The Epistle to the Hebrews is the only book in the New Testament that teaches the doctrine of Christ’s priesthood. In every chapter we learn to appreciate the author as a skilled and outstanding theologian who is thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures of the Old Testament and who knows the teachings of Christ.

In addition, we study the doctrine of the covenant, the message and purpose of this book, as we apply its teachings to the church of today.

**Schedule**

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<td>Aug. 30</td>
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| Sept. 6 | Structure, Theology, Exegesis  
Chapter 1:1-14. Superiority of the Son, and his divinity.  
Psalm Citations. |
| Sept. 27 | Chapter 4:14-16. Jesus the great high priest.  
Chapter 5:1-10. Christ is superior to Aaron. Jesus’ life on earth. |
Chapter 6:13-20. God is faithful in his promises. TEST |


Nov. 29  Chapter 13:1-25. Exhortations to do works of love, to honor leaders in the church, to obey leaders, to pray. Benediction and greetings.

Dec. 8-13  TEST

Assignments

Text book. F. F. Bruce, Hebrews. Rev. edition (Eerdmans, 1990) and D. Guthrie, Hebrews (Eerdmans, 1983). You are responsible for the weekly assignments as we go through the chapters. You will also prepare two short study projects of two pages each. The first one due September 13 is on the word atonement in Hebrews and the second on the word covenant due October 25.

There are three examinations in this course: October 4, November 8 and December 8-13.

Reserve Shelf

Bruce, F. F.  Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews
Calvin, John  The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews
Ellingworth, P.  Commentary on Hebrews
Guthrie, D.  Hebrews
Hagner, D.  Hebrews
Kent, H. A.  The Epistle to the Hebrews
Kistemaker, S. J.  Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews
Lane, W. L.  Hebrews 1-8, 9-13, two volumes
Moffatt, J.  Hebrews (ICC)
Morris, L.  Hebrews
Stedman, R. C.  Hebrews
Trotter, A. H., Interpreting the Epistle to the Hebrews
Authorship.

The epistle is addressed to Jewish people, for Gentiles are not included. Residing in Rome. Evidence: 1:1, 2 the term forefathers does not refer to Gentiles. The term son speaks to Jews. Son means the one and only Son. While angels are created sons of God, we are adopted sons. The writer chooses term Son purposely and not the terms Lord or Jesus.


   **Other names.** As authors these are mentioned: Barnabas, Apollos, Luke, Peter Stephen, Jude, Silas, Priscilla, Mary, and Epaphras. Heb. 11:32 with masculine particle rules out feminine authors. Tertullian in 3rd century ascribed it to Barnabas. Martin Luther in 16th century ascribed it to Apollos.

2. **Style and Syntax.** Author of Hebrews balanced sentences, 169 words that are only found in Hebrews, rhetorical rhythm, and equilibrium. Alliteration and assonance in Hebrews.

   Author quotes the Septuagint. He relies on the LXX and does not correct the wording. There are 24 quotations and another 5 that are verbally comparable to the text. Ps. 40:6 and Heb. 10:5. Scripture for the author was inspired. The three persons of the Trinity individually introduce these quotes. God says, 1:5, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 13. Jesus says, 2:12, 13. The Holy Spirit says, 3:7.

   Paul writes doctrine first and then concludes with exhortations. Hebrews intersperses doctrine and practical parts.

   Paul calls on God the Father 35 times in his epistles. Hebrews never.

   Paul writes Jesus Christ 24 times, but Hebrews 3 times; Paul writes Christ Jesus 78 times, Hebrews never. Paul’s “our Lord Jesus Christ” never occurs in Hebrews. Paul uses the word Christ 95 times, and Hebrews 5 times. Paul writes Jesus 16 times, Hebrews 5 times. The phrase in Christ and the word gospel are absent in Hebrews but common in Paul.

   Paul writes incoherent sentences (Rom. 5:12), but the writer of Hebrews has complete sentences as each one of them contributes to the flow of his argument. The Epistle to the Hebrews is characterized by harmony in its development of thought expressed in excellent Greek and an easy flowing style.

   Paul begins each of his letters with his name, a greeting, and a prayer of thanks. Often he uses the first person pronoun I, as in “I, Paul. Hebrews is anonymous, lacks an address, greetings, and thanksgiving. Hebrews uses the pronoun I sparingly (11:32; 13:19, 22, 23).

   Paul was converted at the gates of Damascus, probably in A.D. 32, and began his ministry immediately. The author of Hebrews writes, “This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him: (2:3). This indicates that he was not an apostle but heard the gospel from the apostles, as a second-generation Christian.

   Pauline authorship is abandoned. What about Barnabas? He was a Jew, whose name was Joseph, a Levite, and a native of Cyprus. As a Jew he knew the OT, as a Levite he knew about the priesthood, and a native of Cyprus he knew Greek. Hence he could be the author. Tertullian at the beginning of 3rd century advocated Barnabas as writer of Hebrews, but no one ever followed his suggestion. Heb. 2:3 would not apply to Barnabas.

   Apollos (Acts 18:24-26) was a Jew, a native of Alexandria, well educated, learned in the OT, taught about Jesus accurately. Yet no one in Alexandria claimed him as the writer of Hebrews. In 1522,
Martin Luther translated the NT and claimed that the Apollos was the author of Hebrews. We have insufficient evidence.

Luke could not have written it because of Heb. 1:1 “our forefathers” refers to Jews, not to Gentiles.

3. Political and Religious Climate. Recipients knew the OT and Gospels. Lapse of time had created backsliding.

Dating of Hebrews from A.D. 60 to 90. Second generation Jewish Christians in 60 and the upper limit is 90 because Clement of Rome quotes Hebrews. He wrote I Clement in A.D.96.

Early date for Hebrews is prior to A.D. 70, the destruction of Jerusalem. The evidence is that the writer uses the present tense when he refers to the priesthood, offerings, and sacrifices. Heb. 7:28; 8:3; 9:7, 25; 13:11. Thus the temple was still standing and priesthood still functioning.

But Hebrews never speaks about the temple but always about the tabernacle in the desert. The word Jerusalem occurs once (12:22) and refers to the heavenly Jerusalem. The use of the present tense is the timeless use. Also Josephus writes the present tense when referring to services and offerings, so does Clement of Rome.

Persecution of Christians (10:32-34) could refer to Emperor Claudius expelling Jews from Rome in A.D. 49 (Acts 18:2). But no information is given on hardship. Aquila and Priscilla went to Corinth, but via Ephesus they returned to Rome (Rom. 16:3). In July 64 Nero torched Rome and blamed the Christians. Harsh persecution followed. Confiscation of property and danger were real.

Although an early date is favored, a late date is possible.

4. Historical and Theological Considerations. After Nero’s death, a period of restored order happened during the reign of Vespasian A.D. 69-79. Titus followed the same path, 79-81. His brother Domitian also fostered a peaceful reign 81-96. But in his last years he introduced persecution, so John was banished to Patmos (Rev. 1:9).

Result of peace and prosperity was backsliding. Author of Hebrews admonishes readers not the fall away. He recalls the earlier days (10:32) which may refer to time of Nero. Then Hebrews points to date after 70.

Nowhere in NT are there references to priesthood of Christ (indirect Rom. 8:34). Only Hebrews teaches priesthood in every chapter of epistle. Author teaches doctrine of priesthood of Melchizedek. He boldly states that Levitical priesthood should be set aside (7:11-12, 19). These remarks are suicidal, because Levitical priesthood was everlasting (Num. 18:23).

Stephen was accused of speaking against the temple, and he was stoned. At the end of his 3rd missionary journey Paul met James and elders in Jerusalem. They advised him to take the Nazirite vow to indicate he was a conservative, law-abiding Jew. Yet the Jews would have killed him, if the Roman commander had not intervened.

Author of Hebrews writing to Jewish Christians who are living in Rome A.D. 85 is relatively safe. Rome most likely is the place where the recipients lived (13:24).

5. Conclusion. On authorship we lack certainty. We know that the author’s language is Greek (classical), he was educated, knew the Scriptures, Septuagint text. He preached gospel in Italy, knew Timothy, was not an apostle, and had not followed Jesus. Who wrote Hebrews? Only God knows.

Contents of Hebrews.

Chapter 1 teaches divinity of Jesus by way of psalm quotations.
Chapter 2 stresses the humanity of Jesus and introduces his priesthood.
Chapter 3 compares Jesus to Moses. Quotation from Psalm 95.
Chapter 4 refers to falling away, Sabbath rest. Priesthood of Christ.
Chapter 5 has Aaron and Jesus. Unprepared teachers.
Chapter 6 expounds apostasy and the promise to Abraham.
Chapter 7 explains the priesthood of Melchizedek.
Chapter 8 introduces the doctrine of the covenant.
Chapter 9 applies the covenant; the once for all sacrifice.
Chapter 10 quotes Psalm 40. Second introduction.
Chapter 11 lists the heroes of faith.
Chapter 12 discusses discipline, Sinai and Zion. Chapter 13 lists various admonitions. Conclusion.

Structure.
The epistle to the Hebrews consists of two strands: teaching and exhorting. These two strands are woven into its fabric, the one following the other. It is a dual discourse structure. After a brief introduction (1:1-4), the author follows this up with a discussion on the priesthood of Christ that covers chapters 1 through 10:18. A second introduction (10:22-24) stresses the topics of faith (11), hope (12), and love (13).

Theology.
The author exeges Gen. 14:18 and Psalm 110:4 and applies the doctrine of the priesthood to Jesus. Then he exeges Jeremiah 31:31-34 and applies the doctrine of the covenant to Jesus and his followers. He is an expositor of the doctrine of atonement.

Exegesis
The author provides a commentary on the psalm citations. Psalm 8 in chapter 2; Psalm 95 in chapters 3 and 4. Psalm 110 in chapter 10. He also comments on Jeremiah 31 in chapters 9 and 10. Other OT passages are explained.

Chapter 1. Introduction, vv. 1-4

V. 1 has alliteration. The verse highlights the unity of the Scriptures, for God spoke in OT period through prophets and through his Son in NT period. God revealed himself in dreams, visions, and angelic appearance. The prophets are from Moses to Malachi. The verb to speak conveys the act of speaking, not the content. The forefathers range from Adam to the NT age.

V. 2. “The last days” refers to NT times in which God has spoken to us, his people. The Son is the one and only unique Son of God. No direct reference here to our Lord Jesus Christ, because the emphasis is on God’s Son in relation to Jewish Christians (Deut. 6:4). The Son is the prophet who speaks the word of God (John 3:34).

The Son is the heir of all things. John 3:16 notes that God loved the world that he gave us his Son, not that he gave his Son the world. But here God made the Son the heir of all things. The reason is that God through the Son made the universe. This text teaches the divinity and eternity of the Son, for he is the agent of creation (also the agent of re-creation). That is, the Son created all the worlds, also the angels.

V. 3. The Son does not reflect God’s glory as the moon reflects the light of the sun. But the Son has his own radiance of glory (“I am the light of the world,” John 8:12). He is also the exact representation of God’s being. He did not become radiance and representation, for he has always been this from eternity. This proves the infinity and divinity of the Son. God and the Son are one in essence.

The Son supports all things (ta panta) by the word of his power. Gen. 1:3, “And God said.” The Son is the upholder of the universe. His word is prophetic.

The Son made for or by himself a cleansing of sins. Here is the priest, and the first mention of Jesus’ priesthood.

The Son sat down at right hand of the Majesty in high places. After completing his atoning work on earth, he ascended to heaven and took his rightful place next to God the Father. Here are the three offices of Christ: prophet, priest, and king.

V. 4. The Son became so much greater than the angels, whom he created, inasmuch as he inherited a more excellent name than they. Only two good angels have been given a name: Michael and Gabriel. Satan (the adversary) is the fallen angel.

Son Superior to Angels, vv. 5-14.
V. 5. “To whom of the angels did God ever say.” Wording of v. 5 and v. 13 are similar. The beginning and the end of the quotations. The verb to speak refers to the contents of what is said.

The quotation is Psalm 2:7, which is a messianic psalm that refers to the Messiah and to the Son who is crowned king. “You are my Son, today I have become your Father.” Emphatic use of the pronoun you and I. Today should not be taken literally, but means general time. Solomon, the son of David, could never fulfill the words of Psalm 2. The words then are directed to the Jesus the Christ.

The second part of v. 5 is a quotation for 2 Sam. 7:14 and also refer to Solomon, who was overshadowed by Jesus. The words “I will be his Father and he will be to me a Son” God spoke through Nathan the prophet to David concerning Solomon.

V. 6. “And again when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says.” The term firstborn does not mean created, but rather to Christ’s preeminence, sovereignty, and priority in all creation. The Son is uncreated, eternal, and divine. Here the word signifies rank.

The quotation is from the Great Song of Moses, Deuteronomy 32:43 in the Septuagint. It is also in the Dead Sea Scrolls. We have the Masoretic Text, but other versions such as the LXX were in use by the early Christians in the dispersion. The text explains and supports v. 4. All the angels are but created servants and must worship the uncreated Son of God.

V. 7. “He makes his angels winds and his servants flames of fire.” The text is taken from Psalm 104:4, where the reading differs, “He makes winds his messengers and flames of fire his servants.” The emphasis is on angels and on servants. Angels are subservient like winds or bolts of lightning. God uses them at will and sends them forth for the benefit of his people.

Vv. 8, 9. “But about the Son he says” The difference between the Son as Creator and angels as created beings is clear, when the writer quotes from Psalm 45:6-7, “Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.” This psalm speaks about the Messiah as king. Jesus Christ fulfilled the words of this psalm. The person honored is divine and eternal, and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

The quotation applies to Jesus’ nature, for he loves righteousness and hates wickedness. Jesus is anointed from eternity to eternity. Jesus holds royal authority and administers his just rule.

V. 10. “In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.” This 6th quotation is from Psalm 102:25-27. The eternity of the Son is evident, because he is the Creator (Gen. 1:1; and Col. 1:16). Emphatic you as the first word. The address, O Lord, is not in Ps. 102:25, but it is found in the LXX, the text the author used.

Vv. 11-12. “They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.” Created beings lack eternity. Some parts seem timeless like mountains. Yet they exhibit change. The Creator is timeless and unchangeable. Angels are not eternal because they have a beginning. The Son is almighty, unchangeable, eternal.

V. 13. “To which of the angels did God ever say.” Here is a repetition of v. 5. The last quotation is from Psalm 110:1 “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” Angels do not have the privilege of being seated at God’s right hand. The Son has been given this honor when he ascended and took his rightful place. Also this psalm is messianic. The author uses it to point out that Jesus is king (v. 1) and priest (v. 4). Jesus quoted it in the last day of his public teaching in the temple area (Mt 22:45), Peter quoted it in his Pentecost speech (Acts 2:36); and Paul quotes it in 1 Cor. 15:27.

The seat of honor is at the right hand of the host. People stand in the presence of a king. The mother of James and John wanted seats of honor to the left and right of Jesus in his kingdom (Mt 20:21). The phrase footstool for your feet is a military term referring to subduing enemies.
V. 14. “Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” This is a rhetorical question that receives a positive answer. The word *angel* means to be a messenger. Messengers are sent out, and this is the task of angels. Angels are numberless. They differ from human beings: they do not have a body, do not procreate, are not created in the image of God, are not covenant partners, do not rule, and cannot be redeemed when fallen.

We have inherited salvation (Rom. 8:17), will inherit is the definite future tense that conveys the meaning that it certainly will happen.


The author builds on the introductory paragraph (1:1-4) in which he pointed to Jesus being prophet, priest, and king. Now in 2:3 and 12-13, he refers to him as prophet, in 2:9 as king, and in 2:27 as priest. In this chapter, the Son is now the Lord, and Jesus. Also, in chapter 1 he stressed the divinity of Jesus, but in chapter 2 his humanity. And last, exhortation (1-4) and teaching (5-18) are interspersed.

V. 1. “We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.” This is a nautical term with verb in the aorist, indicating that the danger of drifting away is real, not imaginary. The emphasis here as throughout Hebrews is on listening obediently to the Word of God. Literally the text says, “On account of this (the preeminence of the Son), it is necessary that we hold (our minds) to the things that were heard.” Like a plowman plowing a straight furrow by constantly keeping his eye on an object in the distance, so the Christian must keep God’s Word in mind every day and every moment of the day.

V. 2. “For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment.” The conditional clause is factual and not hypothetical. The message is the Decalogue. “Spoken by angels” is a typical Jewish way of circumventing the name of God. See Stephen (Acts 7:38), Paul (Gal. 4:3; 19), and the author of Hebrews. Angels mediated the giving of the law (Deut. 33:2 LXX, Targum, Midrash, and Talmud. The principle of transgressing the law results in righteous retribution.

V. 3. “How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.” In 1:14 there was mention of salvation, now once more but preceded by the adjective great. Now not OT but also NT is involved. Jesus achieved this great salvation for us. The principle from the lesser to the greater, then how shall we escape when the Israelites received their just punishment.

The Lord is the speaker. Contrast is between the angels announcing the Law and Jesus proclaiming the gospel. Yet the fullness of God’s Word is meant. The Law equals the OT and the gospel equals the NT. The word *salvation* means redemption in Christ in the sense of the full revelation of God. Jesus’ name (Joshua in Hebrew) means salvation. See Matt. 1:21; John 3:32.

Those who heard Jesus confirmed the gospel others. The author heard the gospel from the apostles who were faithful witnesses. Thus all believers must pass on the gospel to the people who need to hear it.

V. 4. “God testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.” Supernatural signs, wonders, and miracles accompanied the spread of the gospel. In countries where the gospel first makes its entry, miracles still occur. Book of Acts gives eloquent testimony to signs and wonders. Jesus gave the apostles supernatural powers of speaking other languages, healing the sick and raising the dead.

Gifts of the Spirit are listed in 1 Cor. 12:4-11. God is the One who testifies to the veracity of his Word. “According to his will: means that God himself is the agent in using divine powers.

V. 5. “Not to angels that he has subjected the world to come.” Angels are mere messengers and are ministering spirits. The world to come is the world that believers inherit in the messianic age. When Jesus took his seat at the right hand of God, the world
to come was inaugurated. Yet it also refers to the future in which it will be better qualitatively. The world to come is subject to the Son.

V. 6. “But there is a place where someone has testified.” The writer does not reveal ignorance, for he knows the OT Scriptures. But he places emphasis on the primary author, not David, the secondary author. He quotes Ps. 8:4-6 that speaks of the work of God in creation in pristine state. David compares the heavenly bodies to man who is but a speck of dust. Yet man is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Man has authority over the earth, fish, animals, and birds. Sin changed all this.

Vv. 7,8. “You made him a little lower than the angels.” Also the Hebrew reading is “lower than God.” The LXX reading is “angels.” Shorter reading in Hebrews than in Psalm 8:5 LXX, “You placed him over the works of your hands.” Rule is that the shorter reading is more likely the correct one. “You crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet.” Not angels but only man has been crowned with glory and honor. Man is king over God’s creation. All things are subject to man. Even angels are ministering to redeemed man. Adam received God’s mandate to rule creation (Gen. 1:28). Adam stood at the pinnacle of creation. The last line in v. 8 speaks of reality because of sin. Animals flee from human beings because of fear. The psalm was interpreted first to man and then to Christ. The ideal is in sinless Adam who lost, but regained in Christ. Jesus fulfilled Psalm 8. Compare 1:13 (Ps. 110:1) and 2:8b (Ps. 8:6): put everything under his feet.

V. 9. “But we see Jesus.” Phil. 2:8 speaks about Jesus who humbled himself and became obedient to death. Jesus accomplished what Adam failed to do. At his resurrection and ascension he was no longer lower than the angels. He entered his state of exaltation wearing the crown of glory and honor with everything subjected to him. Note the name Jesus that calls to mind salvation. Not universal salvation, but verse 9 must be seen in light of verse 10. Jesus tasted death for everyone of his people. Death was bitterness for Jesus who is life personified. He died as a sinless Savior to set people free from the curse of spiritual death.

The phrase grace of God has been replaced in some manuscripts by apart from God. This is on the basis of Matt. 27:46, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Earliest manuscripts have “grace.” Nevertheless, this reading needs interpretation.

V. 10. “Bringing many sons to glory.” These are the ones led to glory by the Son of God. The subject of this verse is God (Rom. 11:36), but the author of salvation is Jesus. See also Heb. 12:2, “the author and perfecter of our faith.” Through gruesome suffering Jesus brought about perfection. Perfection must be seen as the completion of his suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. See also 10:14, “by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”

V. 11. “Both the one who make men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family.” This is a work of holiness in God’s family. This verse teaches Jesus’ humanity and alludes to his divinity. Sanctification is a lifelong process, and its path lies in obedience to doing God’s will and to do it out of gratitude. If we fall into sin, Christ will
cleanse us and make us holy. He leads us to glory. We may call Jesus our brother, he who is seated at God’s right hand.

V. 12. “I will declare your name to my brothers” is from Psalm 22:22. In chapter 1 God is the speaker, in chapter 2 Jesus speaks from Ps. 22 and Isa. 8:17-18. The brothers are the members of his church. Look at the context of Ps. 22:23-24. Jesus is the Messiah who speaks throughout Ps. 22.

V. 13. “I will put my trust in him.” Jesus utters the words of Isa. 8:17-18. Look at the context of these verses. Isa. 7:14 and 8:8, 10 mention Immanuel. Also see 2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2; Isa. 12:2 that speak about spiritual songs, that is, putting trust in God. Words of Isaiah become the words of Christ. They are applied to the remnant of faithful Israel. They form the church.

Vv. 14, 15. “Since the children have flesh and blood.” Jesus and his people are one family. Thus Jesus assumed flesh and blood. He shared our human nature and lived a full life with weaknesses, ills, desires, and temptations. God appointed Jesus to live on earth, die on a cross to set his people free. Christ’s death resulted in conquering Satan and setting his people free from the fear of death. When Adam sinned, Satan gained control over the power of death. He stood ready to inflict on people physical and spiritual death. But without God’s permission Satan is powerless. God pronounced a curse on the human race and his creation. Jesus took away from Satan the weapon of death and the fear of death. Because people die a physical death, Satan appears to reign supreme. Believers know that nothing can separate them from the love of God (Rom. 8:38-39).

Vv. 16, 17. “It is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants.” Abraham is the father of believers, and they are his spiritual descendants. Different translations: KJV, RSV, NIV. Jesus redeems people not angels that are irredeemable.

Jesus had to identify fully with his people in every respect. He had to be a merciful and a faithful high priest. Jesus is depicted as the high priest who represents man before God, accepts God’s wrath, heals the brokenhearted, lifts up the fallen, and ministers to the needs of his people. Faithfulness has two meanings: a person is faithful in performing duties and is trustworthy toward people who rely on him. The two meanings merge.

The term Atonement means either propitiation or expiation. In the context of Hebrews it means that Jesus took away God’s wrath for us and brought peace between God and man. God reconciled himself to us. Though angry because of sin, God appointed Jesus to remove sin by death on the cross. Through Christ the relationship between God and man is restored (Rom. 5:10).

V. 18. “He himself suffered.” Jesus was tempted just like we are. He personally experienced the power of sin when in his weakness Satan affronted him. He suffered hunger, thirst, weariness, pain, and sorrow. He experienced the intensity of temptation. He is sympathetic toward us.
Chapter 3.

V.1. “Therefore, holy brothers.” Jesus is superior to angels; he is also superior to Moses and to Aaron. Moses represents the law and Aaron the priesthood. The comparison between Jesus and Moses in a sense parallels that of Jesus and angels. Moses is a servant, so are the angels.

First word, therefore, is important; it is the link between chapters 2 and 3 in respect to family. People are addressed as holy brothers. Holy means being sanctified with permission to enter the presence of God. We share in the heavenly calling. The writer calls Jesus the apostle and high priest. Apostle means to be sent as an ambassador. He can only speak the words his sender gives him (John 3:34). The word _apostle_ applies to Moses, the word _high priest_ to Aaron. God’s people confess Jesus’ name (1 Cor. 12:3), Jesus is Lord.

V.2. “He was faithful to the one who appointed him.” Note the past tense _was_ that points to the work Jesus did on earth and which terminated when he ascended to heaven, yet there it continues. He continues his work as high priest by preparing a place for his people and he intercedes for them. Was not Moses faithful in all God’s house. The word _house_ should not be taken literally but figuratively. Moses ministered faithfully to the church of God in the desert. The inclusion of the word _all_ is advisable.

V.3. “Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses.” Jesus is called apostle and high priest; Moses never received that two-fold office. Example from building trade. Architect is honored but not the contractor. These two stand at different levels. God is the architect, Jesus is the builder, and Moses is the servant. Work of Moses is not discredited. God met Moses face to face (Exod. 33:11). God buried Moses (Deut. 34:6). Yet Jesus and Moses are in two different categories. Jesus is the mediator, while Moses was the lawgiver. Moses belongs to the house, but Jesus rules the house.

V.4. “Every house is built by someone.” This verse is an explanatory note. The term _house_ can be understood literally or figuratively. The adversative _but_ is significant, for it directs attention to God. Not Jesus but God receives ultimate glory. God designs and plans, but Jesus is the agent through whom God creates and re-creates. God works through his Son. Because Jesus re-creates, he is greater than Moses.

Vv.5-6. “Moses was faithful.” Author contrasts Moses and Jesus (Num. 12:7). Moses is a servant, but Christ is a son. Word _servant_ (therapo\$n) occurs only once in NT, but many times in OT. A servant is a person who freely wishes to serve, a slave is one who must serve. Moses served with honorable distinction (Josh. 1:1-4). Christ has authority over the house (Heb. 10:21). Moses functioned as a prophet and was prototype of Christ (Deut. 18:15, 18). The words that would be spoken in the future are reflected in Heb. 1:1, 2.

The church of Jesus Christ is the spiritual house. Christ Jesus is the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Tim. 3:15). Fierce opposition against Christians comes from all sides: secularism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Communism. We
must take courage and champion hope (Heb. 6:18-19; 10:23). Some people in times of hardship and persecution fall way (Mark 4:5-6).

Vv.7-9. “The Holy Spirit says.” Not David who composed Ps. 95, but the Holy Spirit speaks addressing the people in OT times. Ps. 95 consists of two parts. First part is for worship services. The second part is different because in it God rebukes his people.

Today. This word means that God speaks to us today. The conditional sentence speaks about the possibility of people hearing God’s voice and hardening their hearts. The imperative is direct: do not ever harden your hearts. Compare James 4:4. David presents a lesson from history: the Israelites in the desert who were rebellious. Two terms are used: rebellion and testing that refer to the beginning and the end of the forty-year journey (Exod. 17:7 and Num. 20:13). The history of Israel in the desert is replete with examples of unbelief and faithlessness. Yet God protected them: cloud by day, fire by night, manna, water, quail, health, clothes and shoes (Exod. 13:21; 16:4-5; 17:6; Deut. 29:5).

Vv.10-11. “I was angry with that generation.” Exact words spoken by God are in Num. 14 and Deut. 1. See especially Num. 14:11. “They shall never enter my rest.” No entrance into Promised Land (Deut. 1:35; Num. 14:23). Canaan was the land of rest (Deut. 12:9). Only two families: Joshua and Caleb. The word rest has a deeper meaning than physical rest. After the life of the nomad and the valiant soldier came to an end, there was still a spiritual rest.

V.12. “See to it that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart.” Does the word So in verse 7 go with verse 7 or with verse 12? The psalm quotation is an illustrious reminder of obstinate Israelites. Falling away from God originates in unbelief. Unbelief is expressed in disobedience. Here is the sequence:

Unbelief---Faith
Disobedience---Hearing obediently
Neglect---Steadfastness
Apostasy---Entrance into Life
Hardening---Salvation

A heart that turns away from God is evil, wicked. (Jer. 17:9). The author of Hebrews indicates that it is possible to find persons with sinful, unbelieving hearts in the fellowship of the church.

V.13. “But encourage one another daily.” God’s house consists of living stones (1 Pet. 2:5; see also 1Cor. 12:12). All the parts of the body should have equal concern for each other. We must have corporate responsibility. This must be done in faithfulness to God, exhorting and encouraging one another. Now is the day of grace. When that day is over, the judgment day has come. Satan sends sin as a deceptive agent to lead believers astray (2 Cor. 11:14). The none of you phrase occurs also in 4:1, 11.

Vv.14-15. “We have come to share in Christ.” Parallel between 3:6 and 3:14 is evident. Both have the wording to hold on to the end. We must hold on to courage and
confidence. Only those people with unwavering faith in Jesus are saved. Without faith it is impossible to please God (11:6).

“A Christian, so long as he is not made perfect, considers himself as a beginner.” We must cling in faith to Jesus Christ and listen to the exhortation to obey God’s Word.

Vv. 16-19. The questions the author asks he answered with rhetorical queries that expect positive answers. The rebellious people left Egypt, died in the desert, and did not enter God’s rest. The rebellious Israelites perished because of unbelief and disobedience. Illustrations from Israel’s history are recorded in Exod. 17:7; Num. 20:13; Deut. 33:8; and Ps. 106:32.

The total number of men 20 years and older in the second year was 603,550; double that number because of the females in Israel; divide the total by the number of days the Israelites were in the wilderness for 38 years. The result is 90 deaths per day as a result of God’s curse (Num. 14:23; Deut. 1:34-35).

Chapter 4.

V.1. “Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands.” Here is the author’s commentary on Ps. 95:11 in connection with rest. The author acts as a pastor and does not want anyone to go astray. Church members should shun unconcern and complacency. First word in Greek text phobe\(\Delta ho\Delta m\)en (let us fear) receives emphasis and also the second word “therefore.” God’s promise of entering his rest is still valid today: “since the promise of entering his rest still stands.” Others translate, “although there is still left a promise to enter into his rest.” The promise is still open and will cease at the end of time.

Failure to stand means falling away and not entering God’s rest. Rest is much broader than physical rest from a nomadic or military life. Spiritual rest is related to the blessed life spent in obedience to God and his law. The term to have fallen short is a term used in sports in relation to failing to rest the finish line. The emphasis is on none of you. No one may be lost.

V.2. “For we also have had the gospel preached to us.” The gospel is the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation. It is the good news for Israelites in the desert and for the Christian today. The recipients of Hebrews had the gospel preached to them for a considerable time. They failed to combine it with faith. Two translations: 1. “The Word was not united by faith in those who heard.” 2. “They did not share the faith of those who heard it.” The first one is more prevalent because it fits the context and is readily understood. But the second one has better manuscript support. The emphasis is on the faith that was not shared, because the people refused to accept God’s Word in faith. Their refusal was not momentary but continuous. Only by true faith in God can the Christian enter God’s eternal rest.

V.3. “Now we who have believed enter that rest.” The author speaks about himself and his contemporary believer. He says, “we …enter that rest.” The promise has become
reality in fulfillment of his divine plan and purpose. Our eyes of faith are fixed on Jesus (12:2). Only those who believe enter that rest.

**Vv.4-5.** “For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day.” God’s rest refers first to his completing the work of creation (Gen. 2:2). And second, it refers to his everlasting rest because there has never been a cessation. Says Jesus, “My father is working still, and I am working” (John 5:17). Rest does not mean idleness, but a cessation from the work of creation. For the believer, rest becomes a reality when sin is removed. If the Israelites had listened to God’s Word, they would have received God’s blessings and be honored above all the nations. For them, life in the Promised Land would have been living the in the presence of God. But see Judges 2:10.

**VV.6-7.** “It still remains that some will enter that rest.” Joshua and Caleb entered Promised Land, for God does not break his word. Thus believers are asked to enter God’s rest, God honors his promise. The “some” refer to exhortation for believers to exert themselves to enter this rest.

People at Sinai accepted covenant, pledged to obey the law, but disobeyed. They were denied entrance. God repeated his promise and called it, *Today*. The promise is from Moses to David, from David to Hebrews, from Hebrews to us. The promise has timeless validity.

**V.8.** “For if Joshua had given them rest. Time gap of 500 years between Joshua and David (Josh. 22:4). KJV has Jesus. Conditional sentence expresses an unreal condition. If Joshua had given them rest—and God fulfilled his promise—God would not have spoken later about another day in Psalm 95. God’s rest transcends the temporal and attains the eternal. It is a rest from sin and evil.

**Vv.9-10.** “There remains, then, a Sabbath rest.” The Greek word *sabbatismos* means keeping the Sabbath and the Day of Atonement. It is an emblem of eternal rest. Those who die in the Lord rest from their labor” (Rev. 14:13). Entering into that rest is a one-time act. It is at the end of life on earth.

**V.11.** “Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest.” Verse 6 is introductory to verse 11. The effort must be undertaken and kept up continually. It is the holding on to the tradition. The author urged the readers to resist to the point of shedding blood (12:4). Do not fall! Not in literal sense but spiritually. Those who have lost their salvation deserve eternal destruction. The author speaks as a pastor to the readers. No one in the church should be left to himself and drift away. The history of Israel should be a lesson. Unbelief leads to disobedience and that results in an inability to come to repentance.

**V.12.** “The word of God is active.” This is not a reference to Christ but rather to the revealed Scriptures. This word is not frozen in history but is energetic—it has an energizing effect. It recreates a person who is dead in trespasses and sins. Ignoring the message of Scripture means experiencing the keen edge of God’s Word.

In the Roman arsenal, the double-edged sword was the sharpest weapon available. The author compares sword to the Word of God. Revelation speaks about the sword
coming out of Jesus’ mouth. This Word penetrates and divides. Joints and marrow are usually left untouched. Let no one take the spoken or written Word for granted, ignore it, or willfully oppose it. Nothing is untouched by Scripture. It exposes the hidden motives of the heart. God addresses people in the totality of their existence. We are unable to escape the impact of God’s Word.

V.13. “Nothing is all creation is hidden from God’s sight.” Man cannot hide anything. All seeing eye of God on dollar bill. Coram Deo, “in the presence of God.” All things are uncovered and laid bare before him. The head is pushed back so that face and neck are exposed. The last clause reveals that everyone must give an account before God.

V.14. “Therefore, since we have a great high priest.” Because of his sonship Jesus is already great. Being a high priest does not make him great. Jesus excels because he is divine. Only Jesus has gone through the heavens. The difference between Jesus and Aaron is immeasurable. The author also uses the adjective great in 10:21, “since we have a great priest over the house of God” and 13:20, “that great Shepherd of the sheep.” Jesus excels earthly high priests. He is human and divine. By comparison, between the accession of Herod the Great (37 B.C.) and the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), there were twenty-six high priests.

Jesus is called the Son of God and is emphatic. The exhortation is to hold on to our confession, that is, our faith in him both objectively and subjectively (Rom. 10:10).

V.15. “For we do not have a high priest.” Negatively with a double negative (not have…unable), but that implies a positive statement. Positively Jesus both human and divine experienced our weaknesses. He was tempted in every way. Nothing human is foreign to him. Yet he was without sin. He suffered hunger, thirst, fatigue, abuse, insult, and loneliness.

V.16. “Let us approach the throne of grace.” Here is a special word of encouragement to the readers. We have freedom to approach God any time (10:22). The throne of grace refers to the kingship of the Son of God (1:3). Believers with contrite hearts (Ps. 51:17) may approach the royal high priest seated at right hand of God. We may come boldly, in full confidence, to receive mercy and find grace. Mercy must be taken and grace must be sought. Mercy shows God’s compassion and grace shows his goodness and love. Help in time of need alleviates distress.

Chapter 5

V.1. “Every high priest is selected from among men.” According to Exod. 28-29, only Aaron and his descendants could serve at the altar. The high priest was chosen from relatively few families. The principle is that a high priest is selected from among men. God must appoint a high priest. Compare Annas and Caiaphas. A sinful high priest serves sinful people in matters related to God. Both gifts and sacrifices are offered (8:3). The high priest is between the people and God.

V.2. “He is able to deal gently with those who ignorant and are going astray.” A high priest must be patient with sinners, must be an intercessor, and be a mediator. Note the emphasis on ignorant, because willful sin cannot be forgiven (Num. 15:22-31). High priest may not overlook or condone sin. Weakness clings to people like a garment covers the body.
V.3. “This is why he has to offer sacrifices.” This is an explanatory note (Lev. 16:15-16). Aaron had to offer a bull for his own sins and that of his family and offer a goat for the people of Israel. He had to intercede on behalf of the people.

Vv.4-6. “No one takes this honor upon himself.” Author compares Aaron to Christ. God appointed both Aaron and Christ. Aaron held next to Moses the highest office in Israel. If a God has not called a person, he is an affront to him and a provocation to his people. Difference between Aaron and Christ is profound. Christ has been crowned with glory and honor. Christ is both priest and king, human and divine. Psalm 2 stresses royal status of the Son, Psalm 110 stresses his priesthood (see Zech. 6:13). Melchizedek is mentioned in Gen. 14:18 and in Ps. 110:4. Jewish people expected a king from the house of David and from the tribe of Judah no priest could come. During Jesus’ earthly life he was not known as priest.

V.7. “During the days of Jesus’ life on earth.” Jesus’ life is related to Gethsemane and Calvary. Prayers and petitions relate to his last twenty-four hours when he suffered spiritual agony. Intense agony in the Garden (Matt. 26:38) with drops of blood (Luke 22:44). Jesus functioned as priest praying on behalf of his people. He prayed that the cup be taken from him, yet God’s will be done. Prayers and petitions reveal the depths of Jesus’ spiritual and physical agony. He uttered loud cries from the cross. Jesus died the second death (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8). That death is a spiritual death. Jesus removed from us eternal death. Jesus prayed to God the Father and saw the horror of being forsaken by God and experience eternal death. God answered his prayer (Luke 22:43). He was heard because of his reverent submission. Note that reverent submission is better than godly fear (Vulgate). God reestablished the Father-Son relationship.

V.8-9. “Although he was a son, he learned obedience.” The main verb is learned, but what did he learn? He showed obedience to become obedient to death on the cross (Phil. 2:8). Here is the active and the passive obedience of Christ, namely, the well-known obedience. Christ provides eternal life and discharges sin and guilt (Rom. 5:19). How was Jesus made perfect? By developing in the school of obedience he became perfect through states of humiliation and exaltation. The source of eternal salvation is the same as author of it (see 2:10). Jesus is priest in the order of Melchizedek. The author introduces this in 2:17, returns to it in 4:14-5:10, and completes it in chapter 7.

Chapter 5 and 6

Vv.11-12. “We have much to say about this.” Before the author explains Melchizedek, he has a lengthy rebuke and exhortation. The readers should have been teachers of the Word, but the matter of the priesthood is too deep and advanced. They have become lazy. They should be able to teach others the doctrines of God. Believers who have heard the Gospel should be able to pass it on. But if they do not know the ABCs of the Christian faith, they are unable to teach. They need milk, not solid food.

Vv.13-14. “Anyone who lives on milk…is not acquainted with teaching about righteousness.” To know the teaching about righteousness is mandatory, for it marks the difference between a child and an adult. Adults need solid food, are mature, and make decisions about ethical conduct. They have experience in distinguishing between good and evil.

Heb.6:1, 3. “Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity.” The recipients are not ignorant but must review the elementary teachings about Christ. The term therefore is retrospective. The author exhorts the people to go beyond these teachings and lay the foundation of repentance: repentance and faith in God. And they should be instructed in baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

Repentance is an action that results in no longer doing works that lead to death. Faith in God includes faith in Christ. The plural form baptisms may include washings other than baptism.

Vv.4-6. “It is impossible.” The main sentence reads, “It is impossible for those [people] to be brought back to salvation.” Those people are typified by the word once that qualifies four clauses: enlightened,
tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, tasted the goodness of the Word of God. Enlightened by the gospel with similarity to baptism. Tasted the gift of God (Samaritan woman at the well). Spiritual gifts with nourishment of the Word and powers belonging to the future age. If those people fall away in apostasy, they can never return. Apostasy and backsliding may never be confused. Also note the third person plural they, that means not the first person plural we. See also 10:26-31. Two clauses in the present tense supply the reasons for apostasy: crucifying the Son of God and putting him to an open shame. This is deliberately sinning against God and is the sin against the Holy Spirit.

Vv.7-8. “Land that drinks in the rain.” The land and the rain are the same for the people. But in the one case the people work and are blessed; in the other case the people fail to work and are in danger of being cursed.

Vv.9-10. “Even though we speak like this, dear friends.” The emphasis is on we and you. The author speaks as a pastor. The recipients will receive better things. God forgets confessed sin, but he remembers deeds of kindness (Matt. 25:40). God is just. See the follow-up of 6:10 in 10:32-34.

Vv.11-12. “We want each one of you.” The pastor wants his people to advance spiritually. Love, faith, and hope are a tripod that stands. He admonishes the readers not to become lazy. Through faith and prayers they are inheritors of God’s promises.

Chapters 6:13-7:28

Vv.13-15. “When God made his promise to Abraham.” At age 75 Abraham received promises of land and son. At age 86 Ishmael was born and at age 100 Isaac. When he died at age 175, he had two fifteen-year old grandsons. Isaac was son of the covenant, so was Jacob. The land he received was a burial plot bought for 400 shekels of silver. God swore an oath to guarantee his trustworthiness. The solemn promise came in response to Abraham’s faith (Gen. 22:16-17).

Vv.16-17. “Men swear by someone greater than themselves.” They swear in the name of God, by the temple, Jerusalem, and the earth. Jesus forbade swearing oaths as a sinful practice, because an oath cannot be broken. An oath puts an end to all argument. God is the ultimate truth. “Your word is truth” (John 17:17), yet in addition God swears an oath by himself. His promise transcends the centuries and is in Christ relevant today.

Vv.18-19. “God did this so that, by two unchangeable things.” Here is a built-in redundancy: God is truth and God cannot lie. It is blasphemous to say that God’s Word cannot be trusted and that God is a perjurer. Two unchangeable things are his promise and his oath. We who have fled take hold of the hope offered to us. We have escaped the power of willful unbelief. God provides hope through the promises of his Word. This hope is an anchor to give stability and security. The word anchor never appears in the OT and only 4 times in the NT (three of them in Acts 27:29, 30, 40). Anchor and veil are two images to refer to Jesus, for Jesus went behind the veil of the Holy of Holies, namely, the very presence of God.

V.20. “Where Jesus…has entered on our behalf.” The name Jesus refers to his earthly life. He is the forerunner and we follow him. Jesus is high priest forever. By his atoning work on the cross he became a high priest, not in the Aaronic high priest but in the one of Melchizedek.

7:1-3. “This Melchizedek was king of Salem.” Name Melchizedek occurs twice (Gen. 14:18 and Ps. 110:4). The first part Melchi means king and the second part zedek mean righteous. He was a priest of God Most High, who blessed Abraham. He was king of Salem, identified with Jerusalem. Abraham gave him a tithe. Melchizedek was a king-priest. Salem means peace. There is no lineage for him: no father, mother, genealogy, and age. He was like the Son of God and remains priest forever. He belongs to a different class, and his priesthood endures.

Vv.4-5. “Just think how great he was.” He was greater than the patriarch Abraham who gave Melchizedek a tithe. Abraham is the friend of God (James 2:23; 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8). Tithing and paying taxes
vary. Hebrews stresses the receiving of a tithe. God instituted the tithe for the support of the Levites (Num. 18:21, 28). There are contrasts: priests are more respected than others; Abraham is greater than his descendants; Melchizedek is greater than Abraham.

Vv.6-7. “This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi.” Abraham was the great-grandfather of Levi, and they received God’s promises. Melchizedek had no genealogy and no promises. Yet he was a king-priest. Abraham voluntarily gave him a tenth and Melchizedek blessed him. “The lesser is blessed by the greater.” Fathers bless children but children do not bless fathers.

Vv.8-10. “In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die.” The priesthood of Melchizedek is permanent, for he [representing the priesthood] is declared to be living yet he died. A Levitical priest served some 25 to 30 years and then died. Their term in office is limited. Levi was the tribal head who existed in the body of his great-grandfather Abraham. The focus is on the greatness of Melchizedek, yet he was like the Son of God who surpassed him.

V.11. “If perfection could have been attained.” The conditional sentence is contrary to fact or unreal. Perfection was not reached. If perfection were reached, there would not be a need for another kind of priesthood. The law of the priesthood was given to the Levites (Num. 18:23). The priesthood was linked to the law.

V.12. “For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change in the law.” Law and priesthood go together, for an aspiring priest had to prove his genealogy. A Jew considered the law of God to be eternal. Not even the smallest letter of the law would disappear (Matt. 5:18). God would have to accomplish the change of priesthood.

Vv.13-14. “He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe.” Jesus came from David’s line of the tribe of Judah, not the tribe of Levi. No one served at the altar except the Levites. Uzziah tried and was stricken with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16-18). God overruled the law concerning the priesthood. He made the law and changed it. The priestly order of Melchizedek is different. Jesus as a descendant of David established not a royal kingdom but a spiritual kingdom.

Vv.15-17. “And what we have said.” The Aaronic priestly order terminated because of Christ’s sacrificial death. The priesthood of Christ continues. Priest is used in comparing Christ and Levitical order; high priest is used when Christ and Aaron are compared. An indestructible life refers to Christ who died and rose from the dead. Ps. 110 verse 4 implies that God himself appointed Christ to be priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Vv.18-19. “The former regulation is set aside.” The word former means introductory. The one that followed is permanent. The Levitical priesthood failed because of sin. The law made nothing perfect. Christ’s sacrifice takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), and the need for animal sacrifices is eliminated. Levitical priesthood could not remove the curse, and could not effect eternal salvation (Ps. 51:16. The law made nothing perfect (Rom. 8:3).

Vv.20-22. “And it was not without an oath!” God swore and oath and Christ became a priest. Levitical priesthood is everlasting (Exod. 29:9) but without an oath. Laws can be repealed, but oats are forever. The oath of Christ’s priesthood is unalterable and unchangeable. Christ is the guarantee of a better covenant. The guarantee is that all God’s promises will be fulfilled. The name Jesus is used purposely (Matt. 1:21). The adjective better in this context means eternal. The promise of God is I will be their God and they are my people (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10).

Vv.24-25. “Now there have been many of those priests.” The length of the priest in office was temporal—long or short periods of time. Jesus lives forever. No one can take Jesus’ place. He is the one and only high priest. Jesus does his work completely and fully to perfection. He does not live for himself but for his people. He is their mediator who stands between God and man. No person comes to the Father but through Jesus. Jesus is the intercessor who perfects our prayers.
Vv.26-28. “Such a high priest meets our needs.” Jesus is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, and is exalted above the heavens. Five characteristics separate Jesus from sinners. In his holiness he fulfills the law perfectly. In his blamelessness he is sinless. In his purity he remains undefiled. God separated Jesus from sinners. He is exalted higher than all the heavens (Eph. 4:10). Jesus Christ occupies a position that is higher than anyone can imagine.

Chapter 8 and 9:1-10.

Vv.1-2. “The point of what we are saying.” The author switches from priesthood to covenant, for he noted that Jesus is the mediator (7:22). Jesus is high priest but he is also king who sat down at the right hand of God (1:3). Priesthood and kingship go hand in hand. The sitting position is for rulers (kings and presidents). God sits on the throne (Rev. 4:2). Throne and sanctuary are together in one place (Rev. 16:17). At Jesus’ ascension he entered the presence of God. Justice and mercy flow from the throne and sanctuary, from the king and from the priest. The ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is superior to that on earth. Jesus serves in the true tabernacle. Jesus is high priest in that tabernacle. The tabernacle is the very presence of God.

Vv.3-4. “Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices.” There is parallelism in the first sentence. Jesus’ name is not mentioned in these two verses, but the thrust is evident. He stands over against numerous high priests. The contrast is significant. The verb to offer relating to the priests is in the present tense and denotes continual action. The same verb in connection with Jesus is a once-for-all act.

V.5. “They serve at a sanctuary.” Here is continuing contrast in this verse and the next. Earthly tabernacle is a copy and shadow. Heavenly tabernacle is the original as the presence of God. Tabernacle is a copy and sacrifices are a shadow. No tabernacle like the one Moses built exists in heaven. Scripture fails to reveal what the original is. The focus is on Jesus the perfect sacrifice.

Vv.6-8a. “But the ministry Jesus received is as superior to theirs.” The difference is more in covenants than in ministries. The concept covenant is in focus here, for Christ is the mediator of the new covenant. The old system yielded to the new. In the old covenant the high priest was the mediator, in the new one it is Christ. The new one is founded on better promises.

The conditional sentence is contrary to fact. In the conditions of the covenant God fulfilled his part, but the people failed to do theirs. Jeremiah’s prophecy 600 years before Jesus came speaks of a new covenant. The people ratified the old covenant (Exod. 24) but failed to keep it.

Vv. 8-9. “The time is coming, declares the Lord.” The Israelites received the Decalogue as the Sinaitic covenant. Now God declared that he would make a new covenant. This prophecy announced the coming of the Messiah. The implied stipulations for the people were that they would be a kingdom and a holy nations living in obedience to God’s law (Exod. 19:6; Deut. 6:5). God would turn away from them if they rebelled. Yet he remains a covenant keeping God.

Vv.10-12. “This is the covenant I will make with them.” The new covenant is for people in the messianic age. Believers, both Jews and Gentiles, fill the house of Israel. The expression minds and hearts represent the inner being that is guided by the law of God. The covenant promise—I will be their God and they will be my people—is the golden thread throughout the Bible. God’s law is inscribed on their hearts, and his name is written on their foreheads. The knowledge of the Lord will be universal, covering the earth as the waters cover the sea. God will forgive sin and remember it no more.
V.13. “By calling this covenant new, he has made the first one obsolete.” In OT sacrifices were offered for the remission of sin, in NT the sacrifice of Christ removes sin. The old covenant was for Israel, the new covenant is for all who believe in Jesus.

Chapter 9.
V.1. “Now the first covenant had regulations. The contrast of earthly tabernacle and heavenly tabernacle is understood from the preceding chapter. Earthly is the counterpart of the greater and more perfect tabernacle. The covenant includes regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. The link between chapters 8 and 9 is the confirmation of the covenant (Exod. 24) and the mandate to construct the tabernacle.

Vv.2-4. “A tabernacle was set up.” This structure had two rooms. The first room is called the Holy Place, and the second is the Most Holy Place. In the first one were the table of consecrated bread, and the lampstand. The altar of incense and the covenant ark were in the second room (but see Exod. 30:1-6). Is the altar in room one or in room two? The author knew his OT. In the temple of Solomon, the altar was in the Most Holy Place. In Luke 1:9 Zechariah burns incense on the altar in the Holy Place. The censer entering the Most Holy Place was an extension of the altar of incense located in the Holy Place.

The high priest on the Day of Atonement cleansed the altar of incense by sprinkling animal blood on the horns of the altar. The ark contained the gold jar of manna (Exod. 16:33) and the tablets of stone with the Decalogue. The staff of Aaron was put in front of the altar (Num. 17:8, 10). It could not fit into the ark.

V.5. “Above the ark were the cherubim.” Cherubim were the angels placed at the tree of life (Gen. 3:24). Now they overshadowed the lid of the ark. Their wings were outstretched. Animal blood was sprinkled on the lid (Lev. 16:14, 34).

Vv.6-7. “When everything had been arranged.” The priests had to burn incense mornings and evenings, tend to the lamps, and replace the loaves each Sabbath. Only the high priest entered Most Holy Place once a year, and he had to sprinkle blood of a bull and then of a goat. Unintentional sins were forgiven, intentional sins not (Num. 15:22-30).

V.8. “The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way...had not yet been disclosed.” The people were not allowed to enter the tabernacle. The priest might enter the Holy Place, and the high priest entered the Most Holy Place. The way was not yet disclosed until the coming of Jesus when the curtain was split top to bottom.

Vv.9-10. “This is an illustration for the present time.” The Greek has the word parable for illustration. The first tabernacle failed to bring perfection. It could not clear the conscience of the sinner. Gifts and sacrifices do not affect one’s conscience. What do they accomplish? They were not unprofitable, for they provided assurance to the people.External rules achieve external objectives. Dietary laws and washings keep one clean, and keeping the law became a preventive action. They did nothing for one’s conscience.

Vv.11-12. “When Christ came as high priest of the good things.” What are the good things that are already here? They are close fellowship of God and his people, knowledge of God, remission of sin, and the work of Christ. Jesus went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not manmade.” This tabernacle is the presence
of God. This presence was never created. The heavenly tabernacle provides free access to God, because the veil has been removed. Christ entered the presence of God by means of his death on the cross. The blood of bulls and goats on the Day of Atonement effected forgiveness and reconciliation. Jesus shed his own blood in behalf of his people. He obtained eternal redemption once for all.

Vv.13-14. “The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer.” The shedding of animal blood had an external effect, one’s conscience remained unaffected. God instituted rules and regulations regarding the sprinkling of animal blood, and ashes of heifer to make the sinner outwardly clean. The blood of Christ, by contrast, cleanses the conscience. Jewish people washed themselves and utensils, but remained inwardly unclean (Luke 11:39). Sin is a matter of the heart (Prov. 4:23; see Mark 7:21-22). The argument is from the lesser to the greater. The Holy Spirit led Jesus in offering himself unblemished and spontaneously. Aaron had to cleanse himself with the blood of a bull, but Jesus was sinless and laid down his life for his people. He cleansed our consciences from acts that lead to spiritual death. Christ became priest and sacrifice, subject and object at the same time.

Vv.15-17. “For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant.” The first covenant had two parties, was sealed with animal blood, and ratified by the people. This covenant became obsolete because it was external. The new covenant is internal. Christ as mediator stands between the sinner and God. In old covenant the mediator was imperfect, in new covenant he is perfect.

There is a double meaning for the Greek word diatheke, either covenant or will. The NIV translates it as will, but the NASB has covenant. The context appears to favor “will.” Verse 15 relates that Christ died a sacrificial death to redeem his people. God made the covenant, and he also made the will. Verses 16-17 the word means a validation of a will. By his death Christ validates the last will or testament. These verses serve as an analogy.

Vv.18-22. “This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood.” The author returns to the meaning “covenant.” He refers to Exod. 24 and quotes verse 8, “This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.” The first covenant was sealed with blood, and Christ sealed the second one with his own blood. Moses took the blood of calves and goats together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. This was a solemn ratification of the first covenant. Jesus instituted the second covenant at the time of the Lord’s Supper. “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20). Moses purified the altar, tabernacle and everything in it with the blood of a bull. He consecrated Aaron and his sons (Lev. 8:10-15). Nearly everything should be cleansed with blood. Other things should be cleansed with water or fire. “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” This statement is absolute.

V.23. “It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified.” The blood of Christ is a better sacrifice than the blood of animals. The blood of animals cleansed the tabernacle, but the blood of Christ cleanses heavenly things (9:24).
expression *heavenly things* should be understood spiritually. Through Christ’s blood we enter heaven. Without his blood, sinners are condemned. His blood provides remission of sins and the gift of adoption (Rom. 8:17).

**Vv.24-26.** “For Christ did not enter a manmade sanctuary that was only a copy of a true one.” Even though the curtain split from top to bottom, Jesus never entered the Most Holy Place. Yet Christ’s sacrifice was better than animal sacrifices. Christ’s sacrifice was once for all and permanent. He entered heaven itself in the presence of God to represent us.

There is no need for Christ to enter heaven again and again. He is different from a Levitical high priest. Christ offered sinless blood, but a high priest could not offer his own blood because it was sinful. Christ’s blood is valid for all.

**Vv.27-28.** “Just as man is destined to die once.” Death and judgment follow each other in logical sequence. All must appear before the judgment throne. Christ will appear a second time to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. He does not come to remove sin, for that was done at his first coming. Jesus will come again to be forever with his people.

### Chapter 10.

**V.1.** “The law is only a shadow of the good things.” The author contrasts earthly institutions with heavenly realities. He uses the word *shadow* that can have various meanings. Here it is linked to the good things to come (9:11). They are the blessings of salvation, the atoning work of Christ and its consequences (10:14). The author’s observation minimizes not the OT law but the effectiveness of the sacrifices.

**Vv.2-4.** “If it could, would they not have stopped.” A rhetorical question demands a positive answer. The people of Israel in mechanical routine offered sacrifices. They no longer had a personal relation with God. The writers of the OT voice God’s dissatisfaction with the sacrificial system (1 Sam. 15:22; Ps. 40:6). God wants a broken and contrite heart. Repetition of sacrifices every year on Day of Atonement proves their ineffectiveness. They were deficient in inability to forgive sin. Christ is the end of old-covenant sacrifices.

**Vv.5-7.** “Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said.” The author quotes Ps. 40:6-8. Christ is the speaker and shows typical Hebraic parallelism in verse 10:5. A body you have prepared versus my ears you have pierced. Hebrew text differs from LXX. Not the outer ear but the inner ear (oreja y oido). Isa. 50:5 is important. See also 1 Sam. 15:22, where God is not satisfied with sacrifices. God prepared a body for Christ who showed complete submission. Ps. 40:6-8 show best proof for putting aside the shadow of Levitical sacrifices.

**Vv.8-10.** “First he said, Sacrifices and offerings …you did not desire.” Offerings of Cain and Abel differed. Cain’s was unacceptable. Sacrifices offered without faith and obedience are an abomination to God (Isa. 1:11-14). Christ came to do God’s will (see
13:21). God is pleased with unflagging trust. Jesus terminated the Levitical priesthood by obediently giving himself up. Thus he made us holy (2:11). The words *body of Jesus Christ* are significant because they refer to the bodily sacrifice on the cross. Christ fulfilled the demands of the Aaronic priesthood and established the new covenant. He fulfilled the requirements of the priesthood of Melchizedek in his dedication to do God’s will. The Aaronic priesthood typifies Christ’s passive obedience, the priesthood of Melchizedek his active obedience.

Vv.11-12. “Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties.” Verse 11 and 12 are a contrast of the old and the new. Innumerable priests are contrasted with one high priest. With his one-time sacrifice Jesus sat down to indicate completion and termination. Christ took his seat next to God.

Vv.13-14. “Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool.” Once more the author alludes to Ps. 110:1. His enemies are all those who oppose his dominion, authority, and power. He waits for their destruction. Sanctification takes place as a process in the lives of his people. “Make every effort to be holy” (12:14). Christ perfects the believer forever. Yet perfection in his life is never complete.

Vv.15-18. “The Holy Spirit also testifies.” Here the Holy Spirit is the speaker (3:7). In the quotation from Jeremiah, God was the speaker. In the quotation from Psalm 40 Jesus was the speaker. There are differences in the wording from Jer. 31:34, but the author is guided by the Holy Spirit. God forgives sin (Ps. 32:5; 103:12). When God forgives sin, there is no need for further sacrifices. Westcott wrote about the consequences of sin: “debt which requires forgiveness, bondage which requires redemption, and alienation which requires reconciliation.” All three Persons of the Trinity are involved in the work of atonement.

Chapter 10:19-31

Vv.19-20. “Therefore, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place.” First, the author presents a recap and then presents an introduction of faith, hope, and love. The recap is to have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place. In OT times only the high priest once a year entered behind the curtain. Now all believers may do so because of Jesus’ blood. Note that the word *Jesus* points to his earthly ministry. A new and living way he has opened for us. The curtain is his body, and the word *new* means recently (originally *freshly slain*). Living means giving life. Is the word *flesh* to be taken with *veil* or *way*? It is no coincidence that the words *flesh* and *curtain* are found together and refer to Jesus’ death and the tearing of the curtain in the temple. Hence, the author calls to mind Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.

Vv.21-22. “And since we have a great priest over the house of God.” We are encouraged to look to Jesus, our high priest. We are exhorted to come to God (4:16) in prayer. Our great high priest perfects our prayers and presents them to God. Jesus is intercessor, mediator, and savior. He and his people are the same family. In prayer we come with sincere hearts, genuine faith, free from doubt. Our hearts are sprinkled with the blood of Christ to cleanse us from an evil (guilty) conscience, and our bodies are washed with pure water (see Eph. 5:25-26).

Vv. 23-24. “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess.” This is the second exhortation that stresses hope. Hope is a natural consequence of forgiveness of sin and cleansing of our conscience. Hope looks
forward to the new life in Christ. Our profession, though not spelled out, should be honored. The one who promised is faithful (6:17). Next, the third exhortation stresses love. We must spur one another on to deeds of love. Love is communal on a horizontal plane. Spur has a positive meaning due to context. It means provoking in a good sense. The term good deeds are the opposite of dead works (6:1; 9:14).

V.25. “Let us not give up meeting together.” This is the conclusion of the second introduction. The author exhorts the Christians to stay together for worship as some are in the habit of neglecting worship services. Do not desert the communion of the saints. Do not follow the example of the Israelites in the desert. The author avoids using the term synagogue because it is a Jewish technical term. After A.D. 70, the church became ekklesia and the synagogue was for the Jews. The Day that is approaching is the Day of Jesus’ return.

V.26. “If we deliberately keep on sinning…no sacrifice for sins is left.” The first word in Greek is “deliberately” which is emphatic, namely, an intentional act. A sin that is committed in defiance to God cannot be forgiven (Num. 15:30). The penalty was death. The author stresses the ongoing act of sinning. The reference to us is tactful without losing sight of the “some” (v. 25). Next, the sinner has received the knowledge of the truth (6:4). Last, the sacrifice of Christ’s death is not for the deliberate sinner. This is the sin against the Holy Spirit.

V.27. “But only a fearful expectation of judgment.” The punishment of apostasy is fearful. This adjective occurs tree times (10:27, 31; 12:21). It means dreadful, terrifying. The execution is that of a raging fire that consumes all God’s enemies (Isa. 26:11). This is in Isaiah’s Song of Praise.

Vv.28-29. “Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy.” Here is an OT example of punishment. A deliberate sinner was executed at the testimony of two or three witnesses. This rule was observed in NT times. There was no appeal, because the verdict was without mercy. Jesus’ trial had to have two witnesses (Mark 14:56). There is punishment worse than death expressed by three participles: trampled, treated, and insulted. Sinners trampled the Son of God. Note that this is Jesus’ title. Work of the Son of God is means nothing to defiant sinner. The sinner intentionally insulted the Person of the Holy Spirit. Ignorance cannot be used as an excuse.

Vv.30-31. “For we know him who said, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay.’” There is grief for believers who see former believers turn away from God and do it deliberately. OT quotation is from the Song of Moses (Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19; and see Ps. 135:14). Believers find grace and mercy, but unbelievers an angry God.

Vv.32-34. “Remember those earlier days.” The Christians had had to face hostilities because they accepted Christ in faith. Receiving the light refers to baptism, which is the breaking point for the Jewish community. The great contest refers to the persecution they endured, even though it was peaceful at present. They were publicly exposed to insult and persecution. Jewish Christians became a target of abuse, for they were traitors of their former faith. They stood next to those who were so treated. Prison ministry was a necessity. They sympathized with those in prison as they saw their possessions robbed. Yet they were joyful, because of lasting possessions. Time reference (2:3) seems to point to persecutions under Nero.

Vv.35-36. “So do not throw away your confidence.” Faith must be confessed boldly in word and deed. God will richly reward the believer. The believer is told to do the will of God (see 10:7, 9-10). If so, they will receive what God has promised.

Vv.37-38. “For in just a little while.” The quotation from Habakkuk 2:3b-4 is from the LXX text. Here is a decidedly messianic interpretation. The contrast is between the godless Babylonian and the righteous Israelite. The author writes, “but my righteous one shall live by faith.” The object of faith is understood, namely, Jesus Christ. The quotation contains a warning to remain true to God.

V.39. “But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed.” Notice the importance of the pronoun we. Those who shrink back receive destruction. Those who have faith receive eternal life.

V.1. “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” This is the author’s definition of faith. The heroes of faith put their trust in God and triumphed. Author contrast faith and unbelief in the epistle. Faith is being sure in words of assurance. The Greek has the word *hypostasis* that can be translated as substance (title deed). Faith is subjective, but substance is objective. The subjective interpretation is commendable. Hope includes the internal and the external. Faith radiates from one’s inner being, where hope resides, to riches that are beyond his purview. Faith demonstrates confident assurance and convincing certainty.

Vv.2-3. “This is what the ancients were commended for.” Abel is the first in the list, followed by Enoch. Not everyone is chosen in the genealogy of Genesis 5, but only Abel, Enoch, and Noah. All three are before the flood. Verse 1 is the heading of chapter 11, followed by the commendation of the ancients, who gained information about creation from Adam and his genealogical line. The universe was formed at God’s command. No one was present at creation. The author speaks of faith that we have, and thus includes himself. Is the verb *to make* or *to appear* negated? Translators are equally divided on this point. I negate the verb *to make*. Parallel Rom. 1:20 and Heb. 11:3. God created heaven and earth (Gen. 1:1). There is no human eyewitness report on creation. It is God who reveals.

V.4. “By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did.” Abel is a man of faith commended by Jesus (Matt. 23:25; Luke 11:51). Abel offered some of the firstborn of his flock (Gen. 4:4) and Cain offered some of the fruits of the field. The heart of the giver is at stake, not the gifts. God reasoned with Cain and instructed him. Cain’s attitude was sinful. The writer is interested in Abel, not Cain. Even in death the blood of Abel speaks. He is at the top of the list and is the father of believers.

Vv.5-6. “By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death.” Enoch was the 7th generation beginning with Adam Gen. 5; Jude 14). All others in the genealogy have the phrase *and then he died*. Enoch walked with God (2 x). Also see the phrase *was (had) taken* that occurs three times. The curse of death did not rest on him. Faith and prayer are needed to please God, by walking and talking with him. See also Rom. 14:23). The word *impossible* is a reminder of 6:4, 18; 10:4). God exists and wants our prayers. Pray in full confidence and you will be rewarded (10:35).

V.7. “By faith Noah …in holy fear built an ark to save his family.” Ratio of unbelievers and believers has never been greater in human history: the population of the world over against eight believers. Noah built an ark on dry land. He felt the scorn of unbelief. His faith was a testimony to the unbelieving world. Noah was a righteous man and possessed righteousness (Gen. 6:9; Ezek. 14:14, 20; 2 Pet. 2:5).

Vv.8-10. “By faith Abraham…obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.” First, God told him to go to a land he would inherit, but he never owned it. Next, he would become a great nation, but he had only one son of the promise and two grandsons when he died. Yet he lived by faith. Not knowing where to go, he obeyed and left. Canaan was the land of promise and Abraham lived there as an alien. The promise was repeated to Isaac and Jacob, and Joshua brought it to realization. Abraham was called God’s friend (James 2:23). He looked forward to the new Jerusalem (12:23).

Vv.11-12. “By faith Abraham…was enabled to become a father.” Translations have different wordings (see NASB and NIV). Abraham not Sarah is the logical subject. The Greek idiom expresses modesty “the power for the laying down of seed.” The verb *to lay down* cannot mean conceive. Yet both Abraham and Sarah received power at their advanced age (see Gen. 18:12).

Vv.13-14. “All these people were still living by faith when they died.” Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob died without seeing the promise fulfilled. The phrase *aliens and strangers* refers to the patriarchs down to...
Moses, who was not permitted to enter but only to see Canaan. This world redeemed by Christ is the Christian’s workshop. Yet our stay on earth is temporary.

Vv.15-16. “If they had been thinking…they would have had the opportunity to return.” Abraham could not return because of his faith. Likewise Isaac and Jacob showed obedience. They were longing for a better country. They looked for eternal life with God. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are pilgrims on earth to receive an inheritance in heaven.

Vv.17-19. “By faith Abraham…offered Isaac as a sacrifice.” This was the greatest test of faith. The test lasted from the moment God called him until the angel stopped him. His love for God was stronger than his love for Isaac. Job lost his children when God took them; Abraham willingly gave his son when God asked. Abraham showed faith. “Stay here…and we will come back to you” (Gen. 22:5). Isaac was the son of promise. With the death of Isaac the line of the covenant would end. Ishmael was not the heir. Abraham believed (Rom. 4:17). Here is a foreshadowing of Christ but not an exact identification.

V.20. “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.” God’s electing love is independent of rules. He chose Isaac, not Ishmael; Jacob, not Esau; Ephraim, not Manasseh. The promise God gave Abraham he repeats to Isaac (Gen. 26:4) and to Jacob (Gen. 28:3-4). Isaac blessed his sons (Gen. 27:27-28, 39-40) and lived another forty years.

V.21. “By faith Jacob…blessed each of Joseph’s sons.” Jacob passed on the patriarchal blessing to his grandsons. Jacob functioned as the king of the Promised Land (Gen. 48:12-20). Jacob looked into the future and gave Ephraim the firstborn blessing, to become the leader is Israel. Half of the Promised Land was allotted to Ephraim and Manasseh in the name of Joseph who was Jacob’s firstborn of Rachel.

V.22. “By faith Joseph…spoke about the exodus.” Joseph lived by faith as a boy, in Egypt, and on his deathbed. His faith speaks of the covenant blessing that God fulfilled 400 years after Joseph’s death.

V.23. “By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months.” Was there a special vision given to Amram and Jochebed? Moses’ parents demonstrated faith in God and disobeyed Pharaoh. The daughter of Pharaoh raised Moses and he was educated to become a leader.

Vv.24-26. “By faith Moses…refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” See Acts 7:21-22. Moses put his faith in Israel’s God at Pharaoh’s court. He identified with the Hebrew slaves. The title son of Pharaoh’s daughter was prestigious. He associated deliberately with the people of God. He was not yet ready to govern the people and lead them out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Note the word Christ stands over against the treasures of Egypt. Christ transcends the ages. Moses never used the word Messiah yet he was aware of Christ’s coming. Yet Moses had no idea of the Person and work of Christ; he only had the promises of God. The coming Deliverer is not in question. Did Christ accompany the Israelites in the desert (1 Cor. 10:4)? The insults were directed to the Hebrew slaves and thus also Moses was maligned. The term reward appears repeatedly (2:2; 10:35; 11:6, 26). God rewards anyone who comes to him in faith.

Vv.27-28. “By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger.” Moses left Egypt twice, when he fled, and when he led the exodus. Was Moses’ first flight from Egypt an act of faith? Why introduce a flight in fear with the phrase by faith? The Exodus account reveals that Moses was afraid (Exod. 2:14). The second time Moses left Egypt was definitely an assignment that demanded faith. He was unafraid of Pharaoh and performed numerous miracles, because he saw him who is invisible that seems to refer to the burning bush and subsequent miracles. However, some say that the historical sequence is disrupted because the wording he left Egypt then precedes the institution of the Passover (v. 28). But the author departs from a strict historical sequence more often (11:21, 32).

What was the mountain top experience of faith in Moses’ life? The author selects the institution of the Passover feast. The people had to express faith individually.
Passover means that the angel of death spared the Hebrews. The Passover became an annual event. Next, the sprinkling of blood of the lamb was a sign and obedience resulted in not losing a single firstborn. Lives of firstborn were spared because of the blood on the doorframes.

**V.29.** “By faith the people passed through the Red Sea.” The Hebrews looked back on the waters and saw that the Lord had fought for them. Did the people have faith? They cowered in fear and grumbled (Exod. 14:11-12). The author speaks about their unbelief (3:16) in the desert. Because of the faith of true believers God saved the people from the imminent attack of the Egyptians. The contrast is not between believers and unbelievers of the Hebrews but rather between faith in Israel and unbelief of Pharaoh.

**Vv.30-31.** “By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.” Jericho prevented invaders from entering the valleys of Canaan. It was a heavily walled city that was comparatively small (600 m. circumference and an area of 225 x 80 meters). Hebrews marched on the 7th day seven times. Faith made the walls fall. Author excludes the standing still of the sun in Joshua’s time and includes this incident as an act of faith.

By faith Rahab welcomed the spies. God did not condone her sinful lifestyle, but because of her faith he protected her. She believed in Israel’s God on the basis of reports. Unbelief results in disobedience but faith in obedience. See James 2:25. She and her family were spared (Josh. 2:14-21). Her name is recorded in Jesus’ genealogy Matt. 1:5-6).

**V.32.** “And what more shall I say?” The personal pronoun I appears here and in 13:19, 22, 23. Names are not in chronological order; they appear in the sequence of three pairs: Gideon before Barak, Samson before Jephthah, David before Samuel. The first one name is the more prominent of the two.


**Vv.35b-38.** “Others were tortured and refused to be released.” People were tortured in the Maccabean period (2 Macc. 7:9, 14, 23, 29, 36). Martyrs suffered for their faith and died. The doctrine of the resurrection was known (John 11:24). Some were jeered, flogged, others were chained and put in prison. Among them Jesus, James of Zebedee, Paul and Peter. In the OT there were Michaiah (1 Kings 22:24-28) and Jeremiah (Jer. 37:14-21). They were stoned, sawn in two, killed with the sword. They were Naboth, Zechariah, Isaiah, and John the Baptist in the NT. Elijah went around in the garment of
hair (2 Kings 1:8). Elisha inherited his cloak. John the Baptist had a coat of camel hair (Mark 1:6). They wandered in deserts, Elijah (1 Kings 18:13; 19:4).

Vv.39-40. “These were all commended for their faith.” Abel and Enoch were commended, but all faithful believers are commended as well. Yet OT believers failed to obtain what was promised in Christ. They saw from afar and welcomed these promises (11:13). The prophets of the OT era searched intently trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow (1 Peter 1:10-11).

The heroes of faith in OT times and we in NT times are one. Jesus is the originator and captain of our faith. God had planned something better for us, namely, the fulfillment in Christ. The OT saints together with us are made perfect. Christ perfects believers.

Chapter 12.

V.1. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses.” A cloud of witnesses are watching and testifying. Abel still speaks, even though he is dead. They are encouraging us. In the race we must lay aside anything that hinders us: anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language (Col. 3:8). The writer says “the sin that so easily entangles.” The sin of covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5). We are in a race and are to keep our eye on Jesus as we aim for the finish line.

Vv.2-3. “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.” Jesus is the author of our salvation; he is the beginning and the end (Rev. 1:17). He is our brother. The joy set before him means that to obtain the joy God had planned for him Jesus obediently suffered the agony of death. This the only time the term cross appears. Hanging on the cross means God’s curse (Deut. 21:23). Death, resurrection, and ascension are telescoped (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). Jesus met unmitigated opposition from a hateful world set against God. So do his followers. Hence, the pastor counsels us not to grow weary and be discouraged.

Vv.4-6. “In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.” Here is a sports arena picture. Sin is a formidable opponent. The text provides no details with respect to time and place or martyrdom. The text seems to allude to faithfulness to the bitter end. The readers knew the OT books of Psalms, Proverbs, and Prophets. Here is a quotation from Prov. 3:11-12. Jesus’ suffering is unique and need not be repeated by his followers. Scripture speaks to us as sons and daughters. We should feel the hand of God in difficulties and see that discipline comes from him. God is our Father, who disciplines those he loves. Discipline is a privilege extended to his children but not to unbelievers. God does not punish us, for Jesus suffered punishment for us as the sin bearer.

Vv.7-9. “Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons.” This is a command and not a statement or condition. The writer asks the rhetorical question, “For what son
is not disciplined by his father?” Discipline means correction and education. It is meant to inculcate obedience to God and his Word. God treats his children as sons and daughters who take their place next to the Son of God. If there is no discipline, there is chaos. The writer calls these children illegitimate and not true sons and daughters. The statement (v. 8) is conditional. The sentence is a statement of fact. Illegitimate children have no right to a spiritual inheritance. The picture is one of family life: fathers discipline children, who in turn show respect (Exod. 20:12). The author employs the principle of the lesser compared to the greater. God the Father is far greater than human fathers. The author compares the human with the divine, and mortality with immortality.

Vv.10-11. “Our fathers disciplined us for a little while.” The comparison continues. Parents raise children to adulthood, but God teaches us for a lifetime. Parents do so with limited skills, but God never makes mistakes. He disciplines in love, never forsakes us, and shows patience. Parents train children for good behavior, but God trains us for holiness. Discipline is painful, but the results are rewarding (James 1:2). The reward is a right relationship to God and a harvest of righteousness and peace.

Vv.12-13. “Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.” Here is a proverbial saying (Isa. 35:3-4; Job 4:3-4; Sir. 25:23). Make level paths for your feet (Prov. 4:26). This is similar to a foot race on a level track. Some runners are lame, but they persist and complete the race. These are illustrations from the world of sports.

Vv.14-15. “Make every effort to live in peace.” The command is to live in peace in family, church, and world, even with enemies. Love your enemies (Matt. 5:9, 44-45). Seek peace and pursue it (Ps. 34:14; 1 Pet. 3:11). See also Rom. 12:18; and 14:19. Pursue holiness. This is a sanctifying process in the life of the Christian to become increasingly like Christ (2:11). Without peace and holiness no one will see the Lord. God can have communion only with those who have peace with him (Rom. 5:1). God’s wrath is directed to those who are unholy. What to avoid. Corporate responsibility demands that members care for one another spiritually. Mutual supervision should be the hallmark of the church. If this is neglected, problems arise. The author uses a picture borrowed from agriculture: a bitter root grows, causes trouble, and defiles many.

Vv.16-17. “See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau.” Esau caused his parents grief by marrying unbelievers (Gen. 26:35). There is insufficient information in the OT to link sexually immoral with godless in respect to Esau. He was godless but we have no knowledge of his life as a fornicator. Is the word immoral to be interpreted literally or figuratively? But spiritual adultery applies to the nation Israel not to individuals. Esau was spiritually dead even though he wanted to inherit the birthright blessing, but was rejected. Rebellious Israelites died in the desert (3:16-19) and the author’s contemporaries (6:4-6; 10:26-31). There was no repentance in Esau, only regret. He showed anger toward Jacob, but he did not repent.

Vv.18-21. “You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire.” Mount Sinai is placed over against Mount Zion, the old covenant and the new covenant. The topic of holiness is the overarching bridge. See Deut. 4:11 and Exod. 19:18. Israelites trembled with fear, for they saw gloom and doom in the fire, smoke, clouds and storm with lightning. They heard a trumpet blast and spoken words. They witnessed an overwhelming spectacle that caused them to ask Moses that no further words be spoken. If anyone (man or animal) should touch the mountain, he would be killed. God’s majesty and holiness is stressed. Even Moses was scared and trembled with fear (see Acts 7:32).
Vv.22-24. “But you have come to Mount Zion.” Here is the contrast of Mount Sinai and Mount Zion, understood spiritually. Note that the author writes “the heavenly Jerusalem.” Mount Zion was known as God’s dwelling place (Ps. 2:6; 20:2; 99:2; 135:21; Isa. 4:3-5; Jer. 8:19). This is the city that comes down from heaven (Rev. 21:3). We shall be in that city forever together with countless angels in joyful assembly. Should the words in joyful assembly be taken with angels or with church? Take it with angels (Luke 15:10). The church of the firstborn, for our names are written in the book of life. We are partners in the new covenant. Jesus is the firstborn, who claims an inheritance, and we are coheirs. God is the judge who will justify his people renewed in true righteousness, holiness, and knowledge. What is relationship between saints in heaven and saints on earth? Saints in heaven wait for day of resurrection, and saints on earth wait for Jesus’ return and transformation. Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant. Through his sprinkled blood we are set free.

Vv.25-27. “See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks.” Three groups of people are addressed: the readers, they (Israelites), and author and recipients. See 3:12. The author speaks pastorally. The contrast is of the piecemeal revelation in the days of Moses and the full revelation we have today (2:3). “At that time his voice shook the earth.” The speaker is God who gave the people the Decalogue. Through the prophet Haggai, God spoke about rebuilding the temple (Hag. 2:6-7). This passage was considered to be messianic. The earth shook when Jesus died and when he arose. “The words once more indicate the removing of what can be shaken.” The author comments on Haggai 2:6. The term removing means “change.” God through Isaiah foretold of new heavens and new earth (Isa. 65:17; and 66:22). The kingdom of Christ cannot be shaken.

Vv.28-29. “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful.” A kingdom has a king, and a king has an administration of rules. Jesus is king in his kingdom that is governed by laws. Citizens in the kingdom remain forever and partake of eternity. OT kingdom came to an end, but NT kingdom cannot be shaken (see Matt. 6:10). The words have grace = “give thanks” in English. Worship must be acceptable by serving God with reverence and fear. “For our God is a consuming fire.” We must be aware of God’s awesomeness and holiness.

Chapter 13.

Vv.1-3. “Keep on loving each other as brothers.” The love of the Jew for his fellow Jew, his “brother,” is national; the Christian’s love for his fellow Christian is universal. Christian love should be extended to all people, but especially to those who belong to the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). Entertain strangers, and open your homes to travelers and provide food and lodging. Entertain angels without knowing it. Practice hospitality (Rom. 12:13). Remember those in prison, who needed food and other necessities. Identify with those who are imprisoned and are mistreated, as if your yourselves were suffering.

Vv.4-6. “Marriage should be honored by all.” Do not commit adultery (Exod. 20:14). In NT nearly every writer discusses marriage. It is the building block of society. When marriage is honored in the home, love emanates in society in numerous ways. Marriage is a treasure we receive from God. It is sacred and defiling it is sin. Illicit sex is sin that deserves punishment. Sexually immoral people, adulterers, homosexual offenders will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:5; and Rev. 21:8; 22:15). “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.” See 1 Tim. 6:6, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” See also Phil. 4:11-12. And love of money leads to greed, and greed is idolatry (Col. 3:5). “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” The choice is either God or money. God’s promise to Jacob, Moses, Joshua and Solomon is that he would never leave them or forsake them. “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” See Ps. 118:6. Nothing happens without his will. The believer need not fear for God is on his side.

Vv.7-8. “Remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of God to you.” Remember the leaders whom death had taken away. The leaders are the preachers of Christ’s gospel. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Their leaders were considered heroes of faith. Leaders come and leaders go,
but Jesus is forever. Notice that the author calls him Jesus Christ (10:10, 13:8, 21). Jesus = Savior, Christ = divinity. Jesus Christ transcends cosmic time.

**Vv.9-11.** “Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.” Paul repeatedly warned Christians against subversive doctrines (Acts 20:30; Gal. 1:6-7; Col. 2:8, 22; Eph. 4:14). “It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace.” The grace of God provides inner strength. Ceremonial foods have no value to those who eat them. See Rom. 14:16-17 and 1 Cor. 8:8. “We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.” This is figurative speech. The altar is the cross of Christ that symbolizes redemption. The communion table figuratively is the altar and the superiority of Christ’s work stands over against the tabernacle in the days of Aaron. A reference to the Aaronic high priest in the desert: the blood was sprinkled in the Most Holy Place as a sin offering while the bodies were burned outside the camp. The implied contrast is that Christ’s sacrifice removed sin once for all.

**Vv.12-14.** “And so Jesus suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.” Outside the city gate = outside the camp. Jesus was condemned to die outside the walls of Jerusalem (see Lev. 24:16, 23; and Num. 15:23). Jesus cleansed his people and sanctified them. The Jewish Christian rejects Judaism and faces expulsion, alienation, and persecution (compare 10:33). The world vents hatred against Christians (John 17:14). Christians bear the name of Christ (Matt. 10:38; 16:24). Christians have no abiding city on earth (see 11:13). Christians must be fully involved in public life, in education, health, labor, and politics. They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-14).

**Vv.15-16.** “Through Jesus let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise.” How do Christians offer sacrifices? They do so offerings of thankfulness. They do so by living dedicated lives of obedience to God (Rom. 12:1; 1 Thess. 5:18; and 1 Pet. 2:5). The clauses fruit of the lips and confessing his name come from Hosea 14:2 and Psalm 54:6. “And do not forget to do good and share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. The two go hand in hand (see 2 Cor. 8:3-4). Consider the life of Enoch (11:5).

**V.17.** “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority.” A dedicated leader brings the message of God’s Word and there the hearers must obey that message and the messenger. The leaders keep watch over the church. The heavier burden they bear, the more honor they deserve. Leaders are accountable to God, for he is their overseer. When there is refusal to obey, the work becomes burdensome. The church belongs to Jesus and he will uphold the leaders whose lives are in harmony with the Word.

**Vv.18-19.** “Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way.” The doctrines in Hebrews caused tensions in the church. The author is fully aware of uneasiness about his instruction and exhortations. He is persuaded that his conscience is clear. Nowhere in the NT is the break between Judaism and Christianity spelled out more clearly than in Hebrews. The writer is not a traditionalist; his conduct is above reproach. He asks for prayer and for an opportunity to visit.

**Vv.20-21.** “May the God of peace…equip you with everything good for doing his will.” This beautiful benediction compares favorably with the beauty and fullness of the introductory verses (1:1-4). Not the peace of God, but the God of peace is important (see Rom. 15:33; 16:20). The doctrine of the resurrection is fundamental to the Christian faith. Jesus’ resurrection appears only once in Hebrews, but see 4:14 that speaks of the ascension; the doctrine of the resurrection is mention in 6:2; women received the dead who were raised to life (11:35). The great shepherd of the sheep is Jesus; compare the adjective great in 4:14. The blood of the covenant has everlasting significance. God equips the Christian in his/her work and continues to work in them.

**Vv.22-25.** “I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation.” The admonition is to listen obediently to the teachings of God’s Word. Note that the author calls his writing not a theological treatise but a letter. He mentions Timothy who has been released from prison and plans to visit them soon. Timothy was in Rome during Paul’s first imprisonment (Col. 1:1; Philem. 1). Greet all your leaders and all God’s people. There are three references to leaders (vv. 7, 17, 24). Those from Italy send you their greetings. The word from can mean “at” (John 11:1) or “away from.” The second choice is preferred. The customary greeting “Grace be with you all” concludes the epistle.