High Priest, Jesus, to whom they will never appeal in vain. His priesthood is important (Heb. 7:15). Jesus is the High Priest after the order and the likeness of Melchizedek.

Some other important similarities between Melchizedek and Jesus are:

- Melchizedek is both king and priest. The Lord Jesus is both King and Priest.
- He is the king of righteousness. Jesus is the King of righteousness (Jer. 23:6).
- There is no mention of a father or a mother. The truth of the divine nature. No mention of His birth and His death: Jesus is without beginning or end.
- Without priestly genealogy. His priesthood does not end with death.

- Melchizedek blessed Abram, who came to him first in Genesis 14:17-21. Melchizedek came with bread and wine for them all. Jesus feeds us with bread and wine. Those are the signs of His finished work upon the cross for us.

Melchizedek spontaneously blessed Abram, who came to him at the right time with the right encouraging words to later resist the king of Sodom. Behind Melchizedek is God. Behind the king of Sodom is the devil. There is a wonderful promise (Heb. 4:14-16; 1 Cor. 10:13). No temptation has overtaken you, but such as is common to man. God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to bear, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape, so that you will be able to endure it. Jesus knows!

Important differences between Melchizedek and Christ

The order of Aaron, and the order of Melchizedek (v. 11).

- Aaron's order is imperfect. The Lord Jesus is perfect.
- The old is weak and also without a guarantee. The new is strong with an oath (v. 16). The power of Jesus is also that of an indestructible life.
- Aaron was a sinner (v. 27), and he had to sacrifice first for his own sins. Jesus is sinless, and He made one sacrifice for the sins of others (Heb. 7:9, 12, 27). Animal sacrifices had to be repeated. Jesus gave Himself once for all (Heb. 7:27-28).

Aarons order consisted only of weak people, without divine power or help. Jesus is God. He has all the divine resources. The priesthood of Aaron is in an earthly sanctuary in an earthly place (Heb. 9:1). The priesthood of Jesus is in heaven, in the true sanctuary (Heb. 8:1-2). The Lord Jesus is our Advocate and High Priest. He sits and fully controls the circumstances all the time. As our High Priest, He can change our inner position for the better.

When we surrender to Him, we experience His justice and peace. In His days the righteous will flourish and there will be great peace, until the moon is no more. Mercy and faithfulness will meet. Justice and peace kiss each other. The fruit of righteousness shall be peace (Isa. 32:17). The effect of justice will bring rest and security for ever and ever (Heb. 7:23, 25).

Because Jesus is our Priest forever, He is able to save us to the uttermost. As long as He lives, we are safe and He gives us eternal life.

You have died and your life is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3).

We are safe! We can live without end through the power of His indwelling life! Our perfect salvation must lead to a life of increasing maturity (Heb. 7:11).

An earthly priesthood cannot accomplish anything perfect, nor can the law of God (Heb. 7:19). Those millions of animal sacrifices cannot do that either (Heb. 10:1-2), but the Lord Jesus can and wants it. Jesus can and will lead us to spiritual maturity if we live by faith. He invites us at all times to draw near to His throne of

grace. He understands us better than we do understand ourselves. An important scripture is 1 John 5:4, where we read:

Whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith. It is our faith in Jesus that brings the victory.

Some additional remarks about this important chapter

- Melchizedek is without genealogy and there is no reference to his priestly ancestors (v. 14). He is a type of Jesus, who is from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10). The greatness and dignity of the priesthood of Melchizedek is far greater than that of Levi. Abram tithes him out of gratitude. Melchizedek blesses Abram. Levi is from that line and therefore also the lesser. The Jewish people understood that writer very well! I understand that these lessons are foreign to us. Aaron's priesthood has failed. It has not brought perfection. In other words, it wasn't enough.
- The key is in verse 19. For the law has made nothing perfect, but the establishment of a better hope does, by which we draw near to God. Unlike the priests of the Levitical order, who were sinful men, the priest in the order of Melchizedek is the holy Son of God. Because He is sinless and brought a perfect, one-time sacrifice, He remains our High Priest forever. This is so very comforting for us all.

- Although nothing is written about Melchizedek's parents and his background, this does not imply that he had no background at all and no parents. For sure he had parents.

Hebrews 8

High Priest at the Right Hand of God

These chapters speak about the dignity of the Lord Jesus as our High Priest, and His ministry. As the High Priest, Jesus surpasses Aaron in His Person, but also in His service. The basic idea of the Jewish religion is to draw near to God. But the Levitical priesthood brought no perfection (Heb. 7:11, 26; 8:1). What we need is a Priest who is holy and undefiled and separated from sinners, and exalted above the highest heavens. The beauty and the reality is that we do have such a High Priest! Our High Priest has now seated Himself at the right hand of God.

Queen mother Bathsheba sat at the right hand of king Solomon (1 Kings 2:19). To sit at the right hand is the place of honor. The Lord has extended the heavens with His right hand (Isa. 48:13). His right hand sustains all believers (Ps. 17:7; 18:36). By His mighty right hand the Lord has redeemed Israel (Ex. 15:6). His right hand is full of righteousness (Ps. 48:11; 98:1). His right arm gives peace and it makes known His own salvation. The words “He has seated Himself” are in the active form in Greek. When Jesus returned to heaven, God the Father invited Him to sit at His right hand and there He is seated now.

In that place of honor He also performs His high priestly work. The earthly sanctuary had no seats. The Levitical priests were never done with their work. Those sacrifices can never take away sins (Heb. 10:11). The Lord Jesus accomplished the purification from sin by giving His life on the cross. He has the right to sit in heaven, in the true sanctuary (Heb. 10:12). He grants us to sit with Him there (Rev. 3:21).

A more outstanding ministry

Verse 2. The nature of His service as our High Priest today is that it has been made clear that He is in heaven, and that He operates by His Spirit in our hearts. His sacrificial service is completed. But the words “a servant” (or serving) indicate that our High Priest is still active today. The atoning work is done! What kind of work is He doing now? This is discussed in more detail in Hebrews 9:24; 10:20; 13:15, 21.

The writer has already said that Jesus prays for us and pleads for us, and lovingly looks after our interests. The Israelites brought their offerings at the gate of the tabernacle. The priests performed their sacrificial services there (Heb. 9:2, 3, 8, 12, 24, 25; 10:19). Jesus performs His ministry in heaven, the true tabernacle where God dwells.

Verses 3-5. The content of the Lord’s priesthood is forever and ever. The high priest was appointed by God to offer sacrifices for the people. Jesus is now our High Priest. He too must have something

to offer. Sacrifice is the subject of this letter. The Levitical high priest had to sacrifice continuously. With Jesus it was a one-time sacrifice (Heb. 9:12-14; 10:5), the offering of His body.

That's why asking ten percent of our income is an Old Testament teaching. We give our bodies as a living sacrifice. Remember the difference at the English breakfast between the egg and the bacon. The chicken gave an egg, but the pork gave his life. I give myself totally to Jesus.

I heard a speaker who mixed the two covenants, which is forbidden (Deut. 19:19). He said: According to Malachi 3:8-9 you are cursed when you do not give 10% of your income. The New Covenant teaches us that Jesus took away our curse (Gal. 3:13).

Verses 7-13. Jesus is the Mediator of a better and an everlasting covenant. The better covenant is the New Covenant in the precious blood of Jesus (Luke 22:20). This covenant is better than the first one made at mount Sinai with the nation of Israel (Ex. 24:8; Jer. 31:31-34). To make a covenant is really to cut a covenant. That is not effective, until the animal is sacrificed (Gen. 15:18; Ex. 24:5-8; Heb. 7:11-12). In the first covenant the Levitical priesthood served constantly. The New Covenant was inaugurated by His death, and is now in full operation (Heb. 9:15-18). The New Covenant would not have been necessary, if the old covenant had worked well. The first covenant was not without fault (Rom. 7:7-12). Let us say goodbye now to the Old Covenant.

The law failed because it cannot take away our sins. The law succeeds in revealing our sins (v. 8b). The New Covenant was promised

because they had broken the first (Jer. 31:32-34). The prophecy of a new covenant came when the armies of Babylon were already at the gates of Jerusalem. Everything will be restored one day. All blessings depended on Israel's obedience. They made a promise, but from the beginning many of them committed idolatry (Ex. 32:1-4, and Baal worship later on). The New Covenant is unconditional and full of grace. The emphasis is on God Himself: I WILL. The New Covenant is filled with promises. They shall all know Me.

The New Covenant has no priestly class with the right to mediate between God and man. All believers have the same access to God (Heb. 10:19-22). Every believer possesses complete inner knowledge. Everything rests on, and comes from God's grace. All sins are removed from God's memory (Heb. 10:3-4). The Old Covenant is about to disappear. The writer is already thinking of the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. The heavenly priesthood leads us to maturity. God puts His word into our hearts and He changes us from within (2 Cor. 3:1-18). Let us rejoice greatly in this new and everlasting covenant!

One of the great differences between the Old and the New Covenant is that God's commandments became God's promises. Brother Charles Price told the story of a prisoner who started to believe in prison. After his release he went to a church and read the ten commandments on the wall. In the beginning he became so discouraged, but then he realized his position that the Lord Jesus, who fulfilled all of the law, lived in his heart. Those commandments became his promises, because the Lord Jesus was now his life – and He is able!

Hebrews 9

The Earthly Sanctuary of the Covenant

Verses 1-5. The continuation of Jesus as the High Priest and His service in a better sanctuary. Previously the Lord had given the tabernacle, because He longed to dwell in the midst of His people (Ex. 25:8). Everything the Lord has passed on was strictly given to Moses. Moses obeyed the Lord in every detail. Yet that tabernacle is inadequate, for it does not give sinners access to God.

The tabernacle consisted of two parts. The Holy Place and the Holiest of All. In between hangs the veil that closes the entrance. The writer discusses the ritual of the Day of Atonement. The veil opens and the high priest takes the blood to the mercy seat. Once a year all their sins were covered, but it had to be repeated annually.

Verses 6-10. The description of the priestly service. It is not about the beauty of the tabernacle, but about its limitations. Only the priests were allowed to enter, and only in the first part (the Holy Place). They must constantly tend to the lamps of the golden candlestick (Ex. 27:20). Every morning they were to offer incense on the golden altar (Ex. 30:7-8). Every Sabbath they were to change the twelve loaves of bread, and lay them on the golden table (Lev. 24:7). The veil between the Holy Place and the Holiest of All teaches us that the

Old Covenant offers imperfect attempts to come to God, and really prevents sinners from appearing before Him. The second part (the Holiest of All) longs for a sacrifice that takes away all sins, and offers the forgiven sinner free access to God.

The customs of the Old Covenant must fail, for they deal with outward things. They do nothing for us inwardly, and nothing in the heart of the sinner or the priest. They do not take away sin. They do not purify the conscience, and do not grant access to God. Everything of the Old Covenant was outwardly, symbolic and temporary. Ezekiel was told in the Babylonian captivity that there would be a New Covenant and God's Spirit for the inner man.

The Better Ministry of the New and the Eternal Covenant

Verses 11-14. Many centuries the Jews looked forward to their Messiah. He must descend from David. He must defeat their enemies and rule over them as their King. They do not expect Him as the High Priest, because the priestly line is that of the tribe of Levi and not of Judah. The New Covenant brings a better sanctuary and also a better sacrifice and an eternal redemption. His sacrifice has inner values, and cannot be expressed in money. The sacrifice of Jesus' blood is different on a number of points. It is human. One sacrifice for sin for all people must be a human sacrifice. It is voluntary. The animals were forced. It is moral and Jesus is without blemish. It is spiritual and eternal. That again points to the divine nature of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 15-22. The blessings of the New and Eternal Covenant. The conclusion (Heb. 8:6 - 9:14). The New Covenant is more effective, because it has a Mediator who died for His own. He is God and also Man, and as the perfect Mediator He looks after our interests. With the same zeal with which Jesus was committed to His Father, He is now committed to the salvation of sinners. Therefore, by His death, He can make atonement for all transgressions.

You can understand that the readers are wondering: What about our parents? Are they lost? No, says the writer. When they believed in the exchanged life of the sacrifice like Abel, then the transgressions of the first covenant are forgiven on the same basis as our transgressions today, namely through the death of Christ. All those animals were the credit card. The animals are replaced by the payment of the atoning blood of Christ. Those saved under the Old Covenant were called, and chosen of God (Rom. 8:29-30). All believers at all times receive their promised inheritance. The readers of this letter are amazed about the emphasis on Jesus' death. He died as a criminal? His willing death is the reason to believe in Him. That is why he points to the will or to the covenant that also fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 53. By His own death God's will was perfectly carried out!

Paul also wrote 1 Corinthians 2:2:

*I have determined to know nothing among you,
except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*

Verses 23-28. The better service of the new and everlasting covenant. We see three reasons why Jesus' ministry from heaven is better:

1. It is better because the Lord Jesus came to us from heaven.
2. It is better because by giving Himself Jesus takes away sin forever.
3. It is much better now because the Lord Jesus delivers His own from judgment. There is no need for us to fear in life and in death (Rom. 8:1).

Summary

The Hebrew believers then, like many now, were not happy with the simplicity of faith in the Lord Jesus. They were more attracted by the impressive rituals and symbols of Judaism. They longed for the trumpets, the incense, the priests, the vestments and the sacred places with the sacrifices of their former religion.

This chapter shows that the ministry of the Lord Jesus is more effective than all those rituals that they longed for. Jesus does not serve us in an earthly sanctuary, but in the tabernacle of God in heaven. That is better than the repeated sacrifices of the Day of Atonement. His sacrifice on the cross is a one-time, perfect and sufficient offering! Believers know that they are eternally saved from the coming judgment (Heb. 9:24-28).

These verses mention the three appearances of the Lord Jesus. One in the past for our salvation. One in the present for our sanctification. One in the future for our glorification, when we will dwell with the Lord forever. Faith in the Lord Jesus always leads us higher. It is the most beautiful life on earth.

Verses 26-28. Jesus has cleansed us from all our sins with His own precious blood. He has therefore also given us the strength to say 'No' to sin and to hate sin with a passion. One day all sin will no longer be present in this world. There is an "after death" for all people. To all those who believe in Jesus there will be no judgment. For those who do not believe in Jesus there will be an eternal judgment (Dan. 12:2).

Once there was a clown who received the scepter of his king to go round his country to find someone who was more stupid than he. After one year he came back with his scepter because he had found no one. In the meantime the king had become ill and was going to die. The clown asked him if he had already made arrangements for his long journey. The king said, No. The clown reacted by giving him his scepter back. He said, finally I have found someone who is more stupid than myself.

Hebrews 10

Union with the heart of God

Verse 1. The law is a shadow of things to come, and cannot make men perfect. The New Covenant message can. By perfect is meant our access to God, our perfect position in Christ (Col. 2:10). Paul was very thankful that he had a conscience without offense toward God and men (Acts 24:16). At the end of his life he could not say that he was free from sin, but that he pressed on (Phil. 3:12-15). In the New Covenant it is not about how good I am, but how good the Lord Jesus is. Jesus lives His perfect life in and through us now, and that is the normal life of the believer.

Verse 2. If you take medicine every hour, you cannot say that you are healthy, so it was with those animal sacrifices, they had to be daily repeated.

Verse 3. The annual Day of Atonement reminded them that their sins were covered, but had not been taken away. It had to be repeated year after year.

Verse 4. The blood of those bulls and goats was powerless to put away sins.

Verse 5. Contrary to the weakness of the Levitical worship, we come to the power of that one sacrifice. Psalm 40 tells us about God's discontentment. All this bloodshed in those many years was just to prepare their hearts for the Lamb of God who would take away their sins. All those rituals did not change their hearts.

Verses 6-8. Those animal sacrifices did not delight the Father in heaven. Only the obedient willingness of His Son. Only Jesus gave joy to His Father in heaven!

Verses 9-18. The old system is taken away and the new has become central! In the New Covenant there is a body prepared. Through the work of the Lord Jesus we are perfect in our new position, and we have been sanctified. We see the finished work of the Lord Jesus in the past, the present and in the future.

Jesus will come as promised, and we too will be like Him (1 John 3:4). The prophecy of the New Covenant will be fulfilled (Jer. 31:31). This Bible verse contains for the first time the expression New Testament, in Hebrew called: *Ha brit ha Chadasha*. It was such an eye opener for me after I had come to believe in Jesus in Israel, that the Jewish people do not read the New Testament. For many years I showed them that Jeremiah already wrote about this.

The new and living way

Verses 19-24. This is the heart of the letter, for we have been given a new and a living way with the living Savior. This way is opened after

the veil in the temple was torn, which is a shadow image of the flesh of the Lord Jesus. His body had to be broken. It cost Him everything.

We are to look out for one another, constantly stirring one another to love and to good works. Even though we all are priests, we also need a High Priest, our Lord Jesus. In the New Testament, love is not an emotion, but it is what we must do. Love is the root and good works are the fruit.

New warning against falling away

It is a warning not to go astray. The danger at the time that this letter was written is that some went back to Judaism. Jesus was hated and so were they (John 15:18).

Verse 26. The warning is about the consequences of sins that we commit on purpose. This concerns those who are associated with a church for a period of time and then turn away from Jesus. They were never born again (1 John 2:19). Judas was one of the twelve disciples for three years, but he never gave himself to the Lord. Jude was the half-brother of Jesus and he came to faith after the resurrection. He wrote that those who believe are being strengthened to abide in the faith. In the New Covenant it is worse than in the Old, when we reject the Lord Jesus.

- a. That person denies his need for Jesus and he rejects Him as Lord.
- b. That person sees no value in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- c. That person grieves the Holy Spirit, who desires to enlighten him or her.

Verses 30-32. When we know God's character, we recognize this also. The lesson is that we must make sure that we do not belong to them (Deut. 32:35). We receive strong reasons to continue with and in the Lord Jesus:

- a. That which has happened to us must also strongly encourage us.
- b. The coming reward that now awaits us should also encourage us daily.
- c. The coming judgment of the Lord Jesus should restrain us from all evil.

Verses 33-34. The suffering that befell on them strengthened their personal faith (Acts 5:41). Sometimes they suffered alone, and sometimes also as a community. They were not afraid to encourage believers who were imprisoned.

They lost material things, but not their joy. They dwelt behind the veil with their hearts, where our anchor is (Heb. 6:18-20). It sets you free when you realize that nothing belongs to you (1 Cor. 4:7). What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it. It was a miracle of divine grace for those believers, who must have learned from Job (Job 1:21).

Verse 35-36. Keep always moving forward. Do not be like an airplane that stops. When you stop, you drop.

“Don’t miss the harvest of your tears”, said F. B. Meyer.

What they needed was endurance. The determination to continue under persecutions, rather than to escape them by denying Christ. After they have done the whole will of God, they would receive the promised reward. In the book of Ruth, Elimelech escaped a famine in Bethlehem, but he could not escape death. Boaz remained and lived. He later became a blessing to both Naomi and Ruth.

Verses 37-38. How wonderful it is, that we as believers have the Old Testament to encourage us and to live with the same hope as they did then (Rom. 15:4; Hab. 2:3). What brings joy to the heart of Jesus is our faith in Him! Faith values all God’s promises and sees the unseen in order to persevere until the end.

Verse 39. The writer tells us clearly that he is not going to fall back. He too wants to continue on the narrow road. The hardened heart needs to hear those warnings! The broken heart needs these wonderful comforts (Isa. 57:15)! To write in the ‘we form’ means, that they are not people who withdraw. We are the people who believe in Jesus and we will endure until the end. In 1982 I came from Israel to the winter school called Capernwray hall in England, where Angela Mills was the dean of students. She saw that I could not sit still and sent me to Leeds to serve Luis Palau with a tent mission. It was great and at the end Luis gave me a verse that I never forgot (Rev. 2:10b). Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.

Faith in the Lord Jesus connects chapter 10 with chapter 11. It gives examples of persevering faith. We do not yet see all things subjected to Him, but we see JESUS. When we exchange Jesus for Judaism, we

leave the foundation of saving faith and turn from the reality to the shadows (Col. 2:17). Jesus is enough!

Hebrews 11

From Abel to Noah

Verse 1. This verse is not a definition of faith but a description of what faith does for us. It makes things hoped for as real as if we had them. It provides evidence. It brings the future within our reach and it makes the invisible seen.

There are boats that have two compasses, one in the cabin and one in the mast. When the captain wants to be sure about his position, he sends someone into the mast because that compass is not influenced by the iron. That is the difference between feelings and faith. Our faith must always be our standard.

Verse 2. Faith in Jesus is to trust in the living God, which leads to obedience. It sees the future as the present and the invisible as the visible. Faith makes all things possible, and love makes all things easy. By faith we rejoice God's heart. Because the elders did believe, the Lord recorded their names in His everlasting Word.

The most important truth about our faith is the substance. When we put our faith in money we can buy a bed but no sleep. When we put our faith in Jesus we receive what He can give. When we put great

faith in thin ice we go through it. When we put small faith in thick ice we walk on it. Jesus holds us. With Him everything is possible!

Verse 3. Before the believers are mentioned, we realize how important faith is even today. If we know by faith that everything was created by God, we understand that by His will everything came into existence. Everything we see in the world is created out of nothing. It has never been improved and it will never be improved.

Verse 4. The writer bypasses Adam and Eve in this roll of faith. When Eve had to decide whether God or Satan was telling the truth, she decided that Satan was. But this does not deny the fact that they were saved by faith. The Lord killed the first animal and clothed them with tunics of skin (Gen. 3:21).

The proof is that Adam called his wife Eve, which means life. Abel believed that principle of saving faith. He must have had the conviction that sinful man can approach God only on the ground of the shed blood of an offering. Cain and Abel both offered a sacrifice to God (Gen. 4:2-8). Abel's offering was accepted. The reason is included: it was by faith that Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain, who made an offering from the cursed ground. Believing is doing what God says. Abel is declared righteous by faith, and he stands first in the gallery of believers. By faith he speaks even now, though he is dead. Before the fall religion did not exist. Cain is the father of human religions. It touches me deeply that the first child in this world was a murderer and the second one was a martyr.

Verses 5-7. Enoch walked with God after he became a father (Gen. 5:28-6:22; Amos 3:3). All the others died, but he didn't. The Lord

had promised him that. By faith we bring joy to God's heart. Enoch also preached about the second Coming (Jude: 14), and he indicated the coming judgment by the name of his son Methuselah (i.e. 'after he dies it will come'). Methuselah died during the year of the flood.

Noah means 'rest'. He shows us that the believer's life is different. The Lord warned Noah about the things that could not be seen. A flood that would strike the world and all the people would perish. It had never rained in those days. Noah believed God and he built the ark. He paid everything! He did his utmost for the salvation of the world. Those who responded to his call were only his family. I love his wife, because she stood by him all those years. By faith he also condemned the world. No one had an excuse. Some had made money from the ark. The invitation sounded until God Himself closed the door. Noah's sermon was very short "Bo", which means come!

The Faith of the Patriarchs

Verses 8-10. Abraham's faith is more fully described in Genesis 15:6. He believed the Lord and He counted it as righteousness. Abraham became the ancestor of the Jewish people, and of all the believers in Jesus. Abraham and Sara did not travel to the land of promise, until he was 75 years old. Never stop living! We also see this pilgrim character in Isaac and Jacob with their tents, their altars and their wells of water. Our obedience is the outward evidence of our inward faith.

The second proof of Abraham's faith was his patient waiting for the fulfillment of the promise in the land. Even in the land he did not obtain it. Not only he, but also Isaac and Jacob lived as strangers in their own land and they moved about in tents. In Abraham's heart were three cities: Ur behind him, Sodom next to him, and the heavenly city before him! Its foundations are of God, and that is the future of every believer.

Verses 11-12. *The satisfaction of faith.* Sarah was Abraham's wife, with whom he departed in obedience. They had been promised a son. From the human point of view this became impossible, because of their old age. Sarah finally believed the Lord. She has been counted faithful to Him, who had promised the birth of Isaac. She finally brought Isaac into the world as the heir. She too trusted in what was humanly impossible.

Verses 13-16. *The pilgrimage of faith* by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They did not see their descendants multiply like the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea. They kept their faith and they died in faith. Faith completely changes one's attitude towards life and towards death. They also kept looking to Canaan, as it will be in the coming Kingdom of the Lord Jesus. God honors them by calling Himself 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' (Ex. 3:6).

Verses 17-19. *The test of faith.* Abraham was asked to sacrifice his only beloved son Isaac on mount Moriah (Gen. 22:1-19). By his obedience Abraham got a view of Jesus (John 8:56), and his son Isaac became a beautiful shadow type of the Lord Jesus. After Isaac's obedience on the mountain, his future bride Rebekah appears

(Gen. 22:23). That was the joy that Jesus saw before the cross: His future bride, the Church.

To make things clear. There was a substitute for Isaac, but not for Jesus. Isaac could not even die for his own sins, but Jesus died for all our sins. Abraham was not tempted, but tried. Even though Isaac was the son of the promise, the Lord had to be number One in everything. Abraham believed in the resurrection of Isaac, for he said to his servants, *We will go to worship and we will come back* (Gen. 22:5). We read that the Lord saw the sacrifice as really made. Faith must spring into action, and lead to acting by faith. The lesson is that the obedience of faith gives precedence to God's will over personal preferences. Faith is not a luxury, but a necessity. If we act in any area of life without faith in Jesus, we are sinning. It is possible to give the Lord the delight that is due to Him (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 14:23).

Verse 20. *The faith of Isaac* (Gen. 25, 26). There are two marriages that we know were for 100% brought about by the Lord Himself: that of Adam and Eve, and of Isaac and Rebekah. They still had to work on their marriage every day, just like we. They both grew apart. There was even a time when Rebekah no longer had any joy in her life (Gen. 27:46). The Lord must be the top of the triangle in our marriage, and a threefold cord every day (Eccl. 4:12).

We look here at three persons who have died in faith. Their lives and testimonies were different. Famous father Abraham. Isaac was a quiet person; he travels little and stays in the shadow of his father. His mother Sarah, and his strong wife Rebekah. Isaac favors his elder son, although he knew that the younger was the bearer of the promises (Gen. 25:21-26). We see at the end of his life that by faith he blessed

his sons concerning things to come (Gen. 27:33). By faith Jacob became the heir. Faith takes precedence of His will, over our own preferences!

Verse 21. *The faith of Jacob.* As we study Jacob in the book of Genesis, I am encouraged that the Lord describes his faith and not all his faults. The Holy Spirit values only what is done by faith, which has eternal value (1 John 2:17). Two acts of faith are mentioned by Jacob when he died. He blessed the two sons of Joseph in the right way (Gen. 48:8-20). Despite Joseph's protest, Jacob gave the primary blessing to the younger son. Faith submits to the will of God. Jacob finishes high. He bowed in worship and leaned on his staff (Gen. 47:27). The staff points to his advanced age. His persevering faith gives him the strength to end in adoration. It is so wonderful to see among all the heroes of faith a brother whose achievement is that he leans on his staff, because he is broken. That is one of the greatest miracles. It all began because Jacob saw the value of the blessings of God. But he did not do everything in the right way. Every Jacob will meet his Laban, but Jacob ended on a high level.

Verse 22. *Joseph's faith.* When Joseph lies on his deathbed, he speaks of the future exodus of God's people (Gen. 50:22-26). Although they are well off in Egypt with pastures, comfort, water of the Nile and prosperity (Gen. 47:5), Joseph reminds the people of God's promises given to them (Gen. 50:24). The promise to Abraham was given almost 300 years earlier, and the exodus from Egypt would follow about 150 years later (Ex. 12:40, 41; Gal. 3:17). By faith Joseph knew that all God's promises would be fulfilled. God's people will enter into the Promised Land again. By faith Joseph knew that their

fathers will rise from the dust. He gave orders concerning his bones (Ex. 13:19, Josh. 24:32). They spoke to the following generations.

The faith of Moses and his people

Verse 23. *The faith of the parents of Moses*, Amram and Jochebed (Ex. 2:1-10). The story of Moses begins first with the faith of his parents. The ruling Pharaoh, whose name is not mentioned, sees the Israelites as a dangerous minority. The midwives, Puah and Shiphrah, who choose for life are mentioned by name. Because the parents walked by faith, they did not fear the laws of Pharaoh and they hid Moses three months.

The important thing is that he was beautiful to God (Acts 7:20). His parents must have seen by faith that he was chosen by the Lord to do great things. The Lord rewarded their faith, for the baby cried at the right time so that Pharaoh's daughter had affection for him. Pharaoh was allowed to pay for the diapers and future training of their savior! What his mother put in his heart during those early years, Pharaoh never got out of him. God took care of Moses from his birth until his death. Let us thank the Lord for our believing parents.

Verses 24-28. *The self-denial of the faith of Moses* (Acts 7:23). He grew up in the courts of the palace and was never a slave. When he was forty years old, he no longer wanted to be a part of that royal family. By faith he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and wanted to identify with God's oppressed people. He could have been the next Pharaoh, but he renounced his Egyptian knowledge, wealth and power, and saw them as a temporary pleasure of sin. He

trusted in God and thinks of his end. He had in mind the reward of the Lord's grace. Moses regarded the reproach of Christ as a greater treasure than the riches and prestige of the present world.

Moses had to learn that he could not deliver the people in his own strength. After killing an Egyptian, he had to flee and for the next forty years he lived a total different life as the husband to one wife and the father of two boys. He became the unknown shepherd of his father-in-law's sheep. At the age of eighty, he saw a bush burning on his way from A to B. Then he learned that God cared for His people. Moses also learned the principle of the exchanged life. Because God was in the bush, it kept burning. When Moses came to the people of Israel the second time, they believed in him and the Lord worked mightily through Moses. The sea was opened and closed. When Moses lets the Lord live through him, all the Israelites come safely across and all the Egyptians drown.

No wonder that the people do not mention his name in their song of praise (Ex. 15). If you live by faith, there are three things you should always refuse. The honor of the world, the sinful pleasures of the world, and the riches of this world. Moses made a wise decision to choose the reproach of the Lord Jesus. He was used to deliver the people in God's time and in God's way. Moses became their prophet and mediator, and the humblest man in the world, who spoke to the Lord face to face (Num. 12:3). Moses is a trophy of God's amazing grace. We can be His trophies.

Verses 27-28. *The certainty of faith.* Between verses 29 and 30 there is a period of 40 years (Acts 7:30). In the meantime the Pharaoh with whom Moses had spent 40 years of his life, had died. Another

Pharaoh ruled over Egypt (Ex. 2:23). The Israelites groaned under their bondage and cried out to the Lord for help. The Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush and sent him back to Egypt. The Lord now uses Moses to judge Egypt through a series of plagues that are victories over the Egyptian gods.

The Lord reveals to Moses at the tenth plague that the firstborn of all the Israelites will survive, when the heads of the families will apply the blood of the Passover lamb on the lintels and the doorposts of their houses (reminding them of the cross) (Ex. 11, 12). Moses and the people believed. Moses gave directions for the observance of the Passover. The Jewish Passover means “to pass by.” The destroying angel did not touch their firstborn sons, while mourning was prevalent in the houses of the Egyptians, who did not put the blood on their doorposts. The Passover is a picture of the one-time sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary. The Jews who did leave Egypt were a redeemed people. That’s why they were not drown in the sea. The Egyptians had not put the blood of the Lamb on the doorposts and they drowned.

Verses 29-30. The Lord says they would escape their pursuers by walking through the Red Sea (Ex. 14:15-16). To make a path through the sea is an act of the Lord, and to pass through the sea is an act of faith by the Israelites (Ex. 14:14, 21, 22). The next forty years in the desert are not mentioned, because it was a period of unbelief and rebellion. In spite of their rebellion, they enjoyed daily many miracles.

Joshua is the hero of faith in the conquest of Jericho. His name is not mentioned, because again we see the wonderful exchanged life.

It is by faith that the walls of Jericho fell (Josh. 5:13-15). The people followed Joshua as they followed Moses. Those walls of Jericho teach us that believers must endure. Two believers like Joshua and Caleb influenced a nation for good! It is very painful that the next generation did not walk by the same faith as their leaders (Judg. 2:7-10).

Verse 31. *The faith of Rahab* (her name means “wide”). Rahab was a prostitute and a pagan woman, living in the condemned city of Jericho. She is an example of a wonderful faith. Her influence is worldwide. She had received the spies with peace. In faith she hung the red (scarlet) cord from her window and her family was saved. This tells me that salvation is for everyone. She became the wife of Salmon (one of the spies), the mother of Boaz, and even the great grandmother of David. She is one of the women in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 1:5). In the Epistle of James she is listed next to Abraham (James 2:23-25). You will receive this life, when you believe and live by God’s Word and sing the song that the Israelites have sung 40 years earlier at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:1; Josh. 2:9-11).

More heroes of faith

Verses 32-38. There is a long line of believers. From the call of Abraham to the taking possession of the Promised Land, these verses also show us man’s spiritual history, beginning with God’s calling and ending with the fulfillment of His promise. The author cannot discuss in detail all the Old Testament heroes of faith. With the words “What more shall I say” the author begins a general overview of the further history of God’s believing people. The following names

are not in chronological order. Of four of them you can read their accounts: Gideon (Judg. 6-9), Barak (Judg. 4-5), Samson (Judg. 13-16), and Jephthah (Judg. 11).

In 1 Samuel 1 - 24 David and Samuel come forward. You can see that David is not mentioned by his title. What Samson started by throwing out the Philistines, David has finished (2 Sam. 8:1). By faith they won military victories and conquered kingdoms. They instituted righteous governments, practiced righteousness, and were rewarded. They received God's promise! The provisional and partial fulfillment gives us all the more certainty of the final fulfillment of all the promises made to Abraham in a coming age. By faith the mouths of lions were closed (Dan. 6:3), and the power of the fire was quenched. By faith the prophets Elijah and Elisha were not killed. They escaped from the edge of the sword (1 Kings 19:2; 2 Kings 6). By faith children rose from the dead (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:17-37).

After the heroes of faith who have triumphed in this life (vv. 32-35a), there follow people who are called '*others*' in verses 35b-38. They were men and women who had equal faith, but these people were tortured and stoned to death. Others endured mockery, beatings, shackles, and prison. Some of them were sawn to pieces (tradition says that this was Isaiah). In God's view it is not important whether a person perishes or escapes, but whether he lives or dies by faith. Those believers who did not accept the offered release will have a better resurrection. They will inherit the promises by their faith.

What is meant by a better resurrection? All those who arose from the dead have died again (v. 35). Someday all the believers will rise

incorruptible and will never die again. Notice the beautiful way believers are described: the world was not worthy of them. They did not value the world that in its own wisdom neither knows nor worships the Lord Jesus. These believers were too good for this world. Peter and James had an equal faith. Peter escaped and James was killed (Acts 12).

This is one of the many promises for every believer today in the New Covenant (2 Tim. 3:12). Indeed all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Verses 39-40. They died without receiving the fulfillment of the promise. What is the fulfillment of the promise that they hoped for? It was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary, where He died for us to come to live in us and live His life through us. The letter begins with us living in the last days (Heb. 1:1). All the blessings of the New Covenant are ours, but the fulfillment of the promises is not heaven, but the Kingdom of God on the earth.

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away (Rev. 21:3-4).

These words went so very deep into me, when our sister Sue Gilmore read them in school.

Hebrews 12

After encouraging these Jewish believers with examples of believers from the past, the writer now encourages them by reviving their hopes. He points out to them not to look to Abel, Moses or Enoch, but to look away from anyone else and look to Jesus, because He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. It is important to see that the writer does not say Christ, Messiah or the Lord Jesus Christ, but "*Jesus*". Jesus is His human name. As a Man, He is our model to follow (1 John 2:6; 4:17).

We look to Him and run the race. It is the race of faith. Jesus had His face as a flint to go to Jerusalem. He never did His own will, but always the will of His Father. He looked for the low and serving place. The Samaritan woman stood, He sat. The disciples sat, Jesus kneeled.

The time is short and so we have to run. If we fall down, and we all do, we get up and continue running. Proverbs 28:13 has always been a great help to me. He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion. Always looking unto Jesus. Jesus Himself focused on the cross. The cross brought Him scorn and hatred and even separation from God.

He is also our Forerunner (Heb. 6:20). He also educates His children by tough discipline, but in everything He has always gone further. He also reminds us of the glorious future in the heavenly Jerusalem.

The writer adds words of warning for those who do not accept the message of salvation. Whoever believes has a glorious and an eternal future, whoever rejects awaits the wrath of God and a horrible never-ending eternity. There are only two ways for us all.

Verses 5-11. The appeal to the Scriptures. As a preacher and counselor the writer always points to the Bible. To help them and see everything in its proper way. In Hebrews 4:12 the Bible is called a two-edged sword. Revelation 1:16 says: Out of the mouth of Jesus came a two-edged sword. The Bible and the Lord Jesus have the same authority.

Chastisement is the school of a loving God. Our heavenly Father wants to teach us heavenly things. That is not possible without suffering. The believers suffered persecution and ridicule. Others were hindered by their financial problems, illness, stress at work, family issues, and unfaithful friends. This is what the Lord often uses in our lives, in order to help us grow to spiritual maturity. We must be taught that all things that happen to us as believers are tests. Jesus is the Door and everything has gone first through Him. The Lord disciplines with a warm heart.

The life of the believer is a series
of new beginnings

Verse 14. When we have freed ourselves we should follow these commandments. Like a hunter we must do everything we can do to get the spoil. Pursue peace with all men, and holiness.

In a world where much is decided by envy and self-interest, we must try to live in peace with all men. Pursue holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. It is not at any cost. It should never be at the expense of holiness. This is a lifelong process of renewal. True believers long so much to live holy lives. Unbelievers do not want that. They will not see Jesus and rejoice in His fellowship. The calling of the believer is to live in sweet fellowship with the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 1:9).

Verses 15-17. The expression “watching over” occurs here also. The elders must take care of the well-being of the believers. In this letter the pastoral workers are called overseers or shepherds (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet. 5:1-5). As shepherds they must watch over them, looking out for the dangers that hinder our spiritual progress and lead to falling behind in the grace of God. Grace is God’s goodness to those who do not deserve it. The elders should see if there are those in the church, who have never come to know the grace of God in truth.

Roots of bitterness. In Deuteronomy 29:18 the Israelites are warned against this. A person who falls away from the faith is constantly angry with the Lord Jesus, and they can embitter many others.

What I love about Asaph is found in Psalm 73:15. When he questions God and his faith wavers, he does not tell it to his children. In our tongue is life and is death (Prov. 18:21).

Esau was a godless man. Esau was also an unholy man. God had given him so many privileges: he was the head of the family, meaning a double share of the inheritance. He gave this up for one meal. He had a worldly attitude toward the things of God. Later he regretted this

hasty and thoughtless act (Gen. 27:34-40). The word repentance for Esau meant to change your mind. It was not the Biblical repentance. He thought of the material blessings he had squandered. The writer mentions him as an illustration. Let us see the value of our spiritual blessings.

Verses 18-24. The readers are encouraged to believe and to live holy lives. Now they read why this is important: You have not come to Mount Sinai. Believers cannot be compared with the Israelites in the wilderness (Ex. 19:16-19; 20:18-21 and Deut. 4:11, 12). Mount Sinai trembled under the violence of thunder and lightning. No one, not even an animal, was allowed to touch or approach the mountain. Sinai teaches us God's utmost holiness. The way to the Lord was not open, and whoever dared to approach Him would pay it by death.

But we can now approach Mount Zion. The word 'but' refers to the contrast between the old, earthly and temporal. Zion symbolizes the New Covenant, pointing to heavenly and eternal things. The Old Covenant forbade the Israelites from coming near. The New Covenant invites believers to join. It does not say: You will draw near later, but *you have come* to mount Zion. The writer makes it very clear that their position in the New Covenant is a fact before God. Readers come to Mount Zion, when they believe in the Lord Jesus. We are still here on earth. As pilgrims we are on our way to the city of the living God. Believers have already become citizens of the kingdom of heaven (Phil. 3:20).

The writer describes in seven points what awaits a true believer in the future:

1. The heavenly Jerusalem is called “Zion”. The name is already used in the Old Testament for the earthly Jerusalem (Ps. 78:68-69). That city is a shadow of the city of God in heaven, which will one day come down to the earth and be God’s dwelling place, together with the Lord Jesus who will dwell or tabernacle with His own people here (Rev. 21:2).
2. Countless numbers of angels. They are there when the entire congregation is welcomed into heaven. Believers who have arrived at their destination will, along with all the good angels, bring eternal praise and glory to God and to the Lamb.
3. The gathering of the firstborn. In the heavenly city God’s children will all be together for the first time. The word “firstborn” means those who will receive a double portion of the inheritance. This speaks of the privileges that will be theirs.
4. God is the Judge of all. This is an encouragement to all who are pilgrims. Men will appear before God to receive their rewards as His children here on earth (2 Cor. 5:10).
5. The Old Testament believers who kept the faith. On that day of the resurrection they will be completed, that is, perfectly glorified and receive a glorified body.
6. The believers will meet the Lord who shed His blood for all their sins.
7. The blood of sprinkling. The death of the Lord Jesus is now compared, not with the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifices of the Old Covenant, but with the murder of Abel. The blood

of Abel cries out for vengeance. The blood of the Lord Jesus speaks of better things, of forgiveness and the taking away of sins, cleansing of the conscience, eternal life, and also of a free and joyful entrance into heaven.

Verses 25-29. In view of the wonderful contrasts with Mount Sinai, the readers are warned of the danger of rejecting the Gospel and the danger of unbelief. To refuse to be saved, is to depart from the living God (Heb. 3:12), and to disgrace the Son of God (Heb. 6:5), and to count the blood of the covenant unclean (Heb. 10:29). The Israelites who were redeemed from Egypt proved time and again that they had hardened their hearts. They refused God's Word as it came to them through Moses. Therefore they did not escape God's judgment. They did not enter the Promised Land and died in the wilderness (Num. 14:22-24; Deut. 1:35, 36).

Now that we have been offered a far better covenant than that of Sinai, we are in much greater danger when we do not take it serious. The Lord spoke from the mountain through His servant Moses. Now the Lord speaks from heaven through His own Son. We shall not escape His judgment, if we reject the Son who offers forgiveness through His blood. Let Jesus rescue you now, because He delights in you (Ps. 22:8).

God will one more time shake the earth and the heavens (2 Pet. 3:10). All that is now hostile to God will be removed from the universe. Only what is unshakable will remain, the realm in which all His citizens will be eternally happy.

The writer is convinced that they are true believers, though at the moment they are weak and weary. That is why he encourages them and calls them to continue to serve the Lord persistently.

He points to three reasons:

1. the immovable Kingdom (Rev. 21:3-4).
2. the ever available grace. They draw upon His unlimited resources to worship God in the right way.
3. the holiness of God. Since God is a consuming fire, He must be served with awe and reverence. The Father of the Lord Jesus is a holy God who keeps track of all our ways and deeds. The believers must realize that their service to the Lord matters and is tested. All what has no eternal value will be burned (1 Cor. 3:10-15). This has nothing to do with our salvation.

There is a good quote from G. Campbell Morgan:

Too often we cry out to be delivered from the punishment, rather than the sin behind it. We would rather escape from the things that hurt us so much, than from the things that hurt the Lord so much.

We can judge the quality of our faith in the way that we behave, said Tertullian.

Hebrews 13

The writer views the life of the believer as a pilgrimage. The believer is one who travels from the city of destruction to the eternal heavenly city. Mount Zion is the city of God. In this chapter, the writer teaches his readers the behavior that should characterize us – with its moral and practical lessons and personal remarks.

Chapter 11 has faith as its theme.

Chapter 12 is about hope.

Chapter 13 shows his own love.

Verse 1. As members of God's family we should treat one another with love, this should hold us together like glue. Because He loves us, we must love one another. Jesus said in the upper room: A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you (John 13:34). It is a commandment. Lack of mutual love is a clear sign that our love for Jesus has also cooled down (1 John 4:8).

Verses 2, 3. We must be hospitable to our fellow believers, and especially when they are strangers. The New Testament also invites us to this (Rom. 12:13; 1 Pet. 4:19). Believers should open their homes (Matt. 10:11-12; Acts 9:43; 16:15). There are brothers and sisters everywhere who need help (Matt. 25:34-40). By being hospitable, some have unknowingly sheltered angels. This probably points to

Abraham (Gen. 18). When we bless others, we will be blessed also. It is also a command to think of the prisoners and those who are mistreated in this world.

Verse 4. The divinely ordained marriage of one man and one woman is under attack (Gen. 2:24-25). When Paul writes about marriage as an image of Christ and the church, he first writes about being continually filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

Verses 5-6. Do not run after money, because God has said that He will never leave us nor forsake us. The believers had suffered financially. This can diminish your generosity, when you do everything you can to regain your wealth.

One day we had to take a lawyer and he asked so much money. A brother reminded me of 2 Chronicles 25:9b. The Lord has much more to give to you. First Timothy 6:10 tells us that the love of money is the root of all evil. Be content with what you have. The Lord assures us that He will provide (Ps. 118:6). The Lord is a great Helper to me. I will not fear. We must continue to give cheerfully, because His purse is never empty.

Leaders

Verse 7. This is about their spiritual leaders. The writer begins by reminding them of those who founded the church. They brought them God's word, by which they came to believe. Some of them had gone to be with the Lord. This is written to many second generation believers. They must follow their faith. There must be recognized

leaders, who ensure that everything functions properly and that no one is forgotten. When everything is done in order, there is great joy (1 Cor. 14:40).

Verses 8, 9. We will pass away, but Jesus will remain the same forever. Jesus made a complete atonement for our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. Today Jesus intercedes for us (Heb. 7:25). Each generation must fight the good fight of faith. The author warns his readers not to be thrown off balance by strange teachings.

Verses 10-12. The reference to the altar and the camp make it clear what strange teachings involved: the introduction of Jewish ceremonies such as washings of the body and eating the flesh of sacrificial animals – belonging to the Old Testament and tabernacle service. All these sacrifices are no longer necessary, because the one-time sacrifice of the Lord Jesus cleanses us from all sin. Food in which “no benefit is found” does not mean food necessary to live, but the consecrated flesh of ritually slaughtered animals from which the Jews expect salvation.

This had everything to do with the ‘altar’. The flesh of animals could only be eaten if they were clean and had been ritually slaughtered (Lev. 11). The Lord Jesus abolished the Jewish dietary requirements (Mark 7:19). He removed the altar that was everything in the lives of the Jews. The heart must not find its strength in food, but in grace! The lesson is clear: our cleansing from sin is a free gift of God. It is not attained by ritual acts of the priests, such as lighting sacrifices, burning incense, or casting blessings, or of one’s own works, such as fasting and doing acts of repentance. The sacrifice in which the Lord God rests and is totally satisfied, is that of the Lord Jesus alone.

Some Jewish readers found it a problem that their faith had no visual priest, no temple and no sacrifices. Earlier they were told that Jesus was their sacrifice. Now they learn that Jesus is also their altar. Believers do have an altar, a priest and an offering. Their altar is the cross of Calvary, where Jesus sacrificed Himself. The New Testament believers “eat” from that altar. They feed on the Lord Jesus and His finished work of redemption. They know that He is the High Priest of their profession. He prays and pleads for them in the true sanctuary in heaven.

There is also a popular teaching these days about prosperity. The friends of Job were the first prosperity preachers. The Lord was not happy with them (Job 42:7). The only thing that is wrong with prosperity teaching is that it is very wrong. The New Testament believers should also not give themselves a title (Matt. 23:8).

Verses 12-13. The Day of Atonement is a type and the Lord Jesus the reality. The pre-burning outside the camp foreshadows the death of Jesus outside the city. Not within the city, but on Calvary’s cross, Jesus met God’s judgment for our sins (Mark 15:20).

The Lord Jesus was also the Sin-bearer who, being cursed by the people, was despised, rejected, and slain outside the city (Lev. 24:14). This means that He suffered outside the holy city and outside the temple. This once again makes it clear that the death of the Lord Jesus marks a radical and complete break with Judaism. His sacrificial death and resurrection opens up a new and living way with His own people.

Verses 13-14. Going out to the Lord Jesus is the right response. The writer encourages his readers to distance themselves from Judaism with its visual altars, sacrifices, and priests, and look by faith alone to the Lord Jesus Christ. The true believer has no part in any religious system that has rejected the Savior.

We must leave all religious systems and go forth to Him, outside the camp and bear His reproach. Like the Old Testament saints, the believers are also pilgrims on their way to the heavenly Jerusalem. We have no lasting city here, but we seek the one to come. This letter was written just before the destruction of the temple. The priests had restored the veil and continued their ministry as usual. But in 70 A.D., Jerusalem was destroyed and what was foretold by Jesus was fulfilled.

Verse 15-16. Worshipping God in spirit and truth is only possible through the Lord Jesus. By Him we continually offer our praises. Jesus enjoys adoration from our lips and from grateful hearts, and let us also not forget sacrifices of doing good and mutual help, for with such sacrifices the Lord is very pleased.

The pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world (James 1:27). Doing good is to do good to our fellowmen as an offering to God. Give yourself first to the Lord, then through Him to others (2 Cor. 8:5). Among the early believers were many poor believers. Mutual help is the outward evidence of a pure inward faith.

Verse 17. Obey your spiritual leaders. No church can function without leadership. Everyone must first look after his own soul. David said: Bless the Lord, oh my soul. Leaders must answer to the Lord for their service. Believers must cooperate so that the elders can fulfill their duties with joy. Leaders become discouraged, when we are rebellious. Disobedience not only harms the believer, but also the church.

Verse 18. Disagreements and bitterness are useless. In addition to obeying the elders, we should also pray for our brothers and sisters outside our own church. We must be associated with believers worldwide, because we are His own body.

Verse 19. It is quite clear that the writer is in line with the other writers of the New Testament. In our service of the Lord a good testimony is needed. When we are active in the work of the Lord and have a bad conscience about certain things, it has a defiling effect. He asks them to pray that he may return to them sooner. From this we see that the writer was related to them.

Verses 20-21. This blessing I use often, and it is always positive for the hearers. He prays that the believers will be fully equipped with every good work to do His will. There is a mingling of the divine and the human element. God works in us what is well pleasing in His sight. Then we do His will. In other words, Jesus works the desire in us. He gives us the power to do it. He rewards us. Jesus is worthy of our praise forever. The New Covenant is the eternal covenant, because it is perfect.

Why is the writer so sure that his prayers will be answered? Because the eternal, unchanging God had done mighty things in the past. He has brought back from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ. He has made an everlasting covenant with people on the basis of the precious blood of Christ. This is the first time that the writer speaks of the resurrection. He saved this point for his last and greatest blessing. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus signifies His victory over sin, death and Satan.

It is the only place where Jesus is called the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Jewish readers know that Isaiah 63:11 says that the Lord remembered Moses and His people, and was the One who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock. We also know already that many events of the Old Testament foreshadow the New Covenant. Moses is a type of Christ, the Red Sea a type of death, the exodus is a type of the resurrection, and the old covenant a type of the New Covenant. Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd (John 10:11). He leads His people as a Shepherd and reigns in grace and love. He saved them by His own blood and keeps them for Himself. He died to save His people. By His blood He shows His self-sacrifice as the Good Shepherd for His church.

Jesus is not only the High Priest, who forgave our sins. Because He lives and works in us, He helps us to live as believers and He equips us in good works. The Greek verb to equip also means to perfect, to restore and reconcile. All these concepts are seen in the work of God in the believer. He reconciles, restores, rests, and enables us to continue to do good. The purpose of our lives is to bring joy to the Lord. He is worthy to receive praise and honor in all eternity.

Verses 22-25. We should also listen with an open mind to what is read from the Bible. The letter to the Hebrews is not a short and easy letter. The author himself says that it is a sermon, and 'words of admonition'. Reading this letter takes one hour. That was not so long for the first generation of believers. A worker passing by sometimes continued much longer (Acts 20:7-9). We must be ready to listen to the preaching with an explanation and application. The first sign of real revival is a renewed desire to hear God's Word and to apply it to our hearts and to our lives.

Verse 23. The announcement of Timothy's visit. Timothy was released from prison and as soon as he arrives, they want to visit them together. Once I went with a group of students back to the Sinai desert, where I had lived for eight years. I had to leave in 1982, because they gave the Sinai back to Egypt. One day I put the students on a camel and I went around giving out Bibles. Within an hour I was locked up in their local prison. I was able to send a note to the students to return to Israel by themselves. That morning we had a study: Not to go back to Egypt, with the song of Keith Green. Through a miracle I was set free and found the group in Israel. Years later I wanted to show Linda the Sinai, but they found me on the black list. We were sent back and poor Linda is also now on the black list.

Verses 24-25. Like all the New Testament letters, this letter has also a personal greeting. The writer sends them greetings from the brothers in Italy. Greetings to all the saints. By repeating 'all your' twice the writer shows that he does not exclude anyone and wants those who are not present at the reading to be greeted later. Because of their

spiritual problems, some believers would not be present at each meeting. He wants those who need it to hear what he has to say to them. God's grace is for them all!

Many letters ended with the words: May it be well with you, or may the gods be kind to you. Believers wish each other God's grace, which is the most beautiful word in the Bible. By grace we are saved. By grace we may soon enter the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God. Grace is God's loving help, that is always available to us. The expression 'Amen' is a Hebrew word meaning surely. This is a common response from a group of believers, when they agreed to a prayer or to their worship. The writer expected his readers to agree with his song of praise and also with the rest of what he wrote in this letter.

Summary

Some Hebrew believers had a weak faith and little love for each other. They should be characterized by their hospitality and by their compassion. They must know that through marital unfaithfulness and love for money the love of God disappears. God's love must always and only be their motivation, as it was with Paul (2 Cor. 5:14). They are to imitate the faith of their fathers who had gone before them. And always look to the Lord Jesus, who is eternally the Same!

They must not return to the Levitical system. A Jewish brother from the 18th century called David Baron who was instrumental in bringing many Jewish people to the Lord Jesus said:

To adopt the model of the Levitical priesthood in the New Testament Church, which ritualism endeavors to do, is nothing else but an attempt with unholy hands to sew together again the veil which the blessed reconciled God had Himself rent in twain, and like saying “stand aside, come not nigh to God” to those who are made nigh by the blood of Christ. ³

The believers then and now must unite with the rejected Savior and journey as pilgrims to the heavenly city. They should always be thankful, helpful, and obedient to the Lord. They must trust in God’s amazing grace, which is the only source of our strength.

The exchanged life is the only way to live. The Lord Jesus foretold the disciples in the upper room this miraculous truth, which they would receive after His glorification (John 14:20). I am in My Father, and you in Me and I in you. This is like the bucket in the ocean, and the ocean in the bucket.



3 David Baron; *The New Order of Priesthood*; pp. 39, 40

The Lord Jesus is our life. We are called to abide in Him just as the branch abides in the vine. The quality of our faith in the Lord Jesus can be judged by the way we conduct ourselves.

Johan and Linda are grateful that we are allowed to serve you, with this most beautiful life.

Promises to the Lord and to our brethren

We want to share some promises with all those who read this exposition of Hebrews. Linda and I put this on paper when we were married.

1. We promise that we shall continue to study the Scriptures and according to the light that we receive, obey His Word and faithfully proclaim the indwelling reigning Lord Jesus, Him crucified and risen.
2. We promise that we shall be faithful to one another and love the children, grandchildren and also our great grandchildren as we should.
3. We promise that we shall always do our utmost to behave to anyone that we meet in our days in a correct and godly manner.
4. We promise that we speak the truth to you. Whenever we fail and are aware of this, we shall confess that as soon as we sense it.
5. We promise to serve wherever, without any thought of money.
6. We promise that we shall continue to seek and to serve the Lord Jesus wholeheartedly with our hearts, our hands and our home.
7. We promise that Linda and I will seek to serve side by side, whenever visiting or teaching invitations will come in the future.

The words from the end of the book of Job chapter 42:12 encourage us. The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first part. These blessings did not come in one day, but over a period of time.

We long to bear much fruit for the Lord Jesus and to live wholly for His purposes, alongside you, and like Paul shall finish well (2 Tim. 4:7).

Yours to be counted on, Johan and Linda Schep

Consulted literature

I am grateful for the help of the writings of:

William MacDonald: Believer's Bible Commentary, A complete Bible Commentary in one volume, Edited by Art Farstad

Dr. Warren Wiersbe: The Bible Exposition Commentary, Edited by Cook, Six volumes.

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