

Home Bible Study Series

A Survey Study of
Hebrews

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Lesson One

"Introduction to the Book"

When a new Religious System is ushered in, people have to be weaned away from the old Religious System. This is not easy—especially where the old System was given by God and was in force for around 1500 years. The large percentage of the Jewish Nation has never accepted the new Religious System identified with Jesus, the Christ!

It's Uniqueness

A unique thing about the old System was the statement that it was a fore-shadow of the new System. The old was a means of preparing people for the "real" Religious System that was to come. This new System was prophesied of by the old System Prophets, so that the Jews would be prepared to accept the new System. There are three or more references in the new Covenant telling that the old was temporary and laid a foundation for a better understanding of the new and the "real."

Col. 2:17 _____
Heb. 8:5 _____
Heb. 10:1 _____

The Book of Hebrews calls the old a copy or shadow of heavenly things. And because of this, there is a strong emphasis on doing everything exactly as God had prescribed in the Law (Heb. 8:5).

The Tabernacle or Temple

Another factor to realize about the old System is the place of the Tabernacle or Sanctuary. It was built according to God's strict instructions. Worship was to take place in it. It was also a place for offering of sacrifices for the sins of the people. The Tabernacle (Temple) was critical to the old Religious System of the Nation of Israel. If the Tabernacle were to be destroyed, it would be a way of indicating God's displeasure with the Jewish people. This actually happened in 605 BC when the Babylonians overthrew Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple (2 Chron. 36:15-21). After 70 years of captivity, the Jews were allowed to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple. Again, in 70 AD, the Romans overthrew Jerusalem and leveled the city and destroyed the Temple as was foretold by Jesus in (Matt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21). This condition has lasted for some 2000 years. It would seem that the Jewish people should get the message that God is not pleased with them. The

destruction of the Temple was certainly a "sign" that Jewish Christians needed to realize that God's new Religious System is the one that is acceptable to Him now.

The Writer of Hebrews

The writer of this book is not named in the "text"—which is unusual. It is hard to understand why a name was not attached to it or at least someone in the early church would have known and stated openly who the writer was. The absence of a named writer has brought on speculation of who wrote the book. Some of the names that have been mentioned are: **Paul, Barnabas, Luke, Clement of Rome, Apollos, etc.** At the present only God knows for sure. The writer certainly knew the people to whom he wrote (Heb. 13:19, 23). He even sent greetings to them from people as far away as Rome (Heb. 13:24). He was greatly concerned about their faithfulness to Christ—especially as they were undergoing various forms of persecution (Heb. 13:3, 23; 12:3-4).

Themes Covered in Hebrews

In this study, we will be looking at the 5 main themes of the book, as follows:

1. The Final Revelation of God;
2. The Final Priesthood of God;
3. The Final Sacrifice of God;
4. Dangers of falling away from God;
5. The Blessings of Faithfulness to God.

We will cover these themes by sections so that we can have a complete view of each as given in the Book. We have tried to group the writers' comments together about each of the above five Subjects.

Also, there is a general Theme in the book that becomes obvious to the reader—**The superiority of the New Religious System over the Old Religious System.** Several words are used to identify this concept, such as: **better, more, greater** (used 25 times, at least). The writer is logically reasoning from the lesser to the Greater!

Other Themes are mentioned and dealt with in connection with the above five main Themes. They emphasize the greatness of these things or people—but a greater has come on the scene. They are as follows:

1. Angels (Heb. 1:5-14; 2:5, 16)
2. Prophets of Old (1:1)

3. Man (2:14-16)
4. Moses (3:2-6)
5. The "Rest" for the people of God (4:1-10)
6. The Tabernacle (9:1-6, 23-24)

Concluding Thoughts

It would seem obvious that the recipients of this letter were well acquainted with the old Jewish System. It is believed that this letter may have been written from about AD 63-69. Christians at Rome were undergoing dire persecution; but in other places as well during these years. The faith of some needed under-girding and this letter would certainly help to do that very thing. The writer shows the superiority of the New Religious System over the old by sharp contrast and many Old Testament quotations that foretold of this new System.

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- ___ 1. The old Religious System was given to foreshadow what the new System would be like.
- ___ 2. The Colossian Letter states that the old Religious System was a "copy" or "shadow" of heavenly things.
- ___ 3. The Jews were allowed to build the Tabernacle or Temple after any pattern that they chose.
- ___ 4. The Jewish Temple was actually destroyed on at least three occasions—as recorded in the Old Testament.
- ___ 5. Destruction of the Temple and sensing God's displeasure with them go hand-in-hand.
- ___ 6. The destruction of the Temple was something Jesus foretold and agreed that it should be.
- ___ 7. There are at least five different writers mentioned in history as being the writer of Hebrews.
- ___ 8. There are more than five themes in Hebrews.

- ___ 9. The one main theme of Hebrews is the Superiority of the New over the Old.
- ___ 10. The approximate time of the writing of Hebrews is AD 63-69.

Lesson Two

"God's Final Revelation"

All Men have the generic Law of God written in their hearts (Rom. 2:14-15). That is the reason why all men are called sinners because they break this Law written in their hearts (Rom. 3:10, 23). God revealed Himself in a special way to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because they were to be the forebears of a special nation of people that God would use to bring the Messiah into the world. Once the Nation of Israel had developed into a large body of people, God called them out of Egypt and gave them a special Law to govern them as they went into the land that God had promised to give them. This Law or Covenant was given to the people through Moses and the Prophets (Heb.1:1)—but angels were also involved in the process (Heb. 2:2). This Law was said to be a perfect Law (Rom. 7:12; Ps. 19:7) but it was not the final Law or Revelation from God. God caused the Prophet Jeremiah to foretell or prophesy of the giving of another Covenant (31:31-34). That Covenant would be first spoken by His Son in what was called "the last days."

Jesus, the Superior Law-Giver (Covenant) (Heb. 1:1-3)

A unique thing about the Bible is its willingness to foretell future events! All other Religions started by men do not dare do this (Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism, and Zoroastrianism). The giving of a New Covenant is just one of the many prophecies that have come true.

The Superiority of Jesus as a Law-giver (Covenant) is seen in the following things:

1. God spoke to mankind today through His Son (Heb. 1:2);
2. This Son was appointed to be heir of all things (1:2);
3. It was through this Son that the worlds were made (1:3);
4. This Son is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person (1:3);
5. He upholds all things by the word of His power (1:3);
6. This Son was used by God to purge mankind of his sins (1:3);
7. He has been exalted to sit at the right hand of the Majesty on high (1:3);

No one has greater credentials than Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God! He deserves to be heard because He has a message that all mankind needs to hear! The remainder of this Lesson will look at Jesus' Superiority as a Law-Giver (Covenant) over Angels, over Moses, and over the first Covenant.

Superior to the Angels (Heb. 1:4-14)

The Superiority of Jesus over Angels is seen in the following things:

1. He has inherited a more excellent name than the Angels (1:4);
2. He never said to Angels, *"You are My Son, this day have I begotten You."* (1:4-5) Jesus is in a "Father-Son" relationship.
3. The Father called upon the Angels to worship Him when He came into the world (1:6);
4. God created angels as spirits and His ministers as a flame of fire (1:7);
5. But to the Son, He gave Him a throne for ever and ever, and a scepter of righteousness (1:8)
6. Laying of the foundation of the earth and heavens was attributed to Him (1:10); such will perish, but He will not; He is the same.
7. To no Angels did He ever say: *"Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool."* (1:13);
8. Angels were made to be ministering spirits to those who will inherit salvation (1:14);
9. God did not put the world to come in subjection to Angels (2:5);
10. Neither did He give aid (to secure salvation) to Angels (2:16).

It is easy to see how far superior Jesus is to the Angels that are described above.

Superior to Moses as a Law-Giver (Heb. 3:1-6)

Moses was the great Law-Giver (Covenant) to the Israelite Nation. Once that He came to know the true and living God, he had no equals as a servant of God. A contrast is now drawn between Moses and Jesus in the following thoughts:

1. Moses was faithful in all his house; but so was Jesus faithful (3:2);
2. Jesus' Superiority is seen in that he is the builder of the house (3:3-4);
3. But Moses was a "servant" in this house, but Jesus was the owner of the house (3:5-6)

Jesus' Superiority over Moses was foretold by Moses, Himself, in (Heb. 3:5; Deut. 18:15-18; Acts 3:22-23). While Moses was a great Law-giver; yet, he had one who was superior to Him—Jesus, the Son of God!

Superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant (Heb. 8:6-13; 9:15-20))

The writer now gives somewhat of a contrast between the two Covenants to help show that the New is Superior to the Old.

1. Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant which is established on better promises (8:6; 7:22);
2. The Old Covenant was replaced because it had a fault (8:7); (the fault was that the people could not keep the Law perfectly);
3. It was foretold that it would be replaced (8:8-12; Jer. 31:31-34);
4. A change of Priesthood required a change of Law (7:12; Ps. 110:1-4);
5. The first Covenant has been made obsolete (8:13);
6. The death of Jesus made Redemption possible even for those under the first Testament—thus showing its superiority (9:15);
7. Jesus' New Testament was put into force upon His death (9:16-17).
8. Like the Old Covenant, the New Testament had to be put into force upon the shedding of blood—But the New required the blood of Jesus (9:18-20).

A description is given of the Power of the New Covenant as found in Heb. 4:12-13:

1. It is living;
2. It is powerful;
3. It is sharper than any two-edged sword;
4. It pierces even to the division of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow (4:23);
5. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (4:12)
6. There is nothing hidden from its sight (4:13);
7. All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account. (4:13).

Concluding Thoughts

What a great privilege we have to have Jesus as our Law-Giver—who is the Son of God. The Old Covenant was certainly a great document, but it had one bad weakness—it had no power to forgive sin. If a person broke the Law in only one place, he was guilty and must pay the penalty of the Law, which is death (Jas. 2:10). But the death of Jesus gave us hope and a new Covenant that is perfect completely! (Jas. 1:25).

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- ___ 1. All men have the "generic" Law of God in their hearts.
- ___ 2. God revealed Himself to the Patriarchs so that they could help to bring into the world a nation of people through whom He could bring Redemption to mankind.
- ___ 3. The Old Covenant was given by Angels.
- ___ 4. Jesus has been appointed to be heir of all things.
- ___ 5. Jesus is superior to Angels because of His name.
- ___ 6. We have no way of knowing that Angels are created beings of God.
- ___ 7. Jesus does not give "aid" (to secure salvation) to Angels.
- ___ 8. Jesus' superiority over Moses is seen in His being the builder of the house.
- ___ 9. Jesus' superiority is seen by His having to die to save those under the first Covenant.
- ___ 10. A change of Priesthood required a change of Law.

*Lesson Three***"God's Final Priesthood"**

We know very little about the priestly functions during what we call the Patriarchal System. It seems that the heads of the "families" or "tribes" fulfilled the priestly functions for the people (Gen. 8:20; 22:13; 26:25; 33:20). Melchizedek was said to be a priest of the Most High God (Gen. 14:18-20). Job seems to have served as a priest also for his family (Job 1:5). When God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, He gave them a Law by which they were to be governed. But, He also set up a priestly arrangement for the people of Israel. Aaron was the first High Priest in Israel, and all new High Priests were to be appointed from his decendency. All regular priests were to come from the tribe of Levi. The main work of Priest was to serve as "mediator" between God and man—to act on man's behalf. Their consecration was very elaborate and they had special garments that they wore as they officiated (Exo. 28, 29; Lev. 8). The Priest would take care of the daily sacrifices and offerings and especially the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16; 4:13-21; 6:19) They were supported by the tithes, first fruits, firstlings, and the various sacrifices (Num. 18).

The Hebrew Letter draws comparisons between the Levitical & Aaronic priesthoods and the Priesthood of Christ—showing clearly the superiority of the New over the Old System. There are about seven different sections in this Letter about the Priesthood.

**The God-Man Priest
(Heb. 2:6-3:1)**

The Perfect Man (2:6-13). God created man in His image and gave him rulership over all things. Man lost his first estate by sinning and therefore not all things are subject to him. But the God-Man has come to complete the task of subduing all things. Jesus was made a little lower than the Angels so that He could suffer death for all men. As a result, He is crowned with glory and honor. He was made perfect through His suffering and obedience and is able to bring many sons to glory. The writer quotes 4 passages to back-up his statements about Jesus (Ps. 22:22; 2 Sam. 22:3; Isa. 8:17; Isa. 8:18).

Jesus is Partaker of Flesh and Blood (2:14-3:1). This was necessary for several reasons—but primarily, that He would identify with humanity by being in the flesh. His death was also a means of our deliverance from sin and its power of death over us. God's intent was for Jesus to give aid to humans, not to Angels. Jesus is able to be a merciful and

faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God because he was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.

Jesus is well-prepared to be our High Priest (4:14-16). Jesus is said to be a "great" High Priest. He is great because:

1. He was tempted in all ways like us—but did not yield;
2. He understands and sympathizes with our weaknesses and infirmities;
3. He has passed through the heavens;
4. We can confidently draw close to His throne of grace when we need mercy;
5. We can obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

**The Special Requirements of Priest!
(5:1-11; 6:18-20)**

The work of Priest (5:1-3). The function of a Priest was to act on behalf of other humans to God—both with gifts and sacrifices. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weaknesses. He has to offer sacrifices for himself first, and then for the people.

The appointment of Priest (5:4-6; 6:18-20). The Priesthood is not something a person assumes, but he must be appointed by God. Jesus was called by God just as Aaron was called—He did not take this honor on Himself on His own. But Jesus was appointed a Priest like Melchizedek. (Ps. 2:7; 110:4). God appointed Jesus High Priest by two immutable things. This gives us a hope that is an anchor to our soul, both sure and steadfast. And, He has entered God's presence behind the veil so that He may become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

His life was prepared to be a Priest (5:7-11). While He was on earth:

1. Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with great cries and tears to the Father—and He was heard because of His godly fear.
2. Jesus learned obedience by the things He suffered;
3. He was perfected;
4. He became the author of eternal salvation to those who obey Him.

**Jesus and Melchizedek
(Heb. 7:1-28)**

Facts about Melchizedek (7:1-10).

1. He was king of Salem (peace) and king of righteousness.
2. He was a priest of the Most High God.
3. He was acquainted with Abraham and received tithes from him.
4. He was without father and mother or genealogy, neither beginning of days nor end of life. (No record of such).
5. God purposely left the record blank so that Jesus would be a Priest like him continually.
6. The Levitical Priests paid tithes through Abraham to Melchizedek.
7. The lesser (Levites) is blessed by the better (Melchizedek).

The Imperfection of the Levitical Priesthood (7:11-12). The fact that Jesus was appointed a Priest like Melchizedek shows the imperfection of the Levitical Priesthood. And, if the Priesthood is changed, there is also a need for a change of Law.

Jesus could not serve as a Priest under the Levitical Priesthood (7:13-17). No one was allowed to officiate who was not of the tribe of Levi. Jesus was of the Tribe of Judah and could not serve as a Priest under the Aaronic Priesthood. Jesus' Priesthood is based on the likeness of Melchizedek's Priesthood—according to the power of an endless life.

Jesus' Priesthood gives us hope (7:18-19). Since the Law made nothing perfect, it was annulled because of its weakness and unprofitableness. Jesus' Priesthood gives us a better hope and that we can draw near to God.

Jesus was also made a Priest by an Oath (7:20-21). The Levites were made Priests without an oath, but not Jesus (Ps. 110:4). God swore that He would be a Priest like Melchizedek.

Jesus' Priesthood is superior to the Levitical Priesthood (7:22-28). The writer gives a sharp contrast of the two Priesthoods.

1. Under the Levitical, there were many Priests because they died! Under Jesus, there is only ONE, because He ever lives to make intercession for us.
2. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens.
3. He does not need to offer sacrifices daily for Himself and for the people like the Levites.
4. He offer Himself once for all never to be repeated.

5. The Law appointed Priests who had weaknesses, but Jesus has been perfected forever.

**Concluding Thoughts
(Heb. 10:19-25)**

Upon the basis of our study, we are encouraged enter with boldness the new and living way and draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. We are also encouraged to hold fast our confession of hope without wavering and to stir one another up with love and good works—not forsaking to assemble together.

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- ___ 1. We know that there were Priest during the Patriarchal System.
- ___ 2. The Aaronic & Levitical Priests had to wear special garments as they officiated for the people.
- ___ 3. Jesus is said to have been made perfect by His suffering and obedience.
- ___ 4. Jesus had to be flesh and blood in order to be man's sacrifice for sin.
- ___ 5. Since Jesus was tempted like us, He can sympathize with our weaknesses and infirmities.
- ___ 6. Melchizedek was a king as well as a Priest.
- ___ 7. Melchizedek literally did not have a father and mother.
- ___ 8. Jesus was made a Priest by an Oath.
- ___ 9. Jesus could not have served as a Priest while he lived on earth.
- ___ 10. Living and dying Priests under the Law showed that they were insufficient to deliver men from sin and its curse..

Lesson Four

"God's Final Sacrifice"

When God gave a Law to Israel to govern them as a people, it was necessary to set up:

1. A Priestly System to act as a mediator between God and sinful man;
2. To make atonement for their sins daily and yearly;
3. And to set up a holy place (Tabernacle) where God's Spirit would be in their midst and in which the above services could take place.

The Hebrew Writer compares the Israelite System with the Christian System and clearly shows the Superiority of the latter System in all aspects. The main emphasis seems to be on the Perfect Sacrifice of Jesus, the Christ. Without this Sacrifice mankind would really have no hope.

The New Tabernacle (Heb. 8:1-5; 9:1-14)

The purpose of Priests is to offer sacrifices. But Jesus could not offer such if He was on earth, because there were Priest that did that. But they were only doing so to illustrate the heavenly things that would supercede their efforts. (8:3-5).

Jesus serves in the New Tabernacle and is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. This Tabernacle God erected, not man! (8:1-2).

A Description of the Old Tabernacle is given:

1. The first section had the lamp stand, the table, and the show-bread.
2. The second section behind the veil had the golden censer and the Ark of the Covenant. In the Ark there was the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.
3. Only the High Priest could go into the second section. He went alone once a year with blood to offer for himself and for the sins of the people.

These things showed clearly that the way into the Holy of Holies was not

yet made manifest while the first Tabernacle was standing. It could not make the worshipper perfect in regard to the conscience. But Christ came with the greater and more perfect Tabernacle not made with hands. He did not come with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood. He entered the Most Holy Place (once and for all) to obtain eternal redemption for mankind. If the blood of animals was used to purify the flesh; then, how much more can Christ's sacrifice can cleanse our conscience from dead works!

The Necessity of the Shedding of Blood (Heb. 9:18-28)

Almost all things are purified with blood! The first Covenant (Testament) was purified with blood; and so was the second Covenant (Testament). But the Tabernacle and all its vessels were also originally sanctified by blood. In fact, without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. If the copies of the things in the heavens need to be purified by blood; so must the heavenly things as well. Christ did not enter the Holy of Holies made with hands, but He went into heaven itself, in the presence of God, to offer Himself as our High Priest. The earthly High Priest went into the Most Holy Place every year with blood; but Jesus went only once into the heavenly Holy Place to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

The Contrast of Sacrifices (Heb. 10:1-18)

Animal Sacrifices versus Jesus' Sacrifice. These sacrifices under the Law could not perfect those who were under it! This is shown by the fact that they have to be continually offered. Also, if they were purified once for all, they would have had no more consciousness of sins. In the continual offering of the animal sacrifices, it was a continual reminder of sin for the people. The Day of Atonement illustrates this clearly. The people were "supposedly cleansed of sin" by the daily sacrifices. But each year, a new reminder of the need of cleansing was made clear by the Day of Atonement. Thus, the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins! Even prophecy shows this clearly (Ps. 40:6-8). This prophecy shows that God was made flesh (a physical body was needed) in order to make atonement for sin. Jesus is pictured as willingly submitting to the Father's Will to offer Himself as that sacrifice. Jesus was able to take away the first System in order to initiate the New System that gives complete forgiveness. The Levitical Priest repeatedly offered the same sacrifices daily—which could not take away sins. But Jesus' offering of Himself only did this once for the sins of mankind, and afterward sat

down at the right hand of God to wait until His enemies are made His footstool.

Jesus' one offering perfects forever those who are being sanctified. Even the promise of a new Covenant states that their sins and lawless deeds God would remember no more—like He did under the first Covenant! So, where people receive remission of sins, there is no longer a need for another offering for sin.

Concluding Thoughts
(Heb. 10:32-39)

So, remember these things when you face struggles and sufferings, and when you are made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations. Also, joyfully accept the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. So, do not cast away your confidence in God's Word and Promises! For those who will endure to the end will receive a great reward. We must not be of those who draw back unto perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- ___ 1. Today, the sacrifices of animals are worthless!
- ___ 2. One of the changes that the New System brought about was a change of Tabernacle.
- ___ 3. The New Tabernacle is something erected by God and not man.
- ___ 4. Only Priests could enter into the Holy of Holies (Most Holy Place).
- ___ 5. Jesus entered the Most Holy Place (once and for all) to obtain eternal redemption for mankind.
- ___ 6. The blood of animals was sacrificed to purify the flesh.
- ___ 7. The cleansing of man's conscience from dead works was possible under the Old System.
- ___ 8. The Day of Atonement should have been a continual reminder to the Jewish people that their sins had not completely been taken away.
- ___ 9. Ps. 40:6-8 foretells of the coming of God in the flesh.
- ___ 10. The foretelling of a New Covenant shows the need for Jesus' perfect sacrifice for sins.

Lesson Five

"The Dangers of Falling Away"

To "fall away" infers that a person has been a part of something and then he leaves it for one or more reasons. We believe that the Bible clearly points out that a person can become a Christian (become a part of the Redeemed of God) and can fall away and be lost eternally. We believe that this lesson will make this clear.

There are several phrases that are used in Scripture to help us see the broad dangers of a person that was once saved by the grace of God and then turns away from such—that he can be lost! There are obviously religious groups that teach to the contrary, so it is important that we come to know (and want to know) the truth on this matter. We have the Perfect Sacrifice for sin that has been once offered for mankind. We not only need to accept God's gracious offer of Redemption; but, as well, we must live a faithful life or live up to our profession of faith in Christ.

"Drifting Away" (Heb. 2:1-4)

The Christian is urged to give an earnest heed to what he has been taught about Jesus or he will be in danger of drifting away from such. The Hebrew Writer states that under the Old System given by Angels that every transgression and disobedience received a just reward. And he draws the conclusion that if we also neglect this great salvation that God offers to us, we too can be in danger of being punished by God.

This great salvation:

1. Was first spoken by Jesus Himself during His public ministry;
2. Then, later, it was confirmed by those who heard Him;
3. God bore witness to the truthfulness of this teaching by **signs, wonders, various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit;**
4. And all of this was done by God's design or His Will.

"Hardening of your Hearts" (Heb. 3:7-18)

The Hebrew Writer quotes from Psalm 95:7-11 to warn against the danger of one hardening his heart when he goes through trials. He points out that God will test us to see if we will be faithful to Him like He did the Israelites in the wilderness. God accused them of always going astray in their hearts and not being concerned about knowing God's way. The end

Results was—they were not allowed to go into the Land that God had promised to give to them!

He next tells them to **Beware!**

1. Of the dangers of an evil heart of unbelief;
2. Of the dangers of departing from the living God;
3. Of the need to exhort one another daily;
4. Of the danger of being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin;

This warning is real! We can become partakers of Christ's promises to us only if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.

So, Pay attention to God's voice and do not harden your hearts as the Israelites did in the wilderness rebellion.

1. God was angry with them during the 40 years because of their sins.
2. He made it clear that He did not allow the **disobedient** to enter into His promised Land....and neither will he let us enter into our promised Land if we are disobedient.
3. They lost the promise because of their **unbelief!**

"Dull of Hearing"
(Heb. 5:11-6:8)

The Hebrew writer now spells out one of the main problem of these Hebrew Christians—they were dull of hearing (not really concerned with God's message to them). He rebukes them in the following ways:

1. By this time (possibly 30 plus years some had been Christians);
2. You should be able to teach others the Gospel;
3. But instead, you need to be taught the first principles of the Gospel again—they were losing faith in what they were originally taught;
4. You need the milk of the word and not solid food because you are unskilled in the use of the Word of God;
5. You should be feeding on solid food as grown up Christians who have learned how to discern between good and evil.
6. They need to go beyond the first principles and go on to mature spiritual food for their soul.

People who are dull of hearing can easily fall away even after they have:

1. Been once enlightened;
2. Tasted the heavenly gift;
3. Become partakers of the Holy Spirit;
4. And have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come.

"If they fall away!" There is an absolute danger that even these can fall away! Why? What is it about such people like this that will cause them to fall away? It is not because of the four things listed above, but in spite of them! What would cause them to fall away?

1. They crucify again for themselves the Son of God;
2. They put Him to an open shame;
3. And therefore cannot be brought to repentance again!

**"Willful Sinning"
(Heb. 10:26-31)**

A person can sin out of ignorance; but he can also sin willfully! It is willful sin because he has already come to the knowledge of the truth. It is said of such a person:

1. There is no other sacrifice to which he can turn if he rejects Christ;
2. He can only look forward to a fearful expectation of judgment;
3. As well as a fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

When a person rejected Moses' Law:

1. He died without mercy on the testimony of 2 or 3 witnesses.
2. They trample under foot the Son of God.
3. They count the blood of the Covenant an unholy thing.
4. They insult the spirit of Grace.

Such people deserve a sorer punishment from God, and He will avenge and sit in judgment upon them.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands Of the living God!

**Concluding Thoughts
(Heb. 10:37-38)**

1. These dangers are real!
2. God will return to bless or to judge mankind.
3. Only those whose faith is strong will receive the blessing.
4. God has no pleasure in those who start out and then fall away.
5. Do we take these warnings seriously?

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- ___ 1. There are some religious people who profess to believe in Jesus that also believe that once a person is saved he cannot be lost.
- ___ 2. To drift away from Jesus does not necessarily mean that we totally drive away from Him.
- ___ 3. To neglect the salvation we have received can mean we can be eternally lost.
- ___ 4. A Christian can allow his heart to be hardened when he undergoes trials of life.
- ___ 5. A person can harden his heart by being deceived by sin.

- ___ 6. Disbelief and Disobedience are the same thing.

- ___ 7. Some of these Christians mentioned in the Hebrew Letter could have been Christians for a least 30 years or more.
- ___ 8. A person can be enlightened, taste of the heavenly gift, and become partakers of the Holy Spirit and still be lost.
- ___ 9. A person can so sin that he cannot be brought back to repentance again.
- ___ 10. It is possible that a person can deserve a "sorer" punishment for his sins.

Lesson Six

"The Blessings of Faithfulness"

In addition to good solid teaching about the New Religious System that was initiated by the coming of Jesus, the Christ; there were strong warnings that we looked at in the last lesson about the dangers of falling away from Christ. These warnings are interspersed throughout this Letter to the Hebrew Christians. There were obvious factors that challenged their faithfulness to Christ:

1. Jewish Christians had been scattered throughout the area (world possibly) (Jas. 1:1);
2. A new Religious System is challenging the 1500 year old System that was obviously started by God;
3. Only a small portion of the Jews had accepted the teachings of the Gospel of Christ;
4. Christians were being persecuted by both Jews and Romans (Heb. 10:32-33);
5. The Temple of the Jews was still standing which would create questionings and doubtings;
6. Many were dilatory in their efforts to attend the assemblies and be continually instructed in this New Way (Heb. 5:11-14; 10:25).

These Christians were in great need of being challenged to hold firmly to their faith in Christ. This Lesson will survey the various forms of encouragement found in this Letter.

A Defining of Faith (Heb. 11:1-3, 6)

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. The elders (Patriarchs) were well-known for their faith in God. They believed that the worlds were framed by God's Word, and that they were made out of things that were invisible to the eye. Without faith, no one can please God. We must not only believe that He exist, but also that He rewards those who search after Him.

Examples of Faith (Heb. 11:4-12)

Abel listened to God and offered his sacrifice according to God's requirements; but **Cain** failed to offer what God required.

Enoch never saw death but was taken up because his faith pleased God.

Noah's faith was shown by building a large boat according to God's instructions that saved their lives in the Great Flood.

Abraham left his kindred and went into a strange land based on God's promise to bless him.

Sarah's faith was shown by having a child after the time of bearing of children—believing that God would carry out His promise to her.

**The Assurance of their faith
(Heb. 11:13-16)**

All of these Patriarchs died believing that there was a better country (a heavenly country) that they would receive. Therefore God is not ashamed to be their God and He has prepared a special city for them.

**Continued Examples of Faith
(Heb. 11:17-40)**

Abraham's faith was manifested when he willingly made the attempt to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice to God. He believed that God could raise his son from the dead.

Issac's faith was shown by his blessing Jacob and Esau in regards to things to come.

Jacob's faith was manifested when he blessed each of the sons of Joseph in view of God fulfilling His promise of the Land of Canaan.

Joseph's faith was manifested by having his bones buried back up in the Land of Canaan.

Moses' parents showed their faith by hiding Moses and were not afraid of the King's command.

Moses' faith was shown by refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He preferred to suffer affliction with God's people rather than enjoy the pleasures of Sin. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than what Egypt offered him. He forsook Egypt not fearing the King's wrath.

Israel's faith was shown by the keeping of the Passover and the sprinkling of blood to avert the death of their firstborn ones. They also passed through the Red Sea on dry land. Later on, the walls of Jericho fell down by their obedient faith.

Rahab did not perish in the fall of the city because of her faith in God.

Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the Prophets showed their faith by subduing kingdoms, working righteousness, obtaining promises, stopping the mouths of lions, quenching the violence of fire, escaping the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. They were tortured—not accepting deliverance, so they could obtain a better resurrection. Others endured trials of mocking, scourging, chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, tempted, and slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins, goatskins, and were destitute, afflicted, and tormented, wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

Their great faith caused God to say about them: "***Of whom the world was not worthy.*** But, they did not receive the promise—but are waiting on us to join with them in eternity.

God's Chastening and Exhortation (Heb. 12:1-29)

God's people today have a great crowd of witnesses that have gone before us—we need to be encouraged by their examples. Also, remember as you undergo trials that the Lord chastens who He loves (Prov. 3:11-12). He chastens for our profit. So, be sure you do not fall short of the grace of God and let the root of bitterness spring up in your life. Be encouraged because you are a part of the new heavenly Jerusalem that is registered in heaven. Since we are a part of an unshakeable kingdom, let us serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Final Words of Encouragement (Heb. 13:1-25)

Let brotherly love continue in your midst and show hospitality to strangers and to prisoners. Don't be covetous, but rather be content with what you have. Show respect to your leaders and follow their examples. Be willing to bear the reproach of Christ who was crucified outside the city. Let's continually praise God and offer of thanks in the name of Christ. Do good, be willing to share—God is pleased with such. May God make you complete in every good work to do His will. Grace be with you all.

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- ___ 1. These early Christians were persecuted by both Jews and Romans.
- ___ 2. The Temple of the Jews was still standing at the time of the writing of the Letter to the Hebrews.
- ___ 3. True faith does not require evidence.

- ___ 4. The worlds were made out of the things that can be seen.

- ___ 5. Enoch did not see death because of his faith in God.

- ___ 6. Abraham left his homeland before God ever appeared to him.

- ___ 7. Joseph showed his faith in God by having his bones carried back to be buried in Canaan.
- ___ 8. Moses made the decision to no longer be looked upon as Pharaoh's daughter's son.
- ___ 9. God only chastens whom He loves.

- ___ 10. Christ was crucified outside the city of Jerusalem.

