

# **Jesus Is Greater**

A study in the letter to the Hebrews

Andrew Swango

## Letter to the Hebrews - Introduction

*Andrew Swango*

### **AUTHOR**

The author is unknown. For centuries, most people believed it was Paul (according to Jerome and Augustine and the KJV). Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius believed that Paul wrote Hebrews in Hebrew and it was translated into Greek by either Luke or Clement of Rome. The style of Hebrews is closer to both Acts (by Luke) and 1 Clement (by Clement of Rome). However, nearly all scholars (and most certainly myself) believe that Hebrews was certainly not written by Paul, because the style is obviously different from Paul's style. Today, extremely few scholars believe Paul was the author.

One exception is Hebrews chapter 13 which is closer to Paul's style. In that chapter, the author calls Timothy a companion and notes that the author is writing from Italy as well as the timing of these things match Paul.

The best way to discuss the author of Hebrews is to list all the possible authors. Here are the candidates. Luke. Barnabas the apostle (according to Tertullian). Apollos. Timothy. Clement of Rome (according to Hippolytus). Over the past one hundred years, Priscilla (and Aquilla) has gained more and more approval among scholars.

The most meaningful clue to the author, I believe, is found in Hebrews 2:3. There, the author seems to imply that he/she never saw or heard Jesus, but the author heard about Jesus secondhand by those who did see or hear Jesus. If this is what the author is implying, then the author could not have been Paul, who did hear Jesus speak to him. Another clue scholars have pointed to is Hebrews 11:32, saying that the pronoun used there is masculine, showing that the author was male. If this is the case, it would discredit the idea that Priscilla was the author.

In the end, the author is unknown. For someone to say they know who the author with certainty is not being honest.

### **DATE**

Based on how the tabernacle/temple functions are described, it appears that the temple was still functioning when Hebrews was written. Therefore, the letter was very probably written sometime in the 60s. Additionally, we see that Hebrews was circulated among the churches during the first century, which is one of the best witnesses for its canonicity.

### **AUDIENCE**

While it is not explicit, the audience appears to be Christians who converted from Judaism. This makes sense, as Hebrews seems to show how superior Jesus' covenant is to Moses' covenant. If the audience is Gentile Christians, then the author is trying to explain why Christianity is greater than (but came from) Judaism.

### **STYLE**

Foremost, the style is a sermon. Hebrews contains a great deal on the theology of Jesus being greater than the old covenant, and Hebrews contains several sections where it encourages its readers to cling to God and to not fall away.

The style is also a letter. At least, this is how chapter 13 ends.

**THEMES: Jesus is greater. Do not depart from God.**

There are two themes.

FIRST, the author is showing how Jesus, His ministry, and the new covenant are superior to the things of the Law of Moses and the old covenant. Hence, I have named this study “Jesus Is Greater.” This one of the primary words the Hebrews author uses to describe Jesus and the new covenant.

The Greek word is *kreitton* (Strong’s G2909). The base word means “vigor.” While most translate this word as “better,” I believe “greater” is a better (actually, greater! pun intended) translation. I believe “greater” has a stronger connotation than just saying “better.” The author’s point is that Jesus is surpassing and superior compared to what was given through Moses. For example, here are the times the author says the aspects of Jesus and the new covenant are greater:

- 1) Jesus has a greater rank than the angels (1:4).
- 2) There are greater things in regard to salvation (6:9).
- 3) The greater person is the one who blesses the inferior person (7:7).
- 4) Jesus introduces a greater hope (7:19).
- 5) Jesus is the guarantee of a greater covenant (7:22).
- 6) Jesus is the mediator of a greater covenant which has greater promises (8:6).
- 7) Heavenly things are purified by greater sacrifices (9:23).
- 8) We inherit a greater and enduring possession (10:34).
- 9) Our ancestors of faith desired a greater place, a heavenly place (11:16).
- 10) Our ancestors of faith suffered so that they might gain a greater resurrection (11:35).
- 11) God has proved something greater for us (11:40).
- 12) Jesus’ blood says greater things than the Abel’s blood (12:24).

Here is the verse that best encapsulate this theme....

Heb 8:6, “Jesus has now obtained a superior ministry, and to that degree He is the mediator of a greater covenant, which has been legally enacted on greater promises.”

SECOND, the author is making an appeal to his readers, trying to convince them to stay true to their confession in Jesus. The author is telling them to not give up, not to go back to the covenant of Moses, and to rely on Jesus’ new and greater covenant. It is an appeal for the reader to not fall away from their faith in Jesus, who is greater. Here is the verse that best encapsulates this theme....

Heb 6:11-12, “Now we want each of you to demonstrate the same diligence for the final realization of your hope, so that you won’t become lazy but will be imitators of those who inherit the promises through faith and perseverance.” (HCSB)

## Letter to the Hebrews - Outline

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- 1:1-14** First reason Jesus is greater: Angels
  - 1:1-3 Introduction of God's Son
  - 1:4-14 The Son compared to angels
  
- 2:1-4** First warning to the reader: the angels vs the Lord
  
- 2:5-3:6a** Second reason Jesus is greater: suffering as a human
  - 2:5-8 Jesus made lower than the angels
  - 2:9-10 Jesus lowered in order to bring salvation through sufferings
  - 2:11-13 Jesus became human
  - 2:14-18 Jesus' humanity and sufferings bring salvation
  - 3:1-6a Jesus was an obedient builder for God's new plan
  
- 3:6b-4:16** Second warning to the reader: do not depart from God because of sin
  - 3:6b-14 Hold firmly to our confidence
  - 3:15-19 Do not harden your heart like those who came out of Egypt
  - 4:1-11 God's rest was not with Joshua but it remains for us
  - 4:12-13 God's word knows everything in us
  - 4:14-16 Go to Jesus, our great high priest, for mercy and grace
  
- 5:1-10** Third reason Jesus is greater: high priests vs High Priest
  - 5:1-4 Earthly high priests
  - 5:5-10 Jesus, the Son, became high priest
  
- 5:11-6:12** Third warning to the reader: some Christians have departed from God
  - 5:11-6:3 Rebuke for not being mature
  - 6:4-8 Christians who have departed from God are warnings for us
  - 6:9-12 Christians who remain diligent in service are known by God
  
- 6:13-10:18** Fourth reason Jesus is greater: High Priest who sacrificed Himself
  - 6:13-19 God's promise to Abraham is our hope
  - 6:20 Jesus is high priest through Melchizedek
  - 7:1-10 Melchizedek is greater than Levi
  - 7:11-24 Melchizedek is greater than the priests of the Law
  - 7:25-28 Jesus is the perfect High Priest
  - 8:1-6 Jesus serves as High Priest in heaven
  - 8:7-13 Even God said the new covenant would be greater
  - 9:1-10 Descriptions of the first covenant's earthly regulations
  - 9:11-15a Jesus' ministry as High Priest of heaven
  - 9:15b-22 The death and blood of the first covenant was animals
  - 9:23-26 The death and blood of the new covenant was Jesus' sacrifice
  - 9:27-28 Christ's future ministry as High Priest of heaven
  - 10:1-4 Summary of the insufficiency of the first covenant's sacrifices
  - 10:5-18 Jesus' sacrifice is the real and permanent forgiveness of sins
  
- 10:19-39** Fourth warning to the reader: will Jesus remain your High Priest?
  - 10:19-25 How to approach Jesus as our High Priest
  - 10:26-31 Willful sin tramples the Son of God and forsakes His sacrifice for sins
  - 10:32-34 You have already suffered for the name of Jesus
  - 10:35-39 Do not shrink back from your faith
  
- 11:1-40** Cloud of faithful witnesses
  - 11:1-3 Introduction to faith
  - 11:4-12 The faithful, from Abel to Sarah
  - 11:13-16 The faithful sought the heavenly, not the earthly
  - 11:17-31 The faithful, from Abraham to Rahab.
  - 11:32-38 The faithful, from the judges to everyone else

11:39-40 Conclusion to faith

**12:1-11** As God's child, you will suffer—like the faithful witnesses and like God's Son  
12:1-4 Focus on Jesus, who suffered, because you will suffer too  
12:5-11 Suffering for a Christian is God's discipline

**12:12-12:29** Concluding thoughts on the sermon

12:12-17 Stay loyal to the Lord

12:18-24 Final contrast between earthly and heavenly

12:25-29 Final warning to the reader: future destiny of the earthly and heavenly

**13:1-25** Final chapter

13:1-8 Instructions on Christian living

13:9-14 Leaving Judaism behind

13:15-17 Instructions on Christian living (continued)

13:18-25 Valediction

## Letter to the Hebrews - Suggested 40-Week Schedule

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<b>Week</b>	<b>Scriptures</b>
1	Introduction, 1:1-3
2	1:4-14
3	2:1-8
4	2:9-10
5	2:11-13
6	2:14-18
7	3:1-14
8	3:15-19
9	4:1-11
10	4:12-5:4
11	5:5-10
12	5:11-6:3
13	6:4-8
14	6:9-20
15	6:21-7:10
16	7:11-24
17	7:25-8:6
18	8:7-13
19	9:1-15a
20	9:15b-28
21	10:1-18
22	10:19-25
23	10:26-31
24	10:32-39
25	11:1-3
26	11:4-12
27	11:13-16
28-29	11:17-31 (2 weeks)
30-31	11:32 (2 weeks)
32	11:33-35a
33	11:35b-40
34	12:1-4
35	12:5-11
36	12:12-17
37	12:18-29
38	13:1-8
39	13:9-17
40	13:18-25

The two themes of Hebrews are how Jesus is greater ([Heb 8:6](#)) and how we should not give up on our confession in Jesus ([Heb 6:11-12](#)). “Jesus has now obtained a superior ministry, and to that degree He is the mediator of a greater covenant, which has been legally enacted on greater promises.” “Now we want each of you to demonstrate the same diligence for the final realization of your hope, so that you won’t become lazy but will be imitators of those who inherit the promises through faith and perseverance.”

The translation I mostly use is the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB).

### **1:1-3 Introduction of God’s Son**

**Fathers.** When the Bible talks about fathers, it is referring to the fathers (ancestors) of the Jews who were blameless in their walk with God and their service to God’s people. These would include the following. Abraham, who God talked to him directly. Moses, who was called a prophet because God talked to him directly; plus Moses helped establish the Twelve Tribes and the Law. Samuel, who was a judge and a prophet. King David, who did not directly hear from God but prophesied in writing many Psalms. Plus, God spoke to him through the prophets, like Nathan. And there are the vast multitude of unnamed Jewish leaders and elders who lead the people through countless generations. In fact, I would like to point you to Hebrews chapter 11, which lists a good number of these fathers who learned God’s will in some form or fashion and who famously demonstrated their faith in God.

**Different times and different ways.** As I mentioned, God directly spoke to the fathers we call patriarchs, like Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God also spoke to the people through prophets, like Moses and the many high priests. God also spoke through the prophets who were prophets indeed, like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Jonah, and others. And there are others, like King David and King Solomon, who heard God through the prophets of their day. So yes, God has spoken to mankind over many, many generations and in many different ways!

**Spoken to us by His Son.** The author points out that, lately, God has chosen a brand new way to speak to His children: through His Son. This different way of God talking to mankind is the greatest way God has chosen to speak to mankind. At least, this is the point of Hebrews! Therefore, right off the bat, the author begins with a contrast between the Old and the New covenants. Before, it was through the prophets of God. Now, it is through the Son of God, who is THE Prophet!

**Heir of all things.** (1) The Father is a giving God. Even though the Father and the Son have the same nature, the Father wanted His Son to have an inheritance, so to speak. The Father didn’t leave the entire inheritance to the angels. The Father didn’t leave the entire inheritance to humans. The Father appointed Jesus as the heir of all things. Jesus is greater because He is God’s Son AND He is the heir of all things. (2) The author will mention this verse in a bit, but here is what the Father said ([Ps 2:7-8](#)). Jesus knew this when He was on earth ([Matt 11:27](#)). Jesus inherited everything with His death and resurrection ([Matt 28:18](#)). But when Jesus returns at the Second Coming, Jesus will return His entire inheritance back to God ([1Cor 15:24-28](#)).

**Made the universe through Him.** This is primarily spoken by the apostle John ([John 1:1-3](#)). When we are told that Jesus was the creator of the universe, we see another reason why Jesus is greater. Not only was Jesus the creator of the universe, but He existed with the Father and was Deity. The angels cannot claim these things. Humans cannot claim these things. Jesus is greater because Jesus is Creator. The author mentions this again in [Heb 11:3](#). The Father is the one who spoke and commanded the universe into existence. The Son is the one who obeys and did the creating.

**Radiance of God’s glory.** Literally, “Who is a radiance of the glory and an exact copy of His nature.” (1) The point is to show how Jesus is greater. This description of Jesus shows that Jesus is also Deity, just like the Father. Remember, the Old Testament was clear that there is only one God, and there is none like Him. But here, we have a description of Jesus that shows that He is like God (radiance of God’s glory and copy of God’s nature). The only way that this works is that Jesus is also God (Deity). No other being in existence (except the Holy Spirit) can claim the description in this verse. (2) This description of Jesus makes for a great resource regarding the Trinity. Here, we see that Jesus and the Father are not the same person or being. After all, it would take another person in order to say that a person is an exact copy of another person. And just the fact that there is a Father and Son, this also shows that the Father and the Son are two persons or beings, because no one can be their own dad. However, this verse also shows that the Father and the Son have the exact same nature.

What is that nature? Deity, divinity. While there is Father and Son, they make up one, unified God. They are one and unified in their divine nature. They are not one and unified in person.

Sustaining all things by His powerful word. (1) Not only did Jesus create everything, He also sustains everything. God didn't create the universe and completely leave it to its own devices. No, the Father and—as we see here—the Son continue to sustain the universe. And this includes us. This includes the enemies of Christ. There is nothing beyond God's involvement. God will get involved in His creation and God will get involved everyone's lives! Of course, it is up to humans to decide whether they will be a part of God's creation and God's will. If they decide to reject God, God will leave them to their own devices, which will result in spiritual death. (2) Regarding the divinity of Jesus and how Jesus also sustains all things, here it is in Paul's words ([Col 1:15-17](#)).

Making purification for sins. If Jesus' sonship, Jesus' deity, Jesus' power in creation, and Jesus power in sustaining all things were not enough, has the author mentioned what Jesus did in the forgiveness of sins? The author mentions this aspect of Jesus in passing, but it cannot be understood! We should thank the Father for who Jesus is (Deity/God). We should thank the Father for having Jesus create and sustain our actual existence. But the purification for sins is eternally special because it is the most important aspects of the Gospel: God has forgiveness sins! At least to me, we cannot thank the Father and Jesus enough for the purification of sins. While creation was an infinite amount of love that God has given us, the purification of sins is an infinite amount of SACRIFICIAL love that God has given us. There is so much we could say about the purification of sins that has been provided to us by Jesus. But the author will get to that aspect of Jesus' greatness in chapter 9 and the beginning of chapter 10.

Sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. There so many references in the New Testament that Jesus is the one who is at the Father's right hand. Here are a few passages about it. [Mark 14:62](#), [Luke 22:69](#), [Mark 16:19](#), [Acts 7:55-56](#), [Rom 8:34](#), [Eph 1:20-23](#), [Col 3:1-2](#), [Heb 1:13](#).

#### **1:4-14 The Son compared to angels**

Rank is higher. (1) The HCSB has "higher in rank" here. I do not know why. The Greek says, "so much greater." This is the same word used in this study's introduction. Jesus is GREATER than the angels. He is "so much greater" than the angels! (2) An interesting word is used here. Hebrews says that Jesus "became" greater than the angels. Wasn't Jesus always greater than the angels? Yes, I believe He was! What is it about Jesus which caused Him to become greater than angels—in a way that He wasn't greater before? Based on what Hebrews said before, Jesus would have become greater than the angels in how He created the universe (and the angels didn't) or being appointed to inherit everything at His resurrection (and the angels didn't) or making purification for sins (which angels can never ever do). In any of those ways, Jesus would prove that He became greater than mere angels. After all, as we see in the next phrase about Jesus' name, there are aspects in which Jesus was and had always been greater than angels.

Name is superior. This aspect of why Jesus is greater is the main point of this chapter. Jesus is greater than angels because Jesus is a Son and an Heir. It is His inheritance from Father God that makes Him greater than the angels. As Hebrews will show by quoting the Old Testament, Jesus is the Son of God, and none of the angels were ever sons in a real sense.

You are My Son. This is the first of six verses in this chapter where Hebrews shows the ways Jesus is greater than the angels. The first quotation is from Psalm 2:7. I believe Hebrews quotes this psalm first because it is the first psalm with a Messianic prophecy. Let's check it out. With most quotations, I have found the value in reading the whole psalm in context. As I reach each quotation in context, I have found a "hidden" pattern. Behind the scenes, these psalms focus on Jesus' Kingdom, which is different from the kingdom David had. [Ps 2:2-9](#). In this psalm we first see God's enemies, then we see God speaking about His Son. This is a psalm by David. But Hebrews is pointing out that this psalm isn't really about David—especially since David didn't inherit all nations, as the psalm prophesies. Hebrews is saying that God is speaking about His eternally begotten Son, Jesus. The point of Hebrews is that this is one of many reasons why Jesus is greater than the angels.

[Eternally begotten]. This does not appear in the text but I said it in my previous entry. I want to speak more about this because it has to do with the Trinity. So many times, the New Testament refers to Jesus as the only begotten. Because Jesus is the only begotten, does this mean Jesus was created by the Father? No, it does not. According to the accurate doctrine of the Trinity, the Son has always existed and there was never a time when the Son did not exist. This makes the Son eternal. So how



is the Son begotten? We think how the Son was begotten from the Holy Spirit and from Mary. And that is true! But when the Scriptures call Jesus “only begotten,” they also imply that this was always the case—even before Jesus’ physical birth. The Son is begotten because He proceeds from the Father, perfectly submits to the Father, and perfectly obeys the Father. The Father and Son are one in their unity. They always and perfectly act as one unit. But the Son submits to the Father in all things. The Father does not submit to the Son. At all times and in all ways, the Father is the head of Christ (1Cor 11:3). It is in this way that the Father begets the Son. In the case of the Trinity, it is not a matter of not existing and being born. It is about submitting to the parent. Remember, Jesus does this eternally. Jesus is always and perfectly submitting to the Father. Therefore, Jesus is eternally begotten. As for the Father, the Father is eternally unbegotten and invisible.

I will be His Father. (1) Like the first quotation being a psalm from David, this second quotation is related to God giving an eternal inheritance and that inheritance is NOT given to David. This quotation is from 2Sam 7:14 (and 1Chr 17:13). In this context, David wants to build a better house for God than the current tabernacle. So through Nathan, God sends a message to David, saying that David can prepare a house for God. After God speaks to David about the temple, God makes this prophecy about David’s descendant, who will be given a forever kingdom. As we read this passage, we will see how the context is very connected to the context of the previous passage. 2Sam 7:11b-16. The main point of Hebrews is the same point as the previous verse. But this verse makes it more clear that these prophecies were not given to David but to a certain descendant of David (and God!). (2) Interestingly, the part of 2Sam 7:14 about if the son sinning and God disciplining him is not found in the parallel passage 1Chr 17:13.

Brings His firstborn into the world. Literally, “When He will have introduced His firstborn into the world.” I’m not sure why Hebrews says this. To me, introducing Jesus into the world would refer to the first few chapters of the gospels (Jesus’ birth), including everything surrounding John the Baptist. The following quotation is taken from Deut 32:43 and Ps 97:7. These writings were no where near the timing of when the Father introduced Jesus into the world. There are two explanations I can think of. First, these two quotations and prophecies are the Father introducing the Son into the world by prophesying about Him. Second, the verb used here is “will have been,” so Hebrews is not referring to a specific time or event but about the prophecies that will lead to a future event (Jesus’ birth into the world).

All God’s angels must worship Him. Here, Hebrews is quoting from either or both of two passages. Let’s talk about each of them individually. (1) The first place where this quotation occurs is Deut 32:43. Please turn to that verse. However, you might not find this quotation in your Bibles because most Bibles are translated from the Hebrew Masoretic. If the letter is quoting from Deuteronomy, the letter is quoting from the Greek Septuagint. Look at this verse, I will read it as it appears in the Septuagint (and I will put in brackets what appears in the Septuagint and not the Masoretic). “Rejoice, you heavens, [with him, and let all the angels of God worship him. Rejoice you Gentiles,] with his people, [and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in him. For he will avenge the blood of his sons,] and he will render vengeance, [and recompense justice to his enemies, and will reward them that hate him.] And the Lord shall purge the land of his people.” (Deut 32:43, Brenton). This quote from Deuteronomy is a passing phrase that refers to the angels worshipping the Son. (2) The second place where this quotation occurs is at the end of Ps 97:7. Please turn to this verse. At first glance and in context, this phrase seems to be about Father God. But according to Hebrews, this phrase and psalm is about Jesus the Son. “All who serve carved images, those who boast in idols, will be put to shame. All the angels worship Him” (Ps 97:7). Did that last phrase read differently in your translation? The Hebrew Masoretic says, “All the gods must worship Him.” The Greek Septuagint says, “All the angels worship Him.” (3) No matter whether the letter is quoting from Deuteronomy or Psalms, it is not quoting from the Hebrew Masoretic but from the Greek Septuagint. This kind of thing happens throughout the letter. The author definitely used the Greek Septuagint for their Old Testament. As we study through the letter of Hebrews, we will see this over and over. Why does this matter? It matters to us because, as you read quotations in the letter, you will find that many, MANY quotations will not be found in English Old Testaments. If the New Testament quotes from the Old Testament, wouldn’t it matter that we could go to our Old Testaments and verify the quotation? Yes! As you read through Hebrews, I hope you have your footnotes turned on. As you come across quotations, look at the footnotes. Whenever you see LXX, this means the quotation is from the Septuagint instead of the Hebrew. LXX is the symbol for the Septuagint. For example, flip over to

chapter 2 and look at the footnotes. Notice how many times the letter quotes from the Greek Septuagint instead of the Hebrew Masoretic. Folks, this is the biggest and primary reason why I favor the Septuagint over the Masoretic for my Old Testament. It is because the authors of the New Testament did too. (4) Let's get back to the big picture here. We see how Moses and the Psalms say that angels worship the Son. This makes the Son greater because the Scriptures are clear that worship is ONLY reserved for God alone. Angels, humans, and anything in creation are not God and in no way is it appropriate to worship them. However, God and God alone is worthy of worship. So here you have the angels worshipping the Son. What does that say about angels? They are not God. What does that say about the Son? He is God and worshipped as God

Your throne, God, is forever. (1) This is the fourth quotation in this chapter. It is the third quotation in relation to the Son's forever kingdom. In fact, all of Psalm 45 is about King Jesus. This becomes most explicit in verse 7, where it says, "This is why God, Your God, has anointed you." In that one phrase, you see two Persons who are both God. Let me rephrase the verse so that it makes more sense. "This why Father God, Your God, has anointed You as the Son of God. Did you know that Father God is both Father and God to Jesus (who is also God)? John 20:17, Rev 3:2, Rev 3:12. (2) The first half of Psalm 45 is so very beautiful because it is about KING Jesus. I would like to read it and because the Hebrews writer uses the Septuagint for his Old Testament, I would like to read Psalm 45:1-7 from the Septuagint. "A song concerning the beloved. My heart has uttered a good matter. I declare my works to the king [Jesus]: my tongue is the pen of a quick writer. You are more beautiful than the sons of men. Grace has been shed on your lips. Therefore, [Father] God has blessed you forever. Gird your sword on your thigh, O Mighty One, in your comeliness and in your beauty. Bend you bow, and prosper and reign, because of truth and meekness and righteousness. Your right hand will guide you wonderfully. Your weapons are sharpened, Mighty One. The nations will fall under you. They are in the heart of the king [Jesus]'s enemies. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of righteousness. You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Therefore, [Father] God, Your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your fellows" (Psalm 45:1-7, adapted from LXX).

In the beginning, Lord, You established the earth. This is a quotation from Ps 102:25-27. We already saw in 1:1-3 that the Son was the one who created everything. This was also prophesied in Psalm 102. The psalm is about a person who is suffering and is crying out to the Lord. In these verses (25-27), the psalmist leaves speaking about his woes and speaks about who God is. These verses can easily apply to either Father or Son or both. Interestingly, I am having trouble seeing how this verse connects to Hebrews' main point in contrasting Jesus with the angels. So, this is just a beautiful quotation to explain more about who this Son is.

Sit at My right hand. (1) This is a quotation from Ps 110:1. This is the sixth quotation in this chapter. It is the fourth quotation that directly shows how Jesus is greater than the angels. This is a psalm of David, who has actually been "a secretive third party" in this chapter! Through implication, Hebrews is using King David as a witness as to why Jesus is greater than the angels. All this speak of a forever kingdom didn't apply to David. In fact, it applies to God's Son. Hebrews is using these prophecies from David to show how Jesus is greater than angels. I see the masterfulness of Hebrews. Behind the scenes, Hebrews is also saying that Jesus is greater than King David too! If you read all of Psalm 110, it is so appropriate to the subject at hand and continues to show how Jesus' kingdom is a forever kingdom! Hebrews doesn't mention it now but will mention it later, but Psalm 110 also prophesies how Jesus' priesthood is a forever priesthood also! (2) What is really cool about this prophecy in Psalm 110:1 is that even Jesus understood it and explained it! Matt 22:41-46. Jesus used this prophecy about Himself as a mic drop on the Pharisees. (3) Like before, I would like to read Psalm 110 from the Septuagint. This will show us the context of what Hebrews is trying to tell us. Also, notice the reference to priesthood. More than anything, as I have studied Hebrews chapter 1, I have really come to appreciate all these psalms and their context. They are so beautiful because they are about Jesus! "A Psalm of David. The Lord said to my Lord: sit on my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. The Lord will send out a rod of power for you out of Zion. Rule in the midst of your enemies. With you is dominion in the day of your power, in the splendor of your saints. I have begotten you from the womb before the morning. The Lord swore and will not repent: you are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord at your right hand has dashed kings in pieces in the day of his wrath. He will judge among the nations, he will fill up the number of corpses, he will crush the heads of many on the earth. He will drink of the brook in the way. Therefore, he will

lift up the head” (Psalm 110:1-7). (4) I would like to take another break from Hebrews to talk about the Trinity. Did you notice a phrase in the Septuagint that is different in the Masoretic? It said, “I have begotten you from the womb before the morning” (verse 3). This appears to be another phrase that describes what I mentioned about the Trinity in the entry above. This phrase seems to say that the Father begot Jesus before the morning. Not that the Father created Jesus from nothing, but Jesus was begotten (submitting and obeying) even before anything was created. In other words, this phrase seems to be another way to say that Jesus is eternally begotten of the Father—even before mornings were created.

Ministering spirits sent out to serve. (1) Perhaps after speaking about how superior Jesus is to angels, Hebrews feels the need to mention the value that angels have. While the angels are mere servants, they have a purpose that should mean a lot to us. Because God’s angels serve us! I think back to Elijah when birds brought him food as he was hiding out. Just as the birds served Elijah, I’m curious if angels serve us in similar ways—whether it is serving our physical needs and/or our spiritual needs. Just as angels came to serve Jesus both after He was tempted and before he was crucified shows that angels are very familiar with helping where we need it most. I wonder how many hundreds of times angels have served me in my life and I was unaware of it. (2) Speaking of interacting with angels unaware, in chapter 13, (possibly another) author wrote, “Do not neglect to show hospitality, for by doing this some have welcomed angels as guests without knowing it” (Heb 13:2). Notice the contrast in that verse and in this verse (1:14). 1:14 is about angels ministering to us. 13:2 is about us ministering to angels. Perhaps there is a mutual ministry that Christians and angels have with each other. And in both cases, I believe that Christians are unaware that they might be interacting with angels. Of course, the point of 13:2 is not that we should pay attention to whether we are interacting with angels or not. The point is that we should show hospitality and serve no matter what because it is God’s will for us! God will take care of the unseen things. ((Mention Jack Ulmer’s story about his possible interaction with an angel??))

#### **2:1-4 First warning to the reader: the angels vs the Lord**

Message spoken through angels. (1) This is an interesting thing to say. Hebrews is saying that the word was spoken through angels. By word, it might mean the Ten Commandments. I thought God gave it to Moses, not angels. I read (in the Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges) that there was a Jewish belief in the first century that God gave the first commandment and angels gave the rest. Looking at the Ten Commandments, there is a pattern that seems to fit this. In the first two commandments about having no other gods and making no idols (Ex 20:2-4), they are spoken in the first person. But the rest of the commandments are spoken in third person. Notice the commandments about misusing the Lord’s name (Ex 20:7). It switches from first person to third person. It doesn’t say “My name” but “His name.” (2) The only Old Testament reference I have found that the Law came through angels is Deut 33:2. It is not explicit about angels giving the Law, but Moses said (in the LXX), “The Lord arrived from Sinai and appeared from Seir to us and hurried from Mount Paran, together with the ten thousands of Kadash, from His right hand His angels were with Him.” So there is not strong evidence from the Scriptures that the Law was given by angels. But I have presented these two clues that angels may have. (3) In the first century, the belief that the Law came through angels was a common belief. As an extra-Biblical source, Josephus quotes King Herod the Great, who also said that the Law came through angels. Herod is speaking to his soldiers, talking about how ambassadors should be sacred, that is, they should not be killed by their enemies. He says the Greeks viewed the ambassadors of their enemies as sacred, but the Arabians would behead the ambassadors that came to them. Herod uses the angels of God as an example of ambassadors that God sent to mankind. King Herod said, “For ourselves, we have learned from God the most excellent of our doctrines, and the most holy part of our Law, by angels or ambassadors” (Josephus, Antiquities, XV, 5, 3). (4) As for the New Testament writers, the belief that angels gave the Law is found in three places. Of course, we have this verse in Heb 2:2. When Stephen was on trial in Acts 7, he mentioned that the Law was instituted by angels. [Acts 7:51-53](#). Even Paul believed that the Law was arranged through angels. [Gal 3:19](#).

Just punishment. (1) When I think of every transgression of the Law getting a just punishment, the first thing I think of is the man who was gathering wood on the Sabbath from Num 15:32-36. His punishment was to be stoned. Being stoned for gathering wood on the wrong day sounds very strict! And it was! But the Sabbath commandment had just been given, so this man was without excuse.

He neglected the Law given through angels and he received the punishment God said he should. The idea is that if God was that serious about a Law given through angels, how serious will God punish us if we neglect the greater law, which is a law of salvation, given through Christ? (2) When it comes to punishment, God is the only one who can punish justly. See also Luke 12:42-48. Hebrews will talk about this again in [Heb 6:6-8](#).

First spoken by the Lord. I believe it is important to remember that Jesus is the source and author of the gospel and of salvation. The apostles, like Paul, merely explain the same gospel in more words. Salvation doesn't come from Paul; he got it from Jesus. Theology doesn't come from Paul; he got it from Jesus. Jesus is the source of ALL things in the New Testament.

Confirmed to us. (1) The role of the apostles was to confirm the gospel. Those who heard Jesus, like the apostles, confirmed to the world that Jesus was who He said He was. Those who heard Jesus were witnesses who passed along the things Jesus taught. We see that when Jesus gave the Great Commission, saying, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15), we see that the apostles did just that. They bore witness to the whole world about the things Jesus taught and did. (2) As mentioned in the introduction, the way Hebrews delivers this verse, it seems the author is implying that he or she was not one of the people who heard Jesus first-hand. Instead, it was confirmed to the author by those who did directly hear Jesus. I'm not sure if this is what the author is trying to say, but it seems very reasonable to me that the author did not hear Jesus first-hand.

Gifts from the Holy Spirit. (1) The first evidence of signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts were the gifts that Jesus Himself performed. But I think verse 4 is referring to the signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts that the apostles performed, which greatly confirmed who Jesus Christ is. We see this most clearly in the book of Acts. The apostles performed many of the same (and sometimes greater (John 14:12-14)) miracles that Jesus performed. These gifts that were from Jesus was prophesied in Psalm 68:18. Paul points this out in [Eph 4:7-8, 4:11-12](#). (2) As it says here, the gifts are also from the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus' crucifixion, He told the apostles that He would send them the Advocate/Comforter. Jesus said that He had to go so that the Holy Spirit would come. [John 16:13-15](#). After Jesus' resurrection and before His ascension, He told the apostles that they would receive the Holy Spirit. They received it in Jerusalem on Pentecost. (3) Therefore, Jesus introduced and established the New Covenant. The apostles and the Holy Spirit provided more witness and confirmed it. And of course, Father God is in all of it, because He is the source of EVERYTHING. (4) In this section, Hebrews gives us three reasons why we should "not drift away." They are: disobedience brings just punishment, who Jesus is was confirmed to us by the apostles, and God has confirmed it by gifts of the Spirit.

## **2:5-8 Jesus made lower than the angels**

Has not subjected to angels. Verse 5 is extremely hard to understand, both in Greek and English. Here is the best way I can reword this verse to make sense. "For Father God has not subjected the age to come to angels, which is what we are talking about." One interesting thing about this verse is that most translations use "world" here. However, the Greek word is the word for "earth/globe" While this would point us to the earth to come, that is, the New Heavens and New Earth, I do not believe this is what Hebrews is trying to refer to. Instead, I think "age" is the best translation here. The age is the time of the New Covenant. To sum up, the earth had been subjected to angels because the Law was given through angels. However, as the Christian age was coming, it was to be subjected to Jesus (see verse 8). Hebrews is connecting this subjection of the earth to Jesus with what Hebrews already said about Jesus' inheritance in 1:2. In verse 8, Hebrews says that this new age is here because everything has been subjected to Jesus.

One has somewhere testified. To me, this is the most humorous part of Hebrews. While other New Testament authors will quote a passage and sometimes say who it is from, twice, Hebrews quotes a passage and says it's from "somewhere." The other place is Heb 4:4. Are there any others?? One reason why I think Hebrews does this is because the author expects the reader to be familiar with these Scriptures. Especially since this is from Psalm 8, which is at the beginning of the Psalms.

What is man that You remember him. (1) This is from Psalm 8:5-7. For the most part, the Hebrew Masoretic and Greek Septuagint are the same. But there are two small but important differences. The differences are in **bold**. These differences are important because these two verses are quoted in the New Testament (and the quotations follow the Septuagint). (As I share it from the Septuagint,

you will notice some other verses that are familiar.) “O Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is your name in all the earth! For your magnificence is exalted above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have you perfected **praise**, because of your enemies, that you might put down the enemy and avenger. For I will regard the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars, which you have established. What is man, that you are mindful of Him, or the son of man, that you visit him? You made Him a little less than **angels**, you have crowned Him with glory and honor, and you have set him over the works of your hands. You have put all things under His feet: sheep and all oxen, yes, and the cattle of the field, the birds of the sky, and the fish of the sea, and creatures passing through the paths of the sea. O Lord our Lord, how wonderful is your name in all the earth!” (2) In this quotation, you will notice two strong references to the Christ. (2a) First, at the end of verse 5, it says that God cares for the son of man. Other translations say visit. Both of these translations are accurate. It can also mean to see or to inspect. It is the idea that God sees mankind and a son of mankind. Indeed God did, when Jesus came in the flesh and visited mankind. John 1:14. (2b) Second, which is Hebrews’ main point here, Jesus became lower than the angels for a time. For Jesus to be made a little lower than the angels, it is required that He was previously greater than the angels, which is the point of the last chapter. Hebrews shows that Jesus really is greater than the angels, except there was a time when Jesus was made a little lower than the angels. How did that work? It is explained in verses 11 to 13 that this happened because Jesus became human; He became another son of mankind.

Subjected everything to Him. This was discussed earlier (Heb 1:2) in connection with Jesus’ inheritance, which He received at His resurrection. Verse 8 is parallel to what Paul said. It is beneficial to read 1Cor 15:24-28 again. While Jesus becoming human was Him becoming lower than the angels, remember that EVERYTHING was still subjected to Jesus and given to Him after His resurrection. As it says here, when it says everything, this includes things we haven’t even seen before. But when Jesus presents everything back to Father God, we will see everything that has been subjected to Jesus.

## **2:9-10 Jesus lowered in order to bring salvation through sufferings**

We do see Jesus. This is very first mention of Jesus’ name. Up to this point, a reader might be asking: Who is this savior of the world? Who is this Son of God? Who is this being greater than angels? Jews would think this is talking about the coming Messiah. Christians would think about how their Christ is so great and is also God, being the Son of the Father. Either way, Hebrews is now stating that Jesus is that Messiah! Jesus is that Christ and Son of God!

That by God’s grace. (1) Verse 9 is powerful because it explains WHY Jesus was made lower than the angels and dwelt among mankind. Why did Jesus have to be born and become human? So that He might experience death for us. So that He would be gloried and honored because He suffered and died. (2) A lot of times, we jump to the fact that Jesus brought salvation. And yes, that is true, but Jesus couldn’t have brought salvation to mankind without the three ingredients mentioned here: Jesus being human, Jesus suffering, and Jesus dying. Hebrews will explain this more in verses 14-18. Jesus is the author of salvation, yes, but Jesus did it by means of those three ingredients. Did you know that without Jesus’ humanity, without Jesus’ suffering, and without Jesus’ death, mankind would not have salvation at all?? (3) What kind of philosopher or founder of a religion would come up with the idea that salvation comes through humanity, suffering, and death? In other words, who would come up with the idea that the lowest and most despicable things in the world would be the conduit of salvation? No person I can think of! However, God chose the lowly and humiliating things of this world to PROVE His gloriousness and His power. Paul saw this also and began 1Cor with this incredible “upside down” theology. 1Cor 1:18-25. Salvation is established through foolishness. Do you believe in the foolishness of the gospel message? The gospel, which was established through suffering and death? Do you believe in the foolishness that the primary tool of our salvation is a cross, an instrument of public execution? I hope you do, because it is by believing in that foolishness that we are saved! (4) Another thing about this “foolish” gospel is that it was part of God’s plan all along. Look what it says here, “by God’s grace He might taste death for everyone.” Think about it: because of Father God’s graciousness, Jesus died for everyone. I don’t know about you, but I hate the idea that God’s grace caused Jesus’ death. That’s not gracious at all. I don’t think Jesus felt like He was given grace as He suffered and died. No, that is not where God’s grace is shown. Father God shows His grace toward US in the death of Christ. Christ did what was necessary so that WE

could see the full measure of God's grace toward us. Father God is so, so gracious toward mankind, He allowed mankind to torture and kill His Son so that we might be saved. Look at the first phrase in verse 10!

Bringing many sons to glory. Now this is God's ultimate goal. This is where grace shows up. God's greatest desire is to bring many humans to glory! You see, Jesus had to suffer and die (just like humans do), and Jesus had to be glorified and resurrect in order to conquer sufferings and conquer death. Therefore, we also follow Jesus through sufferings and death (taking up our cross daily), so that we can also follow Jesus in His resurrection and glorification. Yes, in the end, God will bring many sons to GLORY!

The source made perfect through sufferings. There is so, so, so much to unpack here. This verse is talking about how atonement works. It talks about Jesus' experience in making that atonement. And it talks about how that atonement comes through sufferings. (1) Jesus is "the source." Literally in the Greek, "the chief leader." In a way, this Greek word is redundant: "chief" meaning first and "leader" meaning first. In what way is Jesus the chief leader? Like what was said in the previous point, we become sons of God and are saved when we FOLLOW Jesus, not only in His teachings but also in His sufferings and death. When it comes to atonement and salvation, we are to "follow the leader!" Of course, Jesus, being God, when He suffered and died, He established atonement for mankind. No one else is able to do that. Jesus was the perfect sacrificial lamb who established salvation. We don't establish salvation through our sufferings and death, only Jesus did. Jesus is greater us. However, if we follow Jesus through the world's sufferings and death itself, in way, we grant salvation to ourselves because we receive from Jesus. Yes, we are able to work out our own salvation, but we are not the source of salvation, Jesus is the only source. So when it comes to being human, when it comes to suffering, when it comes to death, what should you do? Follow the chief leader who has gone before you, showing you both how to live and how to die. In short, take up your cross and follow Jesus, and you will be saved. (2) Next, let's talk about Jesus suffering and how atonement comes through suffering. The longer we have been in the church, the more we have heard how Jesus' death is what brought salvation. Absolutely! Jesus' death did exactly that. But in this verse, it also says that Jesus (the source) was made perfect through sufferings. How? Again, suffering is one of these ingredients to salvation. Why is suffering necessary for our salvation? I have a "mini sermon" on this. (2a) First, let's compare Jesus' atonement to the atonement given in the Law. In the Law, atonement was brought by the sacrificial lamb. The lamb had to be of the best quality and it had to die in a certain way. We understand that and how it connects to how Jesus died on the cross. But again, what about the suffering? In the Law, did it dictate that the unblemished lamb had to suffer before it died? Did the Jews spit on the lamb and torture it before they killed it? No. My point in bringing this up is that Jesus' atonement is different than the atonement in the Law of Moses. We just read that suffering is one of the ingredients of salvation—just like death is. So I ask again: suffering was never part of atonement in the Law of Moses, so why did Jesus have to suffer? Let me explain my thoughts. (2b) Jesus' suffering and death was not to bring atonement the way the Law of Moses brought atonement. Did Jesus' suffering and death fulfill prophecy in the OT? Yes! Was Jesus' death analogous to Old Testament atonement with the Passover? Yes! But Jesus' suffering and death was a very different and greater kind of atonement. I believe Jesus both suffered and died in order to destroy BOTH death and suffering. Jesus, being the sacrificial lamb, both suffered AND died. Why? Jesus endured every bit of suffering and death the world could throw at Him. And what was the result? Jesus was resurrected! Jesus has proved that the world can throw all suffering and death at Him and He has conquered all of it! You see, Jesus is the Great Redeemer. Jesus truly died, then Jesus redeemed death when He was resurrected. Jesus took on all suffering, then Jesus redeemed that suffering by being glorified in a resurrected body, never to suffer again! In short, Jesus had to experience all suffering and all death in order to prove to everyone and everything that He can redeem it all. In this verse it says that Jesus was made perfect or complete. Jesus became "perfect" or complete when He was filled with suffering and death, and showed His power over those things by being resurrected to eternal life. Even now, death and suffering CANNOT even touch Jesus. And when Jesus resurrects us on the last day, then we will be like Him. We will be perfectly and completely free from all suffering and all death. (3) See also notes at Heb 5:8.

## **2:11-13 Jesus became human**

All have one Father. Is Father God Jesus' father? Yes. Both through Jesus being God's eternally begotten Son and through Jesus being born through the Holy Spirit (and Mary). Father God is Jesus' father. Father God is our father too. Think about it. Who is your father? Who was his father? Who was his father? Our ancestry goes back to one man, Adam. Adam is the father of mankind. Who is Adam's father? As the genealogy in Luke says, "Adam, son of God" (Luke 3:38). Therefore, Father God is our father, even by physical means. Father God is our father too by spiritual means when God adopts us as His children through faith. So both Jesus and every person has Father God as their father in two ways. (2) To me, this is a very beautiful statement. Jesus has this in common with mankind: Father God is our father. This makes us equals with Jesus in some way. Of course, we are equals with Jesus when it comes to our humanity. Again, that is a very beautiful thing! Since Jesus has joined us in humanity, not only do we have the same father, but we also call each other brother. (3) Check out these words from Paul about our relationship with Father God. [Gal 4:1-7](#). Hebrews has talked about Jesus' inheritance. Did you know that when we become children of God, we also will have that same inheritance given to Jesus?

Call them brothers. (1) With our talk about Jesus' sufferings and how, through them, Jesus sanctifies us and our sufferings... what is Jesus' attitude about all this? It says here that Jesus did suffer and Jesus does sanctify so that Jesus can call us brothers! The sufferings, the atonement, the salvation... it is all about Jesus redeeming the RELATIONSHIP. Jesus is restoring our relationship with Him, not just in the forgiveness of sins but also in a brotherly relationship with Him. Is He Savior and Teacher and Son of God? Yes. Jesus also says that He is our Friend, our Bridegroom, and our Brother. On one hand we can talk about the theology of how Jesus shared in our humanity in order to redeem us. And that is beautiful. On the other hand, we can talk about how Jesus has done all those things so that He can look at each of us and say, "My brother!" or, "My sister!" And that is also beautiful. (2) Paul talked about this a couple times. In this first passage from Paul, Jesus established a brotherhood by making Himself the firstborn. And so, after predestined the brotherhood, Jesus invited and justified and will glorify the brothers and sisters who will join Jesus' brotherhood. [Rom 8:29-30](#). In this second passage, Paul gives us the full picture of this family that Jesus has brought us into. [Eph 2:17-22](#). This third passage is from John. Just as Jesus became human with us, and He called us brothers. In the future resurrection, Jesus will change us to be like Him, and we will call Him brother. [1John 3:1-3](#).

I proclaim your name. (1) This is a quotation from Psalm 22:22. When you read the heading, you will see that this is a Psalm of David. But now that we know the story of Jesus, this Psalm sounds very, VERY familiar. As you read it, you will see that this Psalm isn't as much about David as it is about Jesus. In fact, knowing the story of Jesus, when you read Psalm 22, you will see that this is called the crucifixion psalm. And it is! Let's read a few passages from Psalm 22 from the Septuagint. You will see why Hebrews says that Jesus is speaking here, just as much or even more often than David. LXX, "(verse 1) O God, my God, attend to me: why have you forsaken me? The account of my transgressions is far from my salvation. (verse 6-8) I am a worm and not a man, a reproach of men, and scorn of the people. All that saw me mocked me. They spoke with their lips, they shook their head, saying, 'He hoped in the Lord. Let Him deliver Him, let Him save Him, because He takes pleasure in Him.' (verse 16-22) For many dogs have compassed me. The assembly of the wicked doers has beset me round. They pierced my hands and my feet. They counted all my bones. And they observed and looked upon me. They parted my garments among themselves, and cast lots for my raiment. But you, O Lord, remove not my help far away. Be ready to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword, my only-begotten one from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth. Regard my lowliness from the horns of the rhinoceroses. I will declare your name to my brothers, in the midst of the church will I sing praise to you." (1a) You can see the many connections between this psalm, the crucifixion psalm, and Jesus. A couple of things to note. In verse 20, the Septuagint most certainly calls Jesus the "only begotten one." When I first learned this, I was amazed. Turns out, when the apostle John calls Jesus this in John 3:16, John didn't come up with a brand new title for Jesus. John was using the title for Jesus that was already used in the Old Testament! Secondly, you will see that both the Septuagint and almost every English translation will say, "They pierced my hands and my feet," in verse 16. This is how the verse is found in the Septuagint, but the Masoretic says, "They bite like a lion my hands and my feet." This is an example of when the Hebrew Masoretic is different from the Greek Septuagint. Normally, English translations will follow the Masoretic, but here nearly none of them do. Nearly all English translations will switch to the Septuagint for Psalm

22:16. (2) Let's return to the point of Hebrews. We have established that Psalm 22 is spoken by Jesus just as much or more often than it is spoken by David. Perhaps, behind the scenes, Hebrews is pointing out that Psalm 22 is another reason why Jesus is greater [than David]! So when we get to Psalm 22:22, we see Jesus saying "I will declare your name to my brothers." Here you have the only begotten of God also calling humans His brothers. In this one quotation, we see how the Messiah is the son of God and the son of Man. (3) We see that Jesus became human, we see that Jesus suffered, we see that Jesus wanted to call humans His brothers, and here we see Jesus worshipping with His fellow humans in the congregation! Remember in verse 11 where it says that the One who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have one Father? We see in verse 12 that the One who sanctifies (Jesus) and those who are sanctified (us) have one God who is worshipped by ALL.

I will trust in Him. (1) Literally, "I will be convinced upon Him." The verb here means to convince, pacify, or assent. It carries the idea of a court's conclusion based on evidence presented. In other words, this phrase could also be translated, "I will rest my case upon Him." Yes, Jesus is worthy evidence that we can rest our case on Him!! (2) Where does this quote come from? Well, if you look at your Bible footnotes, will you see that this quote is not found in the Masoretic, only the Septuagint. Let's look at three possible places in the Septuagint where this comes from. (2a) The first place this quote could come from is 2Sam 22:3, "God, He will be my guard, I will be convinced upon Him." Why would the Hebrews writer quote from 2Sam 22:3? In the context, David is speaking to God, seeing God as the sure and guaranteed instrument of his salvation. The way David phrases things, the same things could be spoken by Christians about Jesus. 2Sam 22:1-6. (2b) The second place this quote could come from is Is 8:17. The words in Heb 2:13 exactly match the words in Is 8:17 in the Septuagint. Because the next in Heb 2:13 is found in Is 8:18, we can easily conclude that Is 8:17 is the one Hebrews had in mind. In this context, God is telling Isaiah to not rely on the culture or people of Jacob, who do not fear the Lord. Instead, Isaiah should fear the Lord by focusing on God instead of the people. Hebrews is telling Isaiah to not blindly follow the ways of the Jews, who are caught in many traps, but to focus on God, who is each person's sanctuary and protection. Is 8:11-17. About 10 verses later is when Isaiah gives a big prophecy about Jesus, Is 9:1-7. Wow, another reference to how Jesus' kingdom will be greater than David's kingdom! In summary, Hebrew is saying the same thing: do not follow the Jews who stumble because they have lost sight of God. Follow Jesus who is God's Christ and Savior, because Jesus is greater. (2c) The third place this quote could come from is Is 12:2. Like in our last quotation, the words exactly match what is found in Heb 2:13. And like our last quotation, Is 12:2 is found in the middle of many Messianic prophecies. Isaiah chapter 11 says A LOT about the nature of Christ's kingdom, such as "there will come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse" (11:1) and "the wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the kid, the calf and young lion and the fatling together, and a little child will lead them" (11:6). (3) In conclusion, no matter where you look in the OT for this quotation, you will find it connected to Jesus. It is almost like Hebrews is showing us that the phrase "I will rest my case upon Him," is absolutely true about Jesus, no matter how you look at it. This phrase is a powerful phrase for each one of us as we see reasons why Jesus is greater!

I am with the children God gave Me. This quotation makes no sense unless you read it in context. It comes from Is 8:18. The full verse is: "here I am with the children the Lord has given me to be signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts who dwells on Mount Zion." This is a reference to Jesus being with the apostles. It says, "Here I am with the children." Jesus said this when He was with His apostles. John 17:6-8, 11-12, 17-19. Mark 16:15-20. I believe that this verse, quoted by Hebrews and originally given by Isaiah is a prophecy about Jesus' apostles and the miracles they performed. In fact, Isaiah even mentions Mount Zion, which is where Jesus told the apostles to wait until they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). But the main point of Hebrews is what Jesus calls His apostles: Here I am with the children the Lord has given me. You see, the gospel and teachings of Jesus didn't come as a voice from heaven. Jesus delivered the gospel and all the heavenly teachings not as a voice from heaven but from His own human lips. As Jesus was doing the Father's will, Jesus was doing it as a human. Jesus said, "Here I am with the children." In other words, both Hebrews and Isaiah is saying that Jesus is doing the Father's will as a human among humans. This is the whole point of verses 11-13... Jesus became human and dwelled among humans.

## **2:14-18 Jesus' humanity and sufferings bring salvation**



Flesh and blood. When the New Testament uses the phrase, “flesh and blood,” what does it mean?

There was a time when I thought it meant something “physical,” which is a more literal meaning of the phrase. I think that is how Paul uses in Eph 6:12, where Paul contrasts the things of this world (flesh and blood) with the ethereal powers of Satan and of evil. However, the way the New Testament uses it, I think the meaning is a little more figurative. In 1Cor 15:50, Paul uses this phrase as a synonym to something corruptible, something mortal. In that context, “flesh and blood” would refer to mortality, that is, something that can or will die. Of course, that fits the context of this verse! I think Hebrews is saying, “Since the children have mortality in common, Jesus also shared in that mortality.” Does this mean that flesh and blood cannot simply mean something physical? No, I believe it means that too. But I think both Hebrews and Paul use this phrase to point to both physical humanity and to humanity’s mortality. In short, “flesh and blood” not only points to something physical but it also points to mortality, and how all things flesh and blood will result in death.

Jesus also shared in these. (1) The way this verse is phrased, it points out that it was NECESSARY that Jesus experience death. This point ties back to my point in verse 10. It was necessary for Jesus to suffer so that He could redeem all suffering. It was necessary for Jesus to die so that He could destroy death itself. In short, Jesus can say to death, “You threw everything you could at Me. Yes, you absolutely killed Me and I experienced actual death. But do you know what I say to you? I am still stronger than you. Even in my death, I will raise from death never to die again. And that is when you and all of humanity will know that you can throw everything you can at Me, and I will still be stronger and greater than you, O death!” I believe this is why Hebrews says, “Jesus had to share in these, so that through His death He might destroy the one whole the power of death.” And now Jesus says what Paul quoted in what we call the “resurrection chapter.” 1Cor 15:54-55. (2) In the HCSB, it says that Jesus “shared” in these. What does your translation say here? I believe “shared” is a good translation, but I think another word would be more appropriate. I would say that Jesus participated in these. Yes, Jesus participated in sufferings, Jesus participated in death, so that He could fully redeem both. I personally like the idea of Jesus participating in these things. As we will see later, because Jesus experienced (participated) in these things, it shows His power over those things as well as Jesus’ perfect empathy toward us when we experience those things too.

The Devil. The last half of verse 14 literally says, “Through the (Jesus’) death, He (Jesus) renders idle the power holding death. This is the Devil.” (1a) In this reading, it is the Devil who is called: the power. Calling someone “the power” is not something new to the Scriptures. In Mark, Jesus calls God “the Power” (Mark 14:62). (1b) The Devil holds on to death. The Devil, being powerful, “owns” death. Why? Because the Devil introduced death to humanity. In the Garden, it was the Devil who deceived Eve, it was Eve who lead her husband (Gen 3:11-13, 1Tim 2:14), and through that sin death spread to all humanity (Rom 5:12). We have talked about how Jesus is the source of the gospel and salvation and creation and many other things. But where did death come from? What is the death’s source? It is the Devil. I believe this is why the Devil is “the power holding death.” (Or as translations say: the Devil is the source of the power of death.) (2a) Now that we have talked about our enemy, the Devil, and how the Devil is the source of death and its owner, let us look at what Hebrews says Jesus is doing. It says that Jesus “rendered [that power] idle.” This is an interesting verb. A lot of translations translate this as “to destroy,” and that might be accurate in some contexts. For example, when Paul talks about Judgment Day, when Jesus will hand the Kingdom back to the Father, Paul says, “The last enemy to be abolished is death” (1Cor 15:26). In that verse, it could be translated as destroy or render idle. However, I think the best translation of this word is “to make void.” This word often carries a legal emphasis behind it. (2b) Beyond any doubt, the vast majority of times this word is used in the Gospels and in the rest of the New Testament, it is used in connection with the obligations of the Mosaic Law. 2Cor 3:13-16 (last verb in verse 14). Eph 2:14-15 (the first verb in verse 15). Therefore, what Jesus Christ did to the Law of Moses (establishing a New Covenant), Jesus Christ is doing to death itself (establishing eternal life). The Law and death are still around, but their power has been rendered idle. Jesus has rendered idle the power of death because Jesus is greater (more powerful) than both the Devil and death! (See also Rom 7:4-6, 8:1-2, 1Cor 15:56.)

Free. (1) When Jesus makes the Devil and death void, when Jesus renders them idle, what does that do for us? It frees us!!! Through Jesus’ death, He freed us from the Devil and from death. You see, because of Adam, all people will die because all people sin. Because all people sin, we become the ownership of Satan. Just as Satan owns death, when people sin, people become owned by Satan

and will experience death. However, through Jesus' becoming human and suffering and dying, Jesus has freed us from all three! We become free from sin, free from Satan, and free from death. These are the freedoms that the New Testament talks about. Every time we sing songs of freedom, this is where our primary freedom is found. We are free from sin, we are free from Satan, we are free from death. The next time we sing songs about freedom or read Scriptures about freedom, let us focus on this kind of freedom! Again, when Jesus frees us, He is freeing us from all evil! (2) Sometimes, when I hear Christians talk about our freedoms in Christ, they usually talk about how, in Christ, they are free from various restrictions. And when they say this, I wonder what kinds of restrictions they are talking about. Would they include "church restrictions?" Are there Christians who focus on their freedom in Christ, believing it means that they are free to act however they want to act, as long as they think it is loving? But that is not the gospel. Our freedom is not from various things that restrict us. After all, when we become Christians, there are godly things that restrict us that did not restrict us when we lived according to the world. For example, Christians are expected to give up their filthy mouths, give up their greed, even give up their lives for Jesus. To be honest, when we become Christians, we are trading the restrictions that the world gives for the restrictions that Jesus gives. Jesus calls us to freedom by giving us His restrictions. Jesus said, "Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. For my yoke is useful and my burden is light." You see, we are trading the yoke and burden of the world for the yoke and burden of Christ. And what do we call that? We call that freedom because Jesus frees us from evil. Not only are Christians set free from sin and death and Satan, but Christians are also set free from their own flesh and their earthly passions. When we take on Christ's yoke, it feels like a restriction because our flesh hates being restricted. Do you understand that when Jesus restricts us and yokes us and burdens us, it is for our GOOD? It is! True freedom is not about "not being restricted." True freedom is being free from evil: sin, death, Satan, our fleshliness. Slavery to Jesus is the GREATEST kind of slavery there is. On the other hand, true restriction is being a slave: to sin, to Satan, and to ourselves. Slavery to the world is the worst kind of slavery there is. And NO ONE can be a slave to both of those masters! (See also Matt 6:24, Gal 5:13, 1Pet 2:16.) (3) We have been talking about how Christ's death has freed us from sin and from death. But one might ask, "But why do I still sin? But why will I still die?" The short answer is that Jesus has defeated these things, but these things have not been fully defeated yet. We sin because there are times when we choose to obey our flesh instead of God. We die because we have sinned. Perhaps all humans must still live with the consequences of the Fall, which is the temptations of our flesh. Perhaps all humans must still die because of the consequences of sin. Remember, a student is not above his Teacher. If our Teacher (Jesus) died (because of our sin), then we should expect to die (because of our sin). Jesus still expects us to "follow the Leader." Jesus is calling us to live and to suffer and to die like He did: in faithfulness to God. So right now, what has Jesus done to sin and death? Jesus has proven how much GREATER He is than sin and death. Jesus has defeated those things for Himself in His resurrection. And when Jesus returns, that is the timing that Jesus has chosen to redeem us from sin and death eternally. Right now, Jesus' victory over sin and death have not been perfectly completed yet. Through Jesus' resurrection, Jesus has absolutely PROVEN that He is more powerful than sin and death. Jesus Christ has proven that He WILL be victorious in the end. But we must wait and we must remain faithful until the end, so that in the end, Jesus will then perfectly completely render idle death. And on that day, we can most certainly translate that word by saying, "Jesus will then perfectly and completely DESTROY death!" (4) Before we leave this topic of freedom, I would like to talk about atonement. Atonement is HOW we become "at one" with God. How does this work? There are many theories. At least in the last few hundred years, the biggest theory about how atonement works is this. Jesus died on the cross in order to appease and satisfy God's wrath. That is, God, in His perfect justice, cannot forgive or save mankind unless His wrath has been appeased. So Jesus' blood was given to the Father so that the Father could change His view of us, making Him able to forgive and save us. At least, this is the most popular atonement theory today. However, I am not a fan of this theory. This is the theory I grew up with, and I have come to learn and believe that it is not Biblical. Let me phrase it this way: the popular atonement theory basically says that Jesus has saved us from the wrath of God, or even God Himself. The atonement theory that I am a fan of is this. Mankind became slaves to sin and to Satan and to death. They needed a Savior, so God sent Jesus to become human and experience the temptation to sin, the temptations of Satan, and death itself... in order to overcome those things by proving Jesus power is greater than those things. Jesus was not killed by the Father but killed by

Satan and humanity. Satan wanted to kill God's heir. Humanity wanted to kill God's heir. They did this so that they could take the inheritance of eternity for themselves. However, in God's foreknowledge, God allowed it to happen in order to prove His ultimate wisdom. God allowed Satan and mankind to throw their worst at His Son so that God could redeem humanity from everything evil. God allowed evil to have its day so that God could reverse (redeem) evil into something even more GREATER. Jesus, being the hero of the story, obeyed God's plan, allowing Satan and humanity to kill Him so that three days later, Jesus could redeem it all. The reason I bring this up is because Hebrew 2:14-18 speaks about this, namely, how it mentions how Jesus frees us from Satan and from death. Another reason this is my favorite atonement theory is because, historically, this was the first atonement theory (of the Christians who followed the apostles). In the popular atonement theory, God is the one who needs changing so that He could save us. The blood was for God in order to appease Him. In my favorite atonement theory, mankind is the one who needs changing so that we could be made like Jesus. The blood was for us, so that we can be cleansed from evil by the most precious, holy thing there ever was. For reference, the name of today's popular atonement theory is called the Penal Substitution Theory. The name of my favorite atonement theory is called the Ransom (or Classical) theory.

Fear of death. (1) Hebrews says that Jesus' death was to free people from death. Jesus frees us both internally and externally. The internal thing Jesus frees us from is the fear of death. Jesus wants to free anyone who fears death. Death is not natural, being introduced by Satan. Fear is not natural, that is, fearing something other than God. So the fear of death is a very unnatural! The fear of death is something that happens internally. And Jesus has come to free us from it. Jesus wants to clean our internal hearts. Jesus has said that He doesn't want to just clean the outside of our cup. Jesus wants to clean us up on the inside too. Why is it important to be cleaned from our fear of death? Because the internal fear of death leads us to being slaves to it and not to God, leading to us to act differently externally. Not only do we have an internal fear of death, but we also in external slavery to it. When someone fears death, their choices and their actions are going to reflect that. Literally, Hebrews says that those who fear death are "liable to slavery." As you can see, this is another verb that has a legal emphasis behind it. Those who fear death are liable to slavery, that is, they are guilty of slavery or they are under the punishment or consequence of slavery. People who fear death do not choose to be in slavery, but external slavery is the result of an internal fear of death. Why are we still enslaved to the things of this world? Perhaps it is because we still have the fear of death. However, as Hebrews says, Jesus has come to free us from the fear of death! And if Jesus is going to free us from everything that is evil, Jesus is also going to free us from the fear of death and our slavery to it! It is unnatural for a Christian to fear death. But, if a Christian is afraid of death, then they shouldn't stay in that fear but allow Jesus to free them from that fear. I could say it this way: it is natural for a Christian to become less and less afraid of death as they mature in Christ. (2) For any Christian, becoming free from the fear of death is not an easy thing. (2a) It takes a lot of God. Seeing God's nature and how He views death helps a lot. For example, God views death as the enemy. God also views death as already being destroyed because of God's power in resurrection! (2b) It takes a lot of prayer. Asking for God to help us through our fear of death is important. God loves us, and God is in the prayer granting business. (2c) It takes a lot of study. Studying the Scriptures about how death works and how God reverses death is a wonderful study. (2d) Another good teacher in teaching Christians to be free from the fear of death is through experience. When Christians are faced with the possibility of dying for their faith, there is nothing better to show where they are putting their fear. If they fear death, they are going to do whatever it takes to not die. But if they fear God, they are going to do whatever it takes to love and obey God, knowing that death has absolutely no power in the end. (3) I have spent half of my Christian life not knowing if I had the fear of death or not. I would like to think that I was free from the fear of death. When I was in high school, the Columbine shooting happened. During that terrible event, there was a student named Cassie Bernall who was shot and killed. Reports came out and Cassie's mother wrote a book about how Cassie was asked if she believed in God, and when she said yes, she was killed. I heard about these reports and the book. I thought what I would do in that situation. I immediately thought that I would respond the same way as Cassie had. However, I have never experienced the situation like those students did. So I cannot know how I would actually react in that situation. But I still held the hope that I would maintain my fear and faith in God and not be a slave to the fear of death. (Side note about Cassie Bernall; the reports and book about her confession of faith did not actually happen. But

this doesn't matter because my point is directed at myself and my readers... Given an experience like that, would we fear God or would we fear death?) Years later, I found the writings of the Pre-Nicene Christians. They lived at a time when being a Christian was illegal and the penalty for it was death. They were Christians who were experiencing situations where their flesh should fear death. But I read their writings and how committed their faith and fear in God was. I read many accounts of martyrs who went to their martyrdoms, who did not recount their faith, like Polycarp. I saw Christians who were completely free from the fear of death!!! After reading their words and the accounts of their martyrdoms, their testimonies inspired me. Because of their examples, I was able to look at my life and believe that I no longer feared death. Of course, no one knows how they will act when actually faced with the experience of impending death. It is with the power and love and death of Christ that it is fully possible for any Christian to be free from the fear of death. Just as it says in Hebrews, Jesus has the power to free us from the fear of death. Will we believe that Jesus has the power to do that in our own lives?

Not help angels. Verse 16 is a little weird to me. For some reason, Hebrews is bringing up angels for the last time (except for once in chapter 12 and once in chapter 13). Unlike the previous times when Hebrews is talking about Jesus being greater than the angels, this verse is about a reason why we are greater than the angels. (Although I think there might be many reasons why angels might be greater than us.) Jesus became human, suffered, and died in order to help humanity. This verse says that Jesus hasn't done things to help angels. Instead, Jesus has done these things to help you and me. Like I said before about Jesus becoming human so that Jesus could call us brother, Jesus didn't become like angels and Jesus doesn't call them brothers. It is Abraham's offspring, the faithful, whom Jesus says are His true brothers and sisters. Jesus came to suffer and die for the sake of humans.

Merciful and faithful high priest. The high priesthood of Jesus is something that Hebrews focuses on. Chapter 7 speaks so, so much about Jesus' high priesthood, especially Jesus' death as high priest. (1) But in this section, Jesus' high priesthood is being connected to Jesus' humanity, sufferings, and death. Hebrews said that Jesus' high priesthood is GREATER because Jesus shared humanity with His brothers. Because Jesus was human, because Jesus suffered, and because Jesus died, this is why Jesus has perfect mercy and perfect faithfulness to be our high priest. Jesus truly is the greatest high priest we could EVER ask for. After all, read verse 18. Then read it again. It is worthwhile for us to read and re-read verse 18. This is the whole point to Hebrews 2:9-18. Jesus was tempted in every way. Jesus suffered in every way. Yet Jesus has redeemed temptations. Yet Jesus has redeemed suffering. This is why He is the greatest and most perfect help we could ever receive! Jesus can look at everything in our lives and say, "I understand. I know exactly how you feel." If that is not perfect mercy and perfect faithfulness, I don't know what is. (2) Notice that Jesus' high priestly service is to God. It is to God, because Father God has appointed Jesus to this. Yet Jesus' high priest is not for God. It is for us! We're the ones who need a merciful and faithful and sympathizing and empathizing high priest.

Propitiation. This seems to be a word that carries a lot of different definitions. (1) When I was growing up, I was taught that this word meant "atoning sacrifice." Yes, when this word is applied to Jesus, that is exactly what it should mean. But the word itself is simply the Greek word for "atonement." It is all about two parties becoming united. Defining this word as becoming "at one" with someone else is exactly what it means. (2) One of the meanings people give to this word is to regain the favor of God or to appease God. At least, this is the meaning of the English word propitiate. As I stated earlier, I am not a fan of that atonement theory. Instead, I like the Greek meaning of this word, simply, "atonement." Every time this word is used in the New Testament, it is followed by a reference to sins. It is as if the target of Jesus' atonement is our sins (instead of the target being Father God). As I said earlier, Jesus' atoning sacrifice was not to change (to appease) God, it was to change (cleanse) us from our sins.

Tested and suffered. As stated earlier, it is because Jesus was tempted and suffered that Jesus makes the greatest high priest in mercy and faithfulness. Chapter 4 states this point very, very well. [Heb 4:15-16](#). Are you being tempted? Jesus is your greatest help. Are you suffering? Jesus is your greatest help. Are you dying? Jesus is your greatest help. Jesus has already experienced these things to a deep degree, so come to Jesus. Jesus gives mercy. Jesus gives grace. Jesus gives help!

### 3:1-6a Jesus was an obedient builder for God's new plan

Brothers and companions. This is one of the first references to the audience of Hebrews. Hebrews wasn't addressed to any specific person or church. Although most theories indicate that Hebrews was written to a certain kind of Christian, such as Christians who converted from Judaism, the audience of this book could be any dedicated Christian, including you and me. Look at how the author speaks to the audience. It literally says, "holy brethren," and "sharers of the heavenly calling." Hebrews is calling the audience holy and sharers of heaven. This is no small thing! Hebrews is focusing on the holiness, the righteousness, the blessings, and the relationship Christians have with God.

Consider Jesus. I do not like how this is worded in the HCSB. Literally, "Holy brethren and sharers of the heavenly calling, look at the Apostle and High Priest of our confession: Jesus [Christ]!!!" In the way this is worded, the author is not calling our attention to some new or cool or greater aspect of Jesus. Actually, the author is trying to introduce Jesus as the Christ in a dynamic and enthusiastic way. The same way an MC would introduce the keynote speaker, giving the speaker a dynamic introduction and enthusiastically getting people pumped for the main attraction, Hebrews is presenting Jesus in the same way. "Come one, come all! If you are holy, being a child of God... If you are a sharer in the blessings of heaven, without further ado, I present to you the APOSTLE, the HIGH PRIEST of our confession... JESUS the CHRIST!!!" This is the kind of introduction that, if you are a holy child and a sharer of heaven, you respond with thunderous applause. :)

Apostle. (1) Hebrews calls Jesus an apostle. How is that true? This may not make sense because the first thing we think of when we hear "apostle" is that it is a title. The Twelve Apostles. There is also Paul who was an apostle "born out of season." But think about what the Greek word for apostle means. It means ambassador or delegate. (The verb form of apostle means "to send out." The idea is that this person is sent out with authority.) The Twelve apostles were Jesus' ambassadors to the world, spreading the gospel. But Jesus is an ambassador for whom? Father God! Jesus was the Father's ambassador to introduce the gospel to mankind. The Twelve are apostles for Jesus. Jesus is an apostle for Father God. The best Scripture that explains Jesus's role as an Apostle is [John 3:16-18](#). (2) We have talked a few times how Jesus is the source of the gospel, Father God is the source of salvation, and Father God is the source of Jesus. I think this is the angle of what Hebrews is trying to say. Look at verse 4, "The One who built everything is God." So, for Jesus to be Father's God's apostle, we see how Father God used His ambassador, Jesus, to build this New Covenant, which is also called the Gospel. In short, Father God is the author of the gospel, and Jesus is its ambassador/apostle.

High priest. More than any other role of Jesus, Hebrews focuses on Jesus' high priesthood. This must be the author's favorite aspect of Jesus. While Apostle is a term that is most commonly associated with Christianity, High Priest is a term that is most associated with Judaism. It doesn't say specifically, but when I read verse 1, I infer that this is talking about how Jesus has the highest rank in the Old Covenant, because He is the God of the Old Testament, and Jesus has the highest rank in the New Covenant, because He was God's Apostle even before He called the Twelve Apostles. There is a lot we could say about Jesus being our High Priest, but I will save that for chapters 5 through 10.

He was faithful. (1) God appointed Jesus as His Apostle and Ambassador. And when Jesus was given that task, He was perfectly faithful to God. With Father God giving Jesus the authority of Apostleship and with Jesus being faithful as God's Apostle, I believe a great Scripture that shows this is [Php 2:6-11](#). (2) In verse 2, Hebrews compares Jesus with Moses. Both of them were God's ambassadors and both of them were faithful to their higher authority. This analogy is explained in verses 4-5. Moses was the ambassador of the Old Covenant and the Law. As Hebrews said, these things were a foreshadow of the things that would come in the New Covenant. And as Moses was ambassador over God's household, Moses was faithful in it.

More glory than Moses. In these verses, although it compares Moses and Jesus, it also contrasts them. There is one contrast in verse 3 and one contrast in verse 6. In verse 3, it says that Jesus has more glory than Moses. How? I'm not sure but here are a couple ideas. First, this could be because Jesus established a greater covenant built on greater promises. So, if Jesus built a better house than Moses, and the builder is greater than the house, then Jesus would be greater than Moses. Second, Jesus could be greater because, although Moses built the house, Jesus was the One who appointed Moses as ambassador. That is, Jesus built Moses before Moses could establish the Law. For

example, in events such as the burning bush and Moses seeing God on Mount Sinai, there are subtle clues that Moses' encounters with God are Theophanies of Jesus. A Theophany is what we call it when a person in the Old Testament has an interaction with God and that God is Jesus. There are strong clues in the OT that it was actually Jesus in the burning bush, and there are subtle clues in the OT that Moses interacted with Jesus on Mount Sinai. My point is this: Jesus is greater than Moses because Jesus established Moses as an ambassador. In other words, Moses was the builder of the Law, and Jesus was the builder of Moses. This is the second possibility why Jesus is greater than Moses. Perhaps that is what Hebrews is implying in verse 3.

One who built everything. (1) Again and again, this study keeps arriving at the fact that the Father is the source of EVERYTHING and the fact that Jesus is the source of everything except the Father. (2) All this talk about who establishes what and who has authority over who, it seems like the author of Hebrews would have been very familiar with the Cosmological Argument within Christian evidences. This is the argument that says God exists because the nature of the universe dictates that there is a cause to everything, and that cause must be God.

Christ was faithful as a Son. Here is another contrast between Moses and Jesus. Moses is an example of being put in charge of a Covenant and doing it well (faithfully). And Moses was just human. Jesus is an example of being put in charge of a Covenant and doing it PERFECTLY (faithfully). Jesus was not only human but also God and also Son, which makes Him the greatest ambassador there can possibly be for a household. Moses was chosen as a servant. Jesus is God's Son. Who better to be an ambassador than the Master's Son?

### **3:6b-14 Hold firmly to our confidence**

We are that household if. This wouldn't be a warning to us Christians without a condition. Here, it literally says, "We are that household if we hold to the boldness and the boasting of the hope, stable up to the end." Would you like to be bold? Then be bold in the hope that Christ gives! Would you like to boast about something? Boast about the hope that Christ gives! There is no reason why we should ever be timid or quiet when it comes to rejoicing in the hope that Christ gives! In fact, Hebrews says this is a mark of someone who is part of God's household!

Holy Spirit says. The Hebrew Old Testament doesn't have a heading to say who wrote Psalm 95. In the Greek Old Testament it says that this is a psalm of David. Since Hebrews used the Greek Old Testament, Hebrews would know what this is from David (see Heb 4:7). Yet, Hebrews says that the Holy Spirit says this. Obviously, David, being a prophet of God, was moved by the Holy Spirit to write this Psalm. That is, the author of Hebrews is explicitly saying that David wrote this by inspiration.

[Psalm 95]. Before we get into the quotation, it is important to see Psalm 95 in context. Hebrews quotes from the last half of the Psalm. However, the first half of the Psalm connects to the previous verse we read in Hebrews, about having boldness and boasting in Christ's hope. So, let's read the first half of Psalm 95, which is a description of the boldness and the boasting that we have because we are the household of God. [Psalm 95:1-7](#).

Rebellion. Nearly all English translations translate this as "rebellion" or "provocation." These are very accurate translations. (1) Did you notice that it says, "the day of testing" and "the rebellion?" When I read Exodus and Numbers, I see multiple days of testing and multiple rebellions. Perhaps Hebrews is referring to all those events in the singular because even though there were multiple events, those evil, unbelieving hearts had a singular attitude that was bent on complaining against God. (2) If you look at Psalm 95 in the Hebrew and in the Greek, they only have a couple of differences. This word is one of them. If you go to Ps 95:8 in the Hebrew, it doesn't say rebellion. It says Meribah. Meribah was the event and place where the people complained against God where Moses first struck the rock in order to bring out water (Ex 17:1-7). So, the Hebrew speaks about one rebellious event, and the Greek generically speaks about all rebellion.

Always. Another difference between the Hebrew and Greek version of Ps 95 is found in Heb 3:9 and Ps 95:10. As you can see, Hebrews says, "They ALWAYS go astray." The word "always" appears in the Greek Ps 95:10 but not in the Hebrew Ps 95:10.

[Ps 95:10-11]. We are connecting quotes in Hebrews with where they are found in the OT. In this case, Ps 95 is speaking for God, as if it is quoting from somewhere in the Law. While Ps 95:10-11 is not directly quoting anything God said in the Law, here are the passages where God said the same thing in different words. What God said in Ps 95:10 and Heb 3:9 connects to Deut 9:7. What God said in Ps 95:11 and Heb 3:10 connects to Num 14:21-23,28-30.

Evil, unbelieving heart. What were the Israelites guilty of? Complaining against God. Their hearts (attitudes) were evil and unbelieving. Their complaining toward God proved what was in their hearts. What is in our hearts? Do our hearts look at the bad things and complain? Or do our hearts look at the bad things and do what the next verse tells us to do (which is encourage each other)?

Depart. This word has a very interesting meaning in the Greek. Depart is not a strong enough word for what is meant. Literally, the word means to remove—like removing an object from its stand (where it belongs). Figuratively, this word means to instigate a revolt. The image is not just removing an object from its stand. The image is that someone is stealing the object. I picture an object like a national treasure being stolen, which would cause a revolt. I get the image of our faith being on display, both to our own selves and to the world. If we “depart” from God, it is like stealing our faith away from where it belongs. When we remove our faith that we have in God, it is the same as revolting against God. This idea of departing from God connects to verse 8, where it says the Israelites were in rebellion toward God. In short, to depart from the living God is to choose to be in revolt or rebellion against God. The Israelites had that attitude in their hearts due to their complaining. Where are our hearts? Is our faith where it belongs?

Encourage each other daily. (1) Now that we know something not to do, what is something we can do? We can help one another!!! Look at the importance or urgency of this work we can be a part of. It says this good work of encouragement should happen daily. Oh, and when should we start doing this? On the day called “today!” (2) There is one thing I would like to share that I think anyone can do. The purpose of encouraging one another is to protect and admonish each other about the horribleness of sin. And to comfort and encourage each other to not give up! Therefore, it is important that we spend as much time around fellow Christians, being in holy environments, instead of spending as much time with our friends who are worldly. Put another way, our church family and Christian circles should be far, far more important than our friends in secular circles.

If we hold firmly. Verse 14 is a bit confusing in the HCSB. This is because this verse is hard to translate. Here is my best attempt to translate verse 14, “For we become sharers of Christ if we hold to the first substance, stable up to the end.” What is this “first substance?” (1) Based on the meanings behind these two Greek words, I believe this is a reference to verses 4 and 6. Jesus was the first and chief ambassador of the gospel. The gospel stands and has its substance in Him. He built it. Jesus is the “first substance,” and we hold on to Him by holding on to the household He established. In other words, we become sharers with Christ when we hold firm to the gospel He established, which is build by and on Him. (2) Another interpretation is based on how this verse is phrased in the HCSB, “If we hold firmly until the end: the reality we had at first.” That is, the “first substance” is our own foundation in the gospel, when we became Christians. The first substance is our belief, our faith, our repentant heart, and our baptism—all of which were the foundational building blocks of our hope in Christ. Those things were our “first substances,” so we should hold on to them so that we can remain sharers with Christ.

### **3:15-19 Do not harden your heart like those who came out of Egypt**

All who came out of Egypt. I don't feel hopeful in people's ability to follow God if “all” who came out of Egypt had hard and rebellious hearts. Of course, “all” is not to be taken literally because Moses, Joshua, and Caleb were ones who did not provoke God. They did not die in the wilderness wandering like most of the Israelites did. It is as if God miraculously gave them long life so that they could see the Promised Land before the Israelites did enter it. This shows that God really does greatly bless those who hear Him and do not harden their hearts against Him. As this passage is trying to warn us, we should be more like Moses, Joshua, and Caleb. We are not to follow the examples of “all” the Israelites whose bodies fell in the wilderness.

40 years. Not only did “all” the Israelites provoke God, but they did so the entire time they were in the wilderness. If someone was to provoke me, it could be something I could forgive. But if someone provoked me for decades, I would find such prolonged provoking an extremely harder thing to forgive! No wonder God was justified when He said, “They will never enter my rest.”

Unbelief. (1) As you look at these verses, we see the consequence of their actions. The consequence was that they would not enter God's rest. But what was the cause of this punishment? In these verses, there are six things listed that the Israelites were guilty of. God did not punish the Israelites just because He was mad with them. God punished them because of what they did. Here is Hebrews' list of crimes that were counted against the Israelites. (1) They hardened their hearts (v15),

(2) they rebelled (v16), (3) they provoked (v17), (4) they sinned (v17), (5) they disobeyed (v18), and (6) they had unbelief (v19). (2) As I look at this list, it looks like the opposite order of how a person intensifies their opposition to God. First, a person disbelieves God. In the Israelites' case, they might say, "God is not able to continue to save us in this wilderness," and, "Let's go back to Egypt; they are able to keep us from dying out here." Second, the person disobeys and sins against God. Then, they start going on the offensive against God by provoking and rebelling against God. Then, they get to the point where their hearts are hardened and they have no desire to repent back to God. I could be looking too much into this list as a general process of how a person opposes God, but it is interesting. God's rest. As we read about God's rest in this chapter, we may think that Hebrews is talking about the Promised Land. However, while the Promised Land was a place of rest for the Israelites, this is not the same as God's rest. As we read into the next chapter, we will see that there is a greater rest than the Promised Land: God's rest. Hebrews is talking about how God's rest is something different and greater than the Promised Land.

#### **4:1-11 God's rest was not with Joshua but it remains for us**

The promise remains. Hebrews is saying that there is a rest, God's rest, that is greater than the Promised Land. The Promised Land was for a time, but God's promise of a greater rest remains. The point of verses 1-11 is to show that God's rest is different and greater than the Promised Land.

None of you should miss it. Remember, this section is a warning to the readers. The Israelites who came out of Egypt missed it. Yet, we have been given a covenant greater than theirs. If God's rest remains for us, will we miss it like they did? Or, will we enter it as it says in [Heb 4:10-11](#)?

The good news just as they did. The Israelites did receive good news. The Law was good news because it was the first covenant of God (Rom 7:12 and context). Of course, the good news that Jesus brought is far, far greater!

Heard it in faith. As Paul says in many of his letters, the problem with the Israelites' relation to the Law is that they didn't receive it, believe it, or obey it—through faith. They went through the motions. They fulfilled the checklists. They followed the Law mechanically, thinking they were in God's grace, but their hearts were far from Him. Isaiah and Jesus pointed this out (Is 29:13, Matt 15:7-9, Mark 7:6-7). The key to the Law was to obey it by faith. King David understood this, as we see in his Psalms. As Hab 2:4 reminded the people, "But the righteous will live by faith." All the great people of faith in Heb 11 understood this. They followed God by faith. But the Israelites in the wilderness did not understand what it meant to receive the Law in faith.

We who believe enter the rest. Again, the key to actually entering God's rest: true belief and real faith. Here, Hebrews says that Christians who understand this and live according to this true belief and real faith are the ones who enter God's rest. Hebrews speaks in the first person plural, pointing out that it is we who enter that rest because we put our true belief and real faith into following Jesus Christ.

Not enter My rest. This is taken when God is speaking to Moses between Egypt and the Promised Land. This verse occurs when the people of God were focused on the Promised Land. While it seems that the rest of Hebrews is talking about is the Promised Land, the next two verses will show that God's rest is something greater than the Promised Land.

His works have been finished. Is God's rest the rest that God did on the seventh day? No, we are not talking about a rest where God rests. God's rest is not for Him but it is for us! We see that God established this rest on the seventh day. So God's rest greatly predates the Promised Land.

David. Hebrews says that David wrote Psalm 95. This is another reason why Hebrews is using the Septuagint as his/her Old Testament. The Hebrew Masoretic does not have a note as to the author of Psalm 95, but the Greek Septuagint says that David wrote Psalm 95. This is why Hebrews says that David is the author of Psalm 95.

After such a long time. In verses 6-7, it is clear that God's rest still existed during the time of King David, long after Moses and Joshua. Although David lived in the Promised Land, he wrote this Psalm, still inviting people to join God's rest. How can David invite people to join God's rest when the people already lived in the Promised Land? This is the point that Hebrews is making. The Promised Land is not the same as God's rest. It is something more spiritual. It is something that is entered into through faith, not by crossing the Jordan River. [Heb 4:8](#) explains this so clearly.

Sabbath rest. Here, it is called the Sabbath Rest. This is because of Gen 2:2, which is when God established this rest. But just like how the Promised Land was NOT God's rest, the Sabbath (seventh) day is not God's rest either. While the Sabbath day and the Promised Land were other



forms of rest, God's rest is something far, far greater. God's true and real rest comes through Jesus Christ. We enter it based on faith (not based on location and not based on the calendar).

Rested from his own works. Now that we have discussed what God's rest is not, let us discuss what it is. Verses 10-11 give a slight definition to what God's rest really is, although it is not clear as I wish it was. I have two theories on what God's rest really is. Just as salvation is being saved FROM something (sin), God's rest is resting FROM something (works). Which works do believers rest from? (1) Are "his own works" the works of a Christian who follows Jesus? As God created the universe in six days, called it good, and rested, we enter into God's rest when we become Christians, and do God's good works that He has given us to do. Then when we die, we will rest from our labors in Abraham's bosom. With this theory, "his own works" are the good things we do as we live the Christian life, God's rest would be Paradise and Heaven. Heb 4:11 speaks of this rest in the future tense, which agrees with this theory. (2) Or, are "his own works" the works of selfishness, pride, and sin? God created the world in six days (which was not selfish or sinful), but then He rested from those works, not to work the works of creation anymore. (After all, God has always worked and continues to work, as it says in John 5:16-17.) As for us, we work selfishness, pride, and sin ...until we rest from our works when we are baptized and put our selfish, prideful, and sinful person to death. We rest from our evil works when Jesus raises us to newness of life. With this theory, "his own works" are the evil things we do as we live apart from God, God's rest would be righteousness and the blessings that come from living faith to Jesus today. Heb 4:10 speaks of this rest in the current tense, which agrees with this theory. (3) After writing these notes, I looked to some commentaries. Some agree with the first theory (good works) and some agree with the second theory (evil works). Perhaps we will never know Hebrews' precise definition of God's rest. Perhaps, just as the Scriptures speak of eternal life being something current and future, perhaps God's rest is the same. God's rest is something that we experience in Christ now (as we rest from our evil works) AND something we experience in Heaven (as we rest of all our works). But whatever God's rest is specifically, we should NOT miss it! It is vitally important to aim for God's rest!

Make every effort. (1) Did notice the paradox? Make every effort to enter rest. In other words, do everything you are able to do so that you can rest from doing. (2) Here are some of the other definitions of "make every effort..." Use speed. Be prompt. Be earnest. Be diligent. Endeavor. This idea is a very important aspect of faith. To be faithful to something means that you are living up to your responsibility. To be faithful in Christ means we are living up to our responsibility to Christ. The letters of the New Testament are filled with instruction on how we should never get tired or faint in living a life that is like Christ, whether it is doing God's good works or it is resting from evil works or both. This is the overall warning that Hebrews is giving us here. It takes effort to not allow our hearts to harden against God, like the Israelites did. It takes effort to have faith in Christ. It takes effort to enter into God's rest. Things like laziness or apathy or unbelief leads to us falling into the same pattern of disobedience. Again, don't follow the example of the Israelites. Instead, follow the example of the great people of faith (which are listed in chapter 11).

#### **4:12-13 God's word knows everything in us**

Word of God. (1) What is the word of God here? On one hand, is the word the Scriptures? We usually refer to the Scriptures as the word of God. I believe Paul is referring to the words of God (the Bible, the Scriptures) when he calls it the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17). Luke referred to the words of God in the parable of the sower as the seed that is spread (Luke 8:11). On the other hand, is the Word Jesus? John referred to Jesus as the Word (John 1:1). While Jesus is referred to as the Word of God a few times in the New Testament, much more often the Word of God refers to the words from God (the Scriptures). In my opinion, Hebrews is talking about the Scriptures. Therefore, in other words, "for the words from God are living and effective." (2) As I looked closely at verses 12 and 13, these verses start with the Greek word *logos* (word) and these verses end with the Greek word *logos* (word). There is something deeply poetic about these two verses, like the author is purposely using word play in a beautiful way.

Living and effective. (1) Literally, "living and active" or "living and working." While most translations say "effective" or "powerful," the idea is that the word of God is DOING. A dead thing cannot do. For something to be living, it must be working in some way. After all, when we say anything has stopped working, we say that it died. (2) Living and active is basically saying the same thing. The word of God is so alive that it is working. The word of God is working so much that it is alive. The word of

God is not dead words on a page. Instead, the word of God gives life ([John 6:63](#))! (3) Would you like to see what the Scriptures say about how they are living and active? Rom 15:4, [2Tim 3:15-17](#). The Scriptures are so living and active that the Scriptures are able to give wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The Scriptures are breathed by God. The Scriptures are active/working when it comes to teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. If the Scriptures can do all that, they are most certainly living and active!!

**Double-edged.** (1) As we go through this list in verse 12 about what the Scriptures are, we see a lot of “doubled-edged” descriptions. First, there is living and active, which are basically the same thing. Second, we have a double-edged sword, which are two blades on the same knife. Third, we have soul and spirit, which are basically the same thing. Fourth, we have joints and marrow, which are basically the same thing. Fifth, we have thoughts and understandings, which are basically the same thing. (2) Of course, the obvious picture that is painted by a double-edged sword is that you there is no backswing. Unlike an axe which has to be raised (swung backwards) in order to be effective, a double-edged blade is just as effective when swung upwards as it is swung downwards. The word of God is so effective that it uses both edges to accomplish its goal and the word of God doesn’t waste energy on a backswing.

**Soul and Spirit.** (1) For me this is the image that most drives home what the author is trying to say. What is the difference between the soul and spirit anyway?? When you look at both words in the Greek, their literal meanings mean the same thing: breath. I’m sure that the Greeks used these words interchangeably all the time. However, they do have very slight nuances. Soul implies the “breath of life.” So it refers to being alive or the breath you make as you breathe. Spirit implies the “breath of the wind.” So it refers to the working of the air or mother nature’s breathing. Think about it. If I were to blow air from my mouth, it would be the breath of life. And it would also be a breath of wind. Do you see how very closely related these words are in the Greek? That is the point. Human languages can be difficult for humans to understand. Yet the word of God is still able to separate the most minute of differences! (2) To make matters even more confusing, consider John 3:8. There, Jesus said, “The ‘pneuma’ blows where it will, you hear its voice but do not know where it came from or where it goes. So is everyone that is born of the ‘pneuma.’ “ The Greek word for Spirit is the exact same Greek word for wind. This shows that there are times that the context of what is said is what determines what a word means. Yet, with all this confusion in human languages, the word of God is still able to separate them!

**Joints and marrow.** These are the parts of the body that holds it together. Marrow holds the bone together. Joints are the parts that hold bone to bone. Of course, the bone is the deepest part of the body. Therefore, the word of God knows what holds other things together, no matter how deep. The word of God doesn’t effect things just on the surface. It is so active, it goes as deep as any doctor can possibly go. And the word of God knows where things fit together and can get into those hard-to-get-to places.

**Thoughts and understandings.** These are basically the same things. Perhaps we can separate them in the sense that thoughts are found in the brain and understandings are found in the mind. But still, this is another example of double-edged things that are basically the same thing. Whether we have thoughts or understandings and whether they are in our brain, our mind, or our heart, the word of God can separate (and judge) them. As the next verse will show, it doesn’t matter how deep into our joints or marrow it goes... it doesn’t matter how deep into our hearts it goes... nothing is beyond what the word of God is able to do. So if we have good things deep inside us, the word of God will reveal it. If we have bad things deep inside us, the word of God can help cure it—no matter how deep they are!

**No creature is hidden from Him.** Look at all the things that the word of God can do. The last and big thing that is mentioned is how nothing escapes God’s sight. The word of God is powerful and God Himself is all-knowing. Remember, there is no escaping God and His word. It is His word that will judge us in the end. Even down to the joint and marrow, even down to the thought and understanding, even down to the soul and spirit, the word of God will judge us ([John 12:47-50](#)) or the word of God will have eternal life ([John 5:24, 6:63, 6:68](#)).

**Naked and exposed.** It is worthwhile to look at what these words really mean. (1) Naked means exactly what it says. God is so all-knowing that it is like everything is naked to Him. Do you remember when Adam and Eve sinned and they tried to cover up with clothes? What a futile thing to do around God. Clothes are not going to make any difference to God. Yet, clothes were given to us as a reminder of the shame we feel when we sin. Therefore, it is pointless to try to hide the shame of our sins from

God. He already knows. We might as well own up to whatever things we've done. Like Adam and Eve, they confronted God and talked about their sin. We should do the same with God. Again, God already knows. If we are trying to hide our sins from God, then we are only fooling ourselves. (2) Exposed has a very specific meaning that is not shown in English. It literally means "to be throated." That is, it means to expose the throat of someone who may be killed. This word is used to describe a victim who is about to be executed. Imagine a sheep on the sacrificial altar when the priest pulls back the sheep's head to kill it. Imagine a man kneeling down and a sword being put to his neck ready to behead him. That's what this word means. It means to expose a victim's throat. (3) As being naked deals with the shame of sin, this word deals with the vulnerability of each person when it comes to God. Remember when Pilate said to Jesus, "Don't you know that I have the authority to release you and the authority to crucify you" (John 19:8)? This word is appropriate in that event. Jesus was fully vulnerable to Pilate. Pilate had Jesus' throat exposed. But that vulnerability was temporary. After all, Jesus said that Pilate was given that authority from above. What is the highest authority there is? It is God. Just as Jesus was vulnerable to Pilate for a time, ALL THINGS are vulnerable to God at all times.

Give an account. (1) Literally, "Toward Whom we word." A literal translation doesn't help us understand what is meant here. As we are confronted with the word of God and are completely seen by God Himself, we must give God an account of ourselves. When it comes to our words toward God, our words will either condemn us or save us. Matt 10:32-33, 12:34-37, Rom 10:9. (2) As said before, verse 12 began with logos (word) and verse 13 ended with logos (word). We see how incredibly powerful God's word is on us. We also see how important our words are toward God. God's word can lead to our salvation and healing or God's word can lead to our condemnation and suffering. And which side we fall on depends on our own words!

#### **4:14-16 Go to Jesus, our great high priest, for mercy and grace**

Passed through the heavens. In the Law, the high priest was the only person allowed to enter the holy of holies, and he was only allowed to do this once each year. Here, Jesus is given a title: high priest who has passed through the heavens. Over the next handful of chapters, the author will go into how and why Jesus has passed through the heavens. All of those reasons are about how Jesus' high priesthood is greater than the high priesthood of the Law. For example, the Israelite high priest entered the most holy place, but Jesus entered the most most most holy place: heaven. For example, the Israelite high priest received his priesthood from Aaron, but Jesus received His priesthood from Melchizedek (an indestructible life). For example, the Israelite high priest would die and hand off the high priesthood to his son, but Jesus was resurrected to never die again, so His high priesthood is forever. Again, Jesus being the "great high priest who has passed through the heavens" is setting up the readers about all the reasons why Jesus is greater, which will be discussed in the next chapters.

Confession. The HCSB says confession. This is a good translation. The Greek word could also be translated as covenant or acknowledgment. I believe this is referring to our commitment, our devotion, our allegiance to God. As Peter calls it: a pledge of a good conscience toward God (1Pet 3:21). This word was used in Heb 3:1, showing that it is our confession that we have made in Jesus Christ. It is used again in Heb 10:23, encouraging us to not waver in our confession but remember that Jesus is faithful in His promises. And so, we should be faithful in our promises to Jesus also. Therefore, if we have devoted and pledged ourselves to God and Christ, the point of Hebrews is to encourage us to not give up on or abandon our commitment to God. Instead, we should hold on tightly to the covenant we have made with God.

Sympathize. See notes on Heb 2:17-18. That section talks about how Jesus is our faithful and merciful high priest, who can help those who are tested. Jesus is the best sympathizer because He has experienced all the same suffering and testing that we have.

Tested without sin. Heb 4:15 is the same as Heb 2:17-18 except that this verse adds something very significant: "yet without sin." Jesus is a greater high priest than earthly high priests because He has experienced every suffering and every test, so that He can sympathize and help us endure. Jesus is a greater high priest because He was perfectly sinless. Jesus is the best of heaven (being perfect and sinless) and Jesus is the best of earth (having experienced suffering and testing). Also, Jesus is exactly what we need in this life: a sympathizer who gives us strength and endurance AND a perfectly sinless high priest who is able to cleanse of us our sin. In short, Jesus is perfectly qualified to be both

Sympathizer and Savior. If Jesus didn't suffer or wasn't tested, then He couldn't have been a sympathizing high priest. If Jesus wasn't perfectly sinless, then He couldn't have been savior for the world. Jesus can sympathize because He has experienced all the nastiness and wickedness of the world. Jesus can save because He was "yet without sin." Again, what makes Jesus so great is that He is the best in both ways; He is the best part of earth, our Sympathizer, and He is the best part of heaven, our Savior.

Approach with boldness. (1) This sounds so much like what Paul said in Eph 3:12. Approaching God in this way is about prayer. Hebrews and Paul are telling us to approach God in prayer with boldness. We are able to do so because of our faith in Christ and because Christ is our high priest. (2) Another aspect of this that helps motivate me to pray is what God has said about how much He wants us to boldly pray to Him, even how much He wants us to boldly ask for things. (2a) A bad attitude in this regard is to not pray to God. Jam 4:2. People murder and covet and steal because they are trying to obtain things by their own power in their own ways. In our culture, people usually have this bad attitude because of self-reliance. Self-reliance is one of those enemies of God. We think it is honorable or responsible to depend on ourselves for the things we need. However, the reason God is asking us to approach Him in boldness is because He wants us to rely and depend on Him for the things we need. Instead of doing things our way—which tends to be a selfish way--, the solution is to ask God so that God will give you what you truly need and God will do it His way. (2b) Now let's look at God's attitude about how bold we can be when we approach Him and how bold we can be in asking things from Him. Php 4:6. As Paul said, God wants to hear us. But is God really that welcoming of us? Does God really want to hear us ask for things? Jesus said the following. Luke 11:9. Don't give up on asking God. Keep showing God how much you desire something. But at the same time, allow God to give you what you need and allow Him to give it in His own time and in His own way.

Proper time. Literally, "into an opportune help." In my own words, "right when we need it."

[Second Warning]. Verses 14-16 are a transition passage. This marks the end of the second warning to the readers, "Do not depart from God because of sin." And it marks the beginning of a VERY LONG section, which is all about the high priesthood.

#### **5:1-4 Earthly high priests**

[Verses 1-10]. These verses are the third reason why Jesus is greater. This section is about why Jesus is greater than earthly high priests.

Taken from men. Why would it mention that every high priest is taken from humans? Isn't that the most obvious statement ever? It's like saying every president is taken from the citizens. I believe this phrase is added here because of the main point of this section: Jesus is greater. You see, earthly high priests began as humans, but Jesus began as deity. There was a time when Jesus was not human nor high priest. But Jesus became high priest and became human. As said in chapter 2, Jesus became lower than the angels for a time. Jesus left heaven and took a "demotion" in order to live as High Priest on earth. In short, while earthly high priests are taken from humanity to serve, Jesus is a greater High Priest because Jesus was taken from heaven in order to serve.

Gifts and sacrifices. (This phrase is used three times in Hebrews: here, 8:3, 9:9.) We commonly hear about the high priests being ministers who helped people with their sacrifices. But what gifts did the high priest offer? I don't think this is meant to mean that the high priests gave presents or door prizes to those who visited the tabernacle/temple. I believe "gifts and sacrifices" refer to the same thing: all the offerings that people brought to God. Not all offerings at the tabernacle/temple were sacrifices. The burnt offering was certainly a sacrifice, a sacrifice of an animal. The peace offering and the sin offering were usually an animal but could also be bread; these were usually burned as a sacrifice. The grain offering was a voluntary gift to God to show your love toward Him; the grains were not burnt but given to the priests as a gift. The guilt offering was a payment of money. Therefore, when it says "gifts and sacrifices," it is referring to anything that people brought to the tabernacle/temple in order to sacrifice to God or to share with the priests. So, do not think that the priests gave gifts TO people. Instead, they received gifts and sacrifices FROM the people, whether sacrifice or gift. It was the priests' duty and ministry to help the worshiper or the penitent person make their offering, whether sacrifice or gift. While the priests received benefits from the offerings, deep down, all offerings, gifts, and sacrifices were offerings to God.

Deal gently. (1) I love how Hebrews includes the kind of attitude that the high priest was supposed to have. It reminds me of the passages that Paul wrote to masters. Masters were to treat their slaves well because even the masters had the Master in heaven. The high priests should have the same attitude. They are not superior to the worshiper. They are human, just like everyone else! They have weaknesses, just like everyone else! Therefore, they are supposed to have a gentle and sympathetic attitude toward every person who comes to the tabernacle/temple. (2) This is one very big difference between earthly high priests and Jesus the High Priest. While Jesus also experienced the weakness of being human and being tempted in every way, Jesus lived a human life but without sin. Because of Jesus' experiences as a weak human, Jesus is very much able to deal gently with us. Jesus can and does deal very gently with you and me!! Yet, because Jesus was without sin, Jesus did not need to make any offerings on His own behalf. As Hebrews will explain well in chapter 10, Jesus, being perfectly sinless, did not offer an offering for His own sake but offered Himself for our sake!

Called by God. (1) This is another reason why earthly high priests should not feel superior to others. If high priests became high priests through their own hard work or if they took the honor and position for themselves, then they would have something to boast about, because they did that. However, when it comes to the high priesthood, a person became high priest because God called them, not because of something they did. God called and appointed high priests, it was not something a person had control over. Therefore, a high priest could not boast or feel superior in his position, because his position was completely given to him by God. Did Aaron do amazing things or take honor for himself in order to become the first high priest? No. God chose him. In other words, none of the high priests were worthy in themselves to be high priests. They had the same weaknesses and sins as everyone else. It was God who called them to a high position and made them worthy of it. (2) Now in this aspect, Jesus is the same as earthly high priests. Jesus didn't take honor or work hard to be the Great High Priest. Father God called and appointed Jesus too! Php 2:6-11. However, unlike earthly high priests, Jesus was always worthy to be High Priest. What Jesus lacked was the sympathy and empathy toward the testing and the suffering that humans experience. In that way, Jesus learned what it means to be obedient (Heb 5:8, Php 2:8).

### **5:5-10 Jesus, the Son, became high priest**

Did not exalt Himself. (1) Again, this is one thing Jesus has in common with earthly high priests: they do not take the high priesthood for themselves, but God chooses and appoints them into that role. While earthly high priests were taken from the earth (and taken from the sons of Aaron), Jesus was taken from a much greater place: heaven, since Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus did not exalt Himself, but look at the way Jesus lowered Himself. [Php 2:6-11](#), [John 8:54](#). (2) This kind of attitude—an attitude that does not focus on one's self but focuses on humility—should be in us also. [Php 2:5](#), [Jam 4:10](#). For those who focus on lowliness, God makes promises to them: [Matt 5:3-5](#).

You are My Son. This is from Ps 2:7. It was already quoted in Heb 1:5. See notes there.

You are a priest forever. Earlier, at Heb 1:13, Ps 110:1 is quoted. This quote comes from Ps 110:4. The reason why Jesus is a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek is explained in detail in chapter 7. See notes there.

Offered prayers and appeals. (1) Neither of these words are the Greek word for "prayer." They are more specific words, more accurately pinpointing the kinds of prayers that Jesus prayed. In the Greek, both words are synonyms. They could be translated petitions, supplications, beggings, askings for a favor. (2) Next, look at the emotions Hebrews is giving to Jesus with these specific kinds of prayer: loud cries and tears (which is a very accurate translation). Based on the types of prayers and the emotions behind those prayers, I cannot help but think about the prayers Jesus prayed to God in the Garden of Gethsemane. [John 12:27](#), [Mark 14:32-36](#). (3) Look closely what about Hebrews is saying about Jesus' prayers and connect this with Heb 4:16. We are told to "approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time." We are called to do that, and Jesus has already modeled it for us! When Jesus was in the Garden, He prayed to God, begging that God would take the cup of suffering from Him. Think about it: Jesus boldly approached the throne of God and prayed for something that was against God's will.

Therefore, it is acceptable if we do the same thing. However, we would be 100% unrighteous if we did that without the second thing that Jesus modeled for us. God wants us to pour out our pain and hurts and beggings and supplications and petitions to Him. Like a good father, He will listen to what

we are going through. God did this for Jesus! Jesus also prayed, “But not My will but Yours be done.” And in the end, Jesus followed God’s will, obeying God, rather than yielding to His desire to not suffer. This second model from Jesus—yielding to God’s will—should and must be far more important to us than our own will or our own desires. And so, are we welcomed to come to God’s throne and pray for things that are not good or holy? Absolutely! But what is most important is where our faith is. Our faith must rely on God’s will far, far greater than what we are feeling. Our faith in Father God must always supersede our own feelings. Jesus perfectly modeled this for us.

Heard because of His reverence. Some translations say “fear” here, but that is not accurate. Literally, this phrase is, “[He was] listened to from the reverence.” That is, Jesus’ reverence to the Father was the source (from) or the reason (because of) why God listened to Him. Note, if this is what Hebrews is trying to say, then we see that the Father listened to Jesus. However, we know that the Father did not grant Jesus’ request in the Garden. Either, the Father listened to Jesus, hearing Jesus’ plea and Jesus’ anguish, or the Father listened to Jesus, saving Jesus from death by raising Him from the dead. Either way, the point is that Jesus revered the Father, fully submitting Himself to the Father’s will, and the Father did not ignore Jesus and the situation Jesus was in.

Learned obedience through suffering. (1) When it comes to Jesus suffering and becoming perfect, see notes at Heb 2:10. (2) The other New Testament passage that speaks of Jesus “learning obedience” is Php 2:8. Jesus learned what it means to be obedient. Jesus was perfectly obedient to the Father, even when it included Jesus’ death. Jesus was faced with intense suffering and certain death, yet Jesus faced those things with perfect obedience. In doing so, Jesus knows what means to be obedient, even when faced with the greatest cost. This is exactly what we see Jesus doing in the Garden. Obedience doesn’t always mean that you obey God in happiness. Obedience means that you obey God no matter what. And it is extremely comforting to know that it is OK to be obedient even when you don’t feel like it. Even if you are scared, you can still be obedient. Even when you know it will hurt A LOT, you can still be obedient. Even when you don’t feel like it, you can still be obedient. Even if every fiber of you doesn’t want to be obedient, you can still be obedient. Look at Jesus in the Garden, He wanted so much to have the cup of suffering taken from Him that His sweat was pouring down as if it was blood. Have you ever brought yourself to that level of anguish before? Jesus’ intense sorrow brought Him to the point of self-inflicted anguish because He did not want the cup of suffering. But you know what? Jesus was still obedient. Jesus has modeled for us what it means to be obedient to God.

Became the source of salvation. See notes at Heb 2:10.

### **5:11-6:3 Rebuke for not being mature**

Lazy of hearing. These first two phrases of verse 11 focus on the speaker. Hebrews wants to say many words but it is difficult to say them. Why? The third phrase in this verse focuses on the audience. It is saying that the listeners (literally) “have become lazy of hearing.” This section of Hebrews seems to be pretty harsh and out-of-the-blue. There may be two reasons for this. First, perhaps the author is familiar with the audience and wants them to know that they need to step up their game. Second, perhaps the author is about to go into a warning to Christian hearers, speaking about Christians who are no longer Christians, and the author wants them to really pay attention here.

You need. In verse 10, the focus of this verse in the Greek is on the audience’s need. They are in need of someone to teach them the first sayings of God. They are in need of milk. The way this is phrased in the Greek, it is not phrased as an insult. It is pointing out that the audience is lacking and in need. Inexperienced. In verse 11, the author is talking about how those who need milk are like infants and are ignorant when it comes to the word of righteousness. The way the verse is worded in the Greek, it might be taken as an insult, but really, it is like the author is saying, “When it comes to righteousness, do you really want to be ignorant of it, like an infant? You don’t have to be. This analogy to an infant does not need to describe you, right?”

Solid food. It literally says that solid food portions are for the complete. The author is giving two extremes in this context. Milk is for infants. Solid food are for the completely grown. The author doesn’t talk about a middle ground or the possibility of growth. By presenting two extremes, the author is not saying his audience is one or the other. Instead, I get the impression that the author is trying to get the audience to choose which extreme is their goal. Are they going to stay comfortable in the elementary things or are they are going to grow into the mature things? One side needs to be

introduced to the basic words of God. The other side has already been trained to know the difference between good and evil.

Have been trained. (1) I am not pleased with how translations have translated verse 14. Here is a literal translation. "The solid food portion is [for] completes (adults), through practice, the senses trained, holding toward a distinction between both good and evil." I have noticed that the phrase "through practice" is not found in more modern translations. (2) The point of this verse is to further describe the complete/mature person. It is a person who practices their faith and Christian walk. It is a person who has trained their senses with the ability to recognize both good and evil. It is a person who has grown in Christ because of their experiences with Christ. That is the picture of a mature person in the faith who is able to eat solid spiritual food.

Elementary message. Here, the author applies 5:12-14 to the subject at hand. It's time to leave the "first saying of Christ" and "carry the completeness." With this verse, I get the sense that the author is saying, "Ready or not, it's time to move forward toward maturity. It's time to forsake the basic things and time to move toward being complete in your understanding and walk with Christ."

Not laying again a foundation. Literally, "Not once more throwing down a foundation." The author is saying, "We've already laid a foundation for the following things. We don't need to spend time laying a foundation for them another time." As I have studied 5:11 through 6:3, I get the impression that the author is tired of talking about the simple and elementary things that Christians talk about. The author is trying to inspire the readers to move on toward a mature understanding of Christ and of good and evil. Perhaps the author will talk about those things, if God permits (6:3), but the author really wants to press on to more mature topics about Christ.

Repentance from dead works. (1) What are the dead works mentioned here? There are two angles. (1a) First, these dead works could be our sins. Eph 2:1-5 talks about how our trespasses and sins made us dead. Because sins make us dead, sins could be called dead works because they are works that bring death. There are two ways that we become alive from these kinds of dead works: salvation and continued repentance. When the NT speaks about repentance, it is usually talking about sins. Therefore, this fits with Heb 6:1. It is obvious that a foundation of Christ is that we are to repent of our sins. Thus, the dead works talked about here could be leaving our sinful life behind. Eph 2:1-5, Col 2:11-13. With this angle, we repent of dead works by living in the salvation we have received from Christ and by continuing to repent from our sins. (1b) Second, these dead works could be the works of the Law. The only other time "dead works" are mentioned in the NT is Heb 9:14. In that passage, the context is about the animal sacrifices that were performed in order to purify a person of sin. Of course, the whole point of Hebrews (as well as the rest of the NT) shows that these works of the Law have died. All of Heb 9 is about why and how Jesus' sacrifices has replaced and is FAR greater than animal sacrifices according to the Law. With Jesus as our Savior and our High Priest and our Sacrifice, the works of the Law have become dead works. Heb 9:7-14. With this angle, as 9:14 implies, we replace dead works of the Law with serving the living God. (1c) Third, I considered including James 2:17-26. However, it does not really connected to Heb 6:1. James speaks of the value of works, because without works, faith is what is dead. While "dead" and "works" appear there, that passage is really about dead faith. (2) Because Heb 6:1 is about the elementary foundations about Christ, it is my opinion that dead works are trespasses and sins. In fact, when reading 9:14, you could even read that verse as if the dead works are sins too.

Faith in God. It goes without saying how important and foundational faith is when it comes to Christianity. Jesus and Paul focused on faith as the most important quality in Christian disciples (except that love is the quality that is even more important than faith). How many times does the New Testament talk about the important, significance, and necessity of faith in God? Therefore, faith in God is a quality that goes without saying. Because Hebrews mentions it here, it shows us that Hebrews really is talking about the most elementary and foundational aspects of Christianity.

Teaching about ritual washings. (1) The Greek is "baptismos didache," literally, "teaching on baptisms." Because the word for baptisms is plural and because all other instances of this word in the New Testament refer to the washings of cups (Mar 7:4), the washing of pots (Mark 7:8), or the various washings in the Law (Heb 9:10), this is probably why some translations say "ritual washings." If you mark in your Bible, I suggest making a note that this word is "baptisms" (baptismos). (2) Hebrews says that this is an elementary and foundational aspect of Christianity. When I look at the other times this word is used in the New Testament, it is usually talking about the Jewish washings. And those washings are not spoken of positively in the New Testament. But in this passage, this teaching is an

elementary teaching in Christianity. What could the teaching of washings refer to but Christian baptism? While it seems like most of Christianity today does not see baptism as an elementary and foundational aspect of Christianity, both the New Testament and the writings of Christians who lived after the apostles wrote that baptism is necessary. Baptism is necessary for salvation according to these New Testament passages: Mark 16:16, John 3:5, Acts 2:38, 22:16, Rom 6:3-9, 1Pet 3:21. For those in the Churches of Christ (and probably also for Catholic and Orthodox Christians), baptism already is an elementary and foundational teaching for a Christian.

Laying on of hands. Of the elementary and foundational things listed in Heb 6:1-2, the laying on of hands is the most obscure to us today. In the New Testament there are three primary reasons and one other reason for the laying on of hands. We see that Jesus and others laid hands on those who were sick (Matt 9:18, Mark 5:23, 6:5, 7:32, 8:23, 16:18, Luke 4:40, 13:13, Acts 28:8). We see the laying on of hands was a way the Holy Spirit was received by new converts (Acts 8:17-19, 19:5-6). We see the laying on of hands performed on people who were given very special roles or tasks in the church (Acts 6:6, Acts 13:3, 1Tim 4:14, 2Tim 1:6). Lastly, there is one example of laying hands on someone as a way to bless them (Mark 10:16). In the Old Testament there are the same patterns. The priests were to lay their hands on the heads of the animal sacrifices (Ex 29, Lev 3, Lev 4, Lev 8). The laying on of hands was performed on people who were to be executed by stoning, on Levites for their service, and on Joshua who became leader. Therefore, in both the Old and New Testament, the laying on of hands seem to have been done to sacrifices (OT: animal sacrifices, NT: living sacrifices), people appointed to be fully devoted to a certain task (OT: Levites and priests, NT: Timothy and Paul and Barnabas), and people appointed to positions of authority (OT: Joshua, NT: elders and deacons).

Resurrection of the dead. The physical resurrection of all the dead is an elementary and foundational teaching in the New Testament. In fact, the resurrection was often used in examples of evangelism in the New Testament. (For example, the apostles taught the resurrection, using Jesus as an example of it: Acts 4:1-2.) The resurrection is one of the biggest reasons why the Gospel is good news, and the resurrection is the primary event where Christians are to put their hope. The resurrection of the dead is not something that is spoken of often in Christianity today. This is because Christianity has been watered down by the philosophies of Plato or Gnosticism. Both Plato and Gnosticism taught that the physical world, especially our flesh, is inherently evil. (This can be seen when Paul is in Athens: Acts 17:30-32.) Those philosophies have affected Christian' minds into believing that in heaven, we will be only spirit or only soul. However, the Scriptures do not teach that. Instead, Jesus and the apostles taught that, when Jesus returns, everyone (EVERYONE!) will be resurrected in their physical body. The most famous teaching from Jesus on this topic is John 5:28-29. Then of course, Paul talks about the resurrection of the dead at great length in 1Corinthians (1Cor 15:12-23, 32-46, 50-54). The resurrection of the dead will be a bodily resurrection!

Eternal judgment. (1) Eternal judgment is so elementary and foundational to Christianity that even non-Christians are very, very familiar with this concept. Unfortunately, Christian teachers and preachers have focused on this aspect of Christianity so heavily, many non-Christians are unaware that the salvation that God offers is not just an escape from punishment but that salvation brings incredible and amazing and awesome blessings both in this life and in the life to come. Plus eternal judgment is not only eternal condemnation but God is able to eternally judge people for eternal life. Both are part of eternal judgment. Again, Christians teachers and preachers have focused on this aspect of Christianity so heavily, many active Christians have doubted their faith in God or the gift of eternal life God has given them. I don't think the church has a problem understanding the eternal judgment. When people reject faith in God or when people lose their faith in God, they already have an understanding of this elementary and foundational aspect of Christianity. We don't need to tell them about it. They know and understand it. They just don't want to live their lives according to eternal judgment.

If God permits. (1) Hebrews will talk about some of these things a little here and there. Of course, everything in Scripture has to do with "faith in God." (2) This is one reason why I do not believe Heb 1-12 was written by Paul. While Paul could talk theology and the mysteries of Christ so incredibly well, Paul also spent plenty of time talking about the elementary and foundational aspects. One of the most important parts of Paul's writings was that he talk about the lifestyle of what a Christian looks like. I don't think Paul would say, "We could talk about the basics of Christianity, but that is best for another time, if God allows." However, Hebrews doesn't spend much time at all on holy living but focuses almost exclusively on the theology and mysteries of who Christ is. Of course, chapter 13 is



very, very different, as it focuses almost exclusively on holy living. That is why I suspect that chapter 13 was written by Paul.

#### **6:4-8 Christians who have departed from God are warnings for us**

[Verses 4-8]. While it seems that Hebrews abruptly changes the subject in verse 4, these next verses are not actually out-of-the-blue. This passage is still talking about warnings to the reader, and the author is still on the same subject. Remember how the author was talking about one extreme of Christians going back to the milk, which is immaturity, and about the other extreme of Christians moving forward to solid food, which is for those who are growing in maturity? The next nine verses continue with two extremes. In these two extremes, we can see the warning the author is trying to show. Verses 4-8 are about Christians who abandoned Christ and are no longer in the church. Verses 9-12 are about Christians who are still committed to God and holding on to their confession. Just as some are immature and on milk, and others are mature and able to eat solid food, some Christians get lazy or reject God and fall away, while other Christians stay true to their confession and continue to work in God's Kingdom. Hebrews is showing these two extremes, pointing out that Christians are either headed toward one extreme or another. We become lazy and abandon God, or we are either become more and more dedicated to God. Christians who do not heed these warnings and will be burned (verse 4-8). Let those fallen Christians be an example and warning to us, so that we do not follow them. Christians who continue to serve God and will be rewarded (verses 9-12). Let those committed Christians be an example and evidence to us, so that we imitate them as they imitate Christ.

Once enlightened. (1) In this example of a Christian who has fallen away, the first thing we see is a list of characteristics that they had when they were still a Christian. (1a) Once enlightened. The times this word is used in Paul's letters (Eph 1:18, 3:9, 2Tim 1:10), it refers to becoming a Christian. These are people who, through the Gospel, have been enlightened to God's truth and to God's goodness. Eph 1:17-19. (1b) Heavenly gift. This is not the word for grace but the word for gift. In the New Testament, this gift is called the "gift of grace" or it refers to the gifts (talents, abilities, spiritual gifts) that God gives us so that we can be effective workers in the Kingdom. These are people who have tasted God's gifts. Eph 2:4-7. (1c) Became sharers of the Holy Spirit. This is significant. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit was given at baptism and/or at the laying on of the apostles' hands. These are people who have partnered with God because they shared God's Holy Spirit. Rom 8:9-11. (1d) Tasted the good matters of God. This is not just about the sayings or the words or the reasonings of God, this is matters of God. These are people who have gone beyond the words of God and have understood or experienced HOW God works. Rom 10:17. (1e) Powers of the age to come. The age to come is eternal, and the powers in that age are God's powers. This would include the powers that God will display on Judgment Day and the powers that build the New Heavens and the New Earth, which is eternal life. Basically, these are people who understand or have some kind of experience in the eternal life that God has already begun within His children. Eph 1:2-21. (2) Now, as we go through that list, we look at these things as characteristics that a fallen Christian used to have. What about these characteristics in the lives of current Christians... us?? Should we go through this list again and look at these things as blessings, graces, and gifts from God that we have right now? Because if a person is a Christian, these things are already ours!

Who have fallen away. (1) This idea that a Christian can fall away is explicitly discussed in a few places in the New Testament. In 1Tim 4:1-5, Paul says that the Holy Spirit prophesies that some will fall away and start their own religions. The most explicit passage about falling away (besides these verses in Hebrews) is found in 2Pet 2. There, Peter talks about how some fall away and return to their previous lives of worldliness and sin. 2Pet 2:20-22. There is another passage about falling away that Jesus taught, and we will look at that with verse 8. (2) Another word for falling away is apostasy. Apostasy is when a person abandons, rejects, or denounces his or her religion. The Greek word means to separate or divorce. Apostasy is the technical term for what we are talking about. Of course, the New Testament also calls it falling away. Here is an analogy. When someone dies, many times we do not say so-and-so dies. We say that they passed away. We say "passed away," instead of saying "died." Because it is a gentler way of saying that someone has died. The same is true for falling away. Falling away is another way of saying someone has apostatized, or has abandoned, rejected, denounced, or divorced their faith.

It is impossible to renew. (1) While this word, “impossible,” appears here in this commentary, it is actually the very first word of verse 4. I have placed it here, because grammatically in English, it is better understood to be placed before the phrase “to renew” which appears a few words into verse 6. (2) One question the readers of Hebrews usually ask is, “So if a person becomes a Christian, then falls away, then is it absolutely impossible for them to become a Christian again?” This is a good question. But I do not think that is the case. (3) When it comes to doing the impossible, God is an expert at that. When you look in the New Testament for “impossible” and “God,” you find a few verses. Luke 1:37 says, “For nothing will be impossible with God.” Again, God is an expert at working the impossible. After all, that is why we call them miracles! Every miracle is God doing the impossible! There is another verse that we find in three Gospels, which says, “With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matt 19:26, Mark 10:27, Luke 18:27). I believe this is the key to understanding this passage in Hebrews. Yes, it is impossible FOR US to renew others to repentance. They have fallen away. And if they are going to reject God and His Holy Spirit, what makes us think that they will listen to us? But what may be impossible for us, God is an expert at doing the impossible. God is still able to move things around in a person’s life in order to give them the best chance at repentance. (3) When it comes to renewing fallen Christians back into God’s church, God is able to do that. We see it happen in the New Testament. (3a) In 1Cor 5, there is a brother who is committing sexual immorality that isn’t even acceptable among the pagans. This man is kicked out of the church and given to Satan. Yet, when we read 2Cor 2, we see that this brother repented and returns to the church. Paul tells the church to fully accept his return. (3b) Another example is in Revelation, where Jesus is speaking to the church at Ephesus, which had fallen from a very important aspect of faith. Rev 2:2-5. Jesus mentions that they have fallen from their first love, but Jesus Himself warns them that they still have an opportunity to repent. (3c) The greatest example of a person who falls away and returns to God and is welcomed by God is the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11ff). Jesus told that story because that’s God’s attitude about those who fall away, come to their sense, and genuinely repent.

Their own harm. (1) I find this phrase very significant, especially when we look at the phrases that follow. Look at the next couple phrases. A person who falls away (either intentionally or unintentionally) is wanting to recrucify the Son of God and/or put Him to open shame. However, when someone tries to do these things with the Son of God, who is Deity, it is not Jesus who is harmed. Instead, people who fall away are only harming themselves! (2) How or why would some people fall away and want to put Jesus to open shame? I have seen people fall away because they hate God for some reason. (2a) For example, I have seen people fall away because they believe that the Bible promotes slavery or racism. So in their hatred for God, they try to paint God and the Bible as pro-slavery or racist. Of course, they do not fully understand the Scriptures, so like Hebrews says, they have fallen from God’s truth and are actually harming themselves. (2b) For example, I have seen people fall away because they believe that God is a God of hate because God is so opposed to homosexuality. They try to put God to open shame by calling God a bigot or homophobe. But when they do this, they prove that they have fallen from God’s truth and are actually harming themselves. (3) The point is this. When someone hates God and want to put God to open shame, they are trying to say that they are greater than God. Of course, they don’t have the authority nor position nor the truth in order to do this, so as they paint God as the bad guy, they are actually harming themselves.

Recrucifying the Son of God. (1) This idea of crucifying Christ again is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. As I look at the Greek word here and the context, this is the impression I get.... This kind of fallen person is saying, “Christ is so evil. He deserved to be crucified, and if I had the chance, I would crucify Him again.” That is, this act of recrucifying the Son of God is not figuratively happening with Jesus. And it is not as if Jesus would need to be crucified again for this fallen person. No. The idea of recrucifying Jesus is the fallen person’s idea. The person wants to kill Jesus all over again. The same thing happening with this next phrase too.

Holding Him up to contempt. I do not like how the HCSB uses “contempt.” In the Greek, this phrase is one really long word. The idea behind this word is a public exhibition of someone who should be shamed by others. This happened to Jesus while He was on the cross. The soldiers mocked Jesus. The Jewish leaders mocked Jesus. And the crowd passing by mocked Jesus. Why? Because the cross was a public exhibition of shame and humiliation. This is the kind of open shame that those who have fallen away want for Jesus. Just like they would want to crucify Jesus all over again, they would want to see Jesus publicly shamed over and over. When people do this, they are doing it to

their own harm. Because again, no one has the authority, position, or power to shame God. They are only fooling themselves. They are actually harming themselves.

[Verse 7]. Is this verse speaking of those who have fallen away or is this verse speaking of those who hold fast to their confession? As I tried to translate this verse, I think it is about those who have fallen away. But commentaries I found think it is about those who stay true to their confession. (1) If this verse is about those who have fallen away, this is my translation. "For soil drinks the rain that comes frequently, and for those who tilled it, it produces plants that are appropriate for them. They accept a formal blessing from God." In other words, every person who depends on the plants and will till the soil for those plants depends on all three: the soil and the rain and the plants, which are all blessings from God. So even the person who is trying to recrucify the Son of God and who is trying to put God to open shame is still using the soil and rain and plants that God provides. And when they use those things, it is like they are accepting a formal blessing from God, who put those things there. Hebrews includes this verse to show how incredibly foolish it is to fall away from God. Such a person knows that God created the universe and that God provides rain for the just and the unjust. So when they hate God that much, their very lives and the food that sustains their lives must still recognize the blessings from God. In other words, even though they hate God, they still must recognize that they cannot live without Him. (2) If this verse is about those who hold fast to their confession, here is the interpretation. This verse is in contrast to verse 8. Therefore, the soil is good soil that receives the "rains of heaven." Frequently, God sends His rain to help, sustain, and grow His children. And when God does that to good soil, it produces vegetation (fruit!) that is useful for those who are growing it, which produces a crop bearing 40, 60, and 100 times from where it started. As we are branches on the Vine (Jesus), we are producing much fruit that is very useful ([John 15:2](#)). And all of this is a blessing from God. When we remain faithful and committed to God, God will continue giving us the strength and guidance to produce that fruit and be useful to others.

Thorns and thistles. If verse 7 is about committed Christians, which is the good soil, Christians who fall away are the thorny soil. Obviously, these two verses directly relate to Jesus' parable of the sower and the soils. After all, the thorny soil did have good roots, but the cares of this world and material possessions were the thorns that choked the plant. This is another image of Christians who have fallen away. However, verse 7 could still be about Christians who have fallen away. And verse 8 could still be reference to Jesus' parable of the sower and soils.

Worthless. This might connect to what John the Baptist said about what Jesus will do with the chaff. [Matt 3:12](#), [Luke 3:17](#). This might also connect to two parables in [Matt 13](#). First is the parable of the wheat and the weeds. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and at the end of the age, they will be gathered and burned in the fire. [Matt 13:37-43](#). Second is the parable of the net and fish. Jesus said that, at the end of the age, angels will throw out the worthless fish and burn them in the blazing furnace. [Matt 13:47-50](#).

Burned at the end. There are Scriptures above that speak about this. In order to tie up the theme of bearing fruit and being burned, this idea is most clearly taught by Jesus in [John 15:1-8](#).

### **6:9-12 Christians who remain diligent in service are known by God**

In your case. Literally, this is "with respect (or, concerning) to you." The previous section was about Christians who have fallen away and who are warning to us to help us not fall away. But this section is about the audience. This section is about faithful Christians. Those who still hold on to their profession of Christ and still committed and dedicated to Christ. The audience is Christians who are still Christians. These are Christians who are not on the journey toward milk but are on the journey toward solid food.

Better things. The compliment the author is giving the audience is understated by the translation when it says "better things." This is the same word that is used throughout Hebrews as "greater." Jesus is the Mediator of a GREATER covenant enacted on GREATER promises. As we have seen, the theme of Hebrews is that Jesus is GREATER. In this verse, the author says that the audience is greater. Literally, this phrase is, "We are convinced through you, beloved, of the greater—even holding salvation." So just as Christ is greater than the old covenant, Christians are greater because they have salvation. But not only salvation, it is all the things listed in verses 4-5, because those are gifts that God gives to Christians who are still Christians. Christians are greater than those who were mentioned in the previous verse—who have fallen away. That is, those who stay true to their profession in Christ are also greater! (2) And if being a Christian is greater, then the practical warning

here is that we should not be looking at inferior things, evil things, ugly things, and the dark places in which we used to live. May we not put our hand on the plow and look back, longing for our old life. From the example of Christians that have fallen away, we see that they have chosen to forfeit all of God's blessings, especially salvation. They are a warning to us.

God is not unjust. When we hear that God is just, what do we think about? For me, I think about how God is the one who is able to deal perfect justice on those who sin. When I think about how God is just, I think about how God will not let the guilty go free. However, this is not the way "just" is used in this context. This context is about the faithful Christian. What does a just God do with a faithful Christian? God gives them a reward! Just as much as the wicked will receive PUNISHMENTS from God's justice, the faithful will receive REWARDS from God's justice. It is the SAME justice. The God who punishes the wicked is also faithful and just to reward the righteous. That is why "God is not unjust. He will not forget your work and the love you showed for His name." This is not a new concept in Hebrews. Jesus taught this. The gospel that speaks most about God rewarding the righteous is the Gospel of Matthew. [Matt 10:40-42, 24:45-46](#). Paul spoke that sins lead to a punishment, whether the sins are obvious or hidden ([1Tim 5:24-25](#)). As Jesus said, the good works done in secret will be rewarded openly ([Matt 6:1-6](#)). Brothers and sisters, Heaven is our reward. Eternal life is our reward too. God's promise to wipe away every tear is our reward. But let us never forget the greatest reward of all: God Himself!

Your work and your love. What things will God reward? Think back to the parable of the talents. God is not going to reward someone for sitting on their faith and not doing anything with it. If a person has faith or if a person is saved, those things by themselves are not worth rewarding because it is like the man who buried his talent. He had faith and salvation (and was commissioned by the Master), but the man just sat on his faith and salvation. He refused to let his faith and salvation be put to work. As we see in that parable, God has called and equipped every Christian for good works. First, God calls us and expects us to do good works ([Eph 2:10](#), [Col 1:9-10](#), [1Tim 2:9-10](#), [2Tim 2:20-21](#), [Tit 2:6-7](#), [Tit 2:11-14](#)). Second, God has equipped us with Scripture ([2Tim 3:14-17](#)) and with gifts ([Rom 12:3-8](#)) so that we can do those good works ([2Cor 9:8](#), [2Thes 2:16-17](#)). (For example, Paul gave an explicit instruction to those who are rich: [1Tim 6:17-19](#).) Therefore, what is God looking to reward us for? Two things: Love and Service. The love we show and how to show it is defined by the Scriptures. The service we do in God's name is defined by the gifts, abilities, talents, and opportunities that God has given to each of us.

You continue to serve them. When it comes to serving others in God's name, this is something Christians have done. It is something that marks them as a Christian. But just because you have served in the past, this does not mean you can quit serving. When it comes to serving other Christians and good works, there is no quota. There is no limit. This is both good news and "bad" news. The good news is that you do not have a quota or a requirement that you must reach in your service to other Christians and your good works, if you want a reward. The "bad" news is that you cannot quit. You cannot retire. There is never a point when you have done enough or have fulfilled your quota. So when it comes to serving the saints and good works, what is God looking for? He is only looking at whether we are doing them according to our abilities, our gifts, and our opportunities. The five-talent man was rewarded because each of his talents gained another talent. He worked according to his ability, his gift, and his opportunity. The same is true with the ten-talent man. He was rewarded because each of his talents gained another talent. Some have been given more ability or opportunity, so more is expected of them. But whatever we have been given, we are expected to use it. It doesn't matter how many acts of service or how many good works we accomplish. What matters is if each of us are currently using the gifts God has given in the ways He has called each of us to use them (repeat that). In summary, you only have to ask yourself two questions. So far, have I worked and shown love in God's name? And, am I still working and showing love in God's name? If you have answered "no" to either of those questions, then there is another question you must ask yourself. Does my life look more like the one-talent man?

[Verses 11-12]. This is the key verse in all of Hebrews when it comes to warning us to stay true to our confession in God. It is also our key verse when it comes to getting encouraged and motivated in serving God and serving others. If our maturity in Christ is supposed to grow and grow, then our service in the Kingdom should grow and grow also. Do you want to return to the milk and be lazy? Or do you want to pursue solid food and diligently serve others? It's all about being imitators of those

who went before us and were mature in faith and perseverance. We can imitate them, after all, everyone who works faith and perseverance is ultimately imitating Christ Himself.

Diligence. This diligence is our commitment to our works and the love we show. Our profession (that is, our commitment to faith) is in Christ. Our diligence (that is, our commitment to works and love) is for His name. As James said (Jam 2), we cannot have a profession or faith in Christ without having works. As Paul said (1Cor 13), we cannot have a profession or faith in Christ without having love. All these things work together. Hebrews' main point here is that all of them are necessary. The warning is that we should never become lazy in them.

Final realization of your hope. We have a hope. Hope is an expectation to receive something that is currently not seen. We have a hope in the rewards that God will give us one day. We have received many rewards now, but we will not see or experience or realize our full hope until the final day. And because we hope that we will receive the ultimate rewards on the final day, that is why we remain diligent. The diligence we put into our good works and the love we show is the evidence of the hope inside us. If we are not being diligent in good works or in the love we show, then are we really hoping to receive the ultimate reward on the final day?

Imitators of those. Through the letter so far, the author has been teasing us with Jesus being the High Priest. Chapters 7 through 10 are all about that topic. In this phrase, the author teases us about those who inherit the promises through faith and perseverance. Chapter 11 is all about those people. The author will give many, many, many examples of these hairs of faith in five more chapters. The Hall of Faith of chapter 11 are those "who inherit the promises through faith and perseverance." We are to imitate them!!

#### **6:13-19 God's promise to Abraham is our hope**

Promise. The promise that God made to Abraham is found at Gen 22:17. Verse 14 is not a direct quote from Gen 22:17 but is a reference to it. The promise God gave in Genesis 2 should be familiar to both Jews and Christians.

Swore upon Himself. (1) God swore an oath. God wanted to be as abundantly clear to Abraham and to all of creation that this promise was something very, very special. As it says in verse 17, "God wanted to show His unchangeable purpose even more clearly to the heirs of the promise." In other words, God swore an oath because that is something that would get our attention. (2) When humans swear, they appeal to something greater than themselves that is able to hold them accountable. But for God, there is nothing greater, so God swore by Himself. (Actually, the Greek word is "upon." God swore upon Himself.) God is able to do this because of two unchangeable things: God's promise is irreversible because, first, He guaranteed it with an oath and, second, it is impossible for God to lie. Now, you might notice that God's guaranteed oath and God's impossibility to lie sound like the same thing. Practically speaking, they are! But these two unchangeable facts about the nature of God are what prove the significance of this promise. In other words, God is a God who does not ever need to swear an oath. Why does God need to swear an oath at all?? It is impossible for Him to lie anyway!! But as it says, God swore an oath to show His purpose even more clearly to the heirs. God did not need to swear an oath; He did it to get our attention. (3) It is important to note that God, being God, has the right to swear oaths. He can do this because it is impossible for Him to lie. But this is not the case with humans. Every human has the ability and possibility to lie, so swearing oaths are very different for humans. Jesus taught about this (Matt 5:33-37). While God is able to swear upon Himself, we certainly cannot. As Jesus said, we cannot even swear upon our own heads.

Obtained the promise. (1) But wait... Abraham did not obtain the promise! First, God promised that Abraham would be blessed, and that did happen during Abraham's life. Second, God promised that He would multiply Abraham's seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand on the seashore, but Abraham only saw one son of promise: Isaac. Therefore, Abraham did not obtain that promise during his life. Third, God promised that Abraham's seed would inherit the cities of the enemies, but the only land that Abraham owned at the time of his death was his own burial plot near Shechem. (The Septuagint says "inherit the cities." The Masoretic says "possess the gates." This is why Hebrews says "inherit" in verses 12 and 18.) Therefore, Abraham did not obtain that promise during his life either. (2) This agrees with what is said in Heb 11:39. Every person in the Hall of faith did not receive what was promised. Now, they didn't receive what was promised while they were living. But as verses 11-12 imply and as verse 15 says, Abraham did obtain his inheritance. So all of them must have inherited God's promise after their deaths. (3) When did Abraham obtain the promise? Was it

when the Israelites were in Egypt and their numbers became like the stars of heaven and the sand on the seashore? Not quite. Was it when the Israelites crossed into the Promised Land and conquered the cities of their enemies and received the Promised Land? Maybe so... But Hebrews sees a different and greater promise going on here... a different and greater hope going on here. I do not think Hebrews is talking about the physical seeds of Abraham. Instead, Hebrews is talking about the spiritual Seed of Abraham. When God made this promise to Abraham, God said that the promise was for Abraham's Seed (singular). Paul also pointed this out ([Gal 3:16](#)). Look how Hebrews explains how this promise and hope was fulfilled. In verses 19-20, it says that this hope enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain. Obviously, only the high priest is able to do this, so Hebrews is saying that God's promise to Abraham is fulfilled in a high priest. However, Hebrews is not talking about the Jewish high priest, but Jesus who is high priest forever. Therefore, Jesus is the hope and the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham.

Hope as an anchor. Just as God's promise was very, very important and special because He guaranteed it with an oath, the hope we have in God's promise is very, very safe and secure—like an anchor for our very lives. Our hope keeps us safe, keeps us grounded, keeps us secure. As we see in verses 19-20, this hope is not just a gift, it is a Person. And when this Person returns on the clouds of heaven, then we will realize the final realization of our hope.

Enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain. There is only one possible reference that this refers to: the high priest. The high priest and any high priest was the one who entered the Holy of Holies, which is the inner sanctuary behind the curtain. And the high priest did this only once a year. Hebrews has beaten around the bush long enough. Verse 20 explicit points to Jesus as a high priest forever. Jesus is the hope that enters the Holy of Holies! Jesus is the High Priest of the promise; He is our High Priest!

#### **6:20 Jesus is high priest through Melchizedek**

Melchizedek. Melchizedek is the key as to why Jesus can be the high priest forever. Chapter 7 explains in detail about Melchizedek and his greater priesthood.

#### **7:1-10 Melchizedek is greater than Levi**

Melchizedek. The story of Melchizedek is found in Genesis 14:17-20. These four verses contain everything we know about Melchizedek's life. In summary, after Abraham defeats many kings and rescues Lot and other people, Abraham returns to the Jerusalem area. Melchizedek, who is king of Salem and priest of the God Most High, gives Abraham bread, wine, and a prophecy. In turn, Abraham gives Melchizedek the very first tithe.

King of Salem. Salem was an early name for Jerusalem. "Jeru" "Salem." So Melchizedek was the king of Jerusalem. The story of Melchizedek is the first reference to Jerusalem in the Scriptures. The first mention of Jerusalem as "Jerusalem" is in Joshua 10, when the Israelites are finally in the Promised Land and beginning to possess it. But even then, Jerusalem wasn't considered a great or holy town. It wasn't until King David moved the capital of Israel from Hebron to Jerusalem that Jerusalem became the holy city. Yet here, we see that Melchizedek—during a time of pre-history—is already king of Jerusalem.

Priest. The fact that Melchizedek is priest is the key to what Hebrews is trying to show. After all, how could there be priest when Aaron wasn't even born. For the Jew, the priesthood and high priesthood began and was ordained with Aaron. Only Aaron and his sons were allowed to be priests. Yet Melchizedek is a man who was already priest during the time of Abraham.

Blessed him. Literally, the first word can be translated as smaller or lesser [person]. The second word can be translated as stronger or better [person]. Melchizedek blesses Abraham. As it is pointed out in verse 7, the stronger or better person is the one who blesses the smaller or lesser person. The smaller person is not able to bless the stronger. This is because the stronger person has something to give, a blessing that can be given. So, in this situation, the blessing itself shows that Melchizedek is stronger or greater than Abraham.

Abraham gave him a tenth. This should also ring a bell, because it is tithing. The tithe was something established between the Israelites and the Levites. The Levites did not receive any territory in the Promised Land. They received a few cities and the tithe. The other 12 tribes were to tithe 10% to the Levites because it was the Levites' job to be priests (the sons of Aaron) or the to take care of the other holy duties that were given to the 3 clans within the tribe of Levi, such as taking special care of

the tabernacle. The point is that tithing was established by the Law, but Melchizedek is an occurrence of tithing before there was the Law, before there was a tribe of Levites, and before there was Levi himself. It was natural for Israel to give tithes to Levi, the priestly tribe. So to see Abraham giving tithes to Melchizedek would be proof that Melchizedek was a legitimate priest. This is explained a little more in Heb 7:9-10.

King of righteousness. In Hebrew, Melchizedek means “king of righteousness.”

King of peace. In Hebrew, king of Salem means “king of peace.” “Salem” is closely related to Shalom.

Without genealogy. We all know how much the Scriptures love their genealogies. We know the genealogies from Adam to Abraham. From Abraham to Jacob. From Jacob to all the 12 tribes of Israel. Genealogies are found in nearly every book of the Old Testament. They are even found in the New Testament in places like Mathew 1 and Luke 3. But Melchizedek has nothing. NOTHING! He certainly is a man of mystery. Who made Melchizedek the priest of the God most high? Who made Melchizedek the king of Jerusalem? Who were Melchizedek’s father and mother? Who were Melchizedek’s descendants? The answers to all these questions are either pre-history (humans never recorded these things) or it is God’s design that Melchizedek be a man of mystery. Why even bring up Melchizedek at all? Why devote four verses to his life in Genesis 14? Why demonstrate why Melchizedek is greater than Abraham? Now, when it comes to answering those questions, I believe the answer is found here in Hebrews 7.

Resembling the Son of God. What an odd thing to say. The author of Hebrews, being a Christian, is making a bold statement here, comparing the person of Melchizedek with the person of Jesus Christ. Literally, the Greek word means that Melchizedek is “from comparison” to the Son of God. I think the meaning is that someone could easily and strongly compare Melchizedek with Jesus, and one of them is probably based on the other. In other words, does Jesus model Melchizedek or does Melchizedek model Jesus? As for me, I believe it is God design that Melchizedek is placed in 4 verses in Genesis so that he would be a model (pre-model) for Jesus.

Without this lineage. (1) The meaning here is that Melchizedek was without the Abrahamic lineage. Melchizedek’s lineage was outside of Abraham’s lineage. With the priests and Levites, they were allowed to collect tithes from Abraham’s other children because the Levites were also Abraham’s children. However, Melchizedek is collecting tithes from Abraham himself WITHOUT any connection to Abraham’s lineage and WITHOUT any family ties. Melchizedek was outside of the promise that God made to Abraham. But even though Melchizedek was outside of God’s promises to Abraham, Melchizedek was still greater than Abraham. WOW! (2) Even Christians are in the family of Abraham spiritually speaking, but this happens through faith, because Abraham is the father of faith. We Christians are children of Abraham when we model faith in our lives—just as Abraham did. Yet even Melchizedek is not tied to Abraham by faith. So there is neither a physical nor a spiritual tie between Melchizedek and Abraham. It’s like Abraham is righteous because of his faith, but Melchizedek is even greater because of something else that we do not see. The Scriptures never tell us why Melchizedek is greater than Abraham and all his children, but Scripture is clear that he is.

Scripture testifies that he lives. This is a difficult phrase. I don’t know of any Scripture that says that Melchizedek never died. (We see Scripture to say that about Enoch, but Scripture is silent about Melchizedek’s death.) I mean, Melchizedek did die, right? Or, when Hebrews is talking about Melchizedek living, is it actually referring not to the Melchizedek the man but Melchizedek the priesthood? About this verse, most commentaries say that the author means that, since Scripture does not speak of Melchizedek’s death, it is like we can say that he is still living. (2) The idea that Melchizedek (and most certainly his priesthood) is forever is echoed in two other places in Scripture. The first is mentioned in Psalm 110:4 (quoted in Heb 7:17,21), where David says that Melchizedek’s priesthood is forever. The second is here in Hebrews 7, specifically 7:23-25, where the author shows that, just as Melchizedek is forever, so is Jesus. They both have the same FOREVER priesthood! [Melchizedek already greater]. I would like to point out, in my own words, all the amazing reasons we have seen how Melchizedek is greater than Levi and Abraham.... Melchizedek was already king before Israel had a king. He was already priest before Israel had priests. He was already prophesying before Israelites had prophets. He was already receiving tithes before the Levites received tithes. He was already living in Jerusalem before Israel made Jerusalem their most important city. He was already using bread and wine before the Israelites used them in the Passover. Therefore, before the Promised Land, before the Law, before Levi, and even before Abraham, Melchizedek was the forerunner in ALL these things!

[Who is Melchizedek?]. I would like to speculate about this question. Who is Melchizedek? The point of saying he is a man without genealogy means that he is certainly a mystery. All we know about him is from four verses. The main fact is that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham. But I would like to indulge you a bit and ask the question again: who is Melchizedek? In him, we have prophet, priest, king. He is the king of righteousness. He is the king of peace. He is without beginning of days and without end of life. Scripture testifies that he is still living. And he can be compared to the Son of God. There is only one other Person who fits all those descriptions. So... who is Melchizedek indeed?!?!]

### **7:11-24 Melchizedek is greater than the priests of the Law**

Perfection. (1) Most translations say “perfection” here. However, this is not the normal Greek word for perfection/completion. The root of this word means to be puffed up. Of the two times it is used in the New Testament (the other being Luke 1:45), it is connected to the fulfillment of a prophecy. I think the best translations of this word are verification or validation. (2) Translating this word as verification or validation better fits the point of this verse. The author is saying that if the Levitical priesthood brought fulfillment (verification/validation), then why would there be any need for another priesthood, such as Melchizedek’s priesthood. Of course, the author is implying that the priesthood that brings fulfillment (verification/validation) comes through Melchizedek’s priesthood. Melchizedek’s priesthood is a fulfillment and verification and validation of what a priesthood is supposed to be.

Another priest to appear. As the author described Melchizedek in the first 10 verses, it showed that Melchizedek’s priesthood is separate from Aaron’s priesthood. In verse 17, the author uses Psalm 110:4 to show that the Messiah would be from Melchizedek’s priesthood. Therefore, the Messiah would not be just another priest, but He would also be from another priesthood. The point is this: why would God establish the Melchizedekian priesthood and prophecy that the Messiah would come from it, when God also established the Aaronic priesthood at the time of Moses? The author is saying that this was part of God’s design and purpose. God knew that one priesthood would be replaced by the other. Now, if you were a Jew, you might believe that the Aaronic priesthood had already replaced the Melchizedekian priesthood. After all, the Aaronic priesthood came later. However, the author is saying that it is exactly the other way around. God designed that the Melchizedek’s priesthood would replace the Aaronic priesthood because Melchizedek came first, and that Melchizedek’s priesthood never ended and is a forever priesthood because of Melchizedek’s indestructible life. But Aaron’s priesthood would end because death kept claiming high priest after high priest. This is why the author keeps going back to Psalm 110:4. That prophecy from King David proves two very significant things. First, it proves that Melchizedek’s priesthood never ended. Second, it proves that the Messiah would come from the order of Melchizedek. Therefore, it was God’s design that Melchizedek’s priesthood would replace the Aaronic priesthood!

Order of Aaron. Notice the two ways that the old priesthood is described: Levitical and in the order of Aaron. Of course, all priests were Levites but not all Levites were priests. Remember that only the sons of Aaron could be priests. So the old priesthood was not in the order of Levi but in the order of Aaron. Yet, the rest of the Levites assisted the priests in priestly duties, such as taking care of the objects of the tabernacle. Therefore, it is still accurate (but not as precise) to call it the Levitical priesthood.

Change in law. (1) Verse 12 implies that a priesthood and a law were directly connected. If one was established, the other was established with it. If one ended, the other ended with it. The partnership of the priesthood and the law would rise and fall together. In this case, it was the Aaronic priesthood and the Mosaic Law that were established—and now replaced—together. (2) Both the Old Testament priesthood and Law were replaced by the New Testament priesthood and law. Christ’s priesthood is in the order of Melchizedek. Christ’s law is His own. Paul calls it the Spirit’s law of life in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:2) and the law of Christ (Gal 6:2). And so, the priesthood of Melchizedek (of which Christ is high priest) and the law of Christ are directly connected. Christ brought both a new priesthood and new law when He lived and taught on earth. No wonder Matthew records the Sermon on the Mount early in his gospel, showing how many times Jesus quoted from the Old Law and taught something very new. For example, recall the times Jesus said, “You have heard it said, but I tell you.”

Belonged to a different tribe. If a Jew was reading Hebrews, they might already be scoffing at the idea that Jesus is a priest. They might say, “Do you believe Jesus is a priest? But Jesus isn’t even from the family line of Aaron. There is no way Jesus could be a priest!” The author knows that the Jews



would make this objection. After all, it is very true that Jesus is not from Levi nor Aaron. Starting in verse 13, the author is going to explain how Jesus, who is from the tribe of Judah, can still be a priest. Of course, the answer is that the Aaronic priesthood had to be removed. Actually, it was replaced. As we will see, the Messiah (who is Jesus) brought a change in the priesthood and a change in the law. And if those were replaced, then there is (and should be) a change in tribe.

No one from it has served at the altar. (1) Why did no one from Judah serve at the altar? The author says this is because “Moses said nothing about that tribe concerning priests.” This is both truth and not true. I will explain. It is true that Moses did not single out Judah, telling that tribe that it could not become priest. However, Moses did generally address ALL other tribes, explicitly telling all of them that they could not be priests and that Levi and the sons of Aaron are the only ones who are able to serve at the altar in priestly duties. In other words, Hebrews is not making an argument from silence. Moses explicitly reserved the role of priests to only Levi and Aaron. See Num 8:13-19. In fact, Moses gave a strict penalty to any other tribe or person who tried to be a priest if they were not from Levi or Aaron. They were to be put to death. See Num 3:9-12, 3:38. (2) Now, there was one king who believed that he could serve as priest. Uzziah of 2Chr 26 (also called Azariah in 2King 15) was a good king. The Lord helped him with many victories over the Philistines. But then, we have this story in 2Chr 26:16-21. Uzziah stands as an example of exactly what Hebrews and Moses commanded for the Levites and sons of Aaron. (3) All this is proof that the Jews are very correct: priests cannot come from any tribe except for Levi. However, the whole point is the author is trying to show is that this true only for Aaron’s priesthood, because that is when Moses gave the Law, explicitly restricting the priesthood to Levi. However, Jesus is a priest through Melchizedek, which was established when there was no such thing as a tribe of Israel.

Our Lord. The author, being a Christian, identifies Jesus as Lord and Messiah. Jesus is the fulfillment of all the prophecies and is indeed the Christ. Because the author believes that Jesus is the Christ and that the Christ is our high priest, it is in these verses that the author shows HOW Jesus can be a priest. The answer is that Jesus’ priesthood is Melchizedek’s priesthood. So, the story about Melchizedek in Genesis 14 and the prophecy about Melchizedek in Psalm 110 are the Old Testament proofs that Jesus can be both from the tribe of Judah and a priest. After all, if Jesus’ priesthood came through Melchizedek and Melchizedek lived before there even was tribes, then there is no requirement that Jesus had to come from Levi. In fact, look at Melchizedek, he was priest at Jerusalem, the city of the kings. Jesus, being a descendant of David (the great king) and in the tribe of Judah (the tribe of kings), then Jesus’ connection to Melchizedek is stronger than we thought. In other words, Jesus, being kingly like Melchizedek was, Jesus is also priestly like Melchizedek was. Melchizedek was both king and priest. Jesus is also both king and priest. Jesus’ connection to Melchizedek is very strong! Because Melchizedek was the king of Jerusalem, that would make Judah as the most likely tribe for the Messiah to come from!

Legal command but indestructible life. This is the best verse that shows all the differences between the priesthood of Aaron and the priesthood of Melchizedek. The author has been implying and explaining how different those priesthoods are and how superior Melchizedek’s priesthood is. In verse 16, this is the best explanation to a Jew how completely different and how incredibly superior Melchizedek’s priesthood is. If someone says that the Messiah-Priest must come from Levi, then they are looking at the wrong standard. Instead of looking to Aaron and Law, they should be looking at the superior standard: a standard of power and indestructibility. The former standard is focused upon (literally) “a law of a fleshly commandment.” The later standard is focused upon (literally) “a power of a permanent life.” As Jesus might have said to them, “Stop judging according to outward appearances; rather judge according to righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

Order of Melchizedek. (1) This is from Psalm 110:4. It is a psalm by King David. For David to refer to a prophesy about Melchizedek is very significant. In fact, if the author is trying to build a big court case on how and why Melchizedek is greater than Aaron, then King David is the star witness. Even David, who was a prophet in his psalms, showed that Melchizedek is greater and that the Messiah would be a priest in the Melchizedek’s priesthood. Therefore, there is no reason why the Jews should have ever expected that the Messiah come from the family of Aaron. David was a kingly witness from the tribe of Judah. (2) Although the author doesn’t reference many things in the gospels, there is also a priestly witness from the sons of Aaron. Yes, there is a priest from the tribe of Aaron who also is a witness that Jesus is the Messiah—even though Jesus is from the tribe of Judah. This other star witness is John the Baptist. Both John’s father, Zechariah, and John’s mother, Elizabeth, are from

the family of Aaron. Therefore, John the Baptist, who was both Levite and a son of Aaron, is the priest and prophet and witness in proclaiming that Jesus is the Messiah! Surrounding the events of Zechariah in the temple and of John as prophet, I can see how the Jews really thought that John might be the Messiah. He was a prophet like in the days of old. Functionally, John was a priest in the family of Aaron. But what did John tell the people? John 1:19-27. (3) For more information about Psalm 110, see notes at 1:14 "Sit at My right hand."

Annulled. (1) This is a good translation. Other good translations included cancelled, nullified, neutralized.

(2) This word is used one other time in the New Testament, Heb 9:24-28. Verse 26 says that Jesus' sacrifice has annulled sin. Just as Jesus' sacrifice is able to cancel, nullify, and neutralize sin, this is the same thing that Jesus' priesthood has done to Aaron's priesthood. Jesus has annulled Aaron's priesthood by replacing it with something far superior.

Law perfected nothing. This is the same word found in Heb 7:11. It does not mean perfect or complete. It is more accurately translated as fulfillment or verification or validation. In this phrase, the author means that the Law fulfilled nothing, validated nothing, verified nothing. In fact, it is the other way around... Instead of the Law fulfilling something, Jesus the Messiah has fulfilled the Law!

Without an oath. When God gave the Law through Moses, God didn't swear an oath. As Christians, we know that when God established the Law, God designed the Law to be temporary (read Galatians 3). God knew that the Law and the Aaronic priesthood would be temporary, that is why God did not swear with an oath when He gave the Law to Moses and established Aaron's sons as priests. In short, God established the Law and the Levite priesthood without an oath. However, when God was with Abraham, God did swear an oath to him. As King David noticed in Psalm 110:4, God swore an oath to Abraham, saying that the Messiah would be a priest forever. God established the promise to Abraham and the priesthood of Melchizedek with an oath. God had designed the promise to Abraham and the priesthood of Melchizedek to be permanent!

Guarantee of a better covenant. While God gave a promise to Abraham and we can stand on that promise, it is still only a thing: a promise. While God gave a priesthood to Melchizedek and we can stand on that priesthood, it is still only a thing: a priesthood. But the evidence and proof of those two things is not another thing. No, the evidence and proof of those two things is a Person! Jesus Himself is the fulfillment and granter of the promise given to Abraham. Jesus Himself is a High Priest in the order of Melchizedek. Today, we stand and put our hope in a Person: Jesus, who is the apostle and high priest of our confession (Heb 3:10)! Abraham lived before the fulfillment of the promise given to him. We live after the fulfillment of that promise, and it turns out that the fulfillment has a face: the person: Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus is the guarantee of a greater covenant. The covenant is no longer a plan; it is a Man. The covenant is no longer a system of laws; it is the Lawgiver. The covenant is no longer based on a future hope; it is an Anchor for our lives and enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain (Heb 6:19).

He remains forever. Yes, Jesus did die. But He was only dead for three days. Jesus has been raised to life—never to die again. This is why Jesus remains forever! Even at this very moment, Jesus still remains our High Priest. How many priests of Aaron have remained?? At the time Hebrews was written, it was the death of each high priest that proved no priest of Aaron can be the Messiah. Later, by the close of the first century, not only have the priests of Aaron died, we see that Aaron no longer has any active priests. That is, without tabernacle, temple, or any active priesthood today, there really is not a single person in the office of Aaron's priesthood. However, Jesus remains forever and He holds the priesthood permanently! The Jews have no one to turn to in order to help them with their sins. Christians have Jesus, who always lives and who is always interceding for them. While Jews long for the Aaronic priesthood to return somehow, Christians are enjoying the active and powerful priesthood we have with Jesus Christ. He is our forever High Priest.

### **7:25-28 Jesus is the perfect High Priest**

Always able to save. Unlike the priesthood of Aaron, in which every high priest died and in which the entire priesthood was removed from service (in 70 AD at the destruction of the temple), Jesus' priesthood is eternal. While Melchizedek's indestructible life is shrouded with mystery, being without genealogy or record of his death, we know exactly how Jesus has an indestructible life. It is not a mystery, it is revealed with the PROOF of Jesus resurrection. Jesus has risen from death into eternal life. Therefore, Jesus is and will be high priest eternally! This is why Jesus is always able to save. Do you need salvation? Do you need someone to mediate and forgive your sins? Then show

yourself to the High Priest, who is Jesus. He will ALWAYS be able to save you and atone for every one of your sins. 1John 1:7.

Always lives to intercede. Not only does Jesus save us by atoning for our sins, Jesus is always listening to our prayers. Just as Aaron's priesthood was able to help people with their sins, which was usually done with burnt offerings, Aaron's priesthood was also able to help people with their free-will offerings to God, which was usually done with grain offerings. In the same way, Jesus atones for our sins and saves us by the offering of Himself. But Jesus also serves in the other function: helping people with their free-will offerings, which includes our prayers and our worship. Every time we pray to Jesus, He hears us and is always and eternally living to intercede for our prayers! Being the perfect high priest because He experienced life as a human as we do, Jesus can empathize and intercede for us so much more greatly than anyone else. Rom 8:31-34, 1Tim 2:5, 1John 2:1.

Holy... exalted. These descriptions in verse 26 cannot completely describe an Aaronic priest. Were Aaronic priests holy? Yes, the priests of Aaron were made holy through the rituals of the Law. Were they innocent? No, not even the high priest because he had to atone for his own sins too. Undeclared? Yes, again because of the rituals of the Law. Separate from sinners? No. Exalted above the heavens? Absolutely not! But now, look at all the reasons why Jesus is the greater high priest. Jesus is holy. Jesus is innocent. Jesus is undeclared. Jesus is separate from sinners. Jesus is exalted above the heavens. And I will add another: Jesus is deity!

Once for all. The Jewish high priests had to offer sins for themselves before they could atone for the sins of the people. However, Jesus never ever sinned. Because Jesus was already perfect and innocent, not only could Jesus make actual atonement for all sin, because Jesus was innocent and greater, Jesus only had to do this once. So, how many atonements did it take for the Jewish high priests to make atonement for sins? The answer is yearly. How many atonements did it take for Jesus the High Priest to make atonement for every sin that has ever been created throughout all of time? Once! Jesus' high priestly sacrifice was so powerful, Jesus only had to do it once. Wow! Talk about a greater atonement!!

He offered Himself. Jesus is the guarantee of a greater covenant. Our evidence and proof is a PERSON. In the same way, our sacrifice is a PERSON. While the Jewish high priests offered things to God on the altar, Jesus proved that His priesthood was greater by not offering things but offering a Person. And there was no one else worthy to die for sin than the perfect, innocent, holy, undeclared, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens... high priest of God. While the Jewish high priests sacrificed lambs, Jesus became the Lamb. Even Jesus' sacrifice as High Priest was greater than the Jewish sacrifices. They offered lambs, Jesus offered Himself.

Promise of the oath. This is a very poor translation. The Greek word for promise is actually "word" (logos). See, this "word of the oath" that came after the Law can only be one thing: Jesus Himself. After all, Jesus is the fulfillment and verification and validation of the Law. So by saying "word of the oath," the author is referring to Jesus Himself. Just as John calls Jesus the Word in John chapter 1, Jesus is the Word of the oath! This Word of the oath is the Son!

Perfected forever. For the third time, this is not a good translation. This is the same word used twice before. The idea here is that the Son has been fulfilled / verified / validated forever.

### **8:1-6 Jesus serves as High Priest in heaven**

Sat down at the right hand. According to Heb 1:3, Jesus did this after making purification for sins. I understand that this happened with Jesus death (or His ascension) and when He entered the holy of holies in heaven (Heb 6:19).

True tabernacle. There is a tabernacle in heaven and it is the true tabernacle. Why? Because it was built by God Himself. Contrast this with the earthly tabernacle. Mankind built the Mosaic and earthly tabernacle (and temple) on earth. With the earthly tabernacle, yes, God designed it and commanded that it be built exactly as He said. But even though the earthly tabernacle was God-designed, it was only a precursor (foreshadow) to the true tabernacle that God built in heaven. About the Mosaic tabernacle (and the Mosaic Law) being temporary or a precursor or a foreshadow, Paul talked about this in Gal 3:24 and in the surrounding context. The point here is that this is another reason why Jesus' ministry is greater: Jesus' tabernacle is not on earth but is in the heavens. Jesus' tabernacle is so great, mankind is not able to build it. Instead, God Himself has built it.

Something to offer. (1) In this context, the author doesn't explicitly mention what Jesus offered as high priest. But for any Christian, what Jesus offered is very obvious: Jesus offered Himself. Being the

Second Adam, being Deity, being Human, being sinlessly perfect, and being the Christ, Jesus is so great that He can be both the High Priest and the offering. And that's what Jesus did. Jesus offered Himself. Gal 1:3-5, Gal 2:19b-20, Eph 5:2, Eph 5:25, 1Tim 2:5-6, Tit, 2:14, Heb 7:27, Heb 9:13-14, Heb 9:25. (2) Jesus gave the greatest gift possible: Himself. Now, over and over Jesus tells us to follow Him. When it comes to offering yourself as a sacrifice, this is also something that we as Jesus followers are supposed to do. Jesus offered Himself, leaving us an example of to follow. In the same way, every Christ follower is expected to bear their cross every day and be a living sacrifice every day. When we look at Jesus' sacrifice and see how great it is, we may think that we are not great enough to match Jesus' sacrifice. And that is very true!!! However, if we are to follow Jesus, then we are to follow His example of sacrifice also. Think of it this way. Jesus is High Priest and sacrificed Himself once for all because of the sins of the world. Each of us is a priest under Jesus, and we are to sacrifice ourselves every day because we want to be just like Jesus. And again, Jesus has called us to this level of sacrifice and expects us to follow Him. So let us follow Jesus: picking up our cross, carrying our cross every day, and being a living sacrifice because we are Jesus' priests. In short, just as Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice on the cross, we are to offer ourselves as living sacrifices bearing our crosses every day.

If He were on the earth. That is, if Jesus was serving on earth right now. Jesus wouldn't be able to serve because—at the time Hebrews was written—there was already a priesthood serving. If Aaron's priesthood and Jesus' priesthood were serving at the same time and in the same place, they would be in competition with each other. That is not God's design. Therefore, Jesus does not serve as high priest on the earth. His priesthood is far greater. Jesus serves as high priest in a greater place (heaven), in a greater tabernacle (the one built by God), and in for a greater length of time (eternally).

Copy and shadow. It was God's design, plan, and purpose to establish Aaron's priesthood. This priesthood was indeed from God, but it was built and serviced by mankind. At the same time, God had also designed, planned, and purposed that the earthly priesthood be replaced by the heavenly priesthood. After all, God established the heavenly priesthood in the beginning with Melchizedek. The whole purpose to Aaron's priesthood was to point to the greater priesthood of Jesus. Therefore, Aaron's priesthood is only an earthly copy of the priesthood that God already established with Melchizedek and established in heaven. Think of it this way... Aaron's priesthood was designed by God but built and serviced by humans. Jesus' priesthood is designed, built, and serviced by God.

According to the pattern. If you were a Jew, you would understand that the priesthood and the tabernacle were supposed to be patterned after what was written in the Law of Moses. And yes, that is very true. But I believe the author is telling us that the pattern that God gave to Moses in the Law was already patterned after the Melchizedek priesthood that already existed in heaven. That is, the priesthood of Aaron was not something completely new. Instead, Aaron's priesthood was a copy of the pattern that already existed in Melchizedek's priesthood. It's not that Melchizedek's priesthood is patterned after Aaron's priesthood. It is the other way around. When God gave Moses the pattern for Aaron's priesthood, God was using the pattern that had already been established in heaven through Melchizedek. In other words, Aaron's priesthood was based on Melchizedek's priesthood all along.

Obtained a superior ministry. (1) When did Jesus become High Priest in the order of Melchizedek? It is very hard to know when Jesus became high priest. What we know for certain is that Jesus did become high priest at some point. We know it happened sometime between Jesus' birth and Jesus' death. (1a) We know Jesus became high priest after His birth because of Heb 2:17. Jesus needed to be human in order to be high priest. It is possible that Jesus became high priest at His birth. (1b) In the Law, high priests were anointed. The time that Jesus was anointed was at His baptism. His baptism was the beginning of His ministry as Christ. Perhaps Jesus became high priest at His baptism. (1c) We know Jesus began SERVING as high priest around His death or ascension. As Heb 8:4 says, Jesus could not have served as high priest on earth. Heb 6:19 says that Jesus served in the heavens when He entered the holy of holies in the heavenly tabernacle. Even though Jesus started serving as high priest after His death/ascension, He could have been given the TITLE of high priest while He was on earth. Of course, this whole question of when did Jesus obtain the title of high priest is of no consequence. What matters most is when Jesus began serving as high priest. As Heb 6:19 says, Jesus began serving in heaven by offering Himself. (2) We may not know exactly when Jesus obtained Melchizedek's priesthood, but we no beyond any doubt that He has obtained it! Verse 6 is the whole point to this section about Melchizedek verses Aaron. And I believe verse 6 is actually the whole point of the entire book of Hebrews.

### **8:7-13 Even God said the new covenant would be greater**

Faultless. This is a good translation of this word. It should be pointed out that this word doesn't mean "having fault" as much as it means "finding fault." That is, it wasn't that the Mosaic Law was inherently less than perfect, it was that Mosaic Law can be blamed as less than perfect. The opposite of this word is used in the next verse.

Finding fault. Either God or people could blame the Law for being less than perfect. In the same way, mankind can be blamed for being less than perfect also. After all, the Mosaic Law could not truly justify mankind.

[Jer 31:31-34]. This is a quotation from Jer 31:31-34. The context of this passage is in a very hopeful section of Jeremiah. In the first half of chapter 31, God talks about, despite the upcoming captivity, He will turn Israel's mourning into joy. In chapter 32, God instructs Jeremiah to purchase land in Israel and save the deed. This was a sign (a promise) that the land would one day be restored to the Israel, even down to each deed owned by the families.

I will make a new covenant. The reason the author includes this quote from Jeremiah is to show two things. First, even in Jeremiah's day, the Mosaic Law could not truly forgive sins. Notice Heb 8:12. This quotation ends with a reference to sins being truly forgiven during the new covenant, implying that God wasn't truly doing this in the old covenant. Instead, God was passing over sins until Jesus' sacrifice (Rom 3:25). Second, God Himself is promising Israel that, sometime after their return from captivity, God will introduce a new covenant. So even the prophet Jeremiah is a witness that a new covenant would come, and the new covenant will be much different than the old one. As the author is trying to say, the new covenant would replace the old one.

Not like the covenant. Which ancestors? The ancestors of Israel and Judah, that is, the Mosaic Law. Through Jeremiah, God Himself prophesied that the new covenant will be very different. Historically, when the Jews returned from exile and restored their kingdom from the Greeks (the time of Judas Maccabees), I wonder if some Jews believed that the new covenant had arrived. But because of this prophecy from Jeremiah, most Jews knew that, though their nation had been restored, they were not yet living in the new covenant, because they still had the Law of Moses. Therefore, they knew that the Messiah would still come, because again, this prophecy shows that the new covenant will be very different from the Mosaic one.

I disregarded them. (1) The last part of Heb 8:9 is different in the Hebrew Masoretic and the Greek Septuagint. As we have seen throughout Hebrews, the author is using the Septuagint as his Old Testament. The Septuagint (Jer 38:33) reads, "For they did not abide in my covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord." That reading agrees with how Hebrews reads. The Masoretic (Jer 31:32) reads, "My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband unto them, says Yahweh." (2) One might ask when did the Lord disregard Israel? I believe it happened while Jeremiah was preaching and making this prophecy. God was finally allowing a foreign power to come in and remove the Israelites from the Promised Land. It was through the Babylonian exile that God disregarded them. Why? Because they did not keep the Mosaic covenant!

Write them on their hearts. In the Mosaic covenant, the priests were the keepers of the Law. They were the ones who were supposed to study and know the Law inside and out. All 600+ commandments. This could be seen in the attitude of some Pharisees, who loved to be keepers of the Law, John 7:45-47. The point of this passage about where the laws would be under the new covenant is one GIANT way the new covenant would be different. Under Moses, the laws were first written on tablets of stone. The new covenant would NOT be like that. It would be very different from the very start. As Christians, we look back and see how God did it. God brought the law through Jesus Christ. No longer was the law something written down to be studied. Under the new covenant, the law was a Person, the Son of God. John 1:17, "The Law was given through Moses. Grace and Truth came through Jesus Christ." Not only did Jesus embody the new law, He brought more than just law; Jesus brought grace and truth, which are greater than a set of laws!

They will be My people. This is the same kind of promise of relationship that God gave the Israelites from the time of Moses forward. God is prophesying that this new covenant will turn people into God's people, just as the first covenant was designed to do. The new covenant would also grant relationship with God just as the first covenant did.

Each person will not teach. (1) Do not get the idea that this verse is saying that Christians are not supposed to teach others about knowing the Lord. Christians are most certainly supposed to teach

each other about the Lord! The point here is that, under this new covenant, people will not need to go through a human mediator anymore. That is, they will no longer have to go through a priest to know who the Lord is. While it is still a good thing to say, "Let me ask my preacher," this is no longer required. Instead, under this new covenant, each person will know God! No matter how great or small a person is, they can directly and intimately know the Lord. No matter how wise or uneducated a person is, they can directly and intimately know the Lord. No matter how rich or poor a person is, they can directly and intimately know the Lord. No matter how old or young a person is, they can directly and intimately know the Lord. "Because they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest of them." (2) How is this possible for someone to know the Lord without a human mediator?

Theologically, we don't need earthly mediators because we already have Jesus Christ as our High Priest and Mediator. We look to Him to know the Lord! [John 14:7-11](#). One might ask, if knowing the Lord is done by knowing Jesus, how do we know Jesus and how do we access Jesus as our Mediator? There are a few ways. First, there is the Bible. When a person has a Bible in their hand or on their phone, and they want to know the Lord, then they are no longer with excuse. Would you like to know the best place to get to know the Lord? Read and understand and digest and meditate on the four Gospels! But what if a person is illiterate or does not have a Bible? Second, there are the sermons and Bible classes at church. One can learn all about Jesus without the Bible. Even in the Middle Ages when the Catholic Church was against God's will by keeping the Bible out of the hands of Christians, the Christians who lived during those centuries still had sermons. Although sermons are a second-hand way to learn about Jesus, they are still a valid way to know the Lord. Lastly, what about the times when churches were keeping the Bible out of the hands of Christians AND not preaching Jesus? In those times and places, the church was acting like the Pharisees did in Jesus' day, and God will harshly judge them for "locking up the Kingdom of heaven from people. For they don't go in, and they don't allow those entering to go in" ([Matt 23:13](#)).

Know the Lord. For me personally, this is one of my favorite verses in the Scriptures. I love the idea that I can know the Lord and, as long as I have the faithfulness and drive to know Him, I don't need to depend on an earthly person to be my mediator. I can lean on other wise people to help me know the Lord. I can share what I know that could help others know the Lord. But in the end, knowing the Lord is my responsibility, my pleasure, and my passion. Is knowing the Lord more and more something that you find worth pursuing?

Fellow citizen. There are differences between New Testament manuscripts on this word. Some of the older manuscripts say "townsman." Many of the new manuscripts say "neighbor." I believe neighbor is correct because both the Masoretic and Septuagint say "neighbor."

Merciful to their wrongdoing. The first phrase in [Heb 8:12](#) is different in the Masoretic and the Septuagint. Once again, the author follows the Septuagint ([Jer 38:34](#)), "I will be merciful to their iniquities." The Masoretic ([Jer 31:34](#)) reads, "I will forgive their iniquity." Wow, one would think that the Masoretic's use of "forgive" would be a stronger word to help prove the author's point. After all, the author's point is that true forgiveness could not have come through the Old Law but only through the New. Yet, the author is consistent in sticking with the Septuagint, which says "merciful." This might be evidence that the author's only language was Greek.

Lawless deeds. At the end of verse 12, there are differences between New Testament manuscripts. Many of the newer manuscripts add "and lawless deeds" or "and lawlessness." Some of the older manuscripts do not have this phrase. I believe the phrase does not belong because this phrase does not appear in either the Masoretic nor Septuagint.

Declared the first is old. (1) We divide our Bibles into two sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. I always wondered if those names were Biblical. As we read through Hebrews, I believe they are. After all, a covenant and a testament are the same thing. So here, the author is saying that the Mosaic Law/Covenant is the Old Testament. (2) However, "old" is not an accurate translation here. The Greek word means "to declare obsolete." It is not that the Mosaic covenant is merely old. The Mosaic covenant is being declared obsolete. God is saying that the Mosaic covenant has worn out. Therefore, a more accurate name for the Old Testament would be the Obsolete Testament.

Old and aging is about to disappear. (1) Look at the two adjectives that appear here. "Old" is the same as earlier in this verse: obsolete or worn out. The second adjective means senile, that is, deterioration with age. To be senile means it has grown weakness and has lost a lot of its ability. (2) There are a lot of unpleasant adjectives that the author is using to describe the old covenant. It's old, obsolete, and worn out. It is aging, senile, and has grown weak. Because of all of that (and with it

being replaced by the new covenant), the old covenant is about to disappear. (3) Since it appears that the book of Hebrews was written before 70 AD, we can look back and see that verse 13 is a solid prophecy. We see with the destruction of Jerusalem that it ended the temple, the sacrifices, the duties of the priest, and even the services of the Aaronic priesthood. Here we are, nearly 2000 years later, we see how the old covenant has still disappeared!

### **9:1-10 Descriptions of the first covenant's earthly regulations**

Also had regulations. Regulation is not a good translation. The root word is justification. This word should be translated acts of justification. The ministries that are performed in both covenants are acts that lead to justification. All the things listed in verses 1-7 which were performed by Aaron's priesthood was designed to be things that lead to people's justification. The objects in the tabernacle and the duties of the priests were ultimately for the people. As we see in verse 7, the most significant event (act of justification) was the Day of Atonement, performed by the high priest when he entered the most holy place.

Earthly sanctuary. The author purposely reminds the readers that the tabernacle is on the earth. We have already seen the contrast between the earthly tabernacle (old covenant) and the heavenly tabernacle (new covenant). See Heb 8:1-4. In Heb 9:11, the new tabernacle is again said to be not made with hands. 9:11 also says it is "not of this creation."

Holy place. (1) The holy place was inside the tabernacle. Only the priests were allowed in this area. This is where Uzziah (2Chr 26) was when the Lord cursed him with a disease. (2) As you see the list of items in verse 2 that were located in the holy place, you may notice that one thing is missing: the altar of incense. This will be addressed soon, so keep reading.

Most holy place. (1) This is the inner most room. The only thing in this room was the ark of the covenant. It is amazing that the ark has been lost since the time of the Philistines and before the exile to Babylon. Therefore, when the temple is completed after the captivity during the time of Zerubbabel, the priests resumed their service at the temple. (2) However, when the high priest would go into the most holy place to sprinkle blood on the ark (mercy seat), there was no ark! From the time of Zerubbabel to the time of Jesus, the high priests were entering an empty most holy place. Even Josephus said that inside the most holy place "there was nothing whatever" (Josephus Hebrews 9.5.5). Without the ark (mercy seat), I wonder where the high priest would sprinkle the blood. Unlike the room called the holy place, the most holy place was entered by the high priest only. And when he did, he only entered it once a year (Heb 9:7).

Gold altar of incense. In verse 4, it says that the altar of incense is located in the most holy place. For those who know their tabernacle (like the author of Hebrews should), they would know that the altar of incense was not in the most holy place. To get something like this wrong, does this mean that the author of Hebrews is not a credible source when it comes to the old covenant? No. I do not believe the author is wrong. There are two ideas that could be going on here. First (and what I believe is weaker), on the Day of Atonement when the high priest would open the curtain, then the ark and the altar of incense would be so close to each other, only 5 meters. In a way, on the Day of Atonement, the altar of incense was in the most holy place. Second (and what I believe is better), the word used here is not the Greek word for altar. Instead, it is the Greek word for censer. Therefore, this word should not be translated as "altar of incense" but "censer." As we have seen so many times, the author is using the Septuagint. When we look up this Greek word in the Septuagint, it is not found in the Pentateuch at all. The Greek word is found in 2Chr 26:19 (what Uzziah was holding when he was trying to offer in the holy place) and Ezk 8:11. In both of those places, the word MUST be translated as "censer." A censer was like a plate that held incense or other things. In this case, the golden censer was the only other object (besides the ark) that was allowed in the most holy place. The high priest would carry the blood on the censer to be sprinkled on the ark (mercy seat). (I have not looked into this, but Mishnah Yoma 4:4 speaks about when a gold censer was used inside the most holy place. But I think it says that the high priest used it to carry coals. Again, I did not research this point very deeply.) Is it correct to translate this word as censer instead of altar of incense? Other translations thought so, such as the Latin Vulgate, the Aramaic Peshitta, as well as the Arabic and Ethiopian versions. And if you use the KJV, you will already see it translated as "censer," which is pretty amazing because the KJV does not use the Septuagint for its Old Testament.

Ark of the covenant. It is interesting that the author goes into detail about which objects were kept in the ark. I imagine they were placed in there never to be removed. There was a jar of manna (Ex 16:33),

Aaron's staff that budded (Num 17:6-10), and the tablets of the covenant (Deut 10:2-5). Wow, what unbelievably special items!!!

Not possible to speak in detail. It is not the author's intention to go into detail about the tabernacle. It is the author's intention to compare these earthly acts of justifications with the heavenly acts of justification in verse 11 and following.

Most holy place had not yet been disclosed. This phrase is given as a jab at the old covenant. You see, under the old covenant, only the high priest was allowed to enter the most holy place. Under the new covenant, Christians were teaching that everyone can enter the most holy place through Jesus, the new High Priest. The author is pointing out that, as a Christian, you can enter the most holy place of heaven. As a Jew, you couldn't even enter the most holy place on earth. Jesus Christ is the One who opened up the way into the most holy place! Can you see the author's point? Why would anyone want to return to the old covenant, where only one person can enter the most holy place... when in the new covenant, through one Christ, every Christian now has access to the most holy place!? If Christians wanted to revert back to Judaism, then they would be returning to a covenant where the way into the most holy place was still restricted to them.

This is a symbol. All of the things mentioned from verse 1-8 is a symbol. Everything dealing with the earthly tabernacle is just a symbol for what the present covenant through Jesus Christ. By reverting back to Judaism, one would be replacing the REAL and GREATER thing to go back to something that was just a symbol and a copy.

Cannot perfect the worshiper's conscience. Do you remember when the word "perfect" was used in Heb 7:11 and 7:19? That was not the word for perfect but a different word that was more connected to the fulfillment of prophecy. Back in chapter 7, the point was that the Law fulfilled nothing. The Law was not the fulfillment of God's design. Instead, the new covenant is. Here in Heb 9:9, the word is the Greek word for perfection (complete). All those acts of justification were designed to justify and atone for the people, but it was lacking. Through all those acts of justification, the worshiper's conscience could not be made perfect or complete. The point here is that the Law and the old covenant and the tabernacle were not able to bring perfection for mankind. However, when the true "time of restoration" came, it did bring perfection! This perfection is discussed in verses 9:11 through 10:25.

Physical regulations. (1) "Physical" is the word that the HCSB uses. Sadly, this is a bad translation. A number of translations have "for the body," which is also a bad translation. The word here is "flesh." Flesh is the best translation. Sinful nature is decent translation. This is not about the physical world. This is not about our bodies. This is about things that are carnal or worldly. These acts of justifications surrounding the tabernacle were weak and not powerful enough to perfect mankind. They merely aided with fleshly and carnal matters. As the author says, these fleshly and carnal things included things that dealt with food, drink, and washings. (2) Contrast the old covenant that dealt with carnal things with the new covenant. As we will see in the next section (9:11-15a), the new covenant deals with heavenly things that actually and powerfully purify the fleshly things.

### **9:11-15a Jesus' ministry as High Priest of heaven**

Good things have come. One of the purposes of the Law and the tabernacle was to point to (and prophesy) the coming covenant that would be greater. And that new covenant has arrived! Remember all the talk in chapter 4 about how there was a rest coming? Everything Moses gave mankind was not the fulfillment. Those things were part of the prophecy. The high priesthood of Christ is the fulfillment. AND IT IS HERE! It's not only NEW, it is GOOD!

Not of this creation. This is a good translation. By creation, this is the creation that happened at the beginning. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." As discussed in 8:1-2, Christ's tabernacle is in heaven. Its structure has no connection to creation. Christ's tabernacle is outside of and/or predates God's Creation. Creation predated Moses' tabernacle, and humans built it with their hands. That's not Jesus' tabernacle at all! Jesus' tabernacle is heavenly.

Once for all. This is an incredibly important phrase. This is a huge contrast to the high priesthood of Aaron who had to enter the most holy place every year (Heb 9:25).

His own blood. As discussed in Heb 7:27, Jesus bypasses the need for animal sacrifices. Instead, Jesus became the Lamb. The blood He brought into the most holy place was not some inferior blood of animals (which is far lower than humans). The blood He brought was His own, which was the blood of both God and Human. Think about it. Not only was Jesus' sacrifice greater than the sacrifices of the old covenant, the blood Jesus brought to the mercy seat is greater too.



Having obtained eternal redemption. In the old covenant, the priest were the gatekeepers of the people's relationship with God. While the old covenant had many acts of justification for the people, they couldn't perfect the people. However, the new covenant has greater acts of justification (including Jesus' death on the cross and Jesus currently serving as our High Priest (Heb 7:25)). Those acts of justification are powerful and effective enough to do what the old covenant couldn't: actually perfect the worshiper's conscience. In other words, the old covenant wanted to redeem people but couldn't; yet the new covenant is fully able to redeem people eternally! And that power of redemption is in the hands of Jesus the Savior.

Sanctify the flesh. In 9:13, it is saying that the acts of justification under the old covenant were designed and able to purify the flesh. After all, in verse 10, the author said that the old covenant was all about fleshly acts of justification, able to purify the flesh. However, the old covenant was lacking because it could not purify the worshiper's conscience. The people were still slaves to their sin under the old covenant.

Cleanse our consciences. In contrast, look at the new covenant. Not only does it purify the flesh but it also purifies consciences! The new covenant has done what the old covenant could not do. Think about it this way, the Jews offered the blood of animals (because they couldn't offer anything better), and through those sacrifices, they were remembering their sins year after year. But Jesus offered His own blood, something far more precious than the blood of both animals and humans. With that blood, Jesus has the power to finally cleanse the worshiper's conscience.

Dead works to serve the living God. (1) What does Jesus' blood cleanse our consciences from? From dead works. What dead works are those? They are those fleshly acts of justifications that deal with things like food, drink, and washings. Those are the dead works. But now, our consciences have been cleansed so that we no longer deal with the fleshly but the heavenly. And it is with a heavenly cleansing that Christians are able to serve a living God. (2) This is another big reason why people should not revert to Judaism. They would be exchanging a conscience that is all about serving a LIVING God for a conscience that is all about serving DEAD works. To revert is like trading life for death. (And since this whole passage has a lot to say about blood, it is also like trading the blood of Christ for the blood of animals.)

Mediator. All of this about Jesus being the High Priest of heaven is about Jesus being our Mediator. Again, in the old covenant, the people had to go to the Levitical priests in order to find mediation. They were the way people came to God. However, Jesus is the God-Man who is our High Priest in heaven. Jesus Himself is our great and only Mediator. Today and forever, Jesus is the only way people can come to God.

### **9:15b-22 The death and blood of the first covenant was animals**

Death has taken place. In verse 15b, I believe the author is being a little ambiguous on purpose. A death? Which death? Jewish readers would think this is about animal sacrifices, such as the death of the goat on the Day of Atonement. However, I believe the primary reference the author is making is about Jesus' death. The rest of chapter 9 shows the contrast between animal sacrifices and Jesus' death. The contrast is most clearly seen in verse 19 (animals) and verse 26 (Jesus).

Committed under the first covenant. (1) I believe Hebrews is saying that the death talked about was for those under the first covenant. Because I believe Hebrews will go on to say that the blood of animals couldn't truly establish the first covenant and sins were not truly forgiven under the first covenant. In this verse, I believe the death is Jesus' death, which does give redemption for sins committed under both covenants, even the first covenant. In short, Jesus' sacrifice is the blood sacrifice that truly forgave sins under the first covenant. (2) I believe Paul says the same thing in [Rom 3:25-26](#).

Where a will exists. Verses 16-17 depart from the topic at hand. They speak about how a will works. The point is that the first covenant, the new covenant, and a will all have something in common. They are all contracts. Hebrews is showing the analogy between how a will works and how each of the two covenants work. The point is that all three covenants are established by death (and blood). We are to think of the two covenants being established like how a will is established. (2a) After looking at verse 16 in the Greek, here is the verse in my own words. "For a will to be a will or to have any effect, it is constrained until the death of the person who made it." (2b) Here is verse 17 in my own words. "Upon death, a will is stable/firm, since it never had power while the person who made it was living."

Inaugurated with blood. Who's blood? Considering the analogy of a will, the blood of the one who made it (v16). In the case of the first covenant, the one who made it was God, but God did not shed His blood. Instead, God used the blood of animals to establish the first covenant. Is the author saying that the first covenant was a covenant put into force by animals? I think so (see verse 19).

Therefore, the first covenant was put into force by the death and blood of animals, NOT by the person who made it! In contrast, the new covenant WAS put into force by the death and blood of the Person who made it; a Person who was both human and deity (see verse 26)! Therefore, the new covenant was actually established by the death and blood of the one who made the covenant.

Blood of calves and goats. (1) Hebrews is explicitly pointing out who's blood was used in the OT.

Perhaps the reason why the animal sacrifices had to be made over and over and over was because animals were not the person who made the will. Animals never EVER had any power to put the first covenant into effect. After all, the animals were experiencing death—not the death of the person who made the covenant. (2) Is this to say that the first covenant was never established at all?? No. It was established and established with blood. But it was established by something weaker, lesser, and inferior to what it should have been established with (which would have been the blood of the one who made it). The old covenant was a legit covenant established by God, but the first covenant was lacking in many ways (as we have discussed through the letter of Hebrews), including in how it was lacking in how it was established.

Water, scarlet wool, hyssop. (1) These things were not mentioned when Moses sprinkled the people.

But it appears that the author is using these the same way when he/she mentions the censer in 9:4.

Just as the censer aided the high priest when he entered the most holy place, these three things aided in the animal sacrifices. They are mentioned other places in the Law and were additives to the animal sacrifices (Ex 12:22, Num 19:6, Lev 14:4-6). (2) I'm curious if scarlet wool was designed by God to be the perfect image of sin and forgiveness. Isaiah 1:18 says, "The Lord says: Come, let us discuss this. Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow. Though they are as red as crimson, they will be like wool." The red scarlet is a symbol of sin. The white wool is a symbol of forgiveness. So perhaps the scarlet wool is a symbol of the forgiveness of sins.

Almost everything is purified with blood. There were two ways people found purification under the Law.

First was with blood, which dealt with sins. Second was the cleanliness laws that dealt with physical uncleanness.

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Under the Law, this idea refers to the Day of Atonement. That was the big day when forgiveness was given to the community of Israel. It involved an animal sacrifice, the high priest taking blood into the most holy place, and atonement for the people. Under the new covenant, this idea refers to Christ's sacrifice, which the author will explain very well in the next section. (2) When looking at the root words of "shedding" and "forgiveness," Hebrews could be using a play on words. The root words for shedding and forgiveness both carry the idea of something going forth. Hebrews could be saying, "Without the pouring forth of blood, there is no sending forth of sins." Here is an image of what I'm thinking about. An animal was killed and its blood gushed out, symbolizing the forgiveness that is given to a person as sins "gush" out of them. With Jesus, His blood gushed out so that ALL our sins could truly and powerfully be forgiven.

### **9:23-26 The death and blood of the new covenant was Jesus' sacrifice**

Copies of the things in the heavens. (1) As mentioned in Heb 8:5, the acts of justification (regulations) on earth are copies of the acts of justification in heaven. It is not the other way around. (2) "Copy" is an OK translation. "Pattern" is also an OK translation. The Greek word literally means to exhibit something as an imitation. I think the best translation is "example." That is, the earthly things are examples of the heavenly things.

These sacrifices. That is, the sacrifices mentioned in Heb 9:19-22. These are the Mosaic sacrificial system. And those sacrifices were necessary and good for the old covenant. As it says in 9:1, the old covenant had acts of justification. Everything that the Law said to do had the purpose of justification and purification. And it was effective. However, it was only effective regarding earthly/fleshly things, as it says in Heb 9:10.

Better sacrifices. The author is not completely discounting the first covenant. But the author is showing that the differences in how much better the new covenant are astounding. All those animal sacrifices and the holy deeds performed on the Day of Atonement are good but not as great or powerful as the deeds done under the new covenant.

Sanctuary not made with hands. If the Law and the old covenant was designed to save us, then Jesus would have entered that covenant's tabernacle. Jesus would have established Himself as the great High Priest of Aaron's priesthood. However, Jesus didn't do that. We have spent chapters seeing how that was never God's plan. Instead, Jesus presented Himself into the true sanctuary which is in heaven itself.

Appear in the presence of God. The priests of Aaron stood in God's presence because God came down as a cloud and entered the earthly tabernacle. Jews could visit the tabernacle and the priests would be there and serve there, along the presence of God. So what makes Jesus' appearance in God's presence greater? But under the old covenant, God came down and "visited" the tabernacle. Under the new covenant, Jesus goes to heaven where God's presence never "visits!" Aaron's priesthood was lacking and God had to come down to them. Jesus' priesthood is not lacking because He can directly appear where God "has always been." (I added quotes because, of course, the Father is omnipresent.)

For us. Note that we are not only talking about the theology and spiritual nature of who Jesus is for us as our High Priest and of what Jesus does for us as High Priest. Remember, Jesus doesn't only do all this to prove to us that His priesthood is greater. What we have been discussing not only theological. What we have been discussing is also very much practical. The reason that Jesus has done all of this—sacrificing Himself as the lamb, being the High Priest, and offering His own blood—is FOR US! Even though Jesus is in heaven acting as High Priest, remember that Jesus is ready and able to meet you there. In other words, Jesus is our Mediator (Heb 7:25). Even though He is in heaven, that's where we meet Him. Unlike the Jews, we don't go to a physical place to meet with Jesus and allow Jesus to atone for our sins as High Priest. Instead, we follow Jesus into the heavenly places! Jesus serves as High Priest in heaven FOR US! So let us know and realize that we can meet Him there. Think of it this way, Jesus is in heaven as High Priest, but Jesus isn't facing God as if Jesus has to complete any more work (acts of justification) with God. Jesus is up there facing us. He is waiting for us to come to Him. When we come to Him, Jesus will give us His blood, which will atone for and forgive all our sins. When we come to Him, we present Him our prayers. Again, Jesus is in heaven FOR OUR SAKE and not for God's sake. Therefore, Jesus will always serve us because He is our Mediator and He is our High Priest.

He did not do this to offer Himself many times. Jesus has already done all the work that is required for true and perfect atonement. Jesus entered the most holy place of heaven ONCE. This means that Jesus is no longer performing the duties of the High Priest when it comes to Atonement. Jesus never has to say, "I'll be right back, I need to do more things so that I can forgive your sins." No! Jesus has already, completely, and perfectly done everything that needs to be done! What is left is what Jesus does for us. As each person comes to Jesus for grace, atonement, forgiveness, salvation, and everything in between, His ministry now focuses on cleansing each of us. All of this is opposed to Aaron's high priests, who had to perform the acts of justification on the yearly Day of Atonement. Blood of another. Aaron's high priests brought the blood of animals. They didn't bring their own blood. They didn't even bring the guilty person's blood. As God designed the first covenant, the blood of animals was the best thing that they could offer. However, Jesus was the perfect atoning sacrifice and the perfect High Priest who could actually forgive sins with the right blood. This is proven in the fact that Jesus only had to do this ONCE. This again shows the inferiority in what the blood of animals could do.

Removal of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Heb 9:26b is one of the most beautiful verses in all the Scriptures! May it be said over and over and over! May we celebrate it over and over and over! Jesus came and, through His priesthood and His sacrifice, can actually say, "IT IS FINISHED!"

### **9:27-28 Christ's future ministry as High Priest of heaven**

Die once. (1a) I have often heard this verse outside of its context. Outside of this context, I have heard this verse to show that each of us will die and that we will experience judgment immediately following our death. While all of that is very, very true, I would like to bring this verse back into the context. (1b) I believe the author's focus is the word "once." Remember in verses 16-17 which explained how a will works? In this verse, the author is explaining how death is supposed to work. Death is supposed to occur only once. As it says here, "It has been appointed for humans to die once." Death is not God's design. And so, God has restricted death to only occur for each person one time. This is the boundary that God has given to death. This is how death is supposed to work. Now, what

does that mean when we consider the context? Reread verses 25-26. Both with the Day of Atonement and with the constant animal sacrifices, they had to be performed over and over and over. Those animals experienced death over and over and over. Those sacrifices and deaths did not reflect the true nature of death itself. Thus again, the deaths of all those animals were not powerful enough to bring real and true forgiveness. And when it comes to true and real forgiveness, God demonstrates it with a death that happens only ONCE. Do you see? Just as God appointed each human to die once, God has appointed His Son to die only once. As verse 28 says, "Christ, having been offered ONCE to bear the sins of many." Therefore, even from how death works, Jesus one-time death is another reason why His atoning sacrifice is greater.

After this, judgment. Literally, "But with this a judgment." The HCSB says "after this," but the Greek is clearly "with this." Based on this wording, judgment spoken of doesn't come at a time in the distant future from a person's death. Instead, a judgment comes alongside a person's death. Secondly, the Greek doesn't say "the" judgment but "a" judgment. These are two reasons why this judgment is not the great judgment that is spoken of in Matthew 25 (with the sheep and the goats) nor the judgment spoken of in Revelation 20 (when the books are opened). This is a judgment for each person. This judgment would be spoken of in Luke 16 (with the rich man and Lazarus) or of the thief who was crucified next to Jesus. Therefore, there is a judgment that comes on each person at the time of the death. But of course, there is also the Great Judgment that comes on the last day. In the same way there are two salvations. We are saved here and now in this life. And look at verse 28. When Jesus comes back, He will bring a more complete salvation.

Bear the sins of many. Look at the two phrases here. There was a time when Jesus bore the sins of many. And there will be a time when Jesus will not bear sins. When Jesus offered Himself to the cross, that is when He bore the sins of many. As Paul said, God "make the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2Cor 5:21). Yes, Jesus became sin. Not His sin, because He didn't have any. Jesus became OUR sin. That is when Jesus bore the sins of many. In fact, as John the Baptist said, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Jesus bore the sins of many because Jesus bore the sins of everyone. (2) But when Jesus returns, it will not be like that. Again, looking at the context of chapter 9, Jesus has borne sins once and only once. When Jesus comes back, Jesus won't even be dealing with sins. He has already and completely dealt with them!!

Will appear a second time. (1) We have talked about how Jesus has already completely established atonement through His sacrifice and high priesthood. However, there is another thing that Jesus has left to do: bring complete and perfect salvation. (2) Jesus has already brought salvation for sin. But our salvation is not completely perfect yet. There are still things that we need saved from, such as death and temptation. While we continue to live in this flesh, we still have no power over death. But Jesus, having already resurrected from death, has complete power over death. When Jesus returns, He will bring salvation from death itself. After all, the last enemy to be destroyed is death. This salvation from death is called the Great Resurrection. I'm not sure if the Scriptures speak much about our salvation from temptations, but it should also be mentioned. As we live in the flesh, we are always subject to temptations—whether those temptations originate from other people who want us to fail or those temptations originate within ourselves because our flesh which continues to struggle with the Holy Spirit. But when Jesus returns, temptation will be no more. Now, that is a perfect salvation worth waiting for!! "Come, Lord Jesus! And until You do, You are worth waiting for."

#### **10:1-4 Summary of the insufficiency of the first covenant's sacrifices**

The Law has only a shadow. Verses 1-4 is a summary of chapter 9.

Never perfect the worshipers. (1) Perfect is a good translation here. It is the Greek word that can be translated as perfect or complete. (2) This phrase is summary of the author's big point. As we have looked at chapter 9 and before, we see that there are many, many reasons why the Law, the priests, nor the animal sacrifices could bring complete forgiveness for those with faith and those who worshiped.

No longer have consciousness of sin. The author says that all the things of the Law could not help the people's consciousness of sin. What is this "consciousness of sin"? The root word means: to see something completely, to be very aware of, to be conscious about. In other words, it means that something is on your mind. It cannot be ignored nor forgotten nor left in the past. And that is just the root word. The word used here means the same but the thing on your mind is even more prolonged.

This thing on your mind is like a plague or a cancer. While the root word describes something that is in your consciousness (your mind), the word used here describes something in your conscious (your moral compass). (2a) You see, under the Law, even though the worshiper offered animal sacrifices, their moral compass was still bothered by their sins. The Law could not cleanse people's moral consciences. The Law could only deal with the outward and fleshly effects of sin. The Law could not cure people of their inward and spiritual effects of their sin. (2b) We can infer from this verse that Jesus' sacrifice IS able to cleanse and cure our moral compasses! Under Christ, we no longer are plagued by the thoughts of our sins. Because of Christ and our faith in Him, our moral compasses (our consciences) are purified forever more. Perhaps this is what Peter had in mind when he wrote, "Baptism... now saves you, not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the pledge of a good conscious toward God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1Pet 3:21).

In the sacrifice there is a reminder. I am very glad the author includes this. Because of all the talk in chapter 9 about what the animal sacrifices could not do, it might leave people with questions about God's purpose for those sacrifices. The purpose was twofold. First, those sacrifices were a shadow, pointing to the greater sacrifice of Christ, the true Passover lamb. Second, those sacrifices were a reminder to the people that they still had sins. Every time they offered animal sacrifices, grain sacrifices, and other offerings, the people were constantly reminded that they had sins. (See also Rom 3:25.)

Impossible to take away sins. Just as the Law could not perfect the worshiper's conscience, it could not take away sins either. In this phrase, the author explicitly says that there is zero chance that anyone can find forgiveness if the only thing they have is the Law.

#### **10:5-18 Jesus' sacrifice is the real and permanent forgiveness of sins**

Therefore. Hebrews has spent all of chapter 9 and the first four verses of chapter 10 about how the sacrifices in the Old Testament were very lacking. Verses 7-18 focus on how Jesus' sacrifice is absolutely powerful enough.

He was coming into the world. (1) Verses 5-7 is what Jesus says to Father God. Even as Jesus was coming into the world as a human, Jesus was onboard with God's plan that God was done with burnt offerings but instead offering His Son's body. And Jesus was fully ready to do God's will. (2) Verses 5-7 is a quotation of Psalm 40:6-8.

Did not want sacrifice and offerings. (1) For many centuries, God had been receiving sacrifices and offerings from the people. God accepted them and bless those who sacrificed and offered. But you see, the things we give to God are not sufficient to cleanse us nor forgive us. When it comes to our atonement, God did not want those things anymore. (2) Instead of the people offering things to God, God was doing something new. God was offering something to the people: a body. Instead of sacrifices and offerings made to God, God prepared a body for Jesus Christ, making Him into the perfect sacrifice for us. In this, God demonstrated that what we could not do for ourselves (even if those things were sacrifices and offerings to God), God did by offering something incredibly special for us.

A body you have prepared. (1) The meaning of this phrase is obvious to those who have lived after Jesus. We can see that this is a prophecy that God meant completely literally. God literally and physically made a body for Jesus. God prepare that body by sending the Holy Spirit to overshadow a woman named Mary. And even after that, God continued to prepare that body within Mary. (2) This quotation comes from Psalm 40. When comparing the Hebrew Masoretic with the Greek Septuagint, there are some minor differences, but there is one major difference. It is this phrase. The Septuagint reads, "A body you have prepared for me." The Masoretic reads, "You have opened my ears." This is yet another direct quotation that follows the Septuagint.

You did not delight. From Abel until Jesus, we read that Father God did approve of the aromas that came from their sacrifices and offerings. However, those sacrifices and offerings were absolutely NOT Father God's true delight. What was Father God's true delight? Well, it wasn't a thing. It was a person. As the Father said, "This is My beloved Son. I take delight in Him!" Then after Jesus completed the will of God, Paul said, "For this reason God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow... and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Php 2:9-11).

It is written about Me. Jesus said this very thing to the Pharisees. John 5:45-47.

I have come to do Your will. I would like to call your attention to the times in the gospels when Jesus made it clear that He was here to do His Father's will—no matter what. (1) Matthew 6:10, Jesus prayed, "Our Father in heaven, Your name be honored as holy. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (2) Matthew 16:21-23, when Jesus rebuked Peter to his face. (3) Matthew 26:37-44, when Jesus was in anguish within Himself and prayed to the Father three times. Therefore, did Jesus really come to earth to do the Father's will? No matter the cost, He absolutely did!!

Takes away the first to establish the second. (1) The verb for "takes away" is not properly translated in the HCSB. In the NT, all cases (except for one), this word is translated as to kill or to murder. For example, the first time it is used in the NT is when Herod "took up" all the children in Bethlehem, that is, slaying them. The one time it is not used to mean murder is in Acts 7:21, when Stephen says that Pharaoh's daughter "took up" Moses as her own son. Obviously, this word was a very, very common figure of speech (an euphemism) for killing someone. (2) Certainly, Jesus didn't treat the first covenant the way Pharaoh's daughter took up Moses. Instead, Jesus treated the first covenant as if He killed it! The author is using Psalm 40:6-8 to show that Jesus came to kill the sacrifices and offerings of the OT. Therefore, this is a play on words. As the Jews would sacrifice and "take up" their offerings, Jesus came to earth to sacrifice and "take up" those very practices. Jesus killed those OT practices. (3) The author also says that Psalm 40:6-8 shows how Jesus establishes a second covenant. How does Jesus do that? It is explained in verse 10....

The offering of the body of Jesus Christ. This is the second covenant's new and greater sacrificial system. It wasn't through animals, sacrifices, nor offerings. The second covenant is established by the one sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ. His body is the ONLY sacrifice that truly and completely forgives sins and purifies the worshiper's conscience. And as this verse points out once again, Jesus sacrificed His body once and only once.

[Verse 11]. This is a repeat of the author's whole point in chapter 9.

Offering one sacrifice for sins forever. This phrase is a summary of chapter 9's references to what Christ has done. The whole point is that Christ's sacrifice was performed ONCE and it gives ETERNAL benefits.

Sat down at the right hand of God. (1) The Scriptures are clear that Jesus sat down at the right hand of God after His ascension and after He made atonement for sins. (2) Even though there is an image of Jesus sitting down and waiting, this image is not supposed to imply that Jesus is doing nothing. Again, remember what the author said at the end of chapter 7. Jesus is actively serving as high priest and is interceding for us. This image of Christ sitting is to show that Jesus' work of atonement has been fully completed. He no longer has to make appeals to God for sins. For example, Paul said that Jesus is both sitting at the right hand of God and interceding for us at the same time (Rom 8:34). In fact, even when Jesus returns a second time on the clouds of heaven, He will be seated at the right hand of the Power (Matt 26:64). Therefore, Jesus can sit at the right hand of God and still be working for and serving mankind.

Waiting. (1) Again, Jesus is not waiting only. He is still serving and interceding! But there are some things that have not been completed yet. Jesus is waiting for the time when the Father says it is time. (It is possible that even now, Jesus does not know when that hour will come. When Jesus walked on the earth, He did not know when His enemies would become His footstool (Matt 24:36ff).) You see, Jesus still has enemies. Although Jesus has already proven that He already has the power to conquer them, the Father says it is not time yet. Jesus is waiting for the time when the Father says that the enemies will meet their end. (2) Verse 13 is a reference to Hebrews 1:13. There, the author quotes Psalm 110:1, "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool." Therefore, as Jesus sits and waits, He is fulfilling David's prophecy. The prophecy is a promise that all of Jesus' enemies will be defeated in the end. Jesus is waiting for this happen.

He has perfected forever. Even though Jesus is still waiting for His second coming and for His enemies to be His footstool, again, what Jesus has already done is perfected forever those who are sanctified. In other words, Jesus' enemies have not been fully defeated yet, but what Jesus has done for the faithful in their sanctification and in their atonement from sin has been perfected.

This is the covenant I will make with them. This verse is to remind us Christians that Jesus' covenant has done for us what the first covenant could never do. The first covenant was written on actual stone. Jesus' new covenant is written on our hearts and minds. We have a better understanding of God, His laws, His nature, His love, and everything else about God than those under the first covenant ever

had. Through Jesus Himself, God has fully revealed Himself to us! Philip said to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and that is enough for us” (John 14:8). Jesus said to him, “If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father” (John 14:9). It is through Jesus Himself that God’s ways are put into our hearts and minds, instead of just being on stone tablets.

Where there is forgiveness. (1) In other words, full forgiveness has arrived. Why is there no more offering? Because the offering must come before the forgiveness. Forgiveness is the result of the offering. And because forgiveness is now full and complete, there will not be any more offerings! (2) Verses 14-18 are directed more toward Christians. This is all about how the promises of God and full forgiveness have now arrived for Christians! The promise that God’s ways have been written on our hearts and minds and the promise that perfect forgiveness has been granted are for now!!! God has fulfilled these promises that were made through Jeremiah. Therefore, there are two incredible and universal truths for Christians: there is forgiveness from sins and there is no longer offering for sin. These truths go hand in hand. And they are granted to all who are Christians.

### **10:19-25 How to approach Jesus as our High Priest**

[Verse 10:19]. Here, the author transitions to the fourth warning to the readers: Will Jesus remain your High Priest? It is clear that those who have been saved through faith gain Jesus as their sympathizing and interceding High Priest. But the question remains for each Christian: will Jesus remain your High Priest by staying true to your confession of faith in Him?

**Boldness.** As Christians, we are able to approach Jesus and the heavenly tabernacle with boldness. Why? Because our forgiveness is real and complete! How? Because Jesus has cleansed us with His own blood! Do you believe your forgiveness is real? The truth is that Jesus’ blood has made it real. Therefore, because of Jesus, you have every reason to approach Him and the tabernacle with boldness.

**Enter the sanctuary.** What sanctuary is this? Of course, it is not the Mosaic tabernacle nor is it a church building. This is the sanctuary in heaven. Yes, we are able to enter the sanctuary in heaven! We cannot enter it physically yet, but we can enter it spiritually, through prayer and worship. Don’t think that it is strange for us to enter the heavenly sanctuary. Paul said, “Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens” (Eph 1:3). Paul also said God has brought us into the heavenly sanctuary (Eph 2:4-6).

**Through the curtain.** In heaven, the curtain between the holy place and the most holy place is not a curtain of fabric but a curtain of flesh. Do you remember when Jesus died on the cross? The curtain on earth was torn from top to bottom. That curtain became pointless and worthless. This is because the original sanctuary in heaven became the true and only sanctuary. The curtain was moved from earth to heaven. The curtain was changed from cloth to flesh. Jesus’ atoning sacrifice, His body, is our curtain into the most holy place in heaven.

**True heart in full assurance of faith.** In Christ, our heart becomes truthful and our faith becomes fully confident. This is how we are able to draw near to our great High Priest. How does our heart become truthful and our faith become fully confident? This is done through what Jesus has done. Jesus is the one who transforms our heart and our faith to something far greater than we could do ourselves (and far greater than what the first covenant could do).

**Hearts sprinkled clean.** This is a reference to Hebrews 9:19. Just as Moses took the blood of animals and sprinkled it on the people, Jesus takes His own blood and sprinkles it on our hearts. It is the power of the blood that transforms our hearts (and our minds). There is power in the blood!

**From an evil conscience.** This is a reference to Hebrew 10:2. Just as the first covenant could not erase our consciousness of sin, the blood of Jesus is able to do just that. A consciousness of sin is not God’s design. As it says in this verse, it is an evil consciousness. The blood of Jesus is the cure for our consciousness of sin!

**Bodies washed in pure water.** (1) Since the context of Hebrews 10 is about our salvation, a salvation that is greater than what the first covenant offered, this washing of our bodies is connected to our salvation. Therefore, this must be a reference to baptism. The New Testament says many times that baptism saves us. When we submit to baptism, baptism is performed on our bodies. Our bodies are submerged underwater and raised to a new life (Rom 6:3-8). Peter also addresses how our bodies are washed in pure water. It is not a washing of dirt from our bodies but Peter said it is the washing away of our evil conscience (1Pet 3:21). While baptism washes our physical bodies, the washing is actually a washing away of our evil consciousness! (2) Putting Hebrews 10:22 together... it is Jesus’

blood that cleanses our hearts and minds, and it is baptism into Jesus' death that cleanses our bodies and consciousness.

Hold onto our hope without wavering. For this commentary, when selecting the key verse that best summarizes the warnings in Hebrews, I selected Heb 6:11-12. Heb 10:23 says the same thing in fewer words. The entire purpose in writing the book of Hebrews is found in these two passages. As people read through Hebrews, I hope they see this purpose behind the book. All the many chapters spent on proving how much greater Jesus is than the first covenant are to build us up and encourage us to stay true to Jesus. As we have read through Hebrews, it has been very, very encouraging reading all the reasons why Jesus is so great! Let all these reasons be your reasons why you will hold onto your confession of hope. After all, He who promised is faithful. God has proven His faithfulness already. And God will continue to prove His faithfulness in the promises that have not yet been fulfilled. Therefore, put your hope in God, and keep it there, because He is always faithful!

Concerned about one another. This is the second time in Hebrews that speaks about how we can serve one another. The first time was Heb 3:13, which was about encouraging one another daily. In that context, it was about encouraging each other not to fall back into sin, as the wandering Israelites did. In this verse, now that the author has established many, many reasons why we can be bold and confident in Christ's incredible sacrifice, the author is encouraging Christians to continue serving each other as fellow priests. Since Jesus is our High Priest, all Christians are priests who serve each other under Jesus. Look at the things listed here that we can focus on as priests for each other. We promote one another's love. We promote one another's good works. We collect together. We encourage each other more and more.

Promote love. I'm glad the author mentions love before works. After all, love is greater than works. As Paul said in 1Cor 13, love is required for works to be good works. In this simple instruction to us that we should promote love, this is enough to keep us busy for the rest of our lives. Understanding and promoting the love of God is a huge task in itself! And we are called to do this. I believe the best place to learn how to love better is the letter of 1John. That whole letter is all about God's love for us, our love for God, and our love for one another.

Good works. There are so many places in the New Testament that tell us that we are expected (even required) to do good works. If God is perfectly good and is always working, then we are called to do the same. If we have love and if we are desiring to glorify God, we accomplish both of those things through our good works.

Not staying away from our worship meetings. (1) At least, that is how the HCSB translates this phrase. Literally, it is, "Not deserting our collection." Yes, it would be fine to translate this word as assembly or gathering, because that is the implication. But by saying "collection," there is another implication by this word. When something is collected, it is done by a collector. The implication here is that when we gather in an assembly, we are being collected by a collector. Of course, that someone is Jesus Christ. Why do we meet together on Sundays and on other days of the week? Because Jesus collects us into the same place! Therefore, for those who reject the assembly of Christians are actually rejecting Jesus, who collects Christians together. (2) There are two other ways this word (and its verb form) is used in the New Testament. The first way is when Jesus prayed over Jerusalem, wishing He could collect them like a hen collects their chicks, but Jerusalem was not willing. The second way is at the Second Coming when Jesus will collect all the elect together. Therefore, when it comes to the assembly of Christians today, we can model ourselves after those two examples of collection in the New Testament. Will we collect ourselves together like the elect will when Jesus returns? Or will we refuse to collect ourselves together like Jerusalem did when Jesus called them?

As some habitually do. (1) This is the Greek word for habit. There are two reasons why a Christian would develop a habit of not being collected into the assembly. First, it could be that they have abandoned their confession of faith and, thus, rejected Jesus Himself. This is called apostasy, and it is done willfully. Second, it could be that the person has wavered, and their selfishness or their concerns of life have become more important to them than Jesus' collection. This is like the thorny soil. This is called apathy, and it happens more by accident because the person was not intentional with their confession of faith. (2) Decades ago, I remember when church attendance was very heavily encouraged. And it was because of this verse. While church attendance is not the determining factor of a faithful or unfaithful person, church attendance is one of the important signs of the state of a person's faithfulness or unfaithfulness. In other words, church attendance doesn't make



you a Christian or a non-Christian. But church attendance is one of many symptoms that will gauge the health and strength of your faith. Just like when a doctor looks for symptoms to know if a person is healthy or sick, our church attendance is a symptom that can help reveal whether we are faithful or unfaithful to Jesus.

All the more. The meaning here is exactly what it says. As the day of Jesus' Second Coming draws closer, we are called to encourage each other "even so much more." In other words, don't fall back on all the years of faith that you have under your belt. The passing of time is not an excuse to become more slack in our encouraging toward others. It should be the opposite. The more time that passes, the more effort we should put into encouraging one another. I will say it this way: the older we get, the more of an encourager we should be. Besides, with all the time and experience a person has under their belt, the more effective they will be at encouraging.

### **10:26-31 Willful sin tramples the Son of God and forsakes His sacrifice for sins**

Deliberately. (1) What is meant by sinning willfully? This is a sin that is not accidental but is pre-meditated. These are sins that a person commits after wrestling with temptation and losing. The best description is that these are sins that have come down to a person's choice, and the person has chosen sin. (2) However, based on the context and the author's point, the author is not talking about the rare or occasional times a committed Christian fails to follow the Spirit's escape plan (1Cor 10:13) and chooses to sin. The author is talking about Christians who have willfully chosen to ignore the Spirit's guidance all together. In short, these are Christians who have willfully chosen a lifestyle of sin. They are fallen Christians. (2a) The two verses that show that the author is talking about fallen Christians are the previous verse and verse 29. The previous verse shows that this pattern of sin has become a habit. Verse 29 shows that this person's lifestyle has abandoned Christ, His sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit. Again, these verses do not describe a committed Christian who has rare or occasional times of weaknesses and has chosen to sin. These verses are about a Christian who has willfully abandoned his or her faith in Christ. They are in willful and habitual sin, because they have rejected their commitment to Jesus. (3) As a disclaimer, just because this context is not about committed Christians who willfully choose to sin on occasion, this does not mean that willful sin is a small thing for the committed Christian. Willful sin is still worse than accidental sin because it is premeditated. Even though the Christian did not want to sin, they were given the choice and they chose sin. Accidental sin can happen because the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. But when a Christian willfully sins, this is very serious and dangerous because it wasn't a matter of the flesh's weakness but a matter of choice. The Holy Spirit has presented the committed Christian with a way of escape (1Cor 10:13), and the Christian—in that moment—chose to sin.

After receiving the knowledge of the truth. Again, this phrase should make it even more clear that this context is about Christians who have fallen away. They have lapsed and backslid. These are Christians who have willfully chose a life based on sin instead of Jesus. So let it be clear: verses 26-31 is a warning, not to the lost people in the world but, to Christians who have abandoned their profession of Jesus Christ. After accessing Jesus as their High Priest and receiving the salvation of their souls, they have willfully denied Jesus' high priesthood.

No longer remains a sacrifice for sins. These are Christians who have accessed Jesus and His blood and received salvation and forgiveness from sins. However, because the Christians has willfully rejected Jesus' ways and has willfully accepted habitual sin, Jesus sacrifice is not longer accessible to them. As long as a person rejects Jesus as their High Priest and Savior of their souls by their lifestyle, then they are rejecting all the benefits that result from Jesus' sacrifice. But didn't Jesus bring salvation and forgiveness to the whole world (John 1:29, 1John 2:2)? He did! But that salvation and forgiveness is only granted to those who have faith in Jesus. If a person's faith in Jesus is abandoned, so are all the blessings that come from Jesus' atoning sacrifice! For Christians who have fallen away, they have lost access to the heavenly tabernacle and Jesus' blood. As the author says it, "There no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" for those who have abandoned their commitment to Jesus. After all, Jesus Himself is that sacrifice for sins.

Terrifying expectation of judgment. Verse 27 literally says, "But some fearful expectation of judgment and zealous fire, intended to eat the opponents." This is a picture of someone who has abandoned Jesus. This person has traded Jesus as their Savior and High Priest for a fearful expectation of judgment and zealous fire. That is how the author describes a person who has fallen away from Christ. The apostle Peter also wrote about Christians who had fallen away. His picture of this is

found in [2Pet 2:20-22](#). As Peter said, it is worse for a person to be a Christian and then abandon Christ than it is for someone who never knew Jesus. It looks like the author of Hebrews is saying the same thing in the description on a fallen Christian in verse 29. Therefore, this “terrifying expectation of judgment” in a fallen Christian must be even more terrifying for them than it is for someone who has never experienced Jesus.

If anyone disregards Moses’ law. The author has spent 10 chapters talking about how Jesus is greater and better than the Law of Moses. Jesus offers far greater benefits than the Law was ever designed to offer! Here, the author shows that the inverse is also true. If the benefits for being in Christ are greater than the Law of Moses, then the punishments of falling away from Christ are greater than the Law of Moses, too. What were the punishments for abandoning the Law of Moses? The most strict punishment was being stoned. If the punishment for abandoning the Law of Moses meant physical death, what kind of greater punishment would there be for abandoning the Son of God? First, there is the judgment (condemnation) that comes from God. Then, there is the punishment, which is zealous fire. What else could that be but the Lake of Fire (Hell)?

Trampled the Son of God. This word for “trampled upon” is found in a couple places in Matthew and a couple places in Luke. The point of the author is more in-line with how Matthew uses it. The idea of trampling on something is a symbol to show how worthless it is. [Matt 5:13](#) (and Matt 7:6). As you can see, to trample upon something is the same as saying that the thing is good for nothing. The fallen Christian has abandoned Christ, and with the way they live their life, they have shown that they believe the Son of God is good for nothing.

Regarded as profane the blood. The word for “profane” can also be translated as common. The author has spent chapters 9 and 10 showing how perfect the blood of Christ is, being the ONLY blood that can actually grant forgiveness. The fallen Christian has rejected the saving power of Christ’s blood, saying that it is only common or even profane. With the way they live their life, they have shown that they believe Christ’s death wasn’t any different from anyone else’s death—that Jesus was only an ordinary human being.

By which he was sanctified. Once again, let it be said that the author is talking about Christians who have fallen away. This passage is not about lost people who have always been enemies of Christ. These are Christians who have abandoned their good confession and have returned to either Judaism or the world. The fallen Christian is someone who actually had been sanctified by the blood of the new covenant. But with the way they live their life, they have shown that they no longer accept Jesus’ blood as the forgiveness and salvation of their soul. (2) The word “sanctified” has the root word for “holy.” In other words, this person had been sanctified, had been made holy, had been purified, and had been consecrated. All these phrases are good translations for the verb “holy.”

Insulted the Spirit of grace. “Insulted” is a good translation. But note, it is a compound word of “in” and “abuse.” So this isn’t just an insult that could easily be brushed off. This kind of insult is one that is done “in abuse.” The fallen Christian is someone who not only wants to insult the Spirit but even to abuse the Spirit. With the way they live their life, they have shown that they believe that the Spirit deserves to be abused. Of course, this should remind us of what Jesus said about blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. For such a person, they are guilty of an eternal sin (Mark 3:28-30).

Vengeance belongs to Me, I will repay. (1) The author quotes a piece of Deut 32:35. From this piece, we see that God is a God of justice. And as it said in verse 29, “How much worse punishment will one deserve?” This kind of person has rejected God in drastic ways. The person deserves punishment, and God will repay them with exactly that. (2) The other piece of Deut 32:35 is also worth considering. It focuses on the person who will receive the punishment. It says, “Their foot shall be tripped up; for the day of their destruction is near to them, and the judgments at hand are close upon you” (LXX). This paints a picture of God as a God of justice and who is righteous when He punishes. This is also a picture of the fallen Christian’s future. I’m sure it is common for fallen Christians who have willfully rejected Jesus would say to themselves, “There is no punishment. God hasn’t done anything to me yet, and I don’t think He ever will.” They are deceived because Deut 32:35 promises that their punishment is coming. Jesus said a very similar thing in [Luke 12:45-46](#). (3) Why does the punishment seem so intense and severe? Think of it from Father God’s perspective. Because fallen Christians have trampled upon His Son! Because fallen Christians have denied the greatest gift God could ever give: the blood of salvation. Because fallen Christians have insulted and desire to abuse God’s Holy Spirit. If someone treated your son that way, if someone treated your most generous gift as garbage, and if someone has insulted your own spirit, how would you react? Do you think they

deserve to go free?? Because of this, God is fully in the right to punish fallen Christians who have become enemies to God.

The Lord will judge His people. As we have seen in Hebrews, this section is about Christians who have fallen and have become enemies to God. In the context of Deut 32:35-36, it is about fallen Israelites. Another reason God is fully righteous in punishing fallen Israelites and fallen Christians is because they were once His people. The Israelites were God's people through Abraham and the first covenant. Christians are God's people through the Son of God and His cleansing blood, being adopted by God as His children through faith. Because Christians are children of God, when a Christian falls away, God has the right to treat the Christian as His child, with the discipline and punishment that comes along with that relationship. Christians are His people, so God is the best Father who is able to deal with them if they fall away.

It is a terrifying thing. The word for terrifying is the same word mentioned in verse 27. The terrifying thing is the expectation of judgment. Though a fallen Christian will deny that there even is a punishment coming for them, deep down, they know the truth about their future. After all, they know God ways because they were once a child of God.

### **10:32-34 You have already suffered for the name of Jesus**

Remember the earlier days. These three verses are not about Christians who have fallen away but are directed to the audience. But who is the audience that the author has in mind? (1) Firstly, is the audience the immediate hearers of this letter, whom the author knows personally? If so, the author is talking about specific trials that the audience has faced, and the author is well aware of them. If this is the case, it would be difficult for a modern day American audience to understand these kinds of sufferings. The best we can do is to imagine what we would do in these situations. Would we do the same things as these Christians did? Or would we be more like the seed spread on the thorns and be distracted by the pleasures and comfort of the world around us? (2) Secondly, is the audience a more general audience? That is, anyone who picks up this letter and reads it? If so, then these sufferings could be the sufferings that we experience when we transition from the kingdom of darkness and this world into the Kingdom of heaven and of God. For anyone who transitions from a worldly and fleshly way of thinking into a heavenly and godly way of thinking can be a very painful transition. For example, some Christians must say goodbye to jobs and social circles that a Christian ought not to be involved in. Some Christians must say goodbye to family—as Jesus said would happen (Matt 19:29). In fact, some Christians may go to prison because they want to come clean and atone for the sins they had previously committed. These sufferings—that take place as a person transitions from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ—are sufferings that Jesus Himself talked about. Jesus said that a person cannot be a discipline unless they have counted the cost (Luke 14:25-33). As Jesus said, "Whoever does not bear his own cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple."

Publicly exposed. Who would be publicly exposing (persecuting) Christians when this letter was written (60s)? This section could be a remembrance of what was done by Nero in the city of Rome. (Widespread persecutions of Christians by the Roman government came a few decades later.) Or, this section is a remembrance of the persecutions the Christians experienced by Jews. Based on the subject of the Hebrews letter, this makes a lot of sense. When this letter was written, Christians would be very, very familiar with the persecutions by the Jews. After all, most of the book of Acts addresses this persecution in detail. I believe this is the public exposure that the author is remembering. It is like the author is saying, "Do you remember who have proven to be the greatest enemies of Jesus and His gospel? Then why would want to return to that religion?"

Companions of those. What do you think this phrase means? What do you think it means for a Christian to become a companion to those who suffered persecution? (1) The word "companion" is the pronoun form of the word fellowship (koinonia). These Christians are fellowshipping themselves with persecuted Christians. Therefore, this phrase means that Christians are voluntarily SHARING in the persecution of their brothers and sisters. (2) The best example I can think of this is from the Passion of Perpetua and Felicity. In the year 200 AD in Carthage, a group of five people (an educated young woman named Perpetua, a slave woman named Felicity, Felicity's slave husband, and two free men) were arrested for their desire to become Christians. Because they proclaimed their faith in Jesus, they were condemned to die by the wild beasts in the arena. While they were in prison, a man from the local church wanted to accompany (koinonia) them and their punishment. His name is Saturus.

He delivered himself to the authorities, professed his faith, and joined (koinonia) the others on death row. The story, written by Perpetua herself, is the account of their imprisonment and martyrdom. Saturus is the best example I know of a Christian who “was a companion of those who were treated that way.” What Saturus did was out of love of these five people because they wanted to hold on to their confession in Jesus Christ—even when it meant torture and capital punishment.

Sympathized with the prisoners. Most of us do not understand what it is like to be a prisoner or in jail.

But when a person has been a prisoner, I have seen how empathetic they are to other prisoners.

Often, those who end up serving in prison ministries are those who have been prisoners themselves. I believe this verse calls all Christians—especially those who have never been a prisoner—to at least sympathize with those who are in prison. Don’t just take this author’s word for it. Jesus has already instructed His followers to visit the prisoner (Matt 25:31-46).

Accepted with joy the confiscation. (1) If my possessions were taken away from me because I was a Christian, I can see how hard it would be to get to the point where I could even accept it. But I have said to myself: how in the world could a Christian accept it “with joy”??? Are you like me, thinking that this seems impossible? But here it is in Scripture. And this is presented as something that Christians are supposed to do. How can this be? The only Scripture I can think of as an example of this is [Acts 5:40-42](#). In this example, the apostles actually rejoiced because they suffered physical pain. Now, under the circumstance, I can understand their joy. But what about Jesus? In all the sufferings Jesus went through, there isn’t a mention of Him enduring them “with joy.” However, in Jesus we do learn the secret. “Jesus..., who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame” (Heb 12:2). For the apostles, their joy came immediately. For Jesus, His joy would come later. And that is the secret. Even in this verse, it says that Christians accepted sufferings with joy. Why? Because they knew they would have better and eternal possessions.

Better and enduring possession. Jesus endured the cross and its shame, knowing that there would be joy on the other side. Christians who have their possessions confiscated accept it with joy, knowing that there will be better and eternal possessions on the other side. Both of these statements say the same thing. For most Christians who experience persecution and/or sufferings, the joy comes later. Therefore, until we experience joy, we are currently experiencing a thing called hope. (2) As we hope for the coming joy, what is the thing that gives power to our hope? That is, how are we convinced that we will later experience a better and eternal joy? The power that fuels our hope is the PROMISES of God. Heb 10:23, “Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” This should be repeated. Heb 10:23, “He who promised is faithful!” This verse is the fuel to our hope, and it cannot be repeated often enough. Jesus said: [Matt 19:27,29](#). How? For He who promised is faithful. Jesus said: [Mark 10:28-30](#). How? For He who promised is faithful! (3) It is true: the world can take many, many, many things away from us. This can include things that we are attached to. But there is one thing that neither Satan nor the world can take away from us: our confession in Jesus Christ. Because we are Christians, there are a lot of things that can be stolen from us. But one thing that cannot be stolen from us is our faith. No one can take our faith away from us! However, it is important that we don’t abandon our faith (as those Christians did in verses 26-31). In summary, God is perfectly faithful in all His promises. God’s promises of joy are for those who are faithful. So remember to stay faithful to God as we hold on to our confession in Jesus Christ. (Verses 35-39 are our reminder to not lose our faith by abandoning our confession in Jesus Christ.)

### **10:35-39 Do not shrink back from your faith**

Confidence. This is not the word for faith. This word means boldness, frankness. “Confidence” is a good translation. What the author is saying is: “Have confidence in your faith!”

Reward. This is not the word for gift. This word means something earned—whether a reward is earned or a punishment is earned. The author is saying: “Your confidence in your faith will earn you a reward.” If you add confidence to the faith you have, then your confidence will earn value for you.

What was promised. There is also what God has promised to the faithful. These include salvation, atonement, a good relationship with God Himself, eternal life, etc.

In a very little while. Most of this quotation comes from Hab 2:4. But this phrase only appears in Is 26:20.

In my opinion, the author is not quoting this phrase from Isaiah nor Habakkuk. It is a common Greek figure of speech, which happens to be found in Is 26:20.

The Coming One will come and not delay. (1) This is from Hab 2:4. Both the Hebrew and Greek agree with what the author says. The exact words the author used exactly matches the Septuagint. (2) When I read this, I get the impression that the Coming One is Jesus Christ. After all, Father God send Jesus to come to the earth and to mankind. From the context of both Habakkuk and Hebrews, this can also refer to Father God too.

My righteous one will live by faith. (1) This is from Hab 2:4. Both the Hebrew and the Greek agree. (2) In the context of Heb 2, this is a vision for a much later time. The Lord tells Habakkuk to write it down so that all can read it, but it “is yet for the appointed time.” Therefore, the Hebrews author is saying that NOW is the appointed time. This is an echo of what the author said in chapter 3, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” The Law of Moses didn’t focus on faith but on the physical regulation. Yet, if a person lived under the Old Testament, faith was still the primary ingredient that God was looking for. Now, today, under the New Testament, the appointed time has come for the followers of God to live by faith (leaving behind the requirements for physical regulations). Faith is the primary ingredient that God had originally wanted from His people. From Adam to Moses to Jesus to today, in God’s heavenly tabernacle (which is the original), faith is the primary ingredient that God is looking for.

If he draws back I have no pleasure in him. (1) This is from Hab 2:4. This phrase does not appear in the Hebrew Masoretic at all. This phrase is from the Greek Septuagint. (2) As the author has done throughout the letter, the author shows that there are two directions a person can go with their faith. There are those who hold onto their faith and profession in Jesus Christ, and there are those who abandon their faith and profession in Jesus Christ. Do you remember what the author said about the unfaithful Israelites in Heb 3:15-19? And about Christians who have already fallen away in Heb 6:1-8? This phrase is another reminder that those who fall away will have Christ, the atonement, forgiveness, and salvation removed from them.

Draw back and are destroyed. This idea of drawing back and being destroyed also comes from Habakkuk and is found in the Septuagint version. So far, the author has been quoting from Hab 2:4. Hab 2:5 in the Septuagint says, “But the arrogant man and the scorner, the boastful man, will not finish anything; who has enlarged his desire as the grave, and like death he is never satisfied, and he will gather to himself all the nations, and will receive to himself all the peoples.” In other words, those who draw back are like a person who becomes an enemy to God (arrogant, scorner), whose end is destruction (the grave, death), and who will inspire others who do not follow God (the nations, the peoples) to follow him toward destruction.

Have faith and obtain life. Do you remember the confidence mentioned in verse 35 and how it brings a great reward? That reward is life. More specifically, eternal life! While those who draw back will be “rewarded” with destruction, those who have faith will obtain life from God Himself. It is worthwhile to marvel and meditate on how great this life is. We speak about how our goal is to go to heaven. And that’s good. But heaven is just a place. Eternal life is what we experience in heaven! While we live in this life, we are constantly moving closer and closer toward death. I know that’s not a pleasant thought, and it is not supposed to be. But for those who have faith, death is defeated in the end, and we are restored to life, never to die again. In short, the life the faithful will obtain is a life that will never, ever, ever be taken from them again! The point of the author mentioning this is that our reward and what God has promised is WORTH IT! In the end, the faithful will have life and life to the FULLEST!

[Chapter 11]. As we transition to chapter 11, the faith chapter, let us look at WHY the author has written the faith chapter. In Heb 10:32-34, the author gives us a picture of what it looks like to keep your profession and faith in God. That is, there are many, many hardships and persecutions that we can experience in this life. But the one who is faithful will accept and even be joyful about those things. Why? Because the faithful know that they have a better and enduring possession in their future. Now that we know the “why,” what does that look like? What does it look like to live faithfully, accepting hardship and persecution, and knowing that there is a better and enduring possession in the future? That kind of faithfulness looks like the folks in chapter 11. These examples have been written down to show us what it looks like to not draw back but to keep the faith.

### **11:1-3 Introduction to faith**

Reality. This is also commonly translated as assurance or substance. All these words are good translations. The Greek word is a compound word that means “stands underneath.” Like how a

foundation is what stands underneath a house and supports the house's existence, faith is what supports our hope. It is the hope of our future, that God will deliver on His promises. Faith keeps our hope in God to stand firm. Faith is the reality of hope, the assurance of hope, the substance of hope. Proof. This is also commonly translated as evidence or conviction. All these words are good translations. Like how a detective is looking for enough evidence and proof, and he needs to find enough in order to convict a jury of a person's innocence or guilt, faith is the evidence and proof of things unseen. I think about the wind. You cannot see the wind. But you can feel the wind and you can see the affects of the wind, like with the leaves of a tree. The same is true with faith. There are things that mankind cannot see. After all, no one has seen or can see Father God. But when we see everything the Father has done or said, we see the evidence and proof that the unseen God does exist. That is when faith sees the evidence of the unseen. Paul mentioned this very thing in [Rom 1:19-20](#). We see the effects and workings of God, but we cannot see God Himself. Therefore, we have faith in an unseen God. As we read these stories of these faithful people of old, look at how their faith led them toward an invisible God.

Our ancestors won God's approval by it. I'm not a Greek scholar, but I believe that 99% of translations are not translating this right. The Greek word is not "approval" but the is "to be a witness" or "to give testimony." I plugged the verse into a modern translator. It reads, "In the same way the elders were martyred." With the exception of the word "martyred," I think this does capture Heb 11:2 much better. In other words, this verse is not saying that the elders won God's approval by faith. The verse is saying that the elders have left us their testimony. Of all the translations out there, I believe that the NKJV has translated this verse the best, "For by it the elders obtained a [good] testimony." You see, all these people in this chapter have lived by faith, and their lives have been left to us as a testimony about what it means to live by faith. The Hebrews author has selected these people and these events as great testimonies of living by faith! And so, this verse isn't about gaining God's approval. This verse is talking about how the elders have left testimonies of faith for you and for me. (Of course, Heb 11:6 is about the direct connection between our faith and being pleasing to God.)

The universe was created by God's command. What better example to start of this chapter! What person was at the creation and saw it being created? Who was there to write down the history of how God created the world? Creation itself was an unseen, invisible event. For us to believe it happened takes faith! Yet, somehow and at sometime, God explained creation to someone. How else would the account of creation show up in God's Old Testament Scriptures? Whether God explained it to Adam or Noah or Moses or someone else, the evidence of the creation is found in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. Again, somehow and at sometime, God must have revealed to someone how He created everything. The creation was unseen, but we are living in it right now, which is evidence that it must have happened. Again, how it happened was also unseen, but we have Genesis 1-2, which is evidence that it must have happened.

Not visible. (1) The second half of Heb 11:3 can be confusing. It depends on where the word "not" is placed. Most translations put it in the middle. "What is seen has not been made out of things that are seen." This sounds like the author is talking about things not made (never created). That's confusing. Other translations put "not" at the end. "What is seen has been made out of things that are not seen." To me, this is much easier to understand. (2) This point may not matter, but I do not believe that the author is saying that God created material from immaterial. (If that was the case, then what about the "waters" in Gen 1:2?) I think the author is saying that God created the creation and God Himself was the unseen, invisible Person who created the creation. The creation is what is seen. God is who was not visible. But again, this point may not matter.

### **11:3-12 The faithful, from Abel to Sarah**

Abel. (1) The author says Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain. Is Abel faithful and righteous because his sacrifice was better than Cain's sacrifice? No! It says that Abel was righteous because of his own sacrifice and gifts. Yet, there was a difference between the brothers. Gen 4:4 says that Abel brought the firstborn and the fat portions of his flock. It was Abel's sacrifice and gifts that testified that he was righteous. (Again, don't think "approval" in these verses. Think about how these elders are giving their testimony.) But was Abel's righteousness from himself? No, as it says, God testified this because of Abel's gifts. Therefore, both Abel's gifts and God Himself testified that Abel was faithful and righteous. (2) Along with Abel's faithfulness in sacrifice to God, another reason Abel is mentioned here is because of Abel's hardship. Remember, the author is showing us examples of

faithful people who had experienced hardship. What was Abel's hardship? It was the persecution that came from his brother, who killed him! Look at both Genesis 4 and this verse: even though Abel has died, Abel is still looking forward to a better and enduring possession. In Genesis, God says that Abel's blood was crying out from the ground. In Hebrews, the author says that even though he is dead, his faithfulness still speaks. Abel is a great testimony for us today. He is a testimony for anyone who is martyred because of their faith.

Enoch. (1) The Hebrews author repeats exactly what Genesis 5:22-24 says about Enoch. (1a) Twice, Hebrews says that Enoch was "taken away." This is the same word used in the Greek version of Gen 5:24. (1b) When the HCSB says, "he was approved," this is not the Greek word there. Again, this is the Greek word "to be a witness" or "give a testimony." (1c) When the HCSB says, "since he had pleased God," this is an accurate translation and is talking about being well-pleasing or approving to God. This word is not a word the author selected on his own. This word is found in the Greek version of Gen 5:22 and 24. The Hebrew version says that Enoch walked with God, but the Greek version uses this word, saying that Enoch was well-pleasing to God. (2) It is in this Greek word "well-pleasing" that Enoch's faith is seen. Even though we are not given specific actions or events in Enoch's life, we see how strong his faith was. The evidence to Enoch's faith was that God took him away. Since Enoch is the only person in the Scriptures who was taken like this, and because Enoch was taken because of his faithfulness, then this would mean that Enoch's faithfulness was something very, very incredible! (3) What could have been Enoch's hardship? Gen 6:5-6. It is possible that an exceedingly wicked world would have been Enoch's hardship. This seems to be what Jude believed also, because Jude uses Enoch as an example of someone who saw a lot of ungodliness around him (Jude 1:12-16). Contrast that world with Enoch's faith. Despite living in the most wicked world, because Enoch shined so brightly, God took him away so that he did not experience death. Wow! (4) However, perhaps the Hebrew author's point in bringing up Enoch is not that Enoch had faith despite hardship. Perhaps it is because Enoch is the first mention of a person's faith being well-pleasing to God. While we study this chapter, we are looking at HOW these folks' faith can be modeled by ourselves. Remember, the ultimate goal of faith is not for ourselves or in ourselves. The ultimate goal of faith is for God, in God, and to please God. In short, perhaps the reason the author brought up Enoch is because Enoch is the first example of someone who lived by the next verse (Heb 6:6).

Without faith it is impossible to please God. (1) The value of faith cannot be understated. Of course, Paul often talked about how our faith is what brings salvation from God. Here, the author says that faith is an ingredient that is absolutely required if we are to please God. We can see this in all these stories. None of these stories focus on a blind trust that people had. All of these stories are all about each person's relationship with God. (2) Question: is faith all you need? No. In fact, the Scriptures say that there is another quality of our character that is even more important than faith. It is love. 1Cor 13:2b says, "If I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing." While our faith is placed in and fully directed toward God, love is more universal and foundational. Without love, faith is selfish. Without love, a person's faith would turn them into something that God doesn't want them to be. I have seen people who had tons of faith but did not have love. We would call them modern-day Pharisees or folks who act like they are God's policeman. While faith is required to please God, love is required too: both love toward God AND love toward your neighbor. Both are absolutely required. In Hebrews, we spend a lot of time talking about hope in God's promises. Right now, we are talking about how faith pleases God. Love is the foundation of both. As Paul said in that same chapter, "Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1Cor 13:13). This is the triad of characteristics that God is most looking for in us. Love is where it all starts and fuels everything else; we love God, we love others. Faith is what saves us and pleases God; our faith is in God who can do all things. Hope is what reminds us that our future is secure in God; after all, we place our hope in the future promises of God because He who promised is faithful.

Must believe. Literally, this is not the word for belief but the word for faith. The point of verse 6b is about what kind of faith we are to have. The kind of faith that matters is what we are putting that faith in. If we truly want to please God, our faith must be put in the proper thing. Of course, a person could have faith in anything. They could have faith in themselves. They could have faith in their own future or ability. That is not the kind of faith that pleases God. The faith that pleases God has two important ingredients. First, it is in God Himself. As it literally says, "It is necessary to have faith that He is."

This reminds me of what God said about Himself to Moses in the burning bush. Moses asked, “what is His name?” God said, “I am who I am [YHWH].” This kind of faith is not simply the belief that God exists. It is the faith that God is Himself existence (that He is life, light, love, etc). All existence exists because of God. God Himself creates and maintains all existence. Our faith is in who God is! The second ingredient is having faith that God rewards those who have faith. Again, this is not just a belief that God will grant eternal life and heaven to those who have faith. This is the faith that God is someone who wants nothing more than to love and bless and show grace and care for everyone. The opposite would be the misplaced faith that God is someone who loves to deal out justice and punishments. This was the misplaced faith of the servant who buried his talent in the ground and said, “Master, I know you. You’re a difficult man, reaping where you haven’t sown and gathering where you haven’t scattered seed” (Matt 25:24). Instead, the faith that God is looking for is like the other servants who knew that God would reward faithful work. That is, they knew that if they did the master’s will (had faith), God would reward their faith.

Noah. When we look at Noah’s faith, here is what Genesis says about Noah. Noah found grace in the sight of the Lord (Gen 6:8). Noah was a righteous man (Gen 6:9). Noah was perfect [Greek version] among his contemporaries (Gen 6:9). Noah was well-pleasing [Greek version] to God (Gen 6:9). Noah did everything that God had commanded him (Gen 6:22). Even before God spoke to Noah about the Flood, Noah had strong faith (probably similar to his great-grandfather Enoch).

What was not yet seen. (1) I believe this is one significant area where we see Noah’s hardship. You see, God told Noah that something was going to happen that had never happened before: rain. Gen 2:5 says that God never provided rain in the Garden of Eden. Later with Noah, this is the first reference to rain. The Hebrews author is implying that rain had never happened before Noah. The Flood was the very first time the earth and mankind would experience rain. Therefore, Noah had to have faith in what God said would come true. Noah had never seen rain nor had a concept of it. But when God said that He would bring not only rain (which was brand new) and a great Flood, Noah had faith in God that this would happen. Noah’s faith in God was strong, believing that God would do something that had never happened before. (2) What Noah models for us is the faith that God is able to do things that we have never seen before or things that we have known to be impossible. As Jesus tells us, “With God all things are possible.” Do we have this kind of faith in God—as Noah did?

Motivated by godly fear. The translators have added more words to this phrase. “Motivated” nor “godly” appear in this phrase. In the Greek, this is a one-word phrase. This one word is not the normal word for fear (phobos). The word used here is being circumspect or apprehensive. That is, it is a fear that is felt when a person is facing the possibility of punishment. Noah knew that this punishment was for the exceedingly wicked world around him. Noah knew the world deserved it, so he built the Ark, not only because God commanded him to but also because Noah was fearful of experiencing the coming punishment on the whole world.

He condemned the world. (1) This is the idea that a person who is presented with the choice to follow the ways of wickedness but repents and follows the way of faith instead, this person proves that it was possible for others to repent and follow the way of faith also. Jesus gives two examples of this in Matt 12:38-42. (1a) First, because of the sins of the people of Nineveh, God appointed them for destruction. But of course, God sent Jonah to give them a final chance to repent. And they did! Because of their repentance and faith, God saved them from the punishments they deserved. Therefore, if the people of Nineveh, who were not God’s special people, humbled themselves in faith, they proved that the people of Israel could do that too. So if the people of Israel, who were God’s special people, did not repent or show faith, then the righteous example of the people of Nineveh—in a sense—condemned unrepentant Israelites. (1b) Second, the queen of Sheba heard about the wisdom of Solomon, which was given to him by God. So she traveled to Israel to see him, knowing that he was a man of God. If this gentile queen noticed the God-given wisdom of Solomon and came to him for advice, what excuse do the Israelites have if they choose not to gain from Solomon’s God-given wisdom? The queen of Sheba proved that her faith was stronger than the many Israelites who ignored Solomon. In a sense, the righteous example of this gentile queen condemned the Israelites who ignored Solomon’s wisdom. (2) In the same way, Noah proved his faith by listening to God, believing God, and obeying God’s commands about how to be saved from worldwide destruction. The people of Noah’s day had the chance to repent and believe God. However, they did not. Noah, who lived in the same time, proved that everyone had a chance to get on the boat and be saved. But



because Noah showed faith and the rest continued to disobey, Noah—in a sense—condemned the rest of the world—who did not listen to God.

Abraham when he was called. (1) This display of faith in Abraham's life is from Gen 12:1-7. Because the author says it twice, the focal point is at Gen 12:4a, "Abram went." The faith that Abraham showed was obeying God's call. God called Abraham to do something: go to a new land. Abraham showed his faith by going. I have a theory: it is possible that Abraham became the father of faith instead of his father, Terah. In Gen 11, Terah gathered his entire family and set out for Canaan (just as Abraham did in Gen 12). However, Terah and all the family stopped in modern day Harran, Turkey. Terah stopped at Harran and that is where he died. However, when Abraham received the call from God to travel to Canaan, he obeyed that call. Because Terah was also planning on traveling to Canaan, I assume that God might have called Terah in the exact same way. But since Terah only went half way and quit, God then called Abraham to continue on to Canaan with Abraham's entire family (plus Lot's family). It is possible that Abraham obeyed God even though his father, Terah, did not. (2) From this story of Abraham's faith, I will propose three hardships. (2a) First, like I theorized, God's call to Abraham might have already been a call to Terah. But Terah stopped in Harran and quit the journey, showing that Terah did not have the faith to follow God's call. But when God called Terah's son, Abraham, he did obey the call. The hardship is that Abraham's obedience had to prove that he could do what his father could not. Abraham showed that his faith was greater than his father's, so Abraham obeyed God's calling to go to Canaan. (Again, if my theory is true that God had called Terah also.) (2b) Second, another hardship was that Abraham was being called by God to uncharted territory. Abraham was going to a place he had never been before and it was going to be given to him. Imagine that someone was offering you a very special or a very valuable gift. But to receive that gift, you had to go where you had never been before. Even today, people call that a leap of faith. For Abraham, he had to decide whether he would obey God and trust God—even though it meant leaving his familiar home. For Abraham, there was no plan. The only thing God promised was the gift of new land. Beyond that, Abraham didn't have a plan. He was taking a leap of faith into uncharted territory. And that is hard to do! Abraham is our example, when God calls us into uncharted territory. (2c) Third, when Abraham stopped at the first place in the land (Shechem), God promised that He "will give this land to your offspring" (Gen 12:7). This is actually a double hardship. First, even before Abraham and Sarah left Babylon, Sarah was already barren. Here, God tells Abraham that He will give this land to Abraham's children. What children!? God is making a promise to Abraham that is biologically impossible. How can God give land to Abraham's children when Abraham will never have children?? Perhaps the everyday person would give up on God and reject God, thinking that God was only deceiving him the whole time. But not Abraham. Abraham continued to stay in Canaan, and within the next two verses Abraham builds an altar and calls upon the name of the Lord. Second, Abraham might disbelieve God's promises because the promised gift is not for him. Think about it. God says that He will show the land to Abraham. Then God says that the land is not to be given to Abraham but to Abraham's children. And as we see Genesis unfold, we see that is the case. This promise God made about the land of Canaan was not to be given to Abraham but to Abraham's children. Abraham himself wouldn't even see the fulfillment of the Promised Land! Yet, Abraham still had faith. He accepted God's promise, believing that his children would one day receive it from God.

Abraham stayed as a foreigner. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were equal heirs of God's promise. Why would they stay as foreigners in Canaan and live in tents? All three of them knew that the Promised Land was not promised to them. They knew that God would fulfill His promise in their children. But God did not leave them high and dry. In Gen 15:13-21, God told Abraham that it would be another 400 years of sojourning for him, Isaac, Jacob, and their children—before the land was given to them. Therefore, what did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob do in response? They lived as foreigners and in tents. They knew that God would not fulfill this promise in their lifetime. This was their hardship. Even though they would not receive this gift, they lived like their children would. They had faith that God would do what He said. These three men are examples for us as we wait for the promises of God—knowing that God's promises may not be fulfilled in our lifetime.

City that has foundations. When God told Abraham to go to Canaan, Abraham did not receive Canaan as his home. Abraham would not build a city or become a great nation (which had been happening since Noah and after Abraham). If Abraham was not supposed to be nation-building during his lifetime, then what would be left for him? The Hebrews author tells us here. Abraham never did call

a city on earth his home. Abraham looked forward to the city that is given to all who have faith in God: the heavenly city ([Rev 21:22-27](#)).

Sarah. Sarah is listed as faithful because “she considered the One who had promised was faithful.” However, this is not what we remember about Sarah. We remember that Sarah laughed. Could Sarah laugh but also be faithful? The Hebrews author is saying this is the case. First, God told Abraham that he would have a child through Sarah, and Abraham laughed (Gen 17:15-21). Second, God told Sarah that she would have a child, and she laughed (Gen 18:10-14). Third, God visited Sarah, and she became pregnant (Gen 21:1-2). When Sarah gives birth to a son, she names him Isaac, which means “laughter.” Sarah even said, “God has made me laugh, and everyone who hears will laugh with me” (Gen 21:6). In all of these events, Hebrews says that Sarah considered God as faithful. Again, can Sarah laugh while considering God faithful? There are two explanations. First, Sarah laughed at the idea that she could bear a child when she was both already barren AND 99 years old, but Sarah still had faith in God Himself, who never breaks His promises. In other words, Sarah doubted the physical possibility of this, but she put her faith in a God who laughs at “physical impossibilities” (Gen 18:14). Second, Sarah laughed because she had doubts, but she also had faith in God Himself. In other words, Sarah had doubts, however, her faith in God greatly outweighed her doubts in God. Regardless of the reason why Sarah laughed, the solution for Sarah was the same: her faith was in God! After all, as she gave birth to Isaac, she continued to laugh. She laughed because God did this miracle, and now she is laughing at either the “impossible” circumstances or she is laughing at the doubt she used to have. It was logical for her to doubt because God was promising something very outrageous. It would be every person’s nature to doubt. It was totally normal for Sarah to laugh. But greater than those doubts, Sarah put her faith in God (not in body nor in her age)! Sarah is an example to us today. If we are faced with such doubt that causes us to laugh at the possibility of God doing something, we can follow Sarah’s example by putting our faith in God alone. And when God blows our minds by fulfilling His promises, we can laugh at ourselves for the doubt that we used to have.

### **11:13-16 The faithful sought the heavenly, not the earthly**

Died in faith. They died having faith. They died, knowing that they would not see the fulfillment of God’s promises. That is, these faithful folks accepted death instead of fulfillment. Their faith was stronger than death. Their faith looked past their own deaths. Even death itself would not make them loose faith. Again, their faith was not in God’s promises themselves. If it was, then they would expect God to deliver in their lifetimes. Instead, their faith was in God Himself. They knew that all things, including life and death, are in God’s hands. Even if they died, they knew God would continue to work and fulfill everything He promised. Yet, they lived their lives like God would fulfill His promises eventually, whether they lived or died. Now that is what faith looks like!

Seek a homeland. Literally, “They searched a fatherland.” Some countries call their land “the motherland.” That is the concept here, but instead of this being about a homeland on earth, this is a homeland in heaven. The Hebrews author uses the word “fatherland” because God is our Father. These faithful folks lived on earth, knowing that their fatherland is not on earth. They knew they had to live faithfully and die faithfully to find their true fatherland, which is God’s fulfillment/gift to all who are faithful.

Thinking about where they came from. (1) At first look, this verse reminded me of when Paul said, “Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead” (Php 3:13). This verse appears to be about leaving the past behind (like these faithful people did), and look forward to God’s future promises. That is, it is worthwhile to leave behind our past faithlessness and move forward toward faith. (2) However, after looking at the Greek, I believe the author has a different message in mind. “Where they come from” has the meaning, “Where you come out from.” This is a reference to Christians who have come out from the world. When people become Christians, they are from the world and are transferred into the Kingdom (Col 1:13). Like Jesus told Pilate, “My kingdom is not from this world.... My kingdom does not have its origin here” (John 18:36). Jesus is from heaven and visits earth. Christians are from the world and are transferred into the heavenly kingdom. In short, I don’t think the primary point of this verse is past versus future; I think it is the world versus heaven. Consider Abraham; after he received God’s call and came out from Babylon, he could have thought about where he came from and used the opportunity to return. Of course, that would have been unfaithful of him. In the same way, God calls us out from the world, and it is our faith that

follows God. If we think about where we came from (a place without God), we have the opportunity to return to our life of unfaithfulness. But Abraham and all the people in this chapter did not look to the world they came from. Instead, their faith caused them to desire the greater place, the heavenly place.

Desire a better place. There is no Greek word for “place;” it is implied by the context. It literally says, “Now they desire a greater.” This is the same word used in the first few chapters of this letter, when the author was talking about how Jesus and Christianity is GREATER. Here, the author shows us folks from the Old Testament (Jews!) who sincerely desired something far greater: the HEAVENLY. God is not ashamed to be their God. This is how God feels about our faith. When you have faith, God takes pride in your relationship with Him!

Prepared a city. Remember Heb 6:6, “He rewards those who seek Him.” We see that in this verse. One of the greatest rewards that God has in store for the faithful is the heavenly city, the heavenly Jerusalem. About this city, Paul said, “The Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother” (Gal 4:26). About this city, it says in the next chapter, Heb 12:22-24. About this city, Jesus said, “To the victor... I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God—the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God” (Rev 3:12). About this city, Jesus said, “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if not, I would have told you. I am going away to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). About this city, John describes its appearance in detail, and John describes how the Holy City will come from heaven and how it will dwell with humans (Rev 21:1-4, 21:5-21, 21:22-27).

### **11:17-31 The faithful, from Abraham to Rahab.**

Abraham when he was tested. This is found in Gen 22:1-2. Why would God ask Abraham to do such a horrible thing? God was testing Abraham’s faith. Now, Abraham had already proven his faith multiple times. First, Abraham followed God’s call and traveled to Canaan (Gen 12). As a reward for his faith, God showed him all the land that God would give to his descendants. Then God made the promise again to Abraham (Gen 15), and Abraham believed God. As a reward for his faith, God credited Abraham with righteousness. With Abraham showing his incredible faithfulness to God, why would God need to test Abraham again in Gen 22? In this test, Abraham proves an even greater level of faithfulness toward God. Because of Abraham’s even greater faith, God has even greater blessings and rewards for Abraham (Gen 22:15-18)! After all, God had already made Abraham many promises. But Abraham’s faith was NOT in God’s promises. His faith was in God Himself. Even after being promises many things by God, Abraham was still faithful to God. We can follow Abraham’s example... Instead of merely resting in God’s promises, we can put our faith in God Himself, following and obeying God even when God calls us to do even more incredible things than we have done before—even when those calls from God seem harder and crazier than what we expected.

Offered Isaac. (1) Did Abraham offer his son Isaac? The answer is no. God stopped Abraham before he offered Isaac. So what does the author say that Abraham offered Isaac? Because Abraham completely and fully had offered Isaac IN HIS HEART. Whether Abraham actually went through with the action or not, when God looked at Abraham’s heart, God saw that Abraham had passed the test. Even James says the same thing, showing that Abraham’s actions (even though they were not completed) proved his faithfulness (Jam 2:21-23). This is why the author says that Abraham received Isaac back. In Abraham’s heart and mind, because God had commanded it, Isaac was already good as dead. So when God stopped Abraham from completing the offering, it was as if Abraham received Isaac back from the dead. (2) There is another unsung hero of this story. At this time, Abraham was well over 100 years old and Isaac was probably in his teens. At this time, Isaac would have been physically stronger than his dad. Once they arrived on the mountain, if Abraham took Isaac and laid him on the altar, then Isaac could have easily overpowered his dad and escaped. If Isaac wasn’t willing, he could have escaped. It seems apparent that Isaac was willing and allowed his dad to tie him up and lay him on the altar! Therefore, not only do we see Abraham’s faith, but we see Isaac’s faith also!

Raise someone from the dead. For us, the idea that someone could raise from the dead is something we hear often. It happened many times in the Old Testament and New Testament. After all, raising from the dead is kind of Jesus’ thing! But think about Abraham. When Abraham lived, no one EVER had risen from the dead. Until the time of Abraham, dead was dead. The concept of someone raising

from the dead may not have existed. That is, it is possible that Abraham might have been the first person who ever had the idea that God could raise someone from the dead. To me, this is another example of Abraham's faith. How else could Abraham reconcile these two things: God's promise that Isaac would be the son of promise and God's command that Abraham should offer Isaac on an altar? Abraham's faith in God was so strong, he looked for a way that both of God's statements would come true. The way Abraham reconciled these two things was the idea that he would offer Isaac and then God would raise Isaac from the dead. Abraham once again proved his faith by believing that God could do the impossible!

Isaac. Isaac's act of faith was in his blessing of Jacob and Esau (Gen 27). However, if you know that story, you will see that the blessing did NOT happen the way Isaac wanted it to. This is when Rebekah and Jacob tricked Isaac into blessing Jacob, even though Isaac wanted to bless Esau. Did Jacob steal the blessing? Yes, however, it was God's will that Jacob receive the blessing anyway. Before Jacob and Esau were even born, Rebekah cried out to God because of her difficult pregnancy. God gave Rebekah a prophecy, saying that she would give birth to twins and the older would serve the younger (Gen 25:22-23). Esau was born first, then Jacob, who was holding onto Esau's heel. Therefore, God had already prophesied that Esau would serve Jacob, and Jacob would be the son who should be blessed. So when time came for the blessing, Isaac decided to bless the older son, Esau, which was contrary to God's prophecy. Isaac did not believe or he did not remember God's will but instead Isaac was following the tradition that the older son should be blessed. So again, when Jacob and Rebekah tricked Isaac, they were actually following God's will. Now, they were not following God's will by lying and deceiving Isaac, but God had already prophesied that Jacob would be greater. Where is Isaac's faithfulness in the blessing? This came after he prophesied on and blessed the "wrong" son. You see, after Isaac realized that he had been tricked by Jacob, Isaac told Esau that there was nothing he could do to change his prophecy/blessing. Isaac had blessed and prophesied on Jacob, and Isaac saw that God's prophecy had come true—in spite of himself! Isaac must have realized that he was showing favoritism toward Esau instead of following God's will. Even when Esau begged, Isaac stayed true to his prophecy and blessing for Jacob (Gen 27:37). Isaac is a great example of faith to us, because Isaac was humbled when he realized that he was prophesying in contrary to God's will. When we discover times when we have been living contrary to God (and perhaps even see when God uses us in spite of ourselves), we can be humbled like Isaac and re-commit ourselves to God's will.

Jacob. Jacob is called faithful because of the same reason as Isaac: in the blessing of his sons. Genesis chapters 48-49 is Jacob's blessings of all the tribes. Unlike Isaac, we see that Jacob's prophecies about his sons/tribes were true to God's will. For example, when Joseph brings Jacob his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, while Jacob is blind (just as Isaac was also), Jacob crosses his hands and blesses Ephraim first—even though Manasseh was the firstborn. So Joseph tries to correct his father, telling him he's doing it wrong. But Jacob is not convinced. He prophesies "backwards," blessing Ephraim before Manasseh just as Isaac had blessed Jacob before Esau. And in this, Jacob is also faithful because he did not prophesy according to Joseph's will but prophesied according to God's will. Jacob is a good example for us in that he was more faithful to God than he was to his family.

Leaning on the top of his staff. This phrase is a quotation from the Old Testament. But you will not find this phrase in most English Bibles. This is another example of the Hebrews author quoting from the Septuagint. This phrase is from Gen 47:31. It is the last phrase before Jacob starts blessing and prophesying for his sons. The Hebrews author includes this phrase to remind his readers where they can find the blessings/prophecies that Jacob gave his sons in chapters 48-49.

Joseph. At the very end of Genesis, Joseph makes a final request and prophesies the coming Exodus. Joseph even says, "God will certainly come to your aid." Why would Joseph care about the Israelites leaving Egypt? Why would the Israelites ever need God's aid while in Egypt? I mean, things are GREAT! Joseph is the second in command of all of Egypt. The Israelites have settled in the best area of Egypt, called Goshen. Why would the Israelites ever need to leave? However, Joseph says that God will help them and they will leave Egypt. Joseph is faithful because he is looking past the earthly blessings that the Israelites are currently experiencing. Joseph remembers the promise that God made to Abraham. Abraham must have passed it along to Isaac, who passed it along to Jacob, who passed it along to Joseph. In Gen 15, God told Abraham that in 400 years, God would rescue Abraham's descendants from slavery and oppression. And so, Joseph decided to believe what God

said instead of relying on all the Egyptian blessings they were receiving. Joseph believed that, even though they were receiving all those Egyptian blessings, God said that the Israelites were still in a time of slavery and oppression. Joseph is a great example for us, inspiring us to look past the temporary blessings of this life and believing that God's future blessings are the true blessings we crave.

Moses' parents. The most powerful phrase here is that Moses' parents did not fear the king's edict. The Pharaoh was afraid of the Israelites, so he commanded that all Israelite infant boys be killed. Moses' parents did not fear the Pharaoh (Ex 2:1-4). They feared God, who values all life. Moses' parents wouldn't kill their infant boys. (It was not only Moses. Remember that Moses had an older brother named Aaron. Moses' parents didn't kill Aaron either.) And it wasn't only Moses' parents. In Exodus 1:15-18, we see that the Israelite midwives did not fear the king's edict either. They also feared God. Both Moses' parents and the midwives are great examples of faith for us. Their allegiance was to God way before their allegiance to their government. Because they feared God, they did not fear their wicked government.

Moses refused to be called Egyptian. Following the order of events in Heb 11:23-29, this phrase describes Moses before he left Egypt. This must be about Ex 2:11-12. Moses calls the Israelites "his own people" and sees their oppression by the Egyptians. Even though Moses grew up in Pharaoh's palace and given an Egyptian name: Moses, he still considers the Israelites "his people" (Exodus 2 uses that phrase twice). Then, Moses comes to the defense of a Hebrew who was being beaten by an Egyptian slave master. We can see that Moses knew what he was doing was wrong, because he looked around to make sure he wasn't seen as he murdered the Egyptian. Then, Moses tries to break up a fight between two Israelites, as one was being beaten by another. However, the Israelites were not ready nor willing for Moses to be their leader. Moses was already known to be a murderer. In those three ways (whether they were morally right or wrong), we see that Moses identified himself with his true, Israelite heritage instead of his Egyptian heritage. By faith, Moses chose a people who were being mistreated, enslaved, and beaten over a people who lived like royalty, in palaces, and with all the pleasures of sin. Moses could have chosen to live a comfortable life as an Egyptian and worshipped their idols. By faith, Moses chose to live life as an Israelite and worship the God. In this way, Moses chose suffering over pleasure, which was an act of faith.

Considered the Christ to be greater wealth. This verse is very difficult to understand. Did Moses have some kind of concept of the coming Christ? Perhaps, but I do not believe so. I believe that the Hebrews author wrote this for our understanding. He is comparing Moses' faith in choosing sufferings over pleasure as a comparison for us. That is, as Moses chose to identify with the suffering Israelites and reject the pleasures (and sin) of the Egyptians, we Christians should identify with the sufferings of Christ and reject the pleasures (and sin) of a life without Christ. Another way to think about it is that Moses had a choice to live according to the pleasures of sin or to live according to God's reward. The pleasures of sin are temporary. God's reward is eternal. Just like Moses, we Christians should choose the path of Christ, which is "greater wealth!" The example of Moses is also an example for us. Moses understood that identify as an Israelite meant a life of suffering. Moses wasn't afraid of suffering—even suffering at the hand of Pharaoh (Heb 11:26). In the same way, we Christians often choose paths of suffering because that is the same path that Jesus chose. Paul talked about how, as Christians, sufferings will come upon us—just as they came upon Christ. But along with sufferings, there also comes comfort to aid us through those sufferings (2Cor 1:3-7). It is an act of faith to choose God's ways, even if it means temporary suffering. This is what Moses chose, and so should we. As Moses was faced with the decision, we are faced with the same decision. Will we choose the pleasures (of sin) or choose the reward (of God)?

Moses left Egypt. (1) This event is most likely the second time Moses left Egypt, Exodus chapter 5 and following. This is event where Moses tries over and over to convince Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave. The first time Moses asks Pharaoh to let the people go, Pharaoh forces the Israelites to get their own straw to make bricks, without changing the quota of bricks that they had to make. The Israelites aggressively complain to Moses about this, blaming him. So, Moses goes to the Lord and says, "Lord, why have You caused trouble for this people? And why did You ever send me? Ever since I went in to Pharaoh to speak in Your name he has caused trouble for this people, and You haven't delivered Your people at all" (Ex 5:22-23). This was the only time that Moses questioned or had doubt. After Moses made that plea to the Lord, the Lord was in constant conversation with Moses, telling him how things were going to turn out. Over the next chapters, Moses confronted

Pharaoh many times. As the author says: Moses was not afraid of the king's anger. Even though Pharaoh threatened Moses many, MANY times, Moses knew that the Lord would protect him and Moses knew that the Lord would eventually (and powerfully) deliver the Israelites from Egypt. This is what Moses' faith looked like: to be unafraid of Pharaoh, even though Pharaoh could have had Moses killed at anytime. Instead, Moses trusted the Lord, putting his fear in the Lord. The author said that Moses saw the One who is invisible. The most common description given to the Lord during the time of the plagues and Exodus was God's "strong hand." After all, it was God's strength who performed all those plagues on Egypt as well as the miracles that happened during the Exodus from Egypt. Moses, who was faithful, saw God's invisible power: God's strong hand. Moses did not fear Pharaoh because God's strong hand was protecting Moses, as well as God's strong hand bringing suffering on Egypt. Moses' hardship was putting his faith in God, even when the most powerful person in the world was threatening to kill him. (2) [Originally, I thought this was when Moses left Egypt the first time, after he killed the Egyptian. I tried to fit that story in with what Hebrews says here. However, after teaching the class, I think the event the author had in mind was the second time Moses left Egypt (the Exodus). But I decided to keep my thoughts here anyway, because I don't think they were half bad.] Perhaps the idea is the contrast of living under the roof of Pharaoh, with all the comfort, security, and necessities that come with it, and living under the unseen roof of the unseen God, who is able to strengthen and preserve us by His provisions. Moses could see that if he stayed with Pharaoh, he would have everything he needed to live and be protected. But Moses left that and believed that the invisible God would provide him with everything he needed to live and be protected. By faith, Moses shows us to not trust in the provisions that the world offers—even if they are provisions that we need. Instead, we can act on faith and allow the unseen God meet our every need. Jesus chose the exact same thing when the devil tempted Him to turn stones to bread (Matt 4:1-14). For example, we should believe that we need the government to meet our needs and keep us safe. We should believe that the invisible God would do a far better job at that. That is faith placed where it ought to be!

Moses instituted the Passover. When Moses grew up, Egypt was a powerhouse and no one could challenge them. But here, Moses is back and God has sent many plagues to challenge Egypt. The tables have turned and Egypt's time has come to an end. Turns out, the Israelites were on God's side in the end. Moses was the person who established the Passover. This was the ceremony that would protect the Israelites from the Angel of the Lord, who would destroy the firstborn. In fact, this would be the tenth and final plague that would finally break Egypt and allow the Israelites to leave. When Moses grew up, he wanted to be identified with the Israelites. Now, based on God's timing, Moses would be the leader of all the Israelites, leading them out of Egypt—just as God had prophesied to Abraham about 400 years before. Moses' faith is an example for us, because there may come a time when God puts us in a position where we can powerfully do His will. When that time comes, we can trust God, believe God, and put our faith in God and obey Him—just as Moses obeyed God and had the honor of establishing the Passover and leading the Israelites out of slavery.

The Israelites cross the Red Sea. When God is on your side, He always provides a way of escape (1Cor 10:13). Even though the people were incredibly afraid of the Egyptian army, they took the leap of faith and walked through the waters. While also being afraid of waters on each side as high as the highest walls, the Israelites had faith to walk between those waters. They trusted God's power to keep the waters back. Because they walked through the Red Sea on dry ground, this proved that their faith in God to provide a way of escape was greater than their fear of the Egyptian army. And as it says, the Egyptians, who did not have faith in God, were the ones who experienced the walls of water collapsing on top of them and drowning them. The faith of the Israelites is a great example to us. Their faith reminds us to look for God's ways of escape. Even when life is closing in around us and it seems like we have no choice but to fall to the enemy, the faithful will look to God for a way of escape—just as the Israelites did. Even though it was very scary times, their way of escape was dry ground.

The Israelites brought down the walls. But wait, the Israelites did not bring down the walls of Jericho. They didn't touch them! God brought down the walls by Himself. What did the Israelites do that was so faithful? First, they obeyed God exactly. Second, they did nearly nothing in order to allow God to display His incredible power. Sometimes, faithfulness is stepping back and watching God take care of things. Sometimes, faithfulness is doing very little while God does the heavy lifting and receives all the glory. This event with the Israelites at Jericho is also like the event with Gideon. Both stories involve faithful people who, first, fully obey God and, second, let God do the work. Their faith can

stand as a great example for us. Whenever we are faced with a problem that is way too big for us to handle or whenever God tell us to step back or slow down, the faithful person will let go and let God. Sometimes, faith looks backwards, as there are times when God asks us to do less, which allows Him to do more. When those times come, will we obey God and step out of His way? If we do, then we will see God's miracles and we will give all the glory to Him. What was the Israelites' hardship? It was either the temptation of being asked to do nothing, which seems very illogical. Or, their hardship was the people of Jericho, who would taunt and insult them. Yet, the Israelites were told to be completely quiet until the very last time they circled Jericho. Even when Jericho threw insults at them, the Israelites were expected to turn the other cheek and allow God to deal with Jericho.

Rahab. Rahab's hardship was growing up in a Canaanite culture and only knowing a land filled with idolatry. Rahab's upbringing and surroundings would be her reasons to remain unfaithful, like all the people around her. So why did Rahab receive the spies? Despite growing up as a Canaanite and living in a land that was filled with idolatry, when Rahab heard the stories of what God did to Egypt and the Amorite kings, she believed! Rahab gave one of the most faith-filled speeches in all of Scripture: [Josh 2:8-13](#). Rahab believed that Jericho was doomed. Rahab also believed that God was able to save her and her family. Rahab's faith is inspirational to us because she hears about God and believes God. As we hear about what God has done in the world and read all these great stories from Scripture, do we believe them as powerfully as Rahab did? (See also [John 20:24-31](#).)

### **11:32-38 The faithful, from the judges to everyone else**

[The author does not explain what events in these people's lives was what made them faithful. So, I will guess what made these folks great people of faith.]

Gideon. In Judges 6, Midian was oppressing Israel. First, Gideon's hardship was constantly doubting God. He didn't believe it was God, so he asked for a sign by offering food. When the Lord performed the sign, Gideon built an altar to God. Second, when Gideon was gathering the army, he asked God for two more signs (the fleece and the dew). God proved Himself to Gideon again. Third, God told Gideon to reduce the number of his army to 0.3% of the army's original numbers. This time, Gideon obeyed without asking for a sign (perhaps the two signs with the fleece were good enough). Fourth, before the battle, God takes the initiative by giving Gideon another sign: the dream of a Midian man who believed that Gideon would win. (Is it possible that this Midian man believed in God more than Gideon did?) Gideon heard the dream and worshipped God. Lastly, Gideon's faith in God had grown so much that he mightily led the Israelites in battle, allowing God to defeat the entire Midian army. In conclusion, Gideon's hardship was low self-worth and doubting God. Gideon's solution was to stand fast on the times when God had proven Himself in the past. It took a lot of previous signs for Gideon to put his faith in God. Gideon had seen how many times God had proven Himself in the past. In the end, Gideon remembered those signs and believed that God would prove Himself again.

Barak. (1) For nearly all the folks listed in Hebrews 11 before Barak, their stories involved some kind of miracle or conversation with God. But in Barak's story, there is no big miracle or conversation with God. What was it in Barak's life that made him faithful? In this verse, the author has picked four people from the book of Judges: Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah. The thing that these men had in common was their military prowess in fighting the Canaanites. After Joshua, it was the Israelites' responsibility to wipe out the rest of the Canaanites, but they didn't do a good job at it. Therefore, God raised up these judges to fight back against these oppressors. I believe this is why Barak is counted as faithful. Of course, why not mention all the great judges from the book of Judges? Why choose Barak as an example? After all, when we think of Barak, we usually think of the other great person of faith in the same story: Deborah. (2) In Judges chapter 4, Deborah is the official leader and judge of Israel. It would make more sense to list Deborah here, right? In the story, Deborah was a prophetess and the leader of Israel. When the time came to attack Israel's oppressors, Barak was the military commander. Barak was faithful to God in taking up God's call to lead the army. Barak was faithful to Deborah and submitted to her guidance (Jud 4:8). We see faithful humility in Barak in Judges 4:9. Even when told that he would not receive honor from this victory, Barak still obeyed the Lord's calling. What was Barak's hardship? Perhaps it was that Barak submitted himself to the leadership of a woman, Deborah, and that Barak surrendered his honor to another woman, Jael. In a culture where a woman leader was unheard of, Barak knew that God had appointed Deborah and Jael (who killed Sisera) to be leaders and to receive honor. Barak did not try to have more authority than Deborah or more glory than Jael. Instead, we see through the whole

story that Barak and Deborah became partners and worked on God's team to defeat God's enemies. In short, perhaps Barak was counted faithful because he knew that his ultimate submission was to God, not demanding or expecting honor and glory for himself. In Barak, he displayed these qualities: obedience to God and Deborah, submission to Deborah's leadership, and humility in allowing his honor to be given to a brave woman—even when God had assigned him to be the military commander.

**Samson.** Samson's story is well-known. God had given Samson an INCREDIBLE gift from birth: superhuman strength. God put a condition on that gift: Samson must never cut his hair. This sounds familiar to Adam and Eve in the Garden. God gave them the greatest gift: a paradise. But they had one condition: do not eat from one tree. Just like Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan the serpent, Samson was tempted by Delilah the Philistine prostitute. Samson's weakness was a foreign woman. Through Delilah, Samson was greatly sinning against God. And it cost him his hair and his strength. Samson's hardship was that his sins cost him the greatest gift that God ever gave him! Samson suffered GREATLY because of his sin. What made Samson faithful? Like all the other judges, Samson fought against Israel's enemies and was very, very successful. That makes him faithful. But perhaps Samson's most faithful act was at the end of his life. While he was in prison and suffering the consequences of his sin, his hair grew back. While in prison, God was giving Samson an opportunity to repent. When Samson knew that his superstrength was returning, he called out to God. In Samson's last act, we see his repentance. Even though he was blind and knew he was going to die, he was still devoted to the calling that God called him to: to defeat Israel's enemies. As a final request to God, Samson continued to be Israel's great judge and killed thousands of Philistines in one day—including all the leaders of the Philistines. Samson was faithful because, even after suffering because of his sins, he repented and allowed God to use him in one more incredible moment. The faith that we can learn from Samson is that we should also accept any and all consequences for our sins. But even when our sins have utterly destroyed our lives and we have reached the bottom of the bottom, when we repent in faith, God can still use us in ways that are even more incredible than what we could have done before we had sinned. God did that for Samson; God can do that for you!

**Jephthah.** (1) From Judges 11, we see that Jephthah had a few things going for him. He was a mighty and successful warrior. In fact, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah so that he would rise up and defeat the Ammonites. He had a daughter. But Jephthah had two significant hardships. First, because of his family of origin, Jephthah was rejected and abandoned by his family. Jephthah was an "illegitimate son," because his dad had an affair with a prostitute. Jephthah was never accepted by his brothers and kicked out of the family. So, Jephthah lived as an outcast without a family. Second, Jephthah made a vow to the Lord that, if the Lord would give him success, he would offer as a burned offering the first thing that passed through the gates of his home. When Jephthah returned from battle as a victor, his only daughter was rejoicing and dancing. She ran through the gate to meet him. Judges 11:39 says, "[Jephthah] kept the vow he had made about her." What was it in Jephthah's life that showed him to be faithful? Was it the fight with his enemies (like Gideon, Barak, and Samson)? Or was it with his vow and his daughter? (2) The text doesn't explicitly say that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter as a burned offering. But this is the plain interpretation of what is said. Both Jews (the Talmud, Josephus) and early Christians (Methodius, Origen) believed that Jephthah really did sacrifice his daughter. It wasn't until the Middle Ages that some Jews introduced new interpretations to this story, and some Christians followed. For example, John Wesley strongly says that Jephthah did not sacrifice his daughter, because she was mourning her virginity, not her death. Regardless of what Jephthah did, we know for sure is that Jephthah was faithful. Otherwise, he would not have been included in Hebrews 11. It is a fact that Jephthah should be counted as faithful. (3) Jephthah's hardship was that he was stuck between a rock and a hard place. Deut 18:10,12 says, "No one among you is to make his son or daughter pass through the fire... Everyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord." But Num 30:2 says, "When a man makes a vow to the Lord or swears an oath to put himself under an obligation, he must not break his word, he must do whatever he has promised." And Deut 23:21 says, "If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to keep it, because He will require it of you, and it will be counted against you as sin." Therefore, Jephthah's hardship was that he was in a lose-lose situation. What does someone do when they are in this situation? Are there hardships worse than: no matter what you do, it would disappoint God? Yet, God knows that Jephthah is in this situation. God is a God of grace and forgiveness. In fact, even when someone like Jephthah finds themselves in a lose-lose situation, God



still understands. God is still able to say that such a person is faithful! Even though Jephthah was in a lose-lose situation, he is still included in the Hall of Faith! (4) In my view, Jephthah remembered the story of Abraham and Isaac, and that story influenced his decision. When Abraham was faced with a lose-lose situation, both having the child of the promise and being commanded to sacrifice that son. Abraham chose to obey God by sacrificing his son. Jephthah might have thought about how his story wasn't so different from Abraham's. Just as with Isaac who allowed his dad to tie him up and place him on the altar, Jephthah's daughter submitted to her dad and to his vow to the Lord. (5) The Pre-Nicene Christians made comments about the story of Jephthah, and I believe they are worth including. (5a) Methodius lived around 290 AD. He sings a song of praise for Jephthah's daughter. He compares her faithfulness and obedience to Jephthah with Jesus' faithfulness and obedience to His Father. As Jesus submitted to His father's plan, Jephthah's daughter submitted to her father's vow. (5b) Origen wrote around 230 AD. He saw Jephthah's daughter the same way, saying, "The victim approved his vow." Origen also compares Jephthah's daughter with Jesus. Just as Jephthah's daughter was the victim when it came to saving Israel from the Ammonites, Jesus was the victim when it came to the salvation of all people. How do you think Jephthah felt when he offered his only daughter? How do you think Father God felt when He offered His only Son? Origen admits that, in both stories, Jephthah and Father God seem cruel. However, the purpose of both stories was for the salvation of others. In short, Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter was a shadow of the Father sacrificing His Son. Perhaps this is the reason why Hebrews includes Jephthah in the Hall of Faith. I believe it is. This story is as much about the faithfulness of Jephthah as it is about the faithfulness of his daughter.

David. What event in David's life showed that he was faithful? 1King 15:5 says about David's life, "David did what was right in the Lord's eyes, and he did not turn aside from anything that He had command him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." There are lots and lots of events from David's life that we can choose from. But there are two events that I could consider the most faithful. (1) When Goliath was taunting the Israelites, David showed more faith than King Saul and everyone in the army. The day David heard Goliath's taunts, he did not hesitate to tell people that he was willing to kill the giant. David said, "The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine" (1Sam 17:37). When David faced Goliath, he declared that it was the Lord who would give him the victory. Of course, David's hardship was that he battled a giant—literally. David showed his faithfulness by putting full and complete trust in God instead of fearing a giant in full armor. In modern times, we have a saying, "We all have our giants to face." This phrase comes from this event, when David faced a literal giant. We look at the story of David and Goliath and we see how it relates to us. The giant we face in our lives may not be Goliath, but each of us has a giant (something or someone) in our lives that wants to see us defeated. The giants in your life are bigger than you and want to see you defeated. Like David, will we put our faith in God (because God is bigger than every giant) and not fear at all the giants in our lives? (2) When Saul was actively trying to kill David, David refused to kill Saul. This happened twice (1Sam 24 and 1Sam 26)! David even commanded his men to not attack Saul. On the second time, Abishai told David that he would kill Saul for David. David's faith can be seen in what he tells Abishai, "As the Lord lives, the Lord will certainly strike him down: either his day will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. However, because of the Lord, I will never lift my hand against the Lord's anointed" (1Sam 26:10-11). From these examples, we see that David fully respected the things that belonged to God, which included Saul. For better or for worse, David saw Saul as God's servant and minister. This proved David's faithfulness because, as we know, Saul had abandoned God at this point. Yet, David still left Saul in God's hands. David wasn't going to be "God's policeman." Instead, David's faith would not allow him to interfere with what God was going to do with Saul. David's hardship was that he had an enemy... an active enemy who was actually and frequently trying to kill him. David's hardship was real and significant. Yet, even though David knew that Saul was not acting in God's will, David still gave Saul the utmost respect! Perhaps David saw that Saul's sins were not against him but Saul's sins were actually against God. Therefore, David believed that God would bring consequences on Saul. David completely gave Saul's fate over to God. David's example of faith shows us that, even when we see someone or something going against God's will, we must remember that we are not to step in where God has not allowed us to step in. There are three New Testament Scriptures that speak to this. Mark 9:38-40 and Rom 14:1-4. And speaking to

the faithful attitude that David had toward Saul, [Rom 12:19-20](#). I believe, David is the best Old Testament example of what it looks like to turn the other cheek—as Jesus said.

Samuel. Samuel was a true prophet and was faithful throughout his entire life. There are two events in his life as examples of his faithfulness. (1) First was Samuel's calling in 1Sam 3. Samuel was probably a young boy when the Lord called to him. Samuel did not realize it was the Lord speaking to him. Samuel's hardship was that he was young and inexperienced. As 1Sam 3:7 says, "Samuel had not yet experienced the Lord." Samuel was so inexperienced, he didn't even consider that God Himself was talking to him. But once Samuel was open to listening to God, he showed great faith. Even though Samuel was young and new to this "God thing," Samuel allowed God to use him as a true prophet (1Sam 3:19-21). Samuel had faith! (2) Second was when Samuel anointed Saul as the first king in 1Sam 8. The people saw the wickedness in Samuel's sons, knowing that Israel's future was at high risk. The people asked for a king like the other nations have. Samuel's hardship was dealing with this request from the people. I'm sure Samuel took this personally, because he knew his sons were not worthy. 1Sam 8:6 says, "This matter was evil in Samuel's eyes." Samuel knew their request was not good nor righteous. And God knew it too. God told Samuel that the people haven't rejected Samuel, but the people have rejected God. God says that Samuel is feeling the same thing that God has felt since they left Egypt. Samuel's hardship was having to accept the people's future path, which was evil. And God was accepting the people's request too. In fact, God had already prophesied through Moses that the Israelites would ask for a king (Deut 17:14ff)! 1Sam 8:22, "The Lord told Samuel, 'Listen to them. Appoint a king for them.' " Samuel's hardship was: taking this sinful world as it is, not as he would have it. (This was a tiny taste of God's hardship with all of mankind, which God accepts every single minute of every single day.) Samuel's faithfulness was obedience to God by anointing Saul as the first king. Of course, God had future plans. It was like God wanted to appoint Saul as king (who was not a great king) in order to show all of Israel the consequences of their choice. But later, God appointed a king who was a man after His own heart, in order to show Israel what a good king looked like. Samuel showed his faithful obedience to God by anointing both the first and the second kings of Israel.

The prophets. By prophets, I'm sure the author means everyone in the Old Testament who was a prophet of God. But in the greater context of this chapter, I believe the author also includes ANYONE who was faithful to God in a plethora of ways—not only those who were prophets.

Conquered kingdoms. The first people who come to mind should be Joshua, all the judges, and the first few kings, like David. All of these leaders conquered kingdoms, but it wasn't by their power; it was by God's power. For example, when Joshua led the military campaigns through Canaan, God actually killed more Canaanites than the Israelites did. For another example, Jericho was the first battle of many and proved that it was truly God who conquered the kingdoms. These faithful military commanders obeyed God, and they gained the victories.

Administered justice. Literally, this phrase is "worked righteousness." Yes, faithful people will work righteousness! These would include, again, Israel's judges and good kings. They helped the people with their problems, working righteousness in their lives. I also think of Nehemiah in chapter 13. Nehemiah returns to Judea, and as former governor, reforms the people back toward righteousness.

Obtained promises. Hebrews 11:13 and 11:39 point out that these faithful people did not obtain the great and eternal promises that come with Jesus Christ and the New Covenant. In this verse, the author must be talking about the temporary promises made to faithful people. These would include promises to Abraham about the Promised Land, promises to Moses about the Exodus, promises to Joshua that God would make him victorious, promises to David that his throne would last forever, promises to Jabez who obtained wealth, promises Hezekiah that he would live longer, and even promises to Paul who would suffer in Jesus' name.

Shut the mouths of lions. (1) This phrase is the easiest to identify the faithful person: Daniel (Daniel 6). Notice how the author says that Daniel shut the mouths of lions. Daniel couldn't have done that. Only God could have shut the mouths of lions! But when you look at the story, you see how Daniel's faith was the key. After all, the lions did not eat Daniel, but for the wicked leaders of Babylon that were thrown in, the lions killed them before they even reached the bottom of the den. Therefore, Daniel's faith made all the difference. Daniel's hardship was being employed by a nation that was an enemy to God. Daniel faced the decision of submitting to God (which would result in persecution) versus submitting to earthly rulers (which would result in faithlessness). It was probably very frightening to be sentenced to die in a lion's den because of faith. Yet, Daniel accepted the

punishment. And, because of his faith, God delivered him from that punishment. As a faithful person, Daniel experienced both the persecution AND the salvation that comes through faith!!! (2) Also, Samson, David, and Benaiah are recorded as overpowering lions.

Quenched the raging fire. Also from the book of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego quenched the fiery furnace (Daniel 3). Just like Daniel, these three men were faithful because they faced a government that was an enemy to God. They faced persecution because they would not worship an idol. Because of their faith in God, they were sentenced to die. They gave a powerful testimony of their faith, saying, "If the God we serve exists, then He can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He can rescue us from the power of you, the king. But even if He does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statues you set up" (Dan 3:17-18). God saw their faith and sent an Angel, a Son of God, into the fire, walking around with the three faithful men. Like Daniel, they experienced both the persecution AND the salvation that comes through faith!!!

Escaped the edge of the sword. Jacob escaped Esau, by fleeing to other relatives. David escaped Saul many times. Elijah escaped Jezebel, fleeing to Mount Horeb. Elisha escaped the army of Aram, seeing the invisible army of the Lord of Hosts. Paul escaped persecution many times, including escaping from a city by being lowered by a rope and a basket. In these cases, they didn't put faith in their own ability to resist their enemies. All of them put their faith in God, who could preserve their lives.

Gained strength after being weak. Hezekiah, the faithful and good king, prayed to the Lord for a longer life, and the prophet Isaiah told him that the Lord granted his prayer. Samson, the judge, was able to kill thousands of Philistines with merely the jawbone of a donkey. Samson also, even after being put in prison, his hair cut off, and blinded, he killed more Philistines in one final act than he did over the rest of his life. Naaman, the foreigner, came to a prophet of God, asking for healing from his skin disease and—obeying the command—God healed him. A man born blind had mud put in his eyes by Jesus and was told to wash in a certain pool; the blind man obeyed Jesus and was cured of his blindness. And there were many people that Jesus and the apostles healed throughout the Gospels and Acts.

Became mighty in battle. Again, all the judges, the good kings and military generals of Israel and Judah, and the Jews during the period of the Maccabees.

Put foreign armies to flight. This phrase is hard to translate. I think it is best translated, "Rolling away the encampments of foreigners." These faithful people are the same already mentioned.

Received their dead to life again. That is, by resurrection. Elijah raised up the son of the widow at Zarephath. Elisha raised up the son of a Shunammite woman. Even Jesus raised up Lazarus for Mary and Martha. These resurrections happened by God's power and by these people's faith.

[Faith through salvation; faith through suffering]. There should be a break in the middle of Hebrew 11:35. Up until this point, faithful people received blessings, salvation, and/or honor because of their faith. God did this for Danile, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Paul, David, etc However, God did not always bring salvation to each person of faith. From this point onward, the author lists many sufferings that came from a person's faith. God did not always save these faithful people from the hand of their enemies. The same faith that brings salvation from God is the same faith that brings persecutions and sufferings from the world. Let it be said and proclaimed: the same faith that accepts salvation is the same faith that accepts persecutions. Whether a person is saved from their hardships or whether a person suffers or is killed by their hardships, that person can still be a person of faith. All the faithful people who experienced Hebrews 11:35b-38 are just as faithful and victorious in God as all the faithful people who experienced Hebrews 11:4-34a. While they did not see salvation in this life, they will attain an even greater salvation in eternal life! As it says in verse 35: a better resurrection.

Tortured, not accepting release. There are a few stories that come to mind. (1) When Paul and Silas were in Philippi and prison, they experienced the earthquake and the conversion of the Philippian jailor. Here is what happened the next day: [Acts 16:35-40](#). In this situation, Paul did not want release, in order to show the Philippian rulers that they were very unjust. After the unjust judges realized this, Paul accepted release. Paul's hardship was being unlawfully imprisoned. His faith was seen that he considered others, like the Philippian jailor, as better than himself. In fact, Paul even considered the well-being of the local rulers, because if Rome found out they had unlawfully imprisoned Roman citizens, they would have died. First, Paul got their intention in regard to what

they did. Second, Paul did not make a big case about his “rights” as a Roman citizen. That is, he allowed the rulers to repent instead of getting them punished by Rome. (2) But there are other ancient stories that the Hebrews author probably had in mind. The word used for torture literally means to be placed on a drum (or a rack or a wheel) and then beaten. This happened to a certain prominent Jew under the Greeks. Because the Hebrew author is very, very familiar with the Septuagint, the author would also be familiar with the other books in the Septuagint that are not in found in most English Bibles today. The books that record the Jewish history under the Greeks are the books of the Maccabees. Here is the story that the author probably had in mind when saying that there were faithful people who were tortured and did not accept release. 2Macc 6:18-31. Eleazar’s hardship is obvious: he was actively and horribly being persecuted for being faithful to God. Eleazar showed THE GREATEST faith in the face of persecution by the Greeks. He valued the faith of young people and the rest of the Jewish nation more than he valued his own life. He knew that his devotion to God was on the line for everyone to see. That was his reason to be 100% faithful to God. Unlike Daniel and other previously mentioned, God allowed Eleazar to be martyred in order to glorify God. And Eleazar’s witness and testimony has been left for us as an example of a truly faithful person.

\* <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Maccabees+6&version=NRSVUE>

They might gain a better resurrection. The idea of the faithful being resurrected on the last day is not commonly found in the Old Testament. Martha believed in the Great Resurrection when she spoke to Jesus about Lazarus: John 11:20-24. Of course, Jesus taught about the Great Resurrection (John 5:24-30). But here, the author says that these ancient people of faith wanted to gain a better resurrection. There is only one place where we see faithful Jews speaking about being raised to life one day. In 2Macc 7, there is a very detailed story of the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons. Four times, these martyrs remark how they will be raised to life again one day. The author must have had these martyrs in mind! WARNING: this martyrdom account is extremely graphic. 2Macc 7:1-20. (Verses that mention the resurrection: 9, 11, 14, 23.) This mother and her seven sons had the same hardship: horrible persecution by the Greeks. Like Eleazar, their martyrdom is left to us as an incredible witness and testimony to what true faith looks like when under persecution.

\* <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Maccabees+7&version=NRSVUE>

Experienced mockings and scourgings. These sufferings and hardships could apply to many in the Old Testament. But I think they best apply to the mother and seven brothers in 2Macc 7 (see above).

Imprisonment. Many people were imprisoned because of their faith. There was Joseph, who was imprisoned multiple times. And Jeremiah, who was beaten, put into the stocks (Jer 20), put into a dungeon (Jer 37), and into an unused cistern (Jer 38). (We see plenty of this happening throughout Acts and the following New Testament letters.) In all those cases, they were faithful and righteous people who were unjustly punished by wicked people.

Stoned. (1) During the reign of wicked king Joash of Judea, Zechariah son of Jehoiada was the high priest after the death of his father. (This is not the Zechariah who wrote the book Zechariah.) He publicly spoke against Joash. 2Chr 24:20-21. Zechariah’s hardship was that he was trying to faithfully fulfill his duty as the high priest. And he was stoned for it. Even though he was a righteous person, he received a sinner’s death. As the author says in Heb 11:38, the world was not worthy of him! (2) According to Jewish tradition (and a book written in the late 300s AD called the Apocalypse of Paul), Jeremiah died by stoning also.

Sawed. According to Jewish tradition and Origen, Isaiah was martyred this way. Origen wrote, “For the author of this Letter to the Hebrews, in speaking of the prophets, and what they suffered, says, ‘They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were slain with the sword.’ To whom, I ask, does the ‘sawn asunder’ refer...? Now we know very well that tradition says that Isaiah the prophet was sawn asunder; and this is found in some apocryphal work, which the Jews have purposely tampered with, introducing some phrases manifestly incorrect.” (Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol 4, p 388) There are two or three different accounts of Isaiah’s death in Jewish literature, and those stories are really fantastical (doubtful because of description). But all Jewish accounts says that Isaiah died under wicked king Manasseh of Judah (before he repented).

Died by the sword. This was the most common way of dying by execution, and I believe execution is what the author is getting at. I do not think the author has in mind that they died in battle. Instead, I think the author is being consistent with the theme that these faithful people were martyrs. The author is including anyone and everyone who was executed because of their faith. (This way of execution would apply to Paul, who was beheaded by the sword.)

Wandered in sheepskins, destitution, afflictions, mistreatments. I could not find information about who the author is referring to with these descriptions. Perhaps the author is not referring to anyone specific. Perhaps the author is adding these because, even though we may not have their stories, there were many, MANY martyrs who suffered and died in faith that we do not have testimonies for. Even though we don't have their testimonies, this does not mean that they should be forgotten. As the author mentions them in a general way here, God closely and personally knows every person who has died as a martyr for the sake of the Kingdom.

The world was not worthy of them. This is the most powerful statement regarding these people's faith. This phrase points out the paradox of martyrdom. While the world hates someone so much, they will kill them because they believe the faithful person is worthless. However, with martyrdom, the opposite is true. These faithful people are to be considered GREATER than the world that killed them. Their faithfulness (even in death) is far, far, far more valuable than anything found in the world. In other words, these faithful people believed that faith is GREATER than suffering and death. And they proved it by suffering and dying because of their faith. They are the most worthy people in God's eyes. And they are listed here as testimonies for us so that we will also put our faith in God—especially when faced with any hardship, any suffering, or even death. Faith is what makes people worthy.

### **11:39-40 Conclusion to faith**

Approved through their faith. Literally, "All of these testified through faith." That is, their faith was lived out and they have left a testimony for us. Their faith speaks today!!!

Did not receive what was promised. There are two sets of promises here. There are the personal and temporary promises that God made to these ancient people. However, the heavenly and eternal promises are the primary focus of this letter. The promises that the ancient people did not receive are the promises that are now here through Jesus Christ! The author has spent most of this letter talking about how God's promises are GREATER under Jesus and His New Covenant. The ancient people didn't receive the promises of Jesus. They could only look forward to them, knowing that they would share in the future promises of Jesus. For example, Jesus said this about Abraham, "Your father Abraham was overjoyed that he would see My day. He saw it and rejoiced" (John 8:56). Jesus also said about his parables, "For I assure you: many prophets and righteous people longed to see the things you see yet didn't see them, and to hear the things you hear yet didn't hear them" (Matt 13:17). Peter also said this (1Pet 1:10-12). I believe this is true for all these great people of faith. This is the author's main point: people who lived before Jesus were waiting (even in death) for the ultimate promises to arrive. Therefore, we should not shrink back in our faith, but see that we Christians have received the promises that all these people of faith were looking forward to. Why would we reject the faith which these faithful Jews died for?? As it says in verse 40, "God had provided in advance GREATER things through us."

They would not be made perfect without us. (1) In the previous phrase, the preposition is different than most translations. It literally says, "Something better through us." That is, in some way, Christians are the agents of the promises and blessings of Jesus and the New Covenant. There must be truth to that because of the phrase found here, "They would not be made perfect without us." Again, there is a way that we are agents of the blessings that these ancient people were looking forward to. (2) The answer is found in a few scriptures. (2a) In Ephesians 1, Paul gives his list of blessings that come to us through Jesus Christ. As you read this passage, think about how these were promises and blessings that came to Christians and NOT to faithful people under the Old Testament. Eph 1:3-14. None of those things were available to the ancient people of faith in Hebrews 11. (2b) So what was the point of these ancient people of faith? Peter explains, "It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you. These things have now been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven" (1Pet 1:12). As pointed out through this chapter, these testimonies of faith are FOR US! It was their duty to God to pass along their faith to us, because we would receive the TRUE and GREATER promises, blessings, and covenant. And to repeat the author's more general point: all these ancients of faith believe that Jesus' covenant was GREATER and worth waiting for. Therefore, there is no reason to return to Judaism or paganism. All the people of faith left us their testimony that Jesus Christ's covenant is GREATER!

#### **12:1-4 Focus on Jesus, who suffered, because you will suffer too**

Large cloud of witnesses. In the Greek, the word for witness and the word for martyr is the same word.

This is the title given to describe all the faithful people in chapter 11. They are not only witnesses, leaving us a testimony of what faith looks like, but many of them are also martyrs, who suffered because they lived out their faith.

Let us lay aside every weight. The idea behind the Greek word for “weight” is the idea of a weight that is causing us to be affected by such a load. That is, any burden. These would be anything that would cause us to lose sight of God and instead focus on our problems. Jesus would describe these weights as thorns, that is, the worries, riches, and pleasures of life (Matt 13:22, Luke 8:14). Those are the things that weigh us down. Those are the enemies of our faith.

Sin that so easily ensnares us. The idea behind the Greek word for ensnares is the idea of a competitor that is trying to prevent us from succeeding. Yes, our sins are our biggest competitor and the biggest influence in our lives that keep us from reaching the heavenly goal. No wonder God calls us to fight sin with repentance and obedience. Repentance and obedience are the proofs of our faith.

Let us run with endurance the race. The idea behind the Greek word for race is the idea of a being driven into a contest. God has us running in a contest. A contest is naturally filled with anxiety and hard work. This is why we are to run this race with endurance. What does it look like to run this race with endurance? Well, look at the example of Jesus, who maintained endurance and patience throughout all His life, knowing what the end looked like for Him.

Jesus the source and perfecter. Literally, “Jesus, the chief leader and completer.” With Jesus, He is our best guide, our best example, and our best leader. He is the One who has shown us what the race looks like. As Peter said, “For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps” (1Pet 2:21). As you run the race of the Christian life, your Coach, who has already shown you how to run and finish the race, is Jesus Christ. Not only is He your Coach, but Jesus is also the One who finishes the race. Only Jesus will tell you when you are finished running your race. Besides, when Christians finish their Christian race, Jesus Himself is the goal and the reward.

The joy set before Him. This is the explanation of what the author said in Heb 10:34, “For you... accepted with joy the confiscation of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves have a better and enduring possession.” Jesus looked forward to the joy that would come when His race was finished. The same motivation is there for us: we look forward (hope) to the joy that will come to us when our Christian race is finished.

Endured a cross. As we remember the great people of faith in chapter 11, many of them were saved from the hands of their enemies but many of them suffered and died to the hands of their enemies. Jesus, who is the most faithful person ever, which group do you think He was in? Yes, Jesus’ life ended the same as those who were tortured and martyred because of their faith. God didn’t save Jesus from the hands of his enemies. Instead, God allowed Jesus to die the ultimate martyr by suffering at the hands of both Jews and Romans and by dying the death on the cross. When those martyrs (or any martyrs) are put to death because of their faith, they are following the example of their Lord and Master, Jesus.

Despising the shame. Jesus knew what His death would mean for humanity. While the world heaped every shameful thing on Jesus, Jesus did not consider all that suffering as shameful. Why? Because Jesus’ suffering and death was the most heroic thing anyone could ever do. Jesus knew that His suffering and death would redeem all of mankind from their sufferings and death! Jesus knew that His suffering and martyrdom would grant mankind the thing that it really needed: a salvation that could not have been granted by the blood of bulls and goats.

Sat down at the right hand of God’s throne. Where Jesus is now is proof that shame did not conquer Him. The fact that Jesus is at the Father’s right hand is proof that Jesus was not a victim of shame but has become the Victor. Jesus was not conquered by shame. Instead, Jesus Himself conquered shame!

Consider Him. It is important for Christians to remember how much hostility Jesus received from sinners. And if Jesus is the chief leader and completer, then Jesus is able to show us the way through the hostility that the world gives us. Jesus has given us this message in His own words: John 15:18-21, 16:33.

In struggling against sin. Why would sufferings and martyrdoms come? It is because we struggle against sin. Eph 6:12-13. John 7:7. And those who fight against sin and the evil forces of darkness will be persecuted (2Tim 3:12).

Not yet to the point of shedding your blood. That is, if you are reading this, then you haven't died as a martyr for the faith—yet. So, if we are numbered among those who have not yet died because of our faith, then certainly we are numbered among those who are still suffering because of our faith. In the next section, the author refers to this suffering as a form of discipline from God.

### **12:5-11 Suffering for a Christian is God's discipline**

Exhortation that addresses you as sons. (1) This is a quotation from Prov 3:11-12. The final phrase of this quotation does not match the Masoretic. It matches the Septuagint. (2) These two verses from Proverbs are the foundation of what the author will talk about through verse 11. It is apparent that the author completely believes every phrase of this proverb. Verses 7-11 are the author's explanation of what this proverb means. (3) Here are the four phrases the proverbs in different words, which can help us see God's part and our part. (3a) The Lord trains; we are not to despise it. (3b) The Lord's authority convicts; we are not to faint from it. (3c) The Lord trains those He loves. (3d) The Lord whips (flogs/scourges) every son He welcomes. (Masoretic: Even as a father delights in the son.)

Endure suffering as discipline. (1) About discipline, we often think about the punishments or consequences that come from our poor choices—just as a parent punishes their child for misbehavior. However, the Greek word for discipline does not always carry the negative connotation of punishments and consequences. Literally, the word is “training.” It is training that comes through education and correction. The training (discipline) the author is talking about is an increase in knowledge and understanding of right and wrong and it is active correction—whether through a punishment, consequence, or learning how to think and act in a more holy way. In short, this training is the same thing as good parenting! Being a good and perfect Father, God is the best source of training, discipline, education, punishment, and learning how to live more holy. The best way to understand this idea of training/discipline is how a parent raises a child to become mature. Of course, the author explicitly speaks to maturity in the following verses. (2) About suffering, when reading these verses, it can be seen that God is the one who causes the suffering. This is certainly what is said in the last phrase from Proverbs, “The Lord whips every son He welcomes.” Yes, God can be a source of our suffering. However, I do not believe that God is the source of most of the suffering we experience. Far from it! I believe there are four sources of suffering. First, there is suffering that comes from simply living in this world. These sufferings would include natural disasters, grief over the loss of loved ones, etc. Second, there is suffering in the persecutions that come from the forces of darkness (Satan, demons, and “the sons of disobedience”). Jesus clearly taught that, because we are Christians, we will suffer persecution. Third, there is the sufferings that come from our own sins. These sufferings include the natural consequences of our thoughts and actions. These sufferings could be internal when we let our flesh get the best of us. These sufferings could be external when we are disobedient to the authorities in our lives (government, bosses, parents, etc.). Fourth, these sufferings could come from God. Like when King Saul was punished by an evil spirit sent by God, or like Paul who had a thorn in the flesh that God would not remove, there are occasions when God can bring suffering on someone. Of these four sources of suffering, I believe the suffering caused by God is the absolute rarest. (3) Now that we have looked at discipline and suffering, let's put them together to see the author's point. The fact is that: God uses suffering as a way to train His true children. In the end, it does not really matter where our suffering comes from. Whatever the reason for our suffering, it is God's desire—as a good and perfect Father—to use that suffering to TRAIN us. God takes the suffering that we experience and redeems that suffering as a way to train us. That is, God redeems the suffering in our lives by using it to actually benefit us in the long run. It will make us more holy (verse 10) and it will give us peace and righteousness (verse 11). If the goal is holiness, peace, and righteousness, take a close look at the ingredients that God uses to get us there. The two ingredients are: suffering (which may or may not come from God) and training (which directly comes from a loving Father). Therefore, as Christians we are to endure suffering, knowing that as we go through suffering, Father God is training us. We will be the ones who benefit in the long run, and we will become more like God.

God is dealing with you as sons. The Greek word for “dealing” (as the HCSB renders it) has the idea that God carries us forward. It's not that God is burdened by having to parent us. No! God is all about

helping us mature as His children! God is carrying us forward with His training. We gain the benefits and maturity that comes from having God as our parent. The author cannot talk about God's training us as children without talking about our amazing relationship with God. Just as training and suffering go hand-in-hand, relationship is the third necessary ingredient. Why would God train us—even if it meant that God's training might be intense or harsh? The whole reason God trains (even whips) us is because we are His children. God's training toward us is true and real—because God's relationship with us is true and real. Remember the third phrase from Proverbs, "The Lord trains those He loves." While the suffering we experience could come from many different places, the training that we receive from God comes from His love. God loves us so much, He wants to train us as His children.

Illegitimate children and not sons. In other words, a good parent is going to train their children. If a parent is not training their children, then he or she is NOT acting like a parent. The same is true with God. If God is our Father and we are His children, then God will act like a parent and train His children. And if we are God's children, then we will accept God's training and not faint from it. However, if God is not training a person, then God must not be that person's parent. Again: the Lord trains those He loves, and the Lord whips every son He welcomes. In short, without training from God, this shows there is no relationship with God because the two MUST go together.

Natural fathers discipline us. Heb 12:9 is another way of saying what Jesus already said. Luke 11:11-13. Even earthly fathers know that they have a responsibility to train their children. As children, we respected the training they gave us. Yet, how much GREATER is Father God than any earthly father! This is another reason not to despise or faint or shrink back from God's training. There is no one greater to train us than Father God.

He does for our benefit. Earthly fathers were not perfect in the training of their children. Earthly fathers did their best according to their best understanding. Their training was based on their own training that they had from their earthly father. However, God's training is very different. Instead of training based on someone else's training, God's training is based on two things: His love for us and our good. Our earthly fathers' training was based on themselves. But God's training is based on Himself and based on what will truly make us better. God's training helps us share in His holiness. God is training and maturing us to be more like Him!

Painful. Literally, sadness. The author has mentioned joy a few times. As discussed earlier, joy comes AFTER the suffering. Here, the author explicitly acknowledges the obvious: suffering is not joyful at the time but sorrowful. Suffering is to be recognized for what it is: unpleasant. However, our hope is placed in the future, when joy will come. Jesus experienced this, since He first suffered and died, then Jesus experienced the joy (Heb 12:2). This phrase reminds us that it is normal not to feel joyful while we are suffering. However, because we are being trained by God and stand on God's promises, even in suffering, we have the hope of a future joy! This is why we are to endure suffering. After we get through it, then real joy will come.

Fruit of peace and righteousness. The last phrase in verse 11 is very hard to translate. Here is my best translation. "Eventually, it gives back the peaceable fruit of righteousness to him through naked training." (1) The author is giving us a glimpse of what is in store for those who endure God's training. Again right now, it is not joyful but sad. But the joy that is in store for us is peaceable fruit of righteousness. That is, those who endure God's training will find peace and they will be more righteous (more like God). (2) The author uses a different Greek word for "training" here. Instead of the idea of training, like a parent would train up a child, this is the idea of someone training for the [Ancient Olympic] Games. Back then, trainers would train and compete in the nude. The author is NOT suggesting that Christians should train in the nude, haha. Instead, I believe the point is that, there was a time when we were trained/disciplined/parented by our parents—because we were children. But there comes a time when each person's training continues—but as an adult. While we are God's children being training into maturity, the style of our training changes as we change from an immature child into a mature adult. As we become mature in the faith, God continues to train us. Our training from Father God never ends! But as our spiritual maturity grows, our training changes. Our spiritual training will look less and less like a child and more and more like an adult athlete.

### **12:12-17 Stay loyal to the Lord**

Strengthen your tired hands and weakened knees. These Greek words that describe the hands and knees do not exactly mean tired or weak. They mean relaxed, that is, these words carry the idea that these things are not being used. For example, I would say that this would include a person who is



just sitting or laying down. The HCSB says strengthen, but the Greek means straighten. Therefore, this whole phrase is about a person who is doing nothing and is called to stand up. The author is telling people to stop being lazy and to stand up! I believe this is the author's way of beginning a pep talk.

Make paths straight for your feet. (1) This phrase sounds a lot like when John the Baptist quotes from Isaiah about "making the Lord's paths straight." The author uses different Greek words for path and straight, but they are synonyms. The words are different, but the meaning is the same. (2) Actually, the author is quoting Proverbs 4:26. It reads in the Septuagint, "Make straight paths for your feet, and order your ways rightly." (3) The meaning is that we are to prepare a way for ourselves and give our feet a place to go. That is, Christians are to be forward-thinking. We are to look to the future with purpose and know where we are headed. Doubt and deception would be the things that hold us back from being forward-thinking.

What is lame. The HCSB says "dislocated," which might be what the author had in mind. It is hard to say because the Greek word means "turned away." When a person is limping because of a lame limb, the limb is either turned away or healed. The author is using this as analogy. I believe the author is saying that having a lame limb is like being in doubt or confusion. What happens when someone is in doubt or confusion? They will either accept the doubt and turn away from the thing they once valued, or they will overcome the doubt and be healed. This analogy makes a lot of sense when you apply it to the subject of this whole letter. A person who is considering returning to paganism or Judaism is like being lame. Will they turn away from God's ways? Or will they turn toward God's ways and find healing in Christ?

Pursue peace with everyone. The author moves from talking about a person's struggles with doubt and finding God to dealing with each other. Sure, we are to pursue peace with everyone. Paul also teaches this in Rom 12:18, "If possible, on your part, live at peace with everyone." But when we keep this instruction within the context of the whole letter, with whom are we to pursue peace? Those Christians who are strong in faith should be peaceful and patient with those who are struggling with doubt. As Paul also said in Rom 14:1, "Accept anyone who is weak in faith." And in 1Thes 5:14, "We exhort you, brothers: warn those who are irresponsible, comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient with everyone."

Holiness. Translations might translate this word in different ways. It is the word for holy. Because holy has become a "religious word," the common (and accurate) English word is "purity." As Christians, we are to pursue peace with people and we are to pursue purity with God. As the author says, "Without it, no will see the Lord."

Falls short of the grace of God. The author is making the same point as Paul does in Galatians 5:1-6. Paul is saying that if someone wants to be justified by the Law of Moses, then they are looking for justification in the wrong place. Since justification comes only through Christ, to reject Christ for the Law of Moses is to fall from grace. The Hebrews author is saying that if anyone wants to return to paganism or Judaism, they are looking for God in the wrong place. Since the favor of God is found only in Christ, to reject Christianity is to fall short of God's favor.

No root of bitterness. Today, we usually use the word bitter as a figure of speech to describe the ugly actions of a person. We say, "That is a bitter person," or, "Do not be bitter toward someone." Here, the Greek word is closer to something having a bitter taste. The word can also refer to something stronger than a bitter taste, like poison. The author is talking about a bitter taste (or a poison) that springs up (or become infectious). What could that bitterness eventually do? It could defile a person. This is why Christians should make straight paths for their feet. Otherwise, bitterness could take root. Bitterness can turn to poison. Poison can turn to defilement. Of course, defilement is a buzz word from the Law of Moses. The Jews (especially the priests) worked hard not to become defiled. Otherwise, they wouldn't be allowed to visit the temple or eat the Passover. Considering the point of this whole letter, the author is making the bold implication that returning to Judaism is what will actually defile a person.

No immoral or irreverent person. The HCSB could have done a better job translating these words. The Greek words are literally, "fornicator or wicked [person]." These words are used to describe Esau.

Like Esau. (1) The author uses the story (and foolishness) of Esau as an analogy for those who leave Christ and return to paganism or Judaism. The author uses the example of Esau because this story is familiar to both Jews and Christians. Esau was obviously and incredibly foolish when he traded his birthright for one meal. Or, as the author says, Esau was a wicked person. In his perceived

desperation, Esau traded the “eternal” (his birthright) for the “temporary” (one meal). The author’s meaning is abundantly clear: for a Christian to reject Christ and return to their previous religion is just as foolish (and wicked!) as Esau was. I believe the thing that made Esau wicked is that he betrayed himself by choosing a meal over his inheritance. When it was all said and done, the only person Esau could blame was himself. Esau knew this, which is why he decided to hate his birthright. The same is true for those who leave Christianity for Judaism: they betray themselves. (2) In Galatians 4, Paul uses Ishmael and Isaac as an analogy of Judaism and Christianity. Even though Ishmael was the firstborn, Isaac was the child of promise. Just as Judaism was God’s first covenant, Christianity is God’s spiritual Israel. Here in Hebrews, the author is using Esau and Jacob to illustrate the same point, using the stories of Esau selling the birthright and Jacob taking the blessing. This is not the only place where Esau and Jacob are used as an analogy of Judaism and Christianity. Paul also shows that Esau represents physical Israel and Jacob represents spiritual Israel. [Rom 9:6-13](#). The Jews had God’s covenant and saw God’s Messiah. However, they sold God’s Messiah for a murderer. Because of their great sin, God has allowed Gentiles to enter into His covenant. Of course, this was God’s plan all along. Esau and Jacob are a foreshadowing of the old and new covenants.

He didn’t find opportunity for repentance. This is another analogy between Esau and those who reject Christ and return to Judaism. The author says that Esau wanted his blessing. Esau made Isaac’s favorite meal and visited Isaac in order to receive Isaac’s blessing. We know from the story, that Isaac’s blessing was already given to Jacob. Esau begged and begged that Isaac would give him another blessing. Esau still wanted his blessing and even asked for it with tears. However, Isaac had one blessing to give and it was given to Jacob. The analogy is the same with Christians who stay in Christ and those who reject Christ by returning to Judaism. Those who stay in Christ are like Jacob. They receive God’s blessings because they believe in the One and Only Son whom God sent. Those who reject Christ and return to Judaism are like Esau. One day, they will discover that Judaism is not where God’s blessing is found. They will still want God’s blessings and they plead for God’s blessings with tears. However, like Esau, they won’t receive God’s blessings. Why? Because they rejected God’s One and Only Son. No matter how hard they plead, beg, and shed tears, the only place to receive God’s blessings are in Christ. In the end, if people reject Jesus Christ, then they reject God. Paul, [2Tim 2:11-13](#). Jesus, [John 12:44-50](#). For those who were once clothed with Christ but rejected Him in order to return to their old religion is illustrated in one of Jesus’ parables. [Matt 22:8-13](#).

### **12:18-24 Final contrast between earthly and heavenly**

What could be touched. (1) The author will be contrasting earthly Mount Sinai with heavenly Mount Zion. Verses 18-21 are about Mount Sinai. All the descriptions the author gives are taken directly from the Old Testament. First, the Israelites arrive, and a boundary is placed at the bottom of the mountain ([Ex 19:9-13](#)). The voice from the mountain gives the Ten Commandments, which are literally called the Ten “Words.” After that, the people respond with fear ([Ex 20:18-21](#)). Years later, Moses recounts the same event in his own words (Deut 5:22-31). Moses also said this about the experience: [Deut 4:9-12](#). (Notice how Heb 12:18 is a quotation from Deut 4:11.) The author says that even Moses was terrified and trembling. This happened later when Moses was talking to the people about the Golden Calf they made (Deut 9:16-21). Moses was not terrified or trembling because of the presence of God but because of God’s condemnation toward the nation for building the Golden Calf. Moses’ terror and trembling has more to say about the sins of the Israelites than it does about the presence of God. (2) When looking at these descriptions of the Israelites’ experience at Mount Sinai, they do not look very pleasant. While a whole lot of important and VERY GOOD things happened at Mount Sinai, let us contrast those experiences with the experiences at the next mountain.

Mount Zion. While the author mentions Mount Zion, which is Jerusalem, the following phrases show that the author is not talking about a literal, physical mountain. But there is a point to why the author says “Mount Zion.” The Jews would understand the difference between meeting God at Sinai and meeting God at Jerusalem. While Sinai was surrounded in power and terror, Jerusalem was the city where God’s temple was, and it was a place where people were excited to meet God there! For example, Psalms 120-134 are called the Psalms of Ascent, which were psalms about how thrilling it was to go up Jerusalem to meet God.

City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. As the author tried to show in chapters 8-9, the earthly tabernacle was a shadow and copy of the heavenly tabernacle that ALWAYS existed. The same thing is said here. Just as Jerusalem was the city of the kings and a place of peace, the heavenly Jerusalem is the original city of God and the ultimate place for peace. Heb 11:10, "The city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God." [Gal 4:24-26](#). See also Heb 13:14.

Myriads of angels. In the notes on Hebrews 1:14, they talk about how angels were credited in giving the Law to Moses. So, angels had a part at Mount Sinai. But at Mount Zion, there are myriads of angels. You see, angels merely visited earthly Sinai. Heavenly Zion is where God's angels live.

Assembly and church of the firstborn. The author uses two Greek words for "assembly." The first Greek word, which the HCSB says "festive gathering," this word literally means "mass meeting." In today's English a good translation would be "general assembly." The second Greek word, which the HCSB says "assembly" is the word for "church." Therefore, we see that both words mean assembly. Why use two words? Because this assembly is very, VERY special. Christians assemble as the church on earth. But in heaven, the origin of the children of God, they have a grand assembly! The Jews had their assemblies in the synagogue and at the temple. The Christians have two things that are greater: God's church on earth as well as God's grand assembly in heaven.

God who is Judge of all. God himself! God did show up at Mount Sinai. He appeared in smoke, fire, earthquake, and loud sounds. But Sinai is not where God's throne is. God's throne is in heaven. Even though the top of the Ark of the Covenant is called the Mercy Seat, God's true, eternal Mercy Seat is His throne in heaven. While under the Mosaic Covenant, God judged Israel. But under the New Covenant, God judges everyone.

Spirits of righteous people. Where do the spirits of righteous people go when they die? They go to God. Whether the person died a Jew or died a Christian, all the faithful people of God die and their spirit goes to where God is. Their spirits do not go to Sinai nor Jerusalem. They go to God. And if we die righteous in the Lord, then our spirits will join with the other spirits of the righteous. There the spirits will wait until the great resurrection of the dead.

Jesus, Mediator. Of course, if God is in the heavenly places, then Jesus would be there too. We have already talked about how, through Jesus' death, He is already in heaven and serving as our High Priest. Jesus' priesthood is so great, He does not serve on earth. He serves in heaven! That is where Jesus acts as our priestly mediator of His New Covenant.

Sprinkled blood. In chapter 9, we have already talked about how Jesus' blood is far greater than that of any sacrificial animal. While Jesus' shed His blood on earth with His body. He presented that blood at the most holy place in the heavenly tabernacle. That is where atonement is! The sprinkled blood is Jesus' blood, and we access that through heaven, not on earth.

Abel. There may be two ideas that the author is trying to convey by mentioning Abel. (1) Abel was the first victim of murder, being fully innocent. Abel was a spotless, innocent victim. So was Jesus. However, Jesus' death was greater because Jesus gave His life willingly. And being God, Jesus' blood is more precious and valuable than Abel's. In other words, Abel's blood couldn't save anyone. But Jesus' blood has the power to save! (2) The author says that Jesus' blood "speaks greater" than Abel's blood. Did you know that Abel's blood spoke? Hebrews 6:6 says that Abel's blood cried out for vengeance. And if Abel's blood did that against Cain, and Jesus' blood is greater than Abel's, what do you think Jesus' blood is crying out? If Abel's blood is crying out for vengeance against Cain, who is Jesus' blood crying out for vengeance against? All of mankind. The same blood that saves those who come to Jesus in faith is the same blood that will be demanded of those who reject Jesus, essentially crucifying Him again. This connects to Hebrews 6:6, where it speaks of those who reject Jesus are recrucifying Him. It could be this is the way Jesus' blood is demanding the blood of those who killed him—which is everyone. Again, the same water that saved Noah and his family also is the water that destroyed the unfaithful. The same is true here. The same blood that saves people and forgives every sin also is the blood that cries for vengeance louder than Abel's.

### **12:25-29 Final warning to the reader: future destiny of the earthly and heavenly**

Do not reject the One who speaks. Who? From the previous verse: Jesus' blood. Jesus' blood is speaking. Do you hear it? For something that precious and value to be speaking to you, it is worthwhile to hear it speak. It will affect your eternal destiny.

If they did not escape. The author continues his message of condemnation. If those under the Old Covenant did not escape God's punishments then, how much more will people not escape God's

punishments on the New Covenant? After all, that is the blood of His son crying out! As the author nears the end of this letter, the author is finally presenting a message to inspire fear in us. Hopefully, we will be inspired to fear God, drawing us closer to Him. Hopefully, we will not be inspired to reject God, which leaves us with the fear of punishment.

He has promised. This is taken from Haggai 2:6. The Septuagint says, “Yet once I will shake the heaven, and the earth.” The author is showing that, even from Haggai, God’s New Covenant will not only be earth but heaven also. Haggai shows that the New Covenant is more universal and greater.

What can be shaken. It is hard for me to understand what verse 27 is saying. The best way I can understand this verse is to connect it with 1Cor 3:10-15. As human Christians, there are things we will build that will not last, being temporary, and there are things that we will build that will last, being eternal. Because of Hebrews 12:29, I believe God’s shaking in Hebrews is the same as God’s fire in 1Cor. I think the shaking is God’s grand test to find what is temporary and what is eternal. Created things, such as the earth and all its wickedness will one day be removed. But there are things that will remain, such as the faithful and their good works.

Kingdom that cannot be shaken. The Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus spoke of so often in Matthew’s gospel is a kingdom that is eternal. Fire and shaking had an effect on Mount Sinai, there is no shaking and no fire that can affect heavenly Mount Zion. No shaking and no fire can touch Jesus’ kingdom! This is a kingdom that originates in heaven, but it is also a kingdom that we are experiencing right now.

Grace to serve God. It is God’s grace that we have received. And it is through God’s grace that we serve Him in return. Grace is never meant to be something received and kept. God’s grace is something that we receive and return to both God and to others. But in all things, God’s grace is the source. Just as we love God (and others) because He first loved us, we show grace to God (and others) because He has given us His grace.

Consuming fire. The chapter ends with another reminder of God’s power to punish. There are two ways a person can respond to God. One way results in receiving and giving God’s grace. The other way is not receiving God but instead God’s fire and God’s shaking. When God shakes the universe and burns it with fire, those who reject God will be eternally affected by that shaking and fire. But for the faithful, they will be saved—as through fire—because the fire cannot touch them (1Cor 3:14-15).

### **13:1-8 Instructions on Christian living**

[Change in style]. When reading through Hebrews, the reader will notice (as do many commentaries) that the style of Hebrews is very different in chapter 13. While the first 12 chapters do not read like Paul at all, chapter 13 does read like Paul.

Brotherly love. (1) There is no better way to being a chapter on Christian living than to mention brotherly love. As Jesus and Paul taught, love is the greatest calling and the greatest reason to live for God and for others. Love is the start of all other ways to fulfill the law of Christ. (2a) If the author of Hebrews is the same author of chapter 13, the author is moving away from the subject of how Jesus is greater and moving toward the subject of basic Christian living. If Hebrews was delivered as a sermon, it would make sense to end it with a call for Christians to live rightly. (2b) If the author of chapter 13 is different, this chapter subject is from someone’s else’s sermon or letter—perhaps Paul or Timothy or someone else.

Hospitality. If brotherly love is the beginning of Christian living, what is the FIRST thing that the author believes is important? Hospitality. Hospitality is one of the greatest ways a Christians can demonstrate their brotherly love. Hospitality is a frequent subject in the New Testament. It is certainly one of the significant marks of a Christian.

Welcomed angels. How can this happen? It has happened before in the Old Testament. Remember how Abraham entertained three visitors, who were possibly greater than angels but divine. Remember how Samson’s parents were visited by an angel and they entertained him. Hebrews would also be familiar with the Old Testament story of Tobit and he being visited by the angel named Raphael. In all those cases (except for maybe Abraham), the hospitable people did not know they were entertaining angels. It wasn’t until the angels left that they realized what was happening. That is Hebrews’ point: be hospitable! You never know who your hospitality will bless.

Prisoners and mistreated. It is the fleshly nature and human nature for people to look at prisoners and those mistreated and wonder, “I wonder what they did to deserve that.” The best example of this is Job’s friends. They saw how mistreatment Job was experiencing. They didn’t try to sympathize with

him. As Christians, we should do the opposite of Job's friends. Even if we don't understand a person's situation... Even if the person deserved it... The prisoners and mistreated are human beings and we should always treat them that way—especially if we are Christians. The reason Hebrews says to imagine putting yourself in that situation is because THAT is the attitude of a true Christian: someone who will sympathize and empathize with folks who are suffering. That's what Jesus did. It is also what He commanded (Matt 25:34-45). Prison ministries exist for two reasons. First, they exist because Jesus commanded Christians to visit and be hospitable toward prisoners and those mistreated. Second, they exist because a number of people who serve in prison ministries were once in prison themselves. They ACTUALLY know what it feels like. Therefore, they know how important it is to visit prisoners. All that to say: there is a good reason why Jesus and Hebrews tells us to be hospitable to prisoners and those mistreated.

Marriage. While the first type of brotherly love was hospitality, the SECOND type of brotherly love Hebrews lists is marriage. Marriage is an institution and covenant directly from God. It existed even before the Fall. Anything God designs ought to be respected, honored, and cherished... because it came directly from God. For someone to disrespect or dishonor marriage is to disrespect and dishonor the God who established it. As Hebrews says, the people who disrespect and dishonor marriage the most are the fornicators and adulterers. Like how Job's friends were the opposite of what Christians should do in regard to sympathy, fornicators and adulterers are the opposite of what Christians should do in regard to marriage. By treating marriage that way, they have treated God that way, for God was the One who established marriage. That is the reason why Hebrews says that God will judge them.

Free from the love of money. (This is about greed, which is the THIRD type of brotherly love that the author lists (verses 5-6).) I would translate this phrase, "Let the way you behave be without greed," and the next phrase, "The possessions in your hand are sufficient." Of course, the NT has a lot to say about greed as one of the most dangerous sins. What the author teaches here is that we ought to remove greed from our thoughts, our hearts, and our actions. It is not just about actions, because the author says it is about "the way" you behave, not just the behaviors themselves. The author is targeting our thoughts and our hearts, which lead to our behaviors. The best way to fight greed is contentment. As the author says, we should already see the things we own as sufficient for our needs. About contentment, Paul said, "If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. I believe the author also had another passage in mind. Matt 6:8, 31-33.

I will never leave you. Why would the author include this statement from Jesus as a way to fight materialism? I believe it is because, when we feel like we are lacking or when we are tempted with thoughts that we need more and more in order to survive, the author is saying that Jesus is ALL we need! Even if the world takes all our possessions away, if we still have Jesus (and we do), then we are very rich indeed! Not only does possessing Jesus make us very rich, but remember that He is Jesus, the Creator of the universe. If there is anything we are lacking, then Jesus Himself will give us what we truly need—not what we think or feel like we need. As it says, "The Lord is my Helper." If Christians are in need, is there anyone greater to have in our lives than Jesus Himself, who is able to give us all things?

Remember your leaders. (This is about honoring authority, which is the FOURTH type of brotherly love that the author lists (verses 7-9).) Those who spoke God's Word to you would be everyone who had a hand in showing you the Gospel and how to become a Christian. It includes everyone who teaches you the Scriptures and everyone who shows you how to live a godly life—after all, both of those things are aspects of the Word of God (the written Word and the living Word).

Observe the outcome of their lives. While knowing and understanding the Scriptures is extremely important, based on what the author says next, knowing and understanding the Christian life is more important. I would translate 13:7b, "Look again at the end result of their behavior. Imitate their faith." Some things cannot be taught in a book (including the Scriptures). For example, we can memorize the list of the fruit of the Spirit, we can try to live out the fruit of the Spirit to the best of our understanding, but I do not believe we can truly imitate those things unless we see those things in others who are living out the fruit of the Spirit. Jesus told us that we would know others by their fruit. When we see the fruit of the Spirit in other people's lives and when that fruit is the same fruit we read about in the Scriptures, then we can see those people's lives and know THAT is what we should imitate. As another example, the Scriptures do not tell us the methods or styles on how we could evangelize. Jesus just said to, "Go." When I see missionaries (local or foreign) obey Jesus and fulfill

the commandment, I see their faith. And that is a faith I can imitate. Speaking personally, without seeing faithful evangelists in my life, I would NOT know what godly (or effective) evangelism looked like. (Verse 7 is continued in verse 17; see notes there.)

Jesus Christ is the same. (1) What is the author's point of verse 8? I believe it is similar to verses 5-6.

We are to honor our spiritual leaders. But not all spiritual leaders are good spiritual leaders. Some leaders abandon their duties or harm others. I would day say that the majority of Christians have had a bad, even hurtful, experience with a church leader. When we experience bad church leaders, we should still remember that the highest church leader there is, Jesus Christ, is the same yesterday, today, and forever. While humans change, Jesus never does. And this is very good news because Jesus is not only unchanging, He is also PERFECT. Remember, even our earthly leaders must answer to the Chief Shepherd. (2) The author is calling us to honor our leaders (whatever level of authority they have in our lives). We are to honor all of them, both the good ones and the bad ones. Paul gave that teaching to slaves in regard to their earthly masters. Every Christian is to honor their leaders in the same way. Here is Eph 6:6, 6:7, 6:9 but rewarded to apply to Christians and their spiritual leaders. "Christians, obey your spiritual leaders with fear and trembling, in sincerity of your heart, as to Christ.... Serve with a good attitude, as to the Lord and not to men.... And spiritual leaders, treat those entrusted to your care the same way, without threatening them because you know that both their Chief Shepherd and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with Him." Again, whether our leaders are good or evil, we are to honor the authority they have. However, to be very clear, if the end result of their lives (their fruit) is not faithfulness (Heb 13:7), then do NOT imitate them (Matt 23:2-3). To sum up, Paul said, "Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ" (1Cor 11:1).

### **13:9-14 Leaving Judaism behind**

Don't be led astray. This instruction is important for both spiritual leaders and every Christian. It is important for spiritual leaders because they have a greater responsibility in protecting those in their care. It is important for every Christian because every Christian is responsible to protect themselves from foreign teachings.

Grace and not foods. The author has done this before. Here, the author is making a jab at Jews (or possibly Jewish Christians) who would claim that one must follow the Mosaic dietary laws in order to be right with God. Around this time, there were some Jewish Christians who said: unless a person is circumcised according to Moses, the person cannot be saved (Acts 15:1). I imagine that some folks said that a person must follow the diet according to Moses in order to be saved. Here, the author says that our consciences and hearts are not clear because of foods. Instead, our hearts are established by grace. The author boldly says that those who are involved in dietary laws are not benefited by them.

Altar. Under Jesus' New Covenant, our altar is in heaven. It is the heavenly and original altar. Contrast that altar with the earthly altar at the tabernacle. (1) If the earthly priests in the order of Aaron are able to eat the choice meats that are sacrificed at the tabernacle, think about what we—the heavenly priests in the order of Melchizedek—get to eat! We eat the body and blood of Jesus Christ. (2) If the earthly priest take the bodies of the sacrificed animals outside of the tabernacle and outside the city, look at how the same was done to Jesus, the Lamb of God. Jesus suffered and died outside of the city, which is another image that Jesus' sanctifying blood being carried outside of the Jewish city of David. The blood of the Lamb is not only for the Jews but for ALL people!

Outside the camp. Jesus did not die where the Jewish sacrifices were sacrificed. Jesus died outside of the Jewish camp. Jesus died along with robbers. Jesus died the most disgraceful death that the Romans had invented. Why does the author tell us to follow Jesus outside the camp? As Christians, we should leave the camp of the Jews—with their priests of Aaron, sacrifices of animals, and tabernacle and altar, all of which are only copies of the original. We are to leave the camp that is only a copy of the true camp. Even if people say we are disgraceful for following Jesus, let them say it. After all, we would only be disgraced by people who want to live an earthly life. As Christians, we are to leave the earthly camp behind and follow Jesus toward the heavenly camp—even when it means that people will call us a disgrace.

Enduring city. For Christians, our city is still unseen. The Jews have their city of David and their tabernacle and altar. But again, what they have now is only a copy and a shadow. For Christians, our city has not arrived yet. The apostle John gives us a vivid description of how our enduring city will

arrive. Rev 21:1-27. Put simply, why settle for current Jerusalem when we can have the beautiful City of God??

### **13:15-17 Instructions on Christian living (continued)**

**Sacrifice of praise.** While Jews would offer up sacrifices of animals at the prescribed times and for the prescribed reasons, Christians offer up sacrifices of words continuously. Let us sacrifice our lips and our bodies as Paul said: Rom 10:9-13, 12:1-2. And that is what makes lips beautiful: confession of God's name. This is the kind of lips God wants: lips that confess Jesus Christ as Lord.

**Do good and share.** Not only do Christians love God by praising Him with the fruit of our lips, but Christians love others by doing good to them and sharing with them. This is not only about acts of charity in giving money or goods. This is about doing every kind of good for others. Let us show benevolence to all people (especially those in the household of faith), whether it is financial, spiritual, emotional, or anything in between! Of course, God is very pleased with us when we do His good works. It is wrong to say that God is not interested in our good works. In fact, the greater the sacrifice, the greater God is pleased (Mark 12:41-44). After all, when we are doing good, sharing, and sacrificing, then we are acting like God.

**Obeys your leaders.** (This verse is a continuation of verse 7; see notes there). Notice that there are responsibilities on each side. Leaders have the responsibility to watch after and care for the souls under their authority, and they will give an account for it. As for non-leaders, they are to obey and submit to their leaders. Non-leaders are to do this in a way that brings joy (not groaning) to their leaders. Just as leaders will give an account for their leadership, non-leaders will give an account for their obedience and submission.

### **13:18-25 Valediction**

**Pray for us.** Notice that the author uses the plural. This letter, like many other letters in the NT was written by one person as well as those who accompanied him. I doubt that this refers to the whole congregation of the author but the author and his/her companions. For example, if the author was Apollos, the plural authorship could also include Priscilla and Aquilla. If the author was Paul, it could include Silas or Barnabas or Timothy or etc. If the author was Clement of Rome, it could include the other church leaders at Rome.

**I urge you.** Notice that the author uses the singular. We see that the author is certainly one person but also has the companionship and/or the approval of others.

**I may be restored to you.** This could be a clue to who the author is, but it is not a good clue. If Paul, this could refer to any congregation, since Paul visited many, many congregations in Asia Minor and in Greece and in Rome. If Apollos, this could refer to Ephesus or Corinth since Apollos moved between these two cities. If Aquila and Priscilla, this could refer to Ephesus or Rome since they moved to Rome. If Clement, this could refer to Philippi or Rome since he moved from Philippi to Rome.

**Lord Jesus.** Verses 20 to 21 are about our Lord Jesus. Remember, the overall theme to this letter is how Jesus is GREATER. It is a worthy ending to include these verses to show that Jesus is truly worthy of all glory forever and ever.

**To do His will.** I believe the last half of verse 20 and the first half of verse 21 is a single thought. Put together, it says, "[May... our Lord Jesus...] in the blood of the everlasting covenant, equip you with all that is good to do His will, doing in us what is pleasing in His sight." Why include that phrase about the blood of the covenant? Because there is power in the blood. Jesus' blood wasn't shed to appease God but to cleanse us. Jesus blood is the agent that makes us holy and is what gives us Christ's righteousness. Jesus' blood does for us what the Law of Moses could not do: it gives us the power to do God's will. As it says here, the blood equips us with all that is good. So yes, there is power in the blood. Jesus' blood gives us the power to do what? God's will. Notice the author's play on words. "to do His will, doing in us." As Christians, we are the ones doing God's will. At the same time, God is doing in us. There is a synergy in partnering with God. God works in us, and we work God's will. And what is the agent of this synergy in our partnership with God? Jesus Christ! It is through Jesus Christ that we are able to partner with God in accomplishing His will in us. But since God and Christ are the reasons why all this is possible, none of the glory belongs to Christians. The glory belongs to Jesus Christ forever and ever.

**Message of exhortation.** Literally, "word of comfort." Seeing how the overall theme of this letter is how Jesus is greater, speaking personally, I have been GREATLY comforted by this study of Hebrews. It

has been uplifting, exciting, and inspiring to hear about all the reasons why Jesus our Lord is GREATER. This certainly has been a word of comfort.

I have written to you briefly. Literally, “For even through shortness I have written by letter to you.” The author says there is much more that can be said about all of this. There are probably many, many more reasons to find why and how Jesus is greater! While we don’t consider Hebrews a short letter at all, when it comes to reasons to believe why Jesus is greater, no amount of words would be too many.

Timothy. We see that the author (or at least, whoever wrote this ending) has a close relationship with Timothy. As it says, the author is known to travel with Timothy. By speaking about Timothy this way, who was one of the leaders of the church, we can infer that the author would also be among the well-known leaders of the church.

Those from Italy. While it would seem like this is proof that the author wrote this letter from Italy (probably Rome), this is not necessarily the case. For example, this could also mean that there are Italians with the author and this letter is being written to others in Rome.

[Superscriptions]. As the letter of Hebrews has been found in old codices, there have been some superscriptions added to the end. Now, all superscriptions were not added by the author but added by ancient Christians who wanted to give some context to this letter. While they are evidence to the letter’s background, they are not authoritative. Here are the superscriptions found. (1) “To the Hebrews.” Of course, this does not mean to the Jews who are practicing Judaism. This letter was certainly written to Christians. Because of the point of the letter, this letter would be directed toward Jewish Christians, who might be considering a return to Judaism. (2) “It was written to the Hebrews from Rome.” This superscription would support the idea that this letter was written from Rome. If that was the case, all of the possible authors that people have suggested remain as possibilities—except for Barnabas, who has no evidence that he was in Rome, and for Luke, who has evidence that he visited Rome but not until the late 60s (2Tim 4:11). (3) “Written to the Hebrews from Italy by Timothy.” This is the longest superscript. It was found on Codex Cyprius, which is dated to the 700s or 900s AD. Therefore, some Christians at that time believed that Hebrews was written by Timothy. One may ask, “Then why is there a mention of Timothy at the end of chapter 13?” Some scholars believe that Hebrews chapter 13 (or the last few verses) was written by someone else. Under this theory, Timothy wrote the letter, but someone else (who knew Timothy personally) added this ending.

#### FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE AUTHOR

- The Cambridge Commentary mentions Philo SO MANY times in its commentary on Hebrews. Of course, Philo was an Alexandrian Jew who lived while Jesus was on earth. See if this sheds ANY clues on who the author is.  
<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/hebrews/1.htm>
- Plus, look up what Cambridge explicitly says about who the author might be. ANSWER: Cambridge clearly states that it believes that author cannot be Paul. **Cambridge strongly believes that the author is an Alexandrian.** The only person in Scripture that is said to be from Alexandria is Apollos.