

THE ~~EP~~ISTLE
TO
THE HEBREWS

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THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

The Holy Spirit has not said who wrote this Epistle, and though it is generally ascribed to Paul there is one point that argues strongly in the other direction, despite the fact that some feel that they have strong evidence from the wording that he was the one that wrote it. In 2 Thes. 3.17 he says, "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write". This salutation is not found in the Epistle to the Hebrews and that is a fairly strong reason for believing that Paul was not the writer.

In ch. 2.3 the writer speaks as if he was dependent upon the testimony of those who had been with the Lord. But Paul emphasizes a direct revelation from the Lord in heaven (Gal. 1.11, 12).

If the Holy Spirit has inspired the writer to make himself known, as is usually the case, it is helpful at times in making comparisons of Epistles to remember who the writer is, whether the same one in both cases or not. But if the Holy Spirit has not given this information we can be content not to know.

We are restful in knowing that the Holy Spirit is the Author in all Scriptures; but there is a characteristic belonging to this Epistle that makes it fitting that the human instrument should not be known. It is one particular function of the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Christ and reveal them to us (John 16.14, 15), and this is the prominent feature of this Epistle, more than any other. The greater part of it is occupied with this one theme, the setting forth of the glory of the Son of God by similitude and contrast.

In the study of Scripture it is necessary always to read right through the whole book which we take up, perhaps several times, before we begin to frame any definite thoughts upon it. Doubtless there will be some definite impressions from the first reading, but there will be some passages which can only rightly be understood when the general character and purpose of the book has been seen.

As an illustration of this, we know that the atoning work of our Lord preceded His intercessory work in resurrection, yet we find here that chapters 2-8 are occupied with His intercessory work and the atonement is dealt with in chapters 9 and 10.

There is a reason for this reversal of order. And when the reason is recognized it helps to clear some passages which present difficulty, and enable us to see others in a light that is more consistent with the whole than appears when they are considered as isolated statements. These we shall see as we proceed. But for the moment we should note some facts from the Acts which shed some light upon the condition of the Hebrew believers of that time.

Before the Lord left the apostles He told them to go to all nations with the Gospel. But as we read through the earlier chapters of the Acts we find that they restricted themselves to the Jews, despite the fact that God gave indications of His will through Philip at Samaria and Peter at Cæsarea. Moreover in ch. 15 we find those at Jerusalem making a distinction between Jewish and Gentile believers, and in ch. 21 we find them engaged with vows and sacrifices.

Paul makes quite clear that there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile, but that as members of the one body we should all be doing the same thing. Jews and Gentiles should be together in local churches, where they could each help the other from their knowledge and experience. This same distinction is being maintained today in the existence of Jewish Missionary Societies. Another factor in the general disunity.

This Jewish aspect, which is contrary to the appointment of the Lord, removed the offence of the cross (Gal. 5.11) and made room for the enemy to sow tares among the wheat; hence Paul's strong language in the Epistle to the Galatians who were being troubled by this Jewish teaching. This fact, the existence of unregenerate ones among the true believers, referred to in Gal. 2.4, needs to be borne in mind when reading such passages as Heb. 6.4-7 and 10.26-31. So will the true meaning become clear.

The turning back of those at Jerusalem to the Temple worship and sacrifices, shews the innate tendency of the Jewish mind at that time to cling to something visible to the natural eye, instead of laying hold of the fact of the heavenly ministry of Christ and our being seated with Him there. And it is because of this that the heavenly ministry of Christ is presented and emphasized in the Epistle to the Hebrews before the atoning work is taken up. By thus noting the construction of the book and seeing the reason for it we are set on the right line to understand more correctly the individual statements, particularly of the first part.

CHAPTER 1.

In general, this chapter sets forth the glory of Christ as Son of God, contrasted to angels, Heir of all things, and the One by whom the *ages* were made. This word "to-make" can have the idea of shaping or composing; and therefore we understand the arranging of the ages in connection with this earth and God's dealing with man upon it.

The fact that we read here "spoken unto us in *a* Son" is in order to emphasize the character and authority rather than the person; in contrast to the prophets. It is son-*ship* rather than personality.

The speaking was in the days of His flesh, according to ch. 2.3, and therefore the "last days" spoken of include the period of His ministry before the veil was rent. But the fact that it is "*these* last days" shews that it also includes the present time, the Epistle being as late as that of Paul to the Ephesians. Chapter 2 goes on to shew

that the period of the signs after Pentecost is all one with this period of the "mystery". Those who believe that the mystery was only revealed to Paul, whether early or after Acts 28.28 have this to face, that Hebrews was written after Paul was a prisoner at Rome, yet the writer, by inspiration, includes the Lord's earthly ministry as one with the ministry of the time of writing, by the use of that one word "*these last days*".

Inspiration allows for ignorance of certain facts, but never allows a false statement due to ignorance. The writer may have been ignorant of the fact that this dispensation would be as long as it has; but his words, given by the Holy Spirit, are exactly correct. With the coming of Christ the Kingdom of the Heavens began to be preached as being "at hand". It began with His resurrection and will continue through the Millennium, when we shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in that Kingdom (Matt. 8.11). Therefore, the last days amount to three thousand years, against four thousand before the coming of Christ. This, of course, must not be confused with the last days of this dispensation spoken of in the Epistles to Timothy, for instance.

The fact that this long period is spoken of as the last days implies that God is dealing with man in the last of his ways, or economies, before the reign of Christ, when righteousness will be enforced. There is no change in dispensational teaching from the preaching of the Lord Himself till He comes in glory to reign. And it also shews God's wonderful longsuffering to Jew and Gentile. The early saints did not know how long it would be before the Kingdom and glory were revealed, the outlook was always "the night is far spent, the day is at hand". But that *night* has continued for about nineteen hundred years and still the foretold vengeance is held off, and God is still calling sinners to be reconciled to Him by the death of His Son.

In verse 3 we have the only reference to atonement that is made in the chapter, and that just a remark in passing. Everything is designed to make his resurrection position the outstanding feature. The principle sentence being He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Wonderful as the other statements are, the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person and upholding all things by the word of His power . . . (from the time that He made the ages), the great point is that, having purged our sins, He is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. This at once diverts the attention from all that He was on earth to where He is now seated. The contrast to all ministry associated with the earthly temple.

So we continue in v. 4, "Becoming so much better than the angels (after the period of humiliation) as He hath *by inheritance* obtained a more excellent name than they". The priests were but men, and therefore inferior to the angels. So the whole chapter goes on to distinguish Him in this way; and always with the resurrection position in view.

"This day have I begotten Thee" is used by Paul in Acts 13.33 as proof of resurrection". "I will *become* to Him for a Father, and He shall *become* to me for a Son" does not at all conflict with His *eternal* Sonship. But when He "became flesh" He was begotten, the only begotten because He was conceived by the Holy Ghost. And in this sense God *became* His Father and He *became* God's Son. We must ever keep in mind His two natures, distinct yet united, when we are dealing with His relationship to the Father. Ver. 6 speaks of the coming *again* of Christ, *whenever He bringeth again* the first begotten into the world He saith, "Let all the angels of God worship Him". Ver. 8, His throne is for ever and ever. The reference to loving righteousness and hating iniquity is just the ground for His present exaltation anointed with the oil of gladness *above* His companions. And when heaven and earth pass away He will be the One that will fold them up as an old garment, as He is the one that now upholds them by the word of His power. Then ver. 13 gives us the quotation from Psalm 110, "Sit Thou on My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool".

All this glorious contrast and superiority to angels is designed to lift the mind above all that the "Jews' religion" could afford, and give authority to the Gospel (spoken of in the next chapter) wherein God has spoken by a Son.

CHAPTER 2.

The warning at the beginning of this chapter, coming so early in the Epistle, reminds of the Epistle to the Galatians. They had been seduced by those who were going back to the law of Moses as these Hebrews were, and Paul admonished them in the first chapter. Here, the danger of allowing what they had received to leak out is emphasized both by the glory of the One Who brought the word, as in the first chapter: and in the verses following, the Lord Himself, and those that heard Him. In Galatians Paul emphasized the authority of the Gospel by asserting that he neither received it from any man, nor was taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ.

The contrast between these two passages seems to support the thought that the writer of Hebrews was one who had heard the Lord and His apostles, or the apostles at least. But it makes no difference as to the real authority, which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

In ver. 2 the word "angels" can be *human* "messengers", as in Rev. chapters 2 and 3. And if there was an appointed just recompense of reward for every transgression under law, how shall we escape if we neglect this great salvation which was actually preached by the Lord Himself: God also bearing witness with the miraculous signs.

This word, "How shall *we* escape", is like 1 John 1 where the apostle includes himself in a number of statements which really apply to unbelievers, but the statements begin with "If". So in Hebrews, "How shall *we* escape, if we neglect?"

The writers of Scripture did not base their security merely upon a statement such as "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved". James says "faith without works is dead". And the Lord said in John 10.^{27, 28}, "My sheep *hear* My voice, and I *know* them and they *follow* Me; and I give unto *them* eternal life". And the warning, coming as it does at the beginning of the Epistle, indicates the reason for its being written. There were those who had crept in, not true children of God, who were undermining the Gospel and leading back to Judaism. The reason is the same as for the Epistle to the Galatians; but they were Gentiles and would not be expected to have the same knowledge of the earlier Scriptures and the Levitical law; therefore Paul deals with them in a different way. The writer to the Hebrews uses their knowledge of the Levitical arrangements, and of all the Scriptures, to bring out the transcendent glory of Christ: and incidentally, to give us a key to the typology of all the tabernacle arrangements.

Ver. 5 seems, at first sight, to suddenly introduce another subject, and thus make the word "for" a difficulty, inasmuch as verses 4 and 5 do not seem to be related. And neither are they directly, we have to go back further to find the connection with "the world to come". The words "whereof we speak" shew that it has been already mentioned, and we find it in four places in ch. 1. In ver. 6 "when He bringeth again the Firstbegotten into the world". Ver. 8, "Thy throne O God is for ever and ever". Ver. 12, "they shall be changed: but Thou art the same". Ver. 13, "Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool".

This consideration of ver. 5 emphasizes the importance of keeping the context in mind, and thus noting the principle theme of the writer. In this case we see the intention is to direct the attention of the reader to the future glory, which fadeth not away, in contrast to the glory of a temporal economy consisting in earthly things. And that "world to come" has *not* been put in subjection to angels (but to men).

Verses 6-8, quoting from Psalm 8, evidently refer to Adam and his posterity, who being inferior to angels, were nevertheless placed over all the earthly creation. But through Adam's sin, and the following sin of all his posterity, that dominion was lost, and "we see not yet all things put under Him". The words "not yet" leave room for the expectation that the dominion will be restored to man; and therefore the purpose of God will be realized: as we read in Isa. 11.6, "the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them".

But for the present we see man has not the full dominion, "but we see Jesus". This is His earthly name in contrast to the titles "Lord" and "Christ". And when used alone, in the Epistles, usually signifies His humiliation among men. He also was made a little (or, a little while) lower than the angels, but we see Him now crowned

with glory and honour. And the world to come is to be in subjection to Him: and those who, in fellowship with Him, suffer humiliation or persecution now, will have the dominion with Him then.

But this verse 9 is of somewhat peculiar construction. He was not crowned with glory and honour that He might taste death. The sequence of the statements is intentionally broken in order to bring the tasting of death at the end. This is done when the writer intends to pursue the thought of such a final statement. In 1 Cor. 10.16 we have a clear example of it. The "cup" is mentioned before the "bread", contrary to practice, because Paul intends to pursue the matter of the bread in the next verse. Ver. 10 in the chapter before us does the same thing, "it became Him . . . to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering". Thus death and suffering become the principle thought of the whole chapter.

While we have this thought before us, we do well to continue to the end of the chapter and note its development. Verses 10-13 shew that this Jesus is the Captain of Salvation to a company whom He calls His brethren. Ver. 14 shews that He, like they, was a partaker of flesh and blood that He might suffer death. And verses 17, 18, bring us to the climax—"a merciful and faithful High Priest" Who has Himself suffered being tempted. The Lord's resistance of the temptation involved suffering, we alas, too often, relieve ourselves of the suffering by yielding, at least in part, and so bring suffering upon ourselves afterwards, when the sin is realized. And to shew the continuance of the thought we may look on to ch. 4.14, 16 and see that the Lord is still in view as the sympathetic and compassionate High Priest.

Now if we recall the fact that the atoning work of Christ is not the theme in these earlier chapters, not being taken up till ch. 9, it will help us to get the intended view of His suffering and death in ch. 2.

Ver. 9 says, "that He might taste death for every man". This word "taste" is full of meaning, let us consider a few places where it occurs. It is used twice in ch. 6.4, 5, those who have "tasted of the heavenly gift", and "tasted the good word of God". We go on to read of such "if they shall fall away". It reminds of the "stoney ground" hearers—a short and shallow experience. Then in 1 Pet. 2.3, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious". This is to "new born babes", and therefore again not a deep experience. But as Psa. 34.8 says, "O taste and see that the Lord is good"; a taste is sufficient to prove His goodness.

One literal use of the word helps us too, 1 Sam. 14.43: "*I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand*".

Now we come to the Lord Himself again at Golgotha, when they gave Him vinegar and gall to drink. "And when He had *tasted*, He would not *drink*". And with this we come back to Heb. 2. When we consider the atonement, and think of the conflict which the Lord passed through in contemplating it in Gethsemane, and the words

"the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not *drink* it?" Then we realize that atonement was something more than a *taste*. But atonement involved something infinitely beyond mere physical death.

As Christians we may be called upon to suffer death for Christ's sake. But we shall never know the depths that He experienced in making atonement. But if we are liable to death we need One, as our sympathetic High Priest Who has also suffered death, but Who lives to help us. And this we have in the Captain of our Salvation. He *tasted* death for us.

Death involves dying—a period, long or short, that leads up to the actual death. And though some have had longer and more painful experiences of death than even crucifixion, nevertheless, our glorious Captain has tasted it. Phil. 2.6-8 is another passage which speaks of the death of Christ, not as to atonement, but as our example (let this mind be in you, ver. 5.) No mention is made of redemption or forgiveness, it is "a death of a cross", as a martyr.

This title "the Captain of our salvation" has also a meaning fitting to the context. Salvation does not always mean deliverance from wrath, far more often it means deliverance from the power of Satan and sin. In this context we are not viewed as sinners, but as the "brethren" of Christ, "sons" of God. Justification leads to a hope in resurrection. And the Captain of our salvation is the One Who has engaged Himself to bring the many sons unto glory. And it was with a view to His being a suitable Captain to lead us on this way that He was made perfect through sufferings.

So in ver. 11 we read, "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are being sanctified (present continuous tense) are all *out of one*". That is out of Abraham (ver. 16). The intervening verses quote passages to prove the relationship of "brethren". Ver. 13, "Behold, I and the *children* which God hath given me", does not imply that we are the children of Christ. He is not ashamed to call us *brethren*. We are the sons of God. As the Lord said, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father". To speak of being "the Lord's children" is not right, and confuses things. We are *given* to Him as His sheep or His disciples. The word in John 21.5, "Children, have ye any meat", is strictly speaking "boys", but it has a wide usage, often being used of a servant, the margin suggests "Sirs" as an alternative.

In a company of saints it is very desirable to keep to proper terms of relationship and proper titles.

In the passage before us we note that the title "God" is used, whereas in Isa. 8.18 which is being quoted, it is "the LORD". "The Lord" in the New Testament is the title given to Christ. God is not "the LORD" of the Old Testament to us, He is "the Father".

And so we come to ver. 14 and see that it was necessary for Him to take on flesh and blood with a view to death.

But death could not hold Him once the purpose of that death was accomplished; so *through* death, not by the fact of death, but by rising

out of it, He overcame all the power of Satan. Thus, as the word "destroy" means, put Satan out of working order, or rendered him powerless, not put him out of existence: and by so doing wrought deliverance in the power of His resurrection for those who were in bondage to the fear of death.

The old covenant said very little about eternal things. Earthly promises were the principle feature, and after death was the unknown. And because of Satan's power there was always a dread of being cut off in one's sins. Eternal security by the blood of Christ was not known. But that is the subject of ch. 10.

However, these Hebrew believers were familiar with that covenant and the writer would lead them to enjoy the glorious victory of the resurrection of Christ the Captain of their salvation Who has undertaken to bring them to glory. Thus, having passed through all the experiences of temptation as well as suffering He is competent to be a merciful and faithful High Priest.

The word "reconciliation" in ver. 17 is literally the word to "atone" for. But it seems that this is not a blunder on the part of the translators, but, as in many cases, they have endeavoured to give the true sense from the context.

There is one passage in Numbers 16 that shews a likeness to this use of the word "atonement". After the death of Korah and his company God plagued the people; and Moses told Aaron to go quickly with a censer of fire from off the altar and with incense and make atonement for the people. Atonement for sin was usually by a sin offering, but in this case there was no time for such, but the censer of fire from the altar and with incense upon it was typical of the intercession of Christ, and in the circumstances God accepted it, and the plague was stayed. The people of Israel were in covenant relation to God and we can see how close a parallel there is with Heb. 2.17.

In our case it is not because there is not time, but because there is no need, and sin offerings are now abolished. Christ having died once, He dieth no more; He lives to intercede. He makes atonement by intercession looking back on the one sacrifice already offered. Hence it seems the translators used the word "reconciliation", seeing that it is Christ in resurrection that is in view, our merciful and faithful High Priest, Who is not only able to intercede but to sympathise and to succour.

CHAPTER 3.

That these Hebrew believers should be exhorted to "consider" the Apostle and High Priest of our profession is particularly fitting to the circumstances, seeing that their tendency was to revert to the earthly priesthood. But the exhortation is never out of date, we need to consider Him much, for there is plenty to distract our attention from Him.

The word "apostle" applied here to the Lord is unique. It means "a sent one" with authority—an ambassador. And in John's

Gospel it is repeatedly recorded that He was sent by the Father: and it is this aspect of His coming—as the faithful and true witness—that is continually being presented in these early chapters in Hebrews. He is not called the Redeemer here, nor is any word used to direct the mind to His atoning work. That is omitted: the minds are carried straight from His earthly testimony, where He was our example, to the resurrection position where He is the High Priest of *our* profession. We are viewed as the sons of Aaron. The theme here being a continuation of that in ch. 2, where He is the Captain of our salvation. There we see Him made like unto His brethren; here we see Him as the one over His own house. So verses 2-6, by comparison with Moses, shew Him to be, not only a servant in God's house, but a Son over His own House at the same time. A member in, and yet the builder of the house. And He Who built all things is *God*. So that again His humanity and deity are presented together.

Now ver. 6 says, "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end". This does not make our position in His house depend upon our works. Every regenerated one is a member of God's house, and regeneration is purely of grace. If our position in the house depended on our holding fast "*unto the end*", nobody could be sure of being in the house while in this life. It does not say "Whose house we shall become", when we reach the end. But "Whose house we *are*", even now. As in Matt. 24 those that shall endure to the end, prove by so doing that they are truly Christ's. The others, who do not, prove that they never were His: and like the foolish virgins, having no oil, will be rejected, so here those who do not hold fast (like those who fall away in ch. 6) prove that they never were really in the house.

The remainder of this chapter and the next are occupied with the extension of this thought, exhorting those who profess to be believers, to prove their heavenly calling. And this is exactly what was needed in view of the turning back of Judaism which is seen in Acts 15 and 21 and in Galatians. As soon as the offence of the cross ceased (Gal. 5.11) it made room for false professors: and it is the same today from another angle—opening the door for the world instead of Judaism.

The remainder of the chapter is based on Psalm 95, shewing that though all Israel were saved out of Egypt, not all entered into God's rest. Paul does exactly the same in 1 Cor. 10. As soon as those at Corinth fell into sin, though he addresses them as saints, he puts before them the fact that those that sinned were overthrown in the wilderness. And here in ver. 12 they are called brethren, yet the warning is given. It is fitting in addressing the whole company to use the word "saint" or "brethren", but the warning is given that each individual may judge himself as to whether it applies to him in truth.

The particular failure in this context is unbelief, not holding fast the beginning of the confidence. Those who perished in the wilder-

ness failed to believe God when the test came, when God commanded them to go up against the Amorites and possess the land. So with these Hebrews, they believed the precious promise of forgiveness of sins, and took the position of believers; but when it meant being cut off from the congregation of Israel and suffering persecution, some began to waver. It is the stoney ground hearer over again, and the same thing happens today.

CHAPTER 4.

So, in this chapter, ver. 3, those who have truly believed, with a faith that produces works, *do* enter into rest. Now this word “do enter” though present tense does not refer to present experience: ver. 9 shews it is still future—God has not rested yet. It is common both in Greek and in English to use the present tense for something that is about to be done, specially when it is desired to give assurance. For instance, “I am coming”. In John 14.18 the tense is exactly the same as in Rev. 22.12, both are present tense, but both refer to the future.

The point of the whole passage is that though God rested the seventh day, after creation, yet in the days of David he still spoke of His rest as future, “If they *shall* enter into My rest”. Joshua (ver. 8) did not bring them into the true rest, and ver. 9 says that that rest still awaits a coming day. It is a “keeping of a sabbath” (marg.). This is not merely a keeping of a sabbath in principle, that is, a time of rest indefinitely; it is a period of 1,000 years. In Gen. 1 we have six days work and one day of rest. And God has been working with man in various ways for nearly six thousand years, and we are nearing the end of this dispensation, which will be followed by the thousand years of God’s rest, when all will be brought into subjection to Him through the righteous reign of His Son upon earth. God is working to a programme and a pattern.

It is blessedly true that the Lord has already given rest to the soul to every one who has “come” to Him (Matt. 11.28, 29). We did not have to labour for that, He *gave* it. But the rest spoken of here we must labour to enter into (ver. 11). The Lord said, “*Strive* to enter in at the straight gate”. Peter says, “Make your calling and election *sure*” (Luke 13.24: 2 Pet. 1.10). The “narrow way” of obedience to Christ, the “adding” of 2 Pet. 1, the “labour” spoken of here in ver. 11, are the evidences of that living faith which alone avails anything. Those who are satisfied to say, “I believe” and have no concern for God’s will, and are unwilling for the labour, can never have the *scriptural* assurance that they will enter into God’s rest. Hence we see the continuance of the same line of thought, that each one who read the Epistle should exercise himself to be sure that he was a real member in God’s house.

Moreover, the words that follow (verses 12-13) are very searching, shewing that the word of God is being continually applied, quick (living) and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. In Eph. 6 the sword is directed against the enemy, here it is directed against us. And a two-edged sword will pierce more keenly and effectively than a one-edged one. And when God uses this sword He uses it with skill and divides between one thing and another. The marvel is that we can read God's word so much without feeling this piercing. Oh for sensitive consciences to feel the application of God's word. For if the dividing work is not accomplished in this life it will be at the judgment to come.

The soul is that part of us which is natural. The spirit is that which is born of the Spirit. How much there is which is natural (soulish) that is mistaken for spiritual. They that worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and in truth. But one may say, How can we tell whether it is natural or spiritual? Not by feelings, not by whether we enjoy it; different persons find different experiences appeal to their temperaments, and what one glories in the other denounces. The only safe guide is the "word of God". Many today claim to be "led" of the Spirit when they do just the opposite to what the Spirit has said in the "word". "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams".

That which is born of the spirit needs no correcting, but it is this piercing work of the word of God which brings our souls into conformity with the mind of God, this is sanctification. We were sanctified unto God (in His purpose) when we were justified by the blood of Christ (ch. 10.10). But we are sanctified in experience as the Holy Spirit is allowed to apply the word. Any outstanding experiences we may have are but steps in this progress which will only be completed when our bodies are "changed" (1 Thess. 5.23).

"The joints and marrow" seem to be terms belonging to the body chosen to represent the spiritual side of our being; inasmuch as the sword is directed against us. The joints of the body fit so perfectly together that it is impossible to get anything between the parts without injury. The marrow, being encased within the bone, is hidden away and quite inaccessible by any ordinary means, but the word of God will penetrate to the innermost recesses of our nature; it is a discernor of the thoughts and intents (or "intentions" in present day usage) of the heart. Has not every child of God felt this as the word has been spoken, or in reading it; something hidden away, which no one but self knows anything about, has suddenly been brought to light with convicting force. It is then that we stand in a critical position, and much of our future progress will depend upon the decision we make. The same applies to the Holy Spirit's application of truth that needs to be obeyed. If we respond to light we shall receive more light. If we reject it, we impair our faculty of seeing it.

The final clause of ver. 13 is not an exact translation but the translators have endeavoured to give the sense. It reads, "the eyes of Him

toward Whom for us (or to us) is the word". This may seem somewhat puzzling, but ch. 13.17 makes it clear. There we read of the "guides" who must "give account" (literally, "give a word"). In English it is sometimes said, "bring me word", which means, "bring me an account of what transpires".

So here, God is the one to whom we must give account. And all things are naked and opened to His eyes. And now what will these Hebrews do in view of such searching truth? Will the mere professors brazen it out? Woe to them if they do. And will the true believers turn to earthly sacrifices and priesthood to meet their need? And what shall we do? If one deceives himself by saying he has no sin, he may read these words and feel nothing. But if one is at all sensitive to the sin that lies within, which can never be eradicated and can only be kept down by constant warfare, he must feel crushed: or at least, would do if it were not for the knowledge of the comforting truth contained in the following verses. But being familiar with it, as soon as the light exposes the sin, or the sword divides and searches it out, we at once resort to the mercy seat. If we do not we are foolish indeed.

So to these Hebrew believers the comfort and exhortation was given to hold fast because we have such a great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God. One who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, One Who has suffered even unto death, One Who was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Able to sympathize, able to succour, He is at God's right hand to intercede for us and to grant us the help that we need. We need not be cast down, He has undertaken to bring the many sons to glory and He will not fail.

The words "having past into the heavens" (ver. 14) should be "through the heavens". In 2 Cor. 12.3, 4, Paul speaks of being caught up *into* paradise, but not *into*, but *to* the third heaven. Thus we see that while the Lord is interceding at the golden altar as our great High Priest, in the third heaven, the souls of the departed are under the altar (Rev. 6.9) in paradise (Luke 23.43). They would therefore be in the second heaven; the first heaven being that which is visible to us.

CHAPTER 5.

It is evident from ver. 2 that this chapter is continuing the same theme as the previous one—a high priest must be able to have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way; and this we have seen to be true of Christ in 4.15—"touched with the feeling of our infirmities". This word "infirmity" as also in 5.2 is "weakness". And the fact that He was tempted in all points like as we are *yet without sin* shews that it is not moral or spiritual weakness in His case, but bodily weakness. Being weary, He sat on the well, in John 4. And it seems that weakness was the reason why Simon was compelled to carry His cross. 2 Cor. 13.4, "crucified through

weakness" seems to apply to this too. Therefore, being subject to the same weaknesses as we are, He was involved in like temptation, yet without sin.

But in the pursuance of this theme fresh thoughts are of course introduced. And in ver. 1 we need to distinguish between "gifts" and "sacrifices for sin". Gifts were not offered for sin, it would be out of place. And sacrifices for sin were not gifts, they were commanded. These two offerings express two aspects of our Lord's ministry on our behalf. The "meat offering" was a gift—something for God's pleasure—a reminder of His dear Son. Such gifts—the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name—the Lord presents on our behalf. But when we sin, we need a Mediator, and He fulfils this office for us on the ground of the one sacrifice that He has offered. But you will notice that this is not gone into here, it is reserved for that part of the Epistle which uses Aaron as a type. This part is leading on to Melchisedec, who, as we have seen, is typical of the resurrection position only.

Aaron is used in ver. 4 to illustrate the call of the high priest because we have nothing in Scripture about Melchisedec being called. But the verses that follow go on to shew that when Christ was called to the priesthood it was after the order of Melchisedec and not after Aaron. Again and again in these early chapters the sacrificial side is passed over and the resurrection ministry of the Lord is brought into prominence. Thus, ver. 9 speaks of "eternal salvation", referring to Christ's *preservation* of His own, as distinct from "eternal redemption" in 9.12. And this eternal salvation is to those that "obey Him". Obedience comes in after we are born again: therefore this salvation is not what is commonly called "conversion", when one first believes. Salvation from wrath does not depend upon our obedience; but salvation from the power of the Devil does.

In ver. 7 we have a reference to "the days of His flesh". But the prayers He offered then were for Himself, not for us. They were "unto Him that was able to save Him from death". And He was heard until the time came for Him to die voluntarily. These prayers and strong crying with tears are mentioned as a further indication of the fact that He passed through the same experiences as He knew His disciples would. And by this experience He "learned" what it meant to be obedient to His Father in a sinful world. And thus was perfected to fulfil His high priestly ministry on our behalf in resurrection, and so provide us with an eternal salvation from the power of the Devil (2.14).

But these Hebrews had not gone on to know the value of this high priesthood of Christ, they had mingled the new with old. They had mixed the earthly with the heavenly, as Acts 21 shews, and they had turned back to animal sacrifices and the Aaronic priesthood; consequently they could not appreciate the glory of Christ as a priest in heaven after the order of Melchisedec.

Therefore it is said in ver. 11, "Of Whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing". They, according to the time (some thirty years after the death of Christ), ought to have been teachers, but were as babes, only able to take the milk of the word.

Unexpectedly, in ver. 13 we read, "unskilful in the word of *righteousness*". The word "righteousness" hardly seems to fit the context. But Paul says in 1 Cor. 15, concerning the doctrine of resurrection, "evil communications corrupt good manners". "If the dead rise not, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die". It is always the same. Errors of doctrine will lead to bad practice, though we may see no connection between them. It is the training of the mind that counts. If the mind is not trained to discern between doctrinal differences it will fail to rightly distinguish between good and evil. So in ver. 14 we read of those who are able to take the strong meat of the doctrine of Christ, they "have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil". In the Greek these two words "good" and "evil", are alike except for the middle letter—*kalon* and *kakon*. There is a lesson here. Sometimes that which is evil is very much like that which is good and one has to look right into the middle of them to find the difference. And in this case, unlike alpha and omega, the first and last letters, *k* and *l* come next to one another. It is so easy to slip out of the good into the evil, and we need to have "the eyes of our heart enlightened" (Eph. 1.18 lit.).

These people needed to be taught again even the first principles of the oracles of God; and the next chapter goes on to say what the first principles are.

The prayers and supplications here are closely connected with His learning obedience through the things which He suffered, and not only with salvation from death.

The suffering of a sinless soul in striving against sin we cannot appreciate but in a little: we are too accustomed to sin to appreciate much that is sin, it passes unnoticed. Moreover, we sin without recognizing the sin because of lack of knowledge. But if we can imagine a man with as perfect knowledge of good and evil as God. A man with as perfect knowledge of God's will as God Himself. And a man that has the same perfect hatred of sin that God has, then we approach to the standpoint of Christ.

Then we need to recognise that to Him was committed a responsibility far and away beyond that which was committed to any other man. He was a prophet to Israel, but none of the other prophets were called upon to do what He did. The prophets were given messages which were inspired by God; but This One spoke by inspiration continually. The more we meditate on His utterances the more we realise that they transcend all the inspired writings of prophets and apostles. So pregnant are they with truth—simple yet profound—that only they can get the full value of them who have "ears to hear".

The Devil knew Him and appreciated this glory, he knew too the purpose for which He had come; and he therefore made Him his target continually. If he "departed from Him for a season", it was only to continue his work through demons and sinful men.

There is one word in the Greek for "trial" and "temptation": the context alone can tell us which is the meaning; whether we are to understand "being tempted" in the sense of Heb. 4.15, "yet without sin", or in the sense of Jas. 1.14, "drawn away of His own lust".

Moreover, every trial involves a temptation. It may be to find our own way out instead of waiting for God to shew His way out. It may be we seek relief instead of enduring with patience. People use words that are improper to "relieve the feelings", forgetting that for "every idle word" we must give account to God. It may be we do not shew any sign of these things outwardly, but inwardly there may be a fretfulness, which if examined, will be found to be complaining against God. The words of Col. 1.11, "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness", specially when considered in their context, must surely make us feel how little we know of spiritual power. Sinless perfection and being filled with the Holy Spirit, as they are talked about today are but a delusion in most cases, suitable to those who have little appreciation of true sanctification, or of sin.

But if we can bring all these things into focus at once and realise Christ's perfect appreciation of each, then we begin to understand something of what it meant for Him to learn obedience by the things which He suffered. And while we rejoice with thanksgiving at having such a great High Priest to intercede for us, we must surely loathe ourselves and hate the sin that brought Him to suffer the curse of God.

CHAPTER 6.

Here the exhortation is to go on to perfection. Not perfection in the sense of sinlessness; but completeness in the doctrine of Christ—that is the context. The first principles were to be left: just as a scholar leaves one class to pass on into the next and learn higher subjects. But the elements that were learned in the early classes are not "left" in the sense of being abandoned. The multiplication tables have to be used in the highest mathematics.

In ver. 2 we have "baptisms" (plural). A person was only baptized once, and if it is plural because many persons were baptized we would expect resurrection to be plural for the same reason. It seems therefore that water baptism and the baptism with the Holy Spirit are intended here. This leads to the conclusion that though these believers were baptized with the Holy Spirit they were still babes. And 1 Cor. 3.1-3 and 14.20 shew the same to apply to those at Corinth. Hence the baptism with the Holy Spirit, even when it was real, did not in itself constitute a "full gospel", as we so often

hear today. There were things concerning the priesthood of Christ that these believers were unable to receive: they remained occupied with the first principles only.

And what shall we say of these days? Everywhere we hear the cry for "food" among God's children. But like ill-nourished children, when anything like solid food is given they are unable to swallow it. It is a sad state of affairs indeed. How many are there today who read their Bibles in an intelligent way? Comparatively, very few. A few verses a day, taken from here there and everywhere, a promise, a pearl. But ask them what the context is dealing with where the pearl was found and they know nothing. It is lamentable indeed. No wonder their senses are not exercised to discern good and evil.

Books have been written on how to study the Bible. The way to study the Bible is to read it in a sensible way, just as one would any other book. The difference being that the Bible consists of many books. Then take one book and read it through quickly enough to keep in mind what you have read and the Bible will be its own teacher to a large extent. Not altogether, for God has appointed teachers. But in ordinary instruction all is not left to the teacher, the pupils are expected to "read up" the subjects, and if they do not they will not know what the teacher is talking about.

Verses 4-6 have been taken as proof, by some, that one that is truly born of the Spirit can be lost eternally. Others, realising that this does not agree with the teaching of the New Testament, nevertheless find a difficulty in explaining the words. But ver. 9 will help. "Things that accompany salvation" imply that those above who fall away were never truly saved. And this view fits the character of the Epistle as a whole: for it was written when the believers had gone back to the earthly calling, the offence of the cross had ceased, and the way had been opened for those to come in who had never been born again.

It has a present day application in Christendom, not in going back to animal sacrifices, but in a man made priesthood modelled partly on Old Testament lines, but intermixed with heathen customs brought from Babylon. The outlook is earthly rather than heavenly, and ordinances of men are the basis of their hope rather than the work of Christ. Nominally they are Christians, but they know not the Lord. And in the day to come He will say to them, "*I never knew you*".

But let us not hurry away from this without due consideration. These verses speak of those who "were made partakers of the Holy Ghost". Are not these true children of God? There is one case that seems to help in this matter, it is that of Judas Iscariot. If the Lord Himself cast out demons by the power of the Spirit of God (Matt. 12.28), by whom did Judas cast them out? He was given the same power as the rest of the twelve (Matt. 10.1): yet the Lord said he was a devil (John 6.70 and 13.18) and his case is prophesied in Psa. 109, and he went "to his own place".

Mistaken ideas about this passage have led some to think that they have committed "the unpardonable sin" (which the context in Matt. 12 shews to refer to something quite different) and plunged them into despair for years.

Having said so much, we are still left with a certain amount of haziness about the actual meaning of the words in verses 4-6. But the verses that follow leave no doubt that the writer has two classes in mind. And those whom he addresses as "you," the "beloved" ones, he is quite confident are not such as fall away to perdition, but who believe to the saving of the soul. There is no suggestion that there is a change from the fruitful condition of ver. 7 to the thorny condition of ver. 8: we can safely conclude, therefore, that those who "fall away", in ver. 6, never were saved. (See also Matt. 7.^{22, 23}).

The tense in ver. 6 should be noted. It is not that they would crucify the Son of God afresh if they repented: but they *are* crucifying (continuous) Him by having returned to the old course. All backsliding or returning to sins that have been given up, all returning to the world, to which *we* professed to be crucified by baptism, is crucifying the Son of God afresh. Either we are crucified to the world by identification with Christ, or we crucify Him afresh by identification with the world.

So again, by keeping in mind the state of the Hebrew believers at that time, we see that the Epistle is written with the object of exhorting the true children of God to shew Whose they are by living up to their heavenly calling, and to cause others to fear. The vagueness seems to be intentional because of the uncertainty of the state of those to whom it is written.

Before leaving these verses let us note that the miraculous signs of the beginning of this age really belong to the "age to come" (ver. 5). Many can quote the passage in Joel 2 that prophesies these things, but how many are aware that it refers to the time *after* Israel are gathered back to their land, as the context states. They were given at the beginning of this age as confirmation of the divine origin of the Gospel (Mark 16.²⁰: Heb. 2.4). Just as the giving of the law was confirmed by the signs on Mount Sinai.

In commending them for their work and labour of love and encouraging them to continue, it is interesting to note the use of the word "unrighteous". If God did not reward the faithful loving service of His people it would be unrighteous. That is the implication. And it reminds us that the judgment seat of Christ will be as strictly righteous as the great white throne: not only as to reward but suffering loss as well.

Having digressed in 5.¹¹ on the matter of their dullness and inability to take strong meat, he now brings the thread of his discourse back to the matter of the eternal security of those who are truly born again. But not by a bare statement of words, neither by their own works. But the security is in Christ and by His priestly work

based upon His redemption: and it is applicable to those who shew their faith by their works. "It is by faith that it might be by grace" (Rom. 4.16), but faith without works is dead.

That the Holy Spirit should inspire the use here of the oath by which the promise was confirmed to Abraham is remarkable, for in ver. 18 that very oath is made to apply to us. We, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us, have the two immutable things (promise and oath) in which it is impossible for God to lie, as the anchor of our souls. This is very different from the thought that one who is really a member of Christ can be eternally lost. We have also the precious fact for our assurance and comfort, that Christ as the forerunner has already entered within the veil, representing us with intercession based on His atonement till the many sons are brought to glory.

Ver. 20 reads literally "whither a forerunner for us entered, Jesus, becoming (when He entered) a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec for ever". This statement is of value in deciding that Christ is a high priest only in resurrection, and the security we are encouraged to enjoy is, *in these verses*, not associated with atonement, but with His position as the Captain of our salvation, Who will lead and preserve us till we are brought home.

CHAPTER 7.

The reference to Melchisedec in ver. 1 clearly shews the continuance of the subject introduced in ch. 6.20, the priesthood after the order of Melchisedec. And as we pursue it through the chapter the preservation to eternal glory is seen to be the outcome of this priestly intercession. But first we need to consider what is said about Melchisedec. The first thing is the incident in Gen. 14 when he met Abraham. And it is worth while to note that in that passage he brings forth bread and wine. These things are not sacrifices in themselves, but are our Lord's appointment as a memorial of the sacrifice that has been offered. So then, as Melchisedec was a priest, he must have offered sacrifice to God though it is not said so. But the bread and wine being brought forth for Abraham suggest the feeding upon Christ spiritually now that He is raised from the dead. Christ ministers His own substance to us in resurrection. In Psa. 110 we have again nothing but the resurrection position mentioned. And in the chapter under consideration we shall find that all is designed to set forth the resurrection position of Christ. When a type of the offering of Christ's body is required Aaron is produced—not Melchisedec.

The blessing and the tenth part are referred to later so we pass to consider the meaning of the name. By interpretation the *name* means King of Righteousness. The title "King of Salam" means

King of Peace. Isa. 32.17 says, "the work of righteousness shall be peace". That is, peace brought about by His righteous rule (see context); and, "the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever". This again belongs to His resurrection glory.

Now we have to deal with some further points which have been misunderstood. If Melchisedec was *made like* unto the Son of God, it is evident that he was *not* the Son of God. Some have thought that he was. Melchisedec appears in the record in Genesis as a priest. Nothing is said of father or mother, when he was born or when he died. And all this is in bold contrast to Aaron whose pedigree is given in full. And that is the intended contrast, as we shall see further on in the chapter. That which is *not* said about him makes him a type ("like unto") the Son of God.

But it has been argued that the Lord Jesus had a mother, and both her genealogy and that of his foster father are given in detail. That is true, but the statement of this verse must be true, there *is* the likeness and we must see where it is to be found. If that Person Who was born at Bethlehem were only human there would be no likeness. But in that He is God as well as man and always was God, though he had a mother and a birth, that same Person had neither beginning of days nor end of life in His essential deity. So completely and perfectly combined are the two natures in the one Person.

Now in ver. 4 we are invited to consider how great this *man* (Melchisedec) was. And if we may sum up the next verses to ver. 7, we may say that Abraham is greater than Levi because Abraham is the father, but Melchisedec is greater than Abraham because Abraham paid tithes to him and was blessed by him. And reading on to ver. 10 Levi is belittled in that though the people paid tithes to him and his sons, yet Levi's father paid tithes to Melchisedec. The glory of the Levitical priesthood thus fades in the light of a greater priesthood, the resurrection priesthood of Christ, of Whom Melchisedec is the type.

These Hebrew believers found it difficult to give up the glory of the Levitical priesthood. But the veil had been rent and God had put it away. So ver. 10 argues. If perfection were to be found in the Levitical priesthood, why does God speak in Psalm 110 of another after the order of Melchisedec. In other words the Psalm, of the time of David, bears witness of the change to come. Therefore they should not count it a strange thing.

So verses 12-19 continue to shew that a change of priesthood necessitates a change of the law. For the Lord did not come from the tribe of Levi. Thus the writer would detach them from the law of ordinances, shewing that the priesthood of Christ is not of that order but in the power of an endless life. The Lord's *earthly* life was *not* endless, it *ended* on a cross. Another evidence that this priesthood is not associated with His earthly life.

So the "weakness and unprofitableness" of the law is asserted, and the fact that it made nothing perfect. But the bringing in of a better hope did, by which *we* draw nigh to God. Who? Only one family of one tribe in Israel, as Aaron and His sons? No. All the Hebrews who believed had that precious privilege, and inasmuch as Jew and Gentile are all one and there is no difference, all who believe in Him have this right as Aaron's sons to draw near. We need no priest to stand between, as Aaron's sons stood between the people and God. Christ is the Great High Priest and we are the royal and holy priesthood under Him. We come back to further aspects of this in later chapters and we will not anticipate them here. We pass next to the matter of the oath, ver. 21. The Levitical priests were not constituted by an oath. But the Lord swore and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Here is further assurance of eternal preservation. And ver. 21 leads on to shew that by this oath Christ was made "surety" of a better covenant.

Now inasmuch as the suretiship of Christ depends upon the oath of His priesthood, it is evident that He is our Surety only in resurrection, as He is High Priest only in resurrection. This therefore cuts away all the teaching that Christ was our Surety in His earthly life. His life and obedience under law were in no sense substitutionary. And though He certainly did stand in our place and atone for our sins, the atonement was by His blood and not by His works. But even so, the Scripture never speaks of Him as being Surety for us in His death, and we do well to restrict our use of the term to that wherein the Holy Spirit has restricted it. He is our Surety in resurrection in that He guarantees to bring us to glory through the administration of this heavenly priesthood.*

So ver. 23 continues to enlarge upon it, shewing that whereas death necessitated the passing on of the office from one to another, the fact of His "endless life" assures us that He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him (verses 24, 25).

And this High Priest "becomes us". He suits our need. Holy, harmless, undefiled, He needeth not to offer for His own sins. But this (offering for the people's sins) He did once when He offered up Himself.

Ver. 28 speaks of "infirmity". And in ch. 5 we see a reference to His infirmities *physically* in the days of His flesh, that He might become a compassionate High Priest. But when He became High Priest in resurrection it was in "perfection". No weakness now, but the *power* of an endless life. (The word "consecrated" is *perfected* or *completed*. Comp. ch. 2.10 and 5.9.)

* A tract on suretiship free from the author.

CHAPTER 8.

We now come to the summing up of this matter, as the opening statement says. We have *such* a High Priest. In every way transcending the Levitical priests, not on earth but set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. A minister of the holy things and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man. Now the word "minister" suggests a service which may be to the public or to God. Our Lord is fulfilling both. He intercedes for us. But as the next verse goes on to shew, He is ministering to God for us. It is necessary that this Man also have somewhat to offer. Many rejoice in fact that He intercedes for us, but the word consecrate in Exodus means to "fill the hands". If the people brought no gifts how could the priests' hands be filled. And if we only come to Him for intercessions how will the hands of our Great High Priest be filled? Do we not all come short in this? The voluntary offerings of the Old Testament speak and give us an idea of what we should bring. Burnt offering, meat offering, peace offering, each presents its own peculiar view of Christ and His life and death. And this is what our God and Father delights to receive. The fruit of our lips, memorials of His beloved Son. And He is there to minister for us to God in presenting such gifts. Oh may our hearts be stirred more and more to come to Him with large gifts and offerings. In Leviticus 2 and 3 we have the "meat offering" which is the gift or present, and the "peace offering" which is the sacrifice.

In 7.14 we are reminded that our Lord sprang out of Juda, and therefore if He were on earth He would not be a priest. But there were those who were still offering the animal sacrifices though God had rent the veil. But they were only shadows (ver. 5) and examples of what Christ is doing in the "super heavenlies". He has obtained a more excellent ministry, the Mediator of a better covenant established upon better promises. Promises of heavenly and eternal realities (ver. 6).

The remainder of the chapter argues out from the promise of a new covenant in Jer. 31.31, that if the first covenant had been faultless there would have been no need to promise a new one. The law made nothing perfect. It was delivered to the people to keep but gave them no power to do so. The offerings were only shadows and really accomplished nothing. But now with the law written in the heart, and the Holy Spirit within us, by whom we know God as our Father, and a Great High Priest in Heaven to succour, lead and minister for us, what manner of persons ought we to be? And this is the summing up that the writer desired to bring these Hebrew believers to, drawing them away from earth to realise what they had in Christ in the heavens. This is the primary purpose of this first part of the book. The next chapter opens up to us the atonement aspect of the work of Christ, pointing out the inefficacy of the animal sacrifices just as these chapters have shewn the weakness of the Levitical priesthood,

CHAPTER 9.

There are two words in the first verse that need a little comment. The word "ordinances" which means literally *righteous things*, which, if the people observed it was their righteousness (Deut. 6.24, 25), and the word "worldly" which could mean according to this world in contrast to the heavenly, or it can have the meaning of an *ordered* sanctuary. The verses that follow seem to require this meaning because they give the orderly arrangement of the tabernacle. There was no confusion or do-as-you-please method in connection with the service of God. Every detail in the furniture, as well as the tabernacle itself, and every detail of the service had a spiritual significance pointing forward to Christ. Some of these details are mentioned here, but at the end of ver. 5 we have the words "of which we cannot now speak particularly".

Why, we may ask, was it not fitting then to give an exposition of those wonderful types in the books of Exodus and Leviticus? There seems to be one reason from the context. As we read on we find it is the way into God's presence by the blood of Christ that is the intended theme for that moment. But was not that a very elementary thing to have to lay out in detail before those who lived in the days of the apostles? Alas, even in those days, the believers were sadly lacking in the knowledge of God's ways and will. In ch. 5 the writer could not unfold all he would because they were as babes and dull of hearing. They were occupied with the earthly instead of the heavenly, and they needed to be taught again the first principles. But ch. 6 exhorts them to go on from the first principles unto perfection. And what can we say of today? How many that profess the name of Christ are acquainted with the types of our Lord Jesus Christ? Indeed some despise them as if they were of no value or out of date. It is evident from this epistle that the Holy Spirit intends them to be the food of God's children. Nevertheless, God has so arranged that though the details of the types are not interpreted for us in full in this epistle, sufficient is given to put us on right lines to interpret them all. And by diligent study, with this book as a key, we can find a wealth of instruction that will help us to bring that with which we can "fill the hands" of our Great High Priest. And the Father "seeketh" such worship.

From ver. 6 onward we see that the ground of the truth that is being expressed is that which is found in Lev. 16, the arrangements for the day of atonement. Those things are out of date in that God has no earthly place of worship today (see John 4.21), no vested priests, no repetition of sacrifices: but they are not out of date as foreshadowings of the glory of Christ, and are intended to be the joy and rejoicing of our hearts as we see there the glory and beauty of our beloved Lord.*

* See "Types in Exodus and Leviticus" from the author.

You will be well repaid, dear reader, if you break off here and read Lev. 16. You will not gather its significance all at once, but line upon line, precept upon precept, you can gather here a little and there a little, enough to fill your heart with praise.

But not only so, are you acquainted, my reader, with the facts of the tabernacle construction? If not, take the book of Exodus, from ch. 25, and read to the end of the book.

Ver. 6 speaks of the first tabernacle. Ver. 7 speaks of the second. The second was divided off from the first by the "veil" and was called the holiest of all. The "once a year" arrangement is clearly laid out for us in these verses, and ver. 8 tells us what it signifies. That the way into the holiest of all was not made manifest while that tabernacle, or later the temple, was still standing. It was a figure (ver. 9), a foreshadowing of Christ. The figure accomplished nothing (verses 9-10) but "Christ being come" a new order of things is brought in (ver. 11). And not only a new and more perfect tabernacle, in heaven, but His own blood in contrast to that of bulls and goats is the precious reality (ver. 12). Redemption, eternal redemption, is now an accomplished fact.

According to ver. 13 the blood of bulls and goats did sanctify to the purifying of the *flesh*. In this dispensation the flesh is renounced and nothing but a new creation avails in the sight of God (Gal. 6.15). In those days, a man could come to the tabernacle or the temple and bring his offering and it was accepted and he had a right to all the privileges of an Israelite no matter what his condition of heart, providing he did not commit himself in a way that involved excommunication. Judas is an example of this; even the Lord sat at the passover with him, though he knew what he was at heart.

The law of Moses was like human law, it could not deal with the state of the heart, but only condemn for actions done.

But the blood of Christ has nothing to do with the flesh. A new creation, a new birth, brings in the new covenant condition which we have seen in ch. 8, the law written on the *heart*. Nothing less avails in the sight of God. Have you experienced this, my reader? If not, seek it at once with all your heart.

So ver. 14 brings in the glorious contrast to sanctified flesh. A conscience purged (cleansed) to serve the living God.

Now Christ is not only the Mediator of the New Covenant, in that He died for the sins of those who came after him. Ver. 15 shews that His atonement covered the sins of those who died in faith before He came. So that they, with us, might enter into the eternal inheritance.

Verses 16 and 17 hardly give the right sense in the A.V. Instead of "testator" read "covenant victim" and you have the sense. The word is actually "the one disposed of", and the word "men" is not there in the Greek, it is "dead ones". This is a reference to a very old custom in Israel. In Gen. 15.8-21, when God made the covenant with Abraham, certain animals were slain and the smoking furnace

(representing God, who took the responsibility of the covenant) passed between the parts of the animals. So in Jeremiah 34.18, 19, much later it was the common practice for those who took responsibility in a covenant to pass between the parts of the slain animal. And without the death of that one that was disposed of (passive, not active in Heb. 9.17, 18) the covenant had no value. So here Christ is not viewed as the covenantor. God is the covenantor and Christ is the victim and the Mediator, in that He offered Himself.

So he goes on to explain, the first covenant, when the law was given, was not without blood. But instead of the people passing between the parts, the blood was sprinkled upon them and upon the book, thus joining them together in a lifelong covenant.

Then in verses 21, 22 the principle is extended to everything in the tabernacle. The blood of the victim that had died was the token of the strength of the covenant. And as the day of atonement, for forgiveness of sins, is the predominating thought, we read that without shedding of blood is no forgiveness.

So, the patterns on earth were purified with animal blood. But the heavenly reality with the blood of Christ. And the plural (sacrifices) here may refer to the fact that He was Sin Offering, Burnt Offering and Peace Offering combined.

The remaining verses are clear in their emphasis on the "once offered" in contrast to the repeated offerings of the old covenant, and the entry into heaven itself instead of an earthly sanctuary.

But the last verse may need one comment. "Unto them that look for Him" does not imply that any saved ones will not be looking for Him. But that the looking for Him is the contrasted characteristic of His people to that of the world. See 1 Thess. 5.4-6. Whatever may be said of unwatchfulness on the part of His people in those days, Rev. 19.7 shews the bride will be ready by the time the Lord comes. And the foolish virgins who were not ready, were certainly not saved ones, for the Lord says to them, "I know you not". May the blessed hope of seeing Him, Who was once the covenant victim for us, stir all our hearts to look more earnestly for that glad moment of His appearing.

CHAPTER 10

This chapter continues the same subject as the previous one: but it is not *mere* repetition. That one presented the Lord as the sacrificial *victim*. This one, as the One Who is both Offering and Offerer: the thought that is expressed at the end of the last ch. (ver. 26).

Ver. 2 presents an argument to support the statement of ver. 1. The manuscripts differ here. But both readings come to the same thing. We can either read it as a question, "Would they not have ceased to be offered?" implying the answer "Yes", or, as a statement, "They would have ceased to be offered". The point is, that if the consciences of those people had been once cleared before God, no

further sacrifice would have been needed. But the fact that they were repeated proves that they did *not* make the conscience clear. If a man sinned as in Lev. 4, he brought a sacrifice, the priest made an atonement and he was forgiven. Yet on the day of atonement there was "a remembrance again made of sins every year" (ver. 3). What then was the use of the sacrifice which the man brought for himself? First, it was the expression of repentance for sin. Second, it was the assurance that God had remitted that sin, so that he should not be punished for it, according to the *earthly* covenant. But no such expression as "eternal redemption" (9.12) is found in the Levitical arrangements. And in Rom. 3.25 the word "remission" is the "putting aside" of sins that are past. So that although the man who brought his sin offering would have a sense of forgiveness, the remembrance again at the end of the year signified that from God's standpoint the sin had not been legally dealt with and the blood of the animal had not made a real atonement. The sin was put *aside* till the One should come Who would put *away* sin by the sacrifice of Himself (9.26). So we see more clearly the force of ch. 9.15. Those Hebrew believers of those days who were *called* by the gospel, had assurance that the sins committed when they were under the law had now been put away for ever by the blood of Christ. We may well consider what it must have meant to those people to have such an assurance. It is like a religious person doing all he could to earn his salvation, and then to suddenly realise that the atoning death of the Lord Jesus covers all.

"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. 4.8). For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (ver. 4).

Chapter nine goes into detail concerning the "Victim", which is the passive side. Chapter 10 goes into detail concerning the Offerer, which is the active side. So in ver. 5 and on we have the words of Psal. 40 shewn to apply to Christ when He came into the world, "Lo, I come, to do Thy Will, O God".

The context here is plainly shewing that the doing of the will of God by the Lord Jesus is in the offering up of Himself in contrast to the "sacrifices and offerings" of the old economy. The attempt to make ver. 10 mean that we are justified by Christ's obedience to law is spurious, and involves the corruption of the whole passage. The Holy Spirit, moreover, has done here what no honest expositor of the Psalm would have dared to do. In ver. 5 we read, "but a body hast thou prepared me", whereas the Psalm says, "Mine ears hast thou opened". And whereas in the Psalm it is written, "Yea, Thy law is within My heart", in Hebrews it is omitted altogether. As if the Holy Spirit, knowing the error that would come, altered the words with the express object of taking the attention away from obedience under law to that which was contrary to the law for mere man, even the eternal counsel and will of God that Christ should offer His Own body, a sacrifice for sin. And it is in the doing of *that* will of God

that we are *sanctified*. Rom. 5.9 says we are “justified by His blood”. But here, “we are *sanctified*” by His blood. Here it is actually a past accomplishment. That is, eternally redeemed (bought) and set apart as God’s own possession. And, with cleansed consciences are fit to enter into His presence now, of which we shall see more later. Thus the personal doing of the will of God is here emphasised.

Now such a vital and complete work affects both Himself and us. If there is no more offering for sin He can “sit down”. Whereas the Levitical priests were still continuing their sacrifices daily. Note that in ver. 11 it is not the burning of incense that is in view but the sacrifices for sin. And it is in this connection that Christ has sat down. And is waiting till His enemies be made His footstool (13). As to the incense aspect, He ever lives to make intercession. So when Stephen was before the council he saw Jesus *standing* on the right hand of God (interceding) (Acts 7.55, 56).

Ver. 14 presents another view of sanctification. It is present and continuous, a process. It can mean, those who are being sanctified by the blood, as they are called one by one. And this seems to fit the context. But it is equally true that we are continually being sanctified by the Holy Spirit in daily experience. However, the point of the statement is that by one offering He *hath perfected them for ever*. Hence there is no more to do, He can sit down. That is how His work affects Him. Now how does it affect us? Let the verses that follow explain. We have been “perfected”. Not in our actual condition, but in our standing before God, cleansed by the blood of Christ, “white as snow”. And in support of this again the new covenant promised in Jer. 31 is quoted, “I will put my laws into their hearts and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and their iniquities will I remember *no more*”. “Now where remission of these is there is *no more* offering for sin”. Then if there is *no more* offering, we can be restful that the “one offering” has accomplished all that is needed for us.

Ch. 3.1 exhorts us to “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession”. That was in connection with the intercessory priesthood of our Lord. Now we have considered the sacrificial priesthood of the same glorious One. At the end of the first part the new covenant is quoted (ch. 8.10) and at the end of the second part it is quoted again (ch. 10.16).

As has been pointed out the Epistle presents the resurrection glory of Christ first, to draw their hearts heavenward away from the earthly temple. But we ourselves can appreciate a value in the order, resurrection—then death. We gaze upward and behold His glory, His infallible intercession, His sympathy, His endless life, His power to save to the uttermost, The God man. Our hearts rejoice. But we look again and we see as it were the Lamb slain. Our hearts are hushed. It is love indeed that He should intercede for us in heaven. But that He should give *Himself* the sacrifice for sin, to bear our due of the wrath of God! Gethsemane and Calvary come to view. Well

Let us consider these two statements, with some helpful comparisons. John 13.¹⁰ reads literally, "He that is *bathed* (*louō*) needeth not to *wash* (*niptō*) save but his feet, and is clean every whit." This makes a clear distinction between two things, which correspond to the consecration of the priests in Israel; whom Moses washed (*bathed*) before he put the holy garments on them (Lev. 8.^{6, 7}); but they from thenceforth were to wash their hands and feet at the laver before they came to the altar or to the tabernacle to minister (Ex. 30.¹⁷⁻²¹).

It seems that the Lord was presenting this fact to the minds of the disciples, in John 13, expecting them to be aware of the Levitical ritual, and so setting forth its spiritual significance for the present dispensation.

Hebrews 10 speaks of our priestly privilege of drawing near to God in the holiest in heaven. And the readers of the Epistle would be expected to know of that ritual in Leviticus also.

The words, "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience," refer to ch. 9.¹⁹, which is typical of the blood of Christ, which, when applied to our hearts "gives the guilty conscience peace," and is therefore judicial; for we are justified by the blood of Christ (Rom. 5.⁹), a thing which is done once for all.

"Having our bodies *bathed* with pure water" corresponds to the initial bathing of the priests, and is referred to in Titus 3.⁵, "the laver (*loutron*) of regeneration," from the same word (*louō*) to bathe, which is also done once for all. Regeneration is new birth by the Spirit of God, which is said to be brought about by His *word*, see John 5.²⁵; Jas. 1.¹⁸; 1 Pet. 1.²³⁻²⁵. Thus justification by the blood of Christ and regeneration by the word of God are the two first essentials to drawing near to God.

The word "having" in Heb. 10.^{19, 21, 22} implies that those believers *had* these things; but the words "let us" at the beginning of vv. 22-25 are words of exhortation, implying a responsibility on the believer to wash himself from daily defilement, so that he can draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, like the priests, washing at the laver in the court of the tabernacle. That water was a type of the word of God, by which we are cleansed as we apply it.

This term, "The laver of regeneration," has been adopted by those who have substituted the sprinkling of infants for believers' baptism, applying the word *laver* to the font. But the law of typology is, that material things in God's economy for Israel represent spiritual things in God's economy for the Church.

The animals offered on the altar represent Christ the sinless One, Who offered Himself for our sins. The mercy-seat within the veil represents the Lord Jesus in resurrection, where He is seated on the

throne of grace, the meeting place of God with men. And so, every detail in the tabernacle has some *spiritual* counterpart in Christ and His Church.

If then the laver in the tabernacle court is to have a *material* counterpart in the appointment of the Church, Why do we not have animals offered on a material altar, and a material mercy-seat? And we might say, Why is not the whole of the tabernacle and its arrangements set up on earth afresh?

Heb. 10 sets forth plainly that all those things were but shadows of the heavenly things which belong to Christ and His Church.

The laver of regeneration then, must be taken figuratively; and Eph. 5.²⁶ explains for us that the water is the word of God. It reads, "that He might sanctify it and cleanse it by the *laver* of the water, by a spoken word," in this case the word of Christ. This word, going forth in the gospel, is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth (Rom. 1.¹⁶).

may the tears of gratitude start as we stand all amazed before the scene. Words fail, the heart swells in affection to Him. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord".

Inset

And if we have boldness before Him we should have boldness before men, the profession of our faith (23). And we can provoke (incite) one another to love and to good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. A passage often misapplied. Children of God sometimes, in these days, find themselves necessarily separated from others on Scriptural principles, because others refuse to obey the word of the Lord. It is the disobedient ones that are forsaking the assembling, no matter how large their gathering, for when this Epistle was written, the gathering together was according to the apostle's doctrine. And if one is gathering in an unscriptural way *he* is forsaking the true assembling for some human arrangement. The times and conditions need to be taken into consideration. May God grant *soon* the unity of the faith when His people will gather according to His will. And let us see to it that we act on His principles and not encourage others to be disobedient. For how can we exhort others to love and good works if we are ourselves taking part with them in the wrong? This we are exhorted to do *the more* as we see the day approaching.

Now again at ver. 26 we strike that note of uncertainty which we saw in ch. 6. "If we sin wilfully . . . no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of *judgment* and *fiery indignation* which shall *devour* the adversaries". There seems to be no question that this refers to final judgment to eternal perdition. Can then those words apply to one who has been born of God. Some would say, "Yes". But if so, then all the efficacy of the blood of Christ of which we have been reading is tremendously discounted. So that those who are finally saved are saved by works and not by grace, for Rom. 11.6 makes it clear that there can be no mixture of grace and works. And those who fall away after being regenerated, have had all their sins forgiven through the atoning work of Christ and yet are finally lost, thus nullifying His work and involving God in demanding twice payment, first at the hand of Christ and then at the hand of the sinner.

Let us remember again the conditions at the time of the writing of this Epistle. Certain *false* brethren had crept in as a result of the return to circumcision and the Law. See Gal. 2. We have also noted the pronoun "we" in 1 John 1.6, 8 in a similar connection. But note further, in Hebrews. "If we sin *wilfully*". Can one who has the law written on the heart *continue* to sin wilfully? (The present participle implies this.) And further, it is after that we have received "the *knowledge* of the truth" in contrast to the *love* of the truth associated with salvation in 2 Thess. 2.10. Then note in ver. 29, "Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing? It would be difficult to imagine one who had been truly born again coming to this. 1 Cor. 5.5 seems clear that God would rather allow Satan to destroy one of His children than allow him to come to such a state. But if we take the words "wherewith he was sanctified" as the man's own opinion of himself, which is clearly the Lord's meaning when He said, "ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance", and "They that are whole need not a physician", we can readily see the possibility of one grasping at a free forgiveness of sins, like the Pharisees who came to John for baptism, but who drew back when the difficulties and persecution of the Christian calling were felt. The stony ground hearers (without root) and the foolish virgins (with no oil) are of this class also. And how many today have thought they were saved, but only for a time. Moreover a Jew who thus turned back would count the blood of Christ as an unholy thing. On such the vengeance of God will assuredly fall (ver. 30). And it is a fearful thing to fall into His hands (ver. 31).

But the exhortation continues reminding them (generally speaking) of their earlier experiences. They *had* suffered for Christ, they *had* shewn a practical love for God's servants. They *had* suffered loss and taken it patiently, with the assurance that they had in heaven, a better and an enduring substance (verses 32-34). On this ground they are exhorted not to cast away their confidence with its great recom-

pence of reward. There was need for still further patience unto the coming of the Lord, and there still is today. But just as in ch. 6, the note of confidence comes in at the end, so here, "The just shall live by faith", but if one has a faith without works, a "dead" faith, there will certainly be no eternal life associated with it and a drawing back unto perdition is to be expected sooner or later. Such believed, but not to the saving of the soul, even as the demons believe and tremble (Jas. 2.17-19).

CHAPTER 11

In the last chapter we came to "the just shall live by faith" and "them that believe to the saving of the soul". But whereas James sums up this position briefly, contrasting a "dead" faith, this writer gives a long list of those who have given evidence of a living faith that those who read might be stirred to emulate them.

Faith, he says, is the substance of things hoped for. We usually understand substance to mean something that we can handle. But the word literally means something that has a position under, a foundation. The Greek word means just this. Faith is a solid conviction laid by God in our hearts that all that He has promised will be fulfilled, the foundation of things hoped for. It is also the evidence of things not seen. Not evident to the eyes, but an inwrought conviction. We *know* Whom we have believed. We have the "earnest" of the Spirit in our hearts. That is why those who really have *this* faith will "endure to the end". "For by it the elders received a good report". And it is of these that the chapter speaks. (The word means "chief men, leaders".)

But before embarking on those things ver. 3 seems to introduce a real test of faith. We read in ver. 1 faith is the evidence of things not seen. Through faith we understand that the worlds (ages) were rearranged or fitted together again by the word of God. After the darkness came in (Gen. 1.2) God said "let light become", "and light became". And so each subsequent part of the work is preceded by a word of God, by which the effect is produced. So that the things now apparent did not become out of things that were seen. They came to be out of *nothing*. They were produced by the spoken word of God. This is creation. Do you believe it? If you give it serious consideration, to believe it seems to require this God-given conviction. Have you the real faith? We need not be surprised that "evolution" and "atheism" are so closely related.

And now we come to the ancients, the leading men, the outstanding figures in past history. Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain because he had this inwrought conviction which is expressed later in the words, without shedding of blood is no remission of sins. And John's comment on it is, "And wherefore slew he him?"

Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3.12). Cain believed, he offered an offering. But his was the dead faith. Abel's was the living faith that produced fruit. And God testified of his gifts. The "meat offering" of flour was the "gift". But it did not make atonement (Lev. 2). But accompanied by the "sacrifice" they were accepted and God testified of them. And by it (the whole) Abel being dead yet speaketh.

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found because God had translated him" (ver. 5). The meaning of the word "translate" in such a case would be "move to another place". Enoch did not see death. He still lives. "But before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God". Again it is faith that produced works. And so it is all through the chapter. But how was he translated "by faith"? It seems that he believed that he was going to be with God in heaven, by God-given conviction without revelation in words, see ver. 16, and so "walked with God" and thus declared that this was not his real home.

But without faith it is impossible to please Him. For he that cometh to God *must* believe that He is (that He exists) and that he becomes a rewarder to those that seek Him out. There must be this diligent seeking of God if we are to be rewarded. He Himself is inscrutable. His ways are past finding out. But those that seek shall find, if they seek diligently they will not be disappointed. In Enoch's day there was no Bible. But he sought and found. Now God has revealed Himself in His word; let us seek and pray that we may know Him more and more, that we may have the understanding enlightened to know how to please Him.

Ver. 7. The words "by faith" here are understood from the account in Gen. 6. God spoke to him. So then, it was by faith that he had communion with God and He spoke to him, and he believed. So being warned, he acted cautiously in accord with the instruction that God gave. (The words "moved with fear") rather have this sense.) By which he condemned the world. Do our actions condemn the world? Are we a contrast to it? Is our "Ark" brought into prominence as Noah's was? Is it manifest to all that we believe in coming judgment? Or on the other hand are we so like the world that our ways justify them instead of condemning them? How much have we learned of what it is to "walk by faith". His was a faith, like the others, that had works: and therefore it was counted to him for righteousness.

In the lives of Noah and of Abraham there came a crisis, a test of faith. To build an ark was no small test. And to offer up one's own son is no small test either. And though it is written in Gen. 15 that Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness, James focuses the attention on Gen. 22 and says that he was justified by works. But the works are the necessary outcome of the faith, and we must have both or our faith is vain.

Here, in ver. 8, we are told that Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees, "by faith" (Gen. 12). And it is not till we get to ch. 15 that we are told he was justified. So that, leaving his country and offering up Isaac are both the evidences of the one faith.

Nor is this faith expressed only in times of crisis. By faith he sojourned in a strange land. Year after year he was living as a pilgrim, dwelling in a tent. And even when he was offered a burying place for Sarah he refused the gift and paid the value of it. That was "by faith" (ver. 9) as much as the other things. And it was a long test. But the word of God was sufficient. God told him that his seed would sojourn in a strange land four hundred and thirty years before they came into possession of the land of promise. And he was content to wait. May we also be content to be strangers and pilgrims like Abraham, until with Abraham we possess the land in resurrection. For "the meek shall inherit the earth".

But Abraham's outlook went beyond an earthly one. He had a heavenly one too. "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Gal. 4.26). We have a view of that city coming down onto the new earth in Rev. 21, but it seems Abraham must have known something about it in His day (ver. 10).

And Sarah too had faith, and for no small a matter either. But God had said it and that was sufficient. And all the multitudes of Israel have sprung from that one. But the increase did not begin till two generations after; a further waiting in faith.

According to ver. 13 all those mentioned before Abraham were strangers and pilgrims as well as he. So that faith in God always takes us on and up to the heavenly prospect. And the more we apprehend the glory of that "better" country the more we shall be loosed from earthly aspirations.

In ver. 15 there is a suggested possibility of those in mind returning to their original country if they had been so minded. This would not apply to Abel, Enoch and Noah. But Abraham was the one whom God called out of Ur of the Chaldees. It is also said in ver. 13 "these all died in faith not having received the promises" (i.e. the fulfilment of them). Now, it was to Abraham and his seed that the promises were made; and they were confirmed to Isaac and to Jacob. And going back to ver. 9 we see that Abraham dwelt in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob. We hereby see the force of the statement of verses 15, 16. That though they were strangers and pilgrims in a land that was promised to future generations ("430 years"), there was something that kept them from desiring to return to Chaldea, the land of their fathers. They had left the idols that their fathers served, and they knew the true and living God. And they "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth". But not only they. David, after the kingdom was established to him in the land, said, "I am a stranger with Thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were". Abraham, Isaac and Jacob built no city, nor desired the cities of Chaldea. But David had a city. Yet he also confessed to be a

stranger (Psa. 39.12). He had earthly glory and riches: but he looked for something better. He sought, with his fathers, that better, heavenly country, and a city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God. What can this be but the New Jerusalem, which is above? Yes, that city is the mother of us all (Gal. 4.26), and we of the present time are united to the saints of the Old Covenant in the one "general assembly and Church of the firstborn ones" of ch. 12.22, 23. And if they who had the earthly promises whose fulfilment was "afar off" were content to be strangers and pilgrims, what shall be our attitude. The heavenly hope was a power in their experiences, shall it not be in ours, who now have the heavenly promises made more clear? "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also". May we, by God's grace, have our treasure there increasingly.

Verses 17-19. Whatever may be said about ver. 19, it is clear that Abraham was "tried" when he was commanded to offer up his beloved son Isaac. The father's love was there, and all his hopes were centered in him. The promise that "in Isaac shall thy seed be called", made everything depend upon him. But in Abraham's mind that only argued the necessity that he should be raised again from the dead. But what a demonstration! No thought of being stayed at the last moment was in Abraham's mind; but the thought of being raised again. Therefore he proceeded to carry out the command, he lifted the knife: it was the one of whom God had said, "Thine only son whom thou lovest", and God only stayed his hand when the last moment had come. Afterward, God said to him, "Because thou hast not withheld thine only son". Thus shewing that Abraham really intended to slay him, believing that God would raise him up again. We can well see why James singles out this event, and not the leaving of Ur of the Chaldees, to demonstrate his point that "faith without works is dead". Faith, like love, is not a matter for talking, but doing.

In ver. 20 we are told, "*by faith* Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau". Yet in Gen. 27 we see that Isaac thought it was Esau upon whom he was putting the first blessing. Isaac had come to love Esau's venison. He seems to have forgotten the appointment at birth, that the elder should serve the younger. But the purpose of God must stand and if Rebecca's heart is not right, it must be overruled, and Jacob received the blessing. But how is it "by faith" on Isaac's part? Ch. 12.17 seems to provide the answer. Whether the surprise caused him to remember the prophecy or not we do not know, but one thing is clear. He would not repent and give the first place to Esau "though he sought it carefully with tears".

But when Jacob was dying (ver. 21) it was simply by faith that he gave the first place to Ephraim and not Manasseh. That God given conviction which foretold the history of the tribe.

Ver. 22. Joseph was the one "Whose feet they hurt with fetters". he was laid in iron. And during that time the word of the Lord (by his own dreams) tried him" (Psa. 105.17, 20). Affliction drew him

nearer to God; and he seems to have had the promise to Abraham in mind when he said, "God will surely visit you and ye shall carry up my bones from hence" (Gen. 15.13, 14: 50.25).

Ver. 23. When the parents of Moses hid their child it was not for fear of their own lives, "they were not afraid of the king's commandment". But to have openly defied would have meant the loss of the child. They trusted God, believing that He had a purpose for it. And when the child grew up he manifested the same faith in marked degree. Ver. 24. He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing affliction rather than the sinful pleasures of the court. And in ver. 26 we have the remarkable words "esteeming the reproach of *Christ*", 1,500 years before Christ was born! What a wonderful aspect of faith is this. The Lord said to the Pharisees, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad". So that to both these men the coming of Christ was their blessed hope. And again if Moses could take such a position then what should be ours now that Christ has come? Abraham looked beyond Isaac to the One in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed: and Moses had the same outlook and suffered reproach and gave up all for it.

Ver. 27. Although Moses feared and fled from the face of Pharaoh when it was known that he had slain the Egyptian, when the time came for him to bring the children of Israel out of their bondage he had no fear at all. In Ex. 10.28 Pharaoh spoke threateningly to Moses and forbade him to see his face again. But Moses replied, "Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more" (that is as a suppliant for Israel). In ch. 11 Moses goes in to Pharaoh again, not to plead, but to give a final warning of judgment that it might be clear that it was God's hand. And he went out from him "in heat of anger". All this was by faith: he believed what God had said and acted upon it. So in ver. 28, "Through faith he kept the passover".

But note the next two verses. Ver. 29 is the passage of the Red Sea. Ver. 30 is the fall of Jericho. Nothing is said of the wandering in the wilderness, and not even a word about the crossing of Jordan. That forty years in the wilderness was not of faith, it was a time of tempting God (ch. 3.9). And if they had acted in faith when they were told to go in and possess the land, they would not have needed to cross the Jordan at all. The dividing of Jordan was like the dividing of the Red Sea over again. They had to make a new beginning.

But from this point the nation as a whole is not spoken of again. They did not continue in faith. They forsook the Lord that had redeemed them from Egypt, and faith was found only in individuals. A few only of these are mentioned, just as examples of faith, such as would be known to every Hebrew. Their experiences are hurried over with just a reference to the mighty things that were accomplished by faith till in ver. 35 we read "and others". No mighty works were wrought by God in response to their faith, they, like Moses, "endured as seeing Him Who is invisible". They were tortured, not

accepting deliverance. And the list of sufferings continues to shew to the Hebrew believers of that day what they were to be prepared for. They had had signs and miracles wrought among them to confirm the gospel at the beginning, but the writer would lead them to a higher experience. He would have them enjoy their heavenly privileges, entering into the holiest by the blood of Christ, that they might have that faith and power to endure for His sake. The false professors could rejoice in deliverance from sickness and suffering, but in Matt. 7.22, 23, we see that there will be such to whom the Lord will say, "I never knew you". But a faith that enables one to suffer for conscience sake and refuse deliverance by compromise is the faith that the Lord will approve in that day. "If we *suffer* with Him we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2.12). And of such it is said, "of whom the world was not worthy".

And these having obtained a good report from God, not from the world, died without receiving the promise. Hundreds of years passed, generations came and passed away. At length Christ came. But it made no difference so far as the promise was concerned. Since the time of Christ another long list of worthies has been added, who have also suffered for His name. They have joined the band of waiting ones. Their spirits are made perfect, but they wait the redemption of their bodies, as we do, and in that sense we shall be perfected together (ver. 40), when the last trump is sounded.

CHAPTER 12

Obviously there is no intended break between these chapters. The great cloud of "witnesses" can be a cloud of "martyrs" for that is the Greek word. They are not looking on at us as we run the race, but have witnessed, or testified in their lives, their good confession of faith. Thus leaving us an example to follow, which in effect says, "If they can do it, so can you". Therefore, we are exhorted to run with patience the race set before us. Not a hundred yards sprint, the stony ground hearer can do that. The marathon race of those times was a long and severe test of endurance.

Nor are we to make any one of these worthies our chief example, but Christ Himself. The name Jesus without the title here (Lord or Christ), unusual in the Epistles, is intended to bring into prominence the days of His flesh, when He was the faithful and true Witness. And as such He was the One who began and finished the course of faith without wavering. The word *our* in ver. 2 is better left out (it is in italics), it is His faith not ours that is in view. Like those in ch. 11 He had "that day" in view, and for the joy that was set before Him He endured a cross (not *the* cross). Like Phil. 2.8, it is the death of a martyr as an example for us that the Holy Spirit would impress. And thus (as also in Phil. 2), He is set down on the right hand of the throne of God. Our Chief Example completed His

course without wavering. As we go through ch. 11 we see that the failures of those mentioned are not recorded. The object being to give us an example to follow. This throws up the glory of Christ by contrast, as the one Who began and finished.

So we are exhorted to consider *Him* (ver. 3).

Resisting unto blood, in ver. 4, has been taken by many to refer to our Lord's agony in Gethsemane; but we are told that His *sweat* was *as it were* great drops of blood (Luke 22.44). The parallel passage, Phil. 2, helps us to see that resisting unto blood is resisting unto death for there it is "obedient unto death". He would rather die than disobey. The Devil will entice and deceive, but if these fail he may try to force us to disobey even by torture unto death. But Rev. 2.10 says, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life".

Ver. 5 introduces a fresh aspect of things, though it is closely related. God's chastisements upon His children are sometimes in the form of persecution. Psal. 17.13, 14 shew that the wicked men of the world are God's sword. And David cried to be delivered from them. And persecution and chastisement are so worked together that no one can tell whether another is being chastised for sin or allowed to suffer that he may have the reward for glorifying God in it. God gives no account of His matters in this (Job 33.13) and that was why Job could not understand God's dealing with him, and his friends came to wrong conclusions about it. We do well to examine ourselves when trouble comes; for if we cannot see why, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are *exercised* thereby. If we are indifferent and treat it as the sort of thing that everybody is liable to, or if we chafe and murmur under it, we lose the profit God intends us to have.

But according to this passage not one of God's children escape chastening. If one is without chastening he has no legal standing as a son. One who is not a legal child did not become such by personal failure, he was born into that position. A legal son can never become an illegal son. This is important in the Epistle, for it shews in a very marked way that there were many who had taken a position as one of the family of God, but had no legal right by birth, they had not been "born of God". The stony ground hearers were of this type. As soon as persecution or tribulation arose, they were "offended" and fell away. But the true children of God *profit* under trial and are drawn nearer to their Father. What the Devil could not do by persecution at the beginning he has accomplished by subtlety and flattering. Hence the sad state of the Church today. But in the great tribulation those who have no real standing as children of God will go over to Antichrist, or at least be weeded out and God's true children will be drawn together in His will. 1 Cor. 11.29-32 shew that sickness is sometimes a chastisement for sin, but we cannot say it is always. The man in John 9 was born blind "that the works of God might be manifest in him". 1 Cor. 5.5 shews that death may be a chastisement

for sin, and at the same time an expression of mercy in accord with the "eternal redemption" made by the blood of Christ. 1 John 5.16 shews that sin may bring death as a chastisement in that it cuts one off from further service to the Lord, and therefore deprives of the reward one might have had in that day. In 1 John 5.16 the words, "I do not say that he should pray for it", should rather be, "I do not say that he should enquire about it". In other words, if one is known to have sinned and is sick, we should not enquire whether it be unto death or not, but pray for his recovery.

In ver. 12 we see a return of thought to ver. 1, running the race. "Wherefore", in view of all that has proceeded, "lift up the hands that hang down and the feeble knees". In running the hands are not allowed to hang down at the side as in ordinary walking, and the knees too are lifted up. When either of these are not kept well up, it is a sign of failing strength. The whole is a figurative view of the Christian life as it should be. A long strain, in which all the power we have must be brought into effect. There must be a determination not to slacken. All our spiritual faculties must be kept at full pitch so that our bodies with all their members will be kept as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6.13).

The Marathon runner did not make his own path, but obviously he would choose the best path where he had the choice. But in spiritual things we can make our own paths (ver. 13). We have the power to choose and to plan as to our future, to a large extent. If we choose a line of business which pays well but has snares in it that will sear our consciences, we obviously are not making a straight or even path for our feet. If we enter into an unequal yoke in any respect we shall certainly find ourselves hampered in running the race. If we enter into contracts that bind the future actions we shall not have the liberty we ought to have.

The words that follow, "lest that which is lame be turned out of the way", suggest that this race is not an independent individual running. The speed of a fleet is the speed of its *slowest* ship. It is not fitting that the fastest should go ahead and leave the slowest. Jacob could not hurry because of the flocks (Gen. 33.13). The Christian calling is not merely that of isolated units, but of unity. There should be "churches" according to God's pattern. Our lives affect others. If you are strong enough to resist a certain temptation, there may be one near you who is ensnared and caused to fall through your example, if you are not mindful of the weak ones. 1 Thess. 5.14 says, "Comfort the feeble minded, support the weak". Make a path for yourself such as a lame one will be able to run with you. Our glorious Example, the Beginner and Finisher of this race, was never in a hurry. He always had time amid the crowds to attend to a needy one. He lost no time in running the race by this, such ministry is all part of the "running". The runner who dodges the "obstacles" to get to the end first is disqualified. Let us see to it that no

indifference towards a weak one on our part shall cause such to turn out of the way. Let us so run that he may run with us; so will he "rather be healed".

The word "follow" in ver. 14 is not the word used by the Lord when He said "follow Me". It is really the word "pursue" and is used frequently when it is following after some spiritual virtue. For instance in 1 Cor. 14.¹ "follow after love". In pursuing, the pursuer endeavours to catch up to some thing that is running away from him. So it is with these spiritual virtues. If we do not go hard after them they will elude us. Only by constant effort can we overtake and possess them. How quickly can peace be lost! How often have we thought we had "attained" to something, only to find we had lost it again. May we apprehend more of the power of the resurrection of Christ, to *press* toward the mark (Phil. 3.10-13): for "without which no man shall see the Lord". Holiness is never viewed in Scripture as that to which only a special few attain. It is regarded as the characteristic of all God's children. These verses do not teach that one can be born again and then lost for eternity. If one does not answer to the description given of the normal Christian in Scripture he should be concerned as to whether he is really a child of God. Let us not make the "luke warm" condition of Christians today the standard. This present condition cannot continue. Something must happen before long to fit the Scripture prophecies of the end of this age. And many will have a terrible surprise when they find themselves "shut out". Ver 15 says, "looking diligently lest any fail of the grace of God". The word "fail" has the sense of coming too late, which is what Esau did (ver. 17). Many will knock when the door is shut. And to such the Lord will say, "I never knew you". There is no thought here of having a position in grace and then falling from it. But as we have seen before, the turning again to Judaism opened the door for false professors. There is no sin, except the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, into which a true child of God may not fall. But in such instances it is not the characteristic of the life. David fell, but he was not an adulterer in character, and quickly repented. So with the one in 1 Cor. 5, but he quickly repented when Paul wrote to them (2 Cor. 2.6, 7). The failure there was, that the church should have acted in discipline before. Peter denied His Lord with an oath, but he was not an habitual liar. So we may sum up the teaching of these verses in the words of Peter, "make your calling and election sure" by pursuing holiness.

"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched", continues ver. 18, and the contrast is drawn between Mount Sinai and Mount Sion. Mount Sinai, the giving of the law, was a covenant of law. According to which it was possible to be blotted out of God's book (Ex. 32.33). But we stand in a covenant of grace. And if it be of grace it is no more of works (Rom. 11.6). But in this covenant we have the law written on the heart. Therefore, those who are really in it desire to do the will of God.

But what blessings are associated with this Mount Sion! The Heavenly Jerusalem, which is the mother of all who are justified by faith. The place which the Lord has gone to prepare—the Holy City of Rev. 21. There we shall see the innumerable company of angels who are sent forth to minister to us now (ch. 1.13, 14). The general assembly and church of the firstborn ones, those whose names are in ch .11, and an innumerable company of others who also died in faith. We are brought to God, though once far off, by the precious blood of Christ. The Judge of all, but justice has been meted out on His beloved Son, and we are free. We have come to the spirits of just men made perfect; not that we can communicate with them, but are in the same company. And when we see the angels we shall see them. That will be when we see “Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant”, whose blood speaks better things than Abel’s sacrifice. He is mentioned last because the object of the whole Epistle is to focus attention on Him.

So then ver. 25, “See that ye *refuse* not Him that speaketh”. God has spoken by His Son. For it they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth (from Sinai), how much more if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven. God shook the earth at Sinai, but there is coming a greater shaking, the word “Once more” signifies the *removing* of the things that may be shaken; for it is *once* more, and there is a new heaven and a new earth to be made; so that when this happens there will be no shaking again after it. The new creation remains for ever and ever.

Wherefore let us have grace to serve God acceptable with reverence and godly fear. For “service” without these is like faith without works, it is dead. And those who are thus characterised will prove that our God is a consuming fire.

CHAPTER 13

As in most epistles, the last chapter is one of general exhortation. And while we readily acknowledge that such is never out of date, there is a special application of some parts to the Hebrew believers of that time. This we will note as we go.

“Let brotherly love continue”. This is never out of date in its general application. But with these believers who had shown a tendency to return to Judaism there would probably be a tendency to belittle the Gentile believers. We see that this was the case in Galatians when Paul wrote to them (Gal. 2.12). The reference to “strangers” which follows may be because of this. The word, in Scripture, usually refers to believers away from home, who would be received by other believers. The word is in the Greek connected with the word to “lodge”, and the following passages will help. (Acts 10.6, 18, 23, 32: 21.16: 1 Tim. 5.10: Phil. 22.) “Let not the love of strangers be forgotten” is the exhortation here. We are not

under any *obligation* to take in any stranger that may come to the door. That some, in old times, did entertain heavenly angels is clear in the Scriptures; but the question comes up as to whether it was done unawares, i.e. not knowing they were angels. On the other hand, the word angel can stand for a human messenger. But in either case the exhortation remains the same. In times of persecution, we can readily see, there would be a special application of this principle. The next verse speaks of those in bonds, and if such escaped, or if others were fleeing from persecutors, we can see the responsibility of fellow saints to receive such, even to the endangering of themselves. "Remember them that are in bonds, *as bound with them*" shews us the need of putting ourselves into the like position. What would we wish others to do for us? So with regard to those who suffer adversity. We also are in the body, and never know when some trial of sickness or need may overtake us.

Ver. 4 is no more out of date than the other exhortations, even for Christians of long standing of either sex. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall".

"Let the manner of life be without love of money: and be content with such things as ye have". The promise here is very forceful in the Greek. "Never" is a double negative, and "nor" is a treble one. And in view of this we certainly should be "bold" and not fear what man shall do unto us.

Ver. 7 exhorts them to remember their "leaders". But how does this apply today when the leaders are all taking different ways. The position is such that we can take nothing for granted. We must prove all things. May God speed the time when "pastors and teachers" will lead the sheep in the way of truth, the doctrine of the apostles. Praise God, Jesus Christ is the same, may our hearts be kept pure toward Him.

Strange doctrines were already being taught in those days (ver. 9): and the reference to "meats" instead of "grace" is another indication of the "Jewish" tendency which the Epistle was intended to resist and rectify.

But if we are not in danger of going back to animal sacrifices, the principle of separation still applies. Christendom has its ritual, ordinances and traditions of men. There is a "camp" that professes to be Christian from which every true Christian should stand apart. The context here builds up its teaching on the principle of the sin offerings. They were not all dealt with in the same way; but there was one rule in particular, which is quoted here that, if the blood of the beast was brought into the sanctuary (and that was not always the case, for in some cases the blood was only sprinkled and poured out at the altar), but if it was brought into the sanctuary, the body had to be burned without the camp. To this typical teaching is added the fact that when our Lord Jesus Christ suffered for our sins, He suffered without the gate.

The earlier part of the Epistle has been shewing the privilege of entering into the holiest by the blood of Christ, where He entered "by His own blood", the print of the nails was there in resurrection. But, in view of what has been said, can we expect to have the heavenly privilege of entering in if we are not willing to be identified with Him outside the camp?

The name "Jesus", used here again, is with the thought of His rejection. The disciples called Him Lord, and the number of times that His name occurs without a title—Lord, or Christ—is very small compared to the whole; that is, apart from the Gospels. The significance here is clear from the context. "Let us go forth *unto Him* bearing His reproach". Not following men, nor choosing the best meeting we know of, but by diligent reading of His word, getting to know Him, and following close to Him.

A further reason for this is given in ver. 14. "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come". In ch. 11 we read that God had prepared for those worthies a city. By faith and in spirit we have already come to it (ch. 12.22), even as in spirit we enter into the holiest. We already have a foretaste, sufficient to make us hold the things of this life only as a trusteeship wherewith to glorify our Lord.

Evidently the writer of the Epistle did not think it a hardship to go forth to Christ without the camp. He says, "By him *therefore* let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name".

David said, "I will not offer a burnt offering unto the Lord of that which doth cost me nothing" (2 Sam. 24.24). So here, the fruit of our lips alone is not sufficient. We are exhorted to do good and to communicate. This word does not simply mean to write letters of sympathy. Phil. 4.10-15 shews the meaning of it—and "with *such* sacrifices God is well pleased".

The way in which the "guides" or "leaders" are referred to in this chapter is an evidence of their faithfulness in those times. A guide or leader goes in front to shew the way. So these took their example from the Captain—the Chief Leader (ch. 2.10). When He putteth forth His own sheep He goeth before them. The first one to encounter any danger that may be ahead. For such pastors (shepherds) we do well to pray. They recognise their responsibility to the Chief Shepherd, and if the flock submit themselves to such it will be profitable for both.

But the writer, evidently a shepherd himself, felt the need of the prayers of those for whom he cared, and asks for them. Whether in prison or not we cannot say, but hindered by Satan in some way, he longed after them (verses 18, 19).

Inasmuch as our Lord Jesus Christ had our sins laid upon Him, it was necessary that He should carry the work of redemption right through. The blood is an expression that is used for the whole of the atoning work. The bearing of wrath and the laying down of His life. So, having been condemned in our stead, He must needs pay

the full penalty and thus He was raised from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Being righteous Himself, He must live; and His blood having atoned for those for whom He died, death can no longer hold Him. And because He lives we shall live also (John 14.19). And it is through Him, in the power of His resurrection, that we shall be equipped or well furnished as the word "perfect" here signifies. In 2 Tim. 3.17 we have a similar expression, "thoroughly furnished": only that there it is by the word. So, if we take the two passages together we see that our completeness is in the risen Christ, Who works through the word. See also Eph. 5.26 and Col. 2.10. There is no thought of *sinless* perfection.

The statement in ver. 22, "I have written a letter unto you in few words" would hardly seem to be correct when we compare the length of this Epistle with that of others. But when we consider the subject matter contained in it, and realise that the precious typical teaching on Melchisedec in 5.10, 11 had to be curtailed, and that on the Tabernacle too in 9.5, we can understand the reason for the remark. John 21.25 says, that if all the things that the Lord did in His life were recorded the world would not contain the books that should be written.

Ver. 23 is taken as strong evidence that Paul was the writer of the Epistle, the reader must judge for himself. Though it matters little to us who wrote it. May God apply the precious truth to our hearts by His Spirit Who inspired the words, that there may be fruit to His glory.

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