

Hebrews

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Personal Study Notes

1. INTRODUCTION TO HEBREWS

A. Authorship and History

The Epistle to the Hebrews is anonymous. The author did not reveal his identity, and there is no sure way of determining who he was. Most scholars consider Paul to be the writer.

If the author, however, were someone other than Paul, then who? Some scholars have suggested Luke, Clement of Rome, Barnabas, or Apollos. Each suggestion, it must be noted, is merely conjecture and, while tenable, without the slightest degree of authority or proof.

Some scholars have determined that the whole Greek style of Hebrews is different from that of Paul's acknowledged writings, and therefore, they reason, cannot be his. But would not a different purpose in writing call for a change of expression? Then too, it is possible that Paul supplied the thoughts of the epistle and another wrote it in its present form as several ancient scholars have pointed out.

In view of the many untenable alternatives, it seems that the most acceptable position is that Hebrews is Pauline in authorship or origin. This study therefore assumes Paul to be the author of this epistle.

From the internal evidence, the date of the writing can be reasonably set between AD 62 and AD 68. The readers are reminded of the "former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions" (10:32); therefore, the epistle was being written long enough after the persecution that they needed to be reminded of it. This, along with other chronological data, causes most scholars to set the earliest date of AD 60.

The Hebrew Christians were yet attracted to the apparatus of approach to God that the Aaronic priesthood and the Temple worship symbolized. Since the writing dealt with the danger of reverting to the practices of the Law, it is evident that the Temple service was yet functioning. Inasmuch as the Temple was destroyed in AD 70, this would be the latest possible date for the writing. Thus, it is reasonable, as was mentioned earlier, to set the probable date of the writing between AD 62 and AD 68.

B. Characteristics

Written in eloquent literary style, Hebrews is the earliest apology, or defense, of the Christian faith. The primary objective of the writing is to *establish Hebrew Christians in the faith* that had been delivered, once for all, to the saints. This is accomplished by a series of comparisons in which Jesus Christ is proven in all respects to be superior: superior to the prophets, angels, Moses, Joshua, and the Aaronic priesthood. Christ's new covenant is superior to the old, His sacrifice greater, and His promises better. Many of the comparisons contrast the real, that is, the heavenly and the eternal, with the apparent, which is earthly and temporal.

The theme of the writing leaves little or no doubt that since Christ's new and living way superseded every other way, it is the only way! To come short of it would constitute apostasy, and the writer, inspired of God, repeatedly warned of the danger, urging believers onward in the faith. Interspersed frequently in Hebrews are grim warnings, sincere exhortations, and numerous references to holy Scripture for authority on these points.

SELF HELP TEST

1. Introduction to Hebrews

Complete the statements.

1. Most scholars consider _____ to be the writer of Hebrews.
2. Most scholars set the earliest date for the writing of Hebrews as _____.
3. The primary objective of the writer of Hebrews is to _____ Hebrew Christians in the faith that had been delivered once for all to the saints.
4. The Epistle to the Hebrews deals with the danger of going back (reverting) to the _____.

Personal Study Notes

2. JESUS CHRIST—THE FINAL AND FULL REVELATION OF GOD (1:1-3)

ANALYSIS: God, who had spoken through the prophets in former days, has now “spoken unto us by his Son.” This expression is not limited to the spoken or the written Word, but here the “Word was made flesh” and became the living Word. In this respect, we are privileged to see the Word of life in the laboratory of time, manifested in all its perfection and flawless beauty! Thus, we have in Jesus Christ the final and full revelation of God.

A. The Contrast Between Revelations (1:1-2a)

“God . . . hath . . . spoken.” There is no theorizing, no questioning, and no doubting in these bold, plain words. The definite ring of strong faith in the divinely inspired Word of God is heard here. In this age of atheistic rebellion against the authority of God’s Word, there needs to be, there must be, resounding echoes of this unalterable fact: “*God . . . hath . . . spoken.*”

The key point of these introductory words of Hebrews, however, is to set forth the contrast between the *former* and the *latter* “expressions” or revelations of God. Not that there was a difference in the essence of the two but a wide contrast is shown in the degree or scope and the means of the revelations. In the mind of the writer of Hebrews, it was a settled fact that the God who spoke “in time past” was the same God who “hath . . . spoken” again. The latter expression, however, was complete and perfect while the former was fragmentary and partial. Notice how the writer makes this clear:

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. . .” (1:1).

“At sundry times” carries the thought that God spoke many different times. But the reference is not to the diversity of times as much as it is to the diversity of the many utterances. God’s revelation of Himself has been progressive, “here a little; there a little.” As it was needed and according to His divine providence, God gave the former revelation in connection with temporary dispensations of time from Creation through the Law. He would reveal one truth to one age, then another to the next age. They were never contradictory, but never full and complete either, always promising, building, preparing, and anticipating.

“In divers manners” denotes the various methods or modes through which God spoke. This refers to the different forms of the utterances themselves. There were prophetic promises, inspired instructions, types in the Tabernacle and the Temple worship and sacrifices, and so forth, to name a few. All were different, and yet, all expressed the one divine mind.

“By the prophets” reminds us of that grand army of God’s faithful men who would say nothing more or less than He had told them to say, men who would rather die than alter or compromise God’s Word, men who were steady as compass needles to the pole, men of whom the world was not worthy. And yet, they had only the partial revelation God had granted. But “to him [Christ] give all the prophets witness” (Acts 10:43). And only in Him can one be complete. They longed to see His day!

“God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. . .” sets forth in a few words the stupendous contrast: no longer the fragmentary expressions of God couched in types, shadows, providences, or angelic utterances that were shrouded with mystery, but the final, complete, plain revelation of the fullness of God in Jesus Christ.

The *spoken Word* created the worlds: “For he spake, and it was done” (Psalm 33:6-9). The *written Word* offered a glimpse at the righteousness, wisdom, power, majesty, and glory of God. But now that “word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” Through the living Word, “God was manifest in the flesh.” “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him” (Colossians 2:9-10). What a contrast! This means that through the new birth we have “Christ [the Word] in you, the hope of glory”!

B. The Surpassing Glory of Jesus Christ (1:2b-3)

Here we are privileged to see the union of two natures in Jesus Christ—deity and humanity. Without this dual nature, Jesus could not have been our Savior! The Law had been given to humanity. If the divine government was to be vindicated, men and women must of necessity keep that Law. This they had failed to do; therefore, the penalty of the Law must be endured. The Savior, then, must be a man in order to pay the penalty of death. But the whole human family had sinned, and no one could redeem his or her brother or sister. All were condemned. The Savior, therefore, must be God! The Incarnation was the only answer to the need. God became a man. The union of deity and humanity can be seen in the following points:

1. Jesus Christ was “appointed heir of all things.”

The Incarnation was not an afterthought, but was according to a foreordained plan, for to be an heir one must first become a child. This in no sense suggests that another “personage” in God is involved. Indeed, there is no such thing! The Eternal simply predetermined the means through which He could die as a man in order to redeem humanity unto Himself. The role of “heir of all things” was “appointed” or foreordained. Therefore, Jesus Christ lived, died, was buried, and arose according to that plan (Luke 24:46).

2. The writer declared Jesus Christ to be the creator of all things!

“By whom also he made the world.” “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not” (John 1:10). Only God can create. Either Jesus is Jehovah, the only true God, the Creator of Heaven and earth, or the whole Bible is a farce! With us there is no doubt. He is the First and the Last, the Almighty. Praise His name!

3. Not only is Jesus Christ declared here to be the Creator of all things, but the sustainer of all things as well. He is “upholding all things by the word of his power.”

The so-called laws of nature are not self-existent laws. They are dependent upon “the word of his power.” Furthermore, they are subservient to His Word. His command withered a fig tree. His rebuke checked and stilled a stormy tempest. Therefore, His Word keeps, maintains, and upholds the planets of the universe. They follow their undeviating orbits at His command.

All people, whether they will admit it or not, are “kept” by the very Word they reject. (See I Peter 1:5.) Amazing grace—unfathomable love. But one day the grace period will expire. His Word will have been fulfilled: “The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard” (Isaiah 24:20). May God help us to be mindful of the sustaining Word of God!

4. Jesus is “the brightness [effulgence] of his glory.”

That is, He is the manifestation of God. *All that God is*—not merely His attributes or ways—but *all that God is*, we find in Jesus Christ. Who could see the noonday sun and not see the radiant rays? To see the beams of sunlight is to see the effulgence of the sun. And the “glory” (*doxa*, Gr.) here refers to “the expression of the divine attributes collectively.” This means that Jesus is set forth as the effulgence [brightness] in whom and by whom that glory is manifested! No wonder He told Philip, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

5. The writer declared Jesus Christ to be the exact expression of God in the phrase, “the express image of his person.”

In actual transliteration, the Greek reads, “An exact impress of the substance of Him.” *Impress* comes from the Greek word *character*. Primarily, this word denotes the instrument used in engraving to make an impression, and from this the actual impression that is made by the engraver. Therefore, we have the thought of the “exact expression of the substance of God” in these words. The substance of God, of course, is Spirit and the “exact expression” is the man, Christ Jesus!

6. This text sets Jesus Christ forth as our Priest-King.

“He . . . by himself purged our sins”—here is Jesus, our Priest. “He . . . sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”—here is Jesus, our King.

The sacrificial offering made for the purification of sins was Himself; thus, “by himself [He] purged our sins.” The efficacy of the sacrifice is the basis of acceptance, and our Priest offered the greatest of all, Himself. When this was completed, Jesus went back to Spirit [Father] from whence He came, “sat down on the right hand of Majesty on high,” and now wields the scepter of the universe. He’s our King!

C. Conclusion

Since “God . . . hath . . . spoken,” we are under solemn obligation to hear and obey. It is a crime and a sin to either neglect to hear or hear and fail to obey; therefore, man is without excuse. Furthermore, His Word is the ultimate authority on all things pertaining to life. To oppose it or pervert it is sheer madness. To reject what “God . . . hath . . . spoken unto us by his Son” is to reject all hope of hearing from God at all, for Jesus Christ is the final and full revelation of God! He is God Himself!

SELF HELP TEST

2. Jesus Christ—The Final and Full Revelation of God

Complete the statements.

1. God, who had spoken through the prophets in former days, has now “spoken unto us by _____.
2. God's revelation of Himself has been _____.
3. The final, complete and full revelation of all God is, is in _____.
4. Without this dual nature of _____ and _____, Jesus could not have been our Savior.
5. All that God is, we find in _____.
6. The substance of God is _____.

Personal Study Notes

3. JESUS CHRIST—BETTER THAN THE ANGELS (1:4-2:18)

PREPARATION FOR STUDY: Give particular attention to the analysis of this division before approaching the text study. It is important that you have an overall view of the division and study it with the purpose of the writer in mind.

ANALYSIS: The thesis of the argument in this section is that the Son is superior to the angels. Beginning with the fact that the Son has inherited a more excellent name than they, the writer proceeds to compare Jesus with the angels. Clearly, the Messiah is shown to be God Incarnate, who is to be worshiped by the angels, while the angels themselves are referred to as attendant worshipers and ministering spirits (1:4-14). Then on the basis of these facts, we are exhorted to take heed to the revelation given in the Son. Since transgression of the Law, which was given through angels, met such stern retribution, what will be the consequences of neglecting this, which “at the first began to be spoken by the Lord” (2:1-4)?

Humans were made a little lower than the angels. Yet while angels are not destined to be over “the world to come,” men and women are. Unregenerate people, however, cannot fulfill the ideal of their destiny. But Jesus, as the Son of Man, can and does. Furthermore, through His death, burial, and resurrection, He raises humanity from their fallen estate. He suffered these things “that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest” □ the sympathetic High Priest of humanity (2:5-18).

A. The Comparison Set Forth (1:4-14)

Angels have always held a high and holy position in God’s divine order. Consequently, His people also hold them in high esteem. In fact, it is with this in mind that the writer sets forth a comparison between Jesus and the angels. In

comparing Jesus with the angels, the author is by no means belittling the angels. To the contrary, by and through this comparison, he emphasizes the greatness of Jesus without detracting from the honor or respect due God's angelic host.

The comparison touches the following factors:

- (1) Jesus is the begotten Son; they are servants (1:5, 7, 14).
- (2) Jesus is commanded to be worshiped by the angels (1:6).
- (3) Jesus is addressed as "God" □Elohim! (1:8). Not so with angels.
- (4) Jesus is addressed as "Lord" □Jehovah! (1:10 and Psalm 102). Not so with the angels.
- (5) "The world to come, whereof we speak" was not put in subjection to the angels, but unto Jesus (2:5).

1. A More Excellent Name (1:4-5)

The comparative phrase "so much better" carries the thought of infinity. The measure is beyond measure! Notice this same term of comparison in Hebrews 7:22. It is obviously difficult to compare anything with the incomparable.

The word *better* is used nineteen times in the New Testament, thirteen of which appear in Hebrews. This comparative word creates a "string" of comparisons through the epistle. It begins "better than the angels" (1:4) and continues with "better things" (6:9), "better [than Abraham]" (7:7), "better hope" (7:19), "better testament" (7:22), "better covenant . . . better promises" (8:6), "better sacrifices" (9:23), "better . . . [possession]" (10:34), "better country" (11:16), "better resurrection" (11:35), and "better thing" . . . "better things" (11:40 and 12:24). *Better* is a key word in Hebrews.

The latter portion of Hebrews 1: 4 supports the assertion that Jesus is "better than the angels": "As he hath *by inheritance* obtained a more excellent name than they." How did He obtain the "more excellent name"? "*By inheritance*!" His name was the name of the Father. Though the angels were, in fact, called "sons of God" (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7) as are Christians (I John 3:1-2), Jesus is the "only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14). Hebrews 1:5 points out this distinction: "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son?" Therefore, His name, "a more excellent name," was obtained "*by inheritance*."

An angel announced that name: "Thou shalt call his name JESUS" (Matthew 1:21). This name identified the Son as the Incarnate Lord of

Glory—God wrapped in flesh! This name is declared to be “above every name” and “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow” (Philippians 2:9-11). “Neither is there salvation in any other: there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The name, then, He obtained “by inheritance”—the name of the Father—the “more excellent name”—is *Jesus Christ*!

2. Angels Commanded to Worship Jesus (1:6-7)

By inspiration, Jesus is referred to as the “firstbegotten” (1:6). Scholars interpret this (along with the grammatical construction of the passage in the Greek) to indicate a reference to the second advent. I cannot concur.

In the first place, we know that the Son’s preexistence was in the mind and plan of God. That is, there was no actual Son of God until the virgin Mary conceived and gave birth to Jesus. However, Jesus is “the beginning of the creation of God” (Revelation 3:14), that is, “the firstbegotten” (1:6).

This is understood when we realize that God “callesh those things which be not as though they were” (Romans 4:17). In His infinite foreknowledge, He “saw” the substance of His human body, when as yet there was none. In the divine mind, the Savior was the “beginning of the creation.” (Read Psalm 139:15-16.) We see the same principle in the reference to “the lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). Though not actually slain in the beginning, in the mind and plan of God it was as though it had already occurred.

The Son was to come at a predetermined date. “When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman” (Galatians 4:4). It was at this point that the “firstbegotten” was brought “into the world” (1:6).

Another reason I believe this verse refers to the first advent is in the commandment itself: “Let all the angels of God worship him.” In His second advent, there will be no need for such a commandment! He’s coming in glory and power. But what about the first advent? Was there a need for such a decree?

God *alone* is worthy of worship, and there is none other God but one! This, the angels knew. Furthermore, humans are made in God’s order “lower than the angels” (2:7). And since Jesus became a man, He “was made a little lower than the angels” (2:9). Hence, the need of the commandment becomes obvious. The angels had to be told. To fail to worship Him would be a passive form of rebellion!

The commandment simply made them to know that the little creature who was wrapped in swaddling clothes was also their Creator! It didn't introduce a second deity, for this would be in flagrant opposition to the first commandment. This commandment made plain that though He had become man, He was yet God—nothing less than or apart from the Eternal, “who is over all, God blessed forever” (Romans 9:5).

The comparison of the text points to the fact that the angels are worshipers, while Jesus is to be worshiped. Angels are created servants (verse 7) while Jesus is the sovereign Creator. High and holy as the angels are, they are shown to be inferior and subject to Him.

3. Jesus Christ, God Incarnate (1:8-13)

It must be noted that the duration and the nature of the reign of Jesus Christ are alluded to in this passage. The duration is eternal: “for ever and ever.” The nature of His reign is described in the symbolic phrase, “a scepter of righteousness.”

Notice particularly the title ascribed to Jesus here: “Thy throne, O God . . .” This means Jesus is Elohim. According to the writer of Hebrews, the psalmist (Psalm 45:6-7) was addressing the coming Christ as He spoke to God! The evidence is overwhelming. Plainly, Jesus is Elohim!

Psalm 102 is a prayer addressed to Jehovah (LORD). This Jehovistic psalm is applied to Jesus by the inspired apostle: “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth.” The Creator, the unchanging, self-existent one—JEHOVAH—is none other than Jesus! Furthermore, though the creation will wax old, He will remain the same (1:12). An echo of this is heard later in the writing, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.”

In comparison, no angel was ever called Elohim or Jehovah! And now, in the form of a question, the writer also points out that no angel was ever told to “sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (1:13). But this was addressed directly to the Messiah (Psalm 110) and here applied to Jesus. The Spirit is speaking to the Son, the human nature, and calling for complete submission of the human will to the divine. This willing subjection was to be until the last enemy, death, was put under. Jesus did this.

“Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death” (Philippians 2:8). In the garden, we hear the final yielding

of that human will as He prayed, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). He remained yielded to the Spirit (at the "right hand" or place of power) until the last enemy was overcome.

(It is ridiculous to interpret "right hand" to be a physical position. How could one get on the right hand of *that which is everywhere*? The phrase is symbolic language denoting a place of power.)

From the vast array of evidence, it is obvious that the writer of Hebrews was a strict monotheist who based his entire epistle on the fact that Jesus Christ was Jehovah God manifested in the flesh!

4. The Role of Angels (1:14)

As was pointed out earlier, angels are "sent forth to minister"; that is, they are servants of God. As they ministered to Jesus after the temptation (Matthew 4:11), they also minister to us, "the heirs of salvation."

The very thought of an angel is awe-inspiring! It has always been so. But how much greater impact the realization brings to our hearts when we are fully aware that Jesus is "better than the angels" (1:4). Glory!

B. A Parenthetical Exhortation (2:1-4)

The whole point of this solemn warning is: If transgression of the Law, which came through the instrumentality of angels who were creatures, brought "just recompense," how much more certain is retributive punishment to those who reject the Lord Himself who has come and spoken!

Therefore (2:1) connects this interposed exhortation to all that was said in the preceding chapter. It carries the exhortation home with force. "The things which we have heard" include the message of New Testament "salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord." And since we recognize His infinite height above the creation, as pointed out in Hebrews 1, "we ought to give the more earnest heed." That is, if the Old Testament prophets should be heard, how much more should the Lord of Glory Himself be heard!

"Lest at any time we should let them slip" (2:1) is better translated, "Lest haply we drift away." The Greek word denotes flowing or floating past a thing. The danger was that of drifting (through neglect) away from what they had

heard. Though the Hebrews were not ignorant of what Jesus had said, they were in danger of neglecting and thereby drifting away. The present world, the flesh, and the devil tug at the believers' moorings in Jesus. The tendency to drift along must be resisted constantly. Let us anchor our souls!

"For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast" reminds us that though the angels were only creatures and servants, God backed up the word spoken through them. No "transgression" (*parabasis*, Gr. "overstepping willfully a commandment") or "disobedience" (*parakoe*, Gr. "failing to hear through neglect") went unpunished!

In face of this, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord . . .?" This question has in its pointed expression an implied answer. Neglect this and "fall into the hands of a living God" (Hebrews 10:31) who has declared, "I will recompense."

"Neglect" would include, among other things:

- (1) Failure to give attention to the things of God: prayer, Bible study, attending church (Hebrews 10:25), and so forth.
- (2) Absorption in earthly pursuits, whether seeking pleasure, wealth, or prestige in this present world.
- (3) Forgetting "judgment to come" and living as "beasts that perish" in immorality.
- (4) Conforming to this present world and losing the "love of God."

Not only was this "spoken by the Lord," but it "was confirmed unto us by them that heard him. God also bearing them witness" (2:3-4). Some scholars feel there was no further confirmation of the gospel after the apostles died. But Paul refuted this in I Corinthians 1:7-8: "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." As God bore them witness, so does He today, "according to his own will" (2:4).

C. Justification of the Incarnation (2:5-18)

1. Man's Destiny and His Failure (2:5-8)

Stating the premise that "the world to come, whereof we speak" (2:5) was not put under or "in subjection" to the angels, Paul quoted the eighth Psalm to prove that supremacy over all created things was assigned to "man" (2:6-8a).

Though, admittedly, humanity was made “a little lower than the angels,” the psalm boldly and plainly asserts the fact that God “set him over the works of thy [God’s] hands” and “put all things in subjection under his feet.” Such was the role of humanity in creation!

But through disobedience, humanity fell and failed to fulfill this role. As the apostle pointed out, “But now we see not yet all things put under him” (2:8b). Humankind, as we are, do not fulfill the ideal of our destiny. By Adam, sin entered into the world and we fell short of our destined glory and honor. Unable to redeem ourselves, we fell farther and farther from our destined dignity.

2. The Goal Attained by and through Jesus Christ (2:9-13)

If humans are to attain the goal of their destiny, then, of necessity, *it must be accomplished by a human!* But, who? All have sinned; all are guilty. Divine justice calls for the execution of sin’s penalty, death (Romans 6:23). No person can pay the sin debt of another; each is obligated beyond his or her personal ability to pay. And yet, if individuals are to attain their lofty goal destined in God’s plan, it must be an accomplishment of a human.

Therefore, we see Jesus, the Holy One Himself, “who was made a little lower than the angels [human] for the suffering of death [paying the penalty of mankind’s sins]” (2:9). Praise His holy name! He did this “that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” He, the sinless One, paid our debt. He reached the ideal of our destiny.

God alone could be our Savior, for He alone was without sin. But He is eternal Spirit and cannot die. So He was made man “for the suffering of death,” thereby redeeming our lost souls. And as a man, He died for humanity. The Incarnation was God’s means of lifting humans from their fallen estate. For thus God, as man, lived, died, and arose, providing the means of salvation.

“But we see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honor” (2:9). As a man, He attained the destiny of humanity for humankind. This was done “through sufferings” and with the intent of “bringing many sons unto glory” (2:10). And we are being brought to that high and holy estate through our daily walk with Him. “If we suffer [with Him], we shall also reign with him” (II Timothy 2:12).

According to 2:11, the sanctifier and the sanctified are “of one,” “for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” What a perfect work has been wrought! To be exalted in such a manner by God Himself! It staggers the mortal

mind. To become “one” with God! And “when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (I John 3:2-3). We will walk with Him in white.

Alluding to the Psalms again, the writer sustained the point that men are elevated to the status of “brethren” “in the church” (2:12). What honor!

3. The Incarnation□Its Purpose (2:14-18)

As foretated, the eternal Spirit, in order to conquer death and thereby “destroy [or “bring to nought”] him that had the power over death” (2:14), had to become “one” with humanity. This was done by becoming a partaker of flesh and blood. In so doing, He could die and break the “reign” of death that held men and women captive (Romans 5). So one purpose of the Incarnation is to “destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (2:14).

Another purpose is expressed in Hebrews 2:15. Deliverance from the “fear of death,” which had held humanity in bondage, was wrought through the victory over death at Calvary.

He deliberately chose the lower role of man, in preference to that of the angels (2:16), in order to “be made like unto his brethren” (2:17). In so doing He could actually suffer temptation, enabling Him to “succour them that are tempted” (2:18) and be “a merciful and faithful high priest” (2:17) for all humanity.

Our God assumed our nature and walked where we walk that He might lift us to walk with Him. Through His becoming “like unto his brethren,” we can be “like him.” He assumed our nature that He might impart unto us His! It is His will that we “might be partakers of the divine nature” (II Peter 1:4).

SELF HELP TEST

3. Jesus Christ—Better than the Angels

True or False: Circle the correct answer.

1. The author of Hebrews attempted to belittle the angels.
True or False
2. The angels are commanded to worship Jesus.
True or False
3. Angels are sometimes referred to as “God” □ Elohim.
True or False
4. *Better* is a key word in Hebrews.
True or False

Short Answers

1. List five of the “better” things mentioned in the epistle.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
2. There was no actual Son of God until _____.
3. Angels are created _____ while Jesus is the sovereign Creator.
4. The title ascribed to Jesus in Hebrews 1:8 is _____.
5. Reference in the Scripture to “right hand” of God refers not to a physical position, but is _____ language denoting a place of power.
6. If the Old Testament prophets should be heard, how much more the _____ (2:1).

7. Though the Hebrews were not ignorant of what Jesus had said, they were in danger of _____

8. "Neglect" would include, among other things:
a. _____
b. _____
c. _____
d. _____
9. God alone could be our Savior, for He alone was without _____

10. As eternal spirit God could not die, so He was made _____

11. God took on or assumed our nature that He might impart unto us _____

4. JESUS CHRIST—GREATER THAN MOSES (3:1-19)

ANALYSIS: Moses was, admittedly, but a servant in the house of God. However, he was highly honored by the Hebrews. And though he was faithful “as a servant” (3:5), it is pointed out, in comparison, that Jesus is Lord over the house and, therefore, worthy of more glory and honor (3:1-6).

It will behoove, us to consider the failure of the Israelites who were under Moses. Since they were not permitted to enter the rest because of unbelief, we too could be overcome by “an evil heart of unbelief” (3:12) and fail to enter the rest intended for us (3:7-19).

The rest into which Joshua led the Israelites was a type of our present “rest.” The writer pointed out that Joshua did not give them rest, in the fullest sense of the word (4:8). They had possession, but had to labor and struggle to keep it! This typifies our present “rest.”

Then, in order to clarify the fact that another phase of “rest” remains to be had by the people of God (4:9), Paul reasoned that God would not “have spoken of another day” (4:8) still in the future, as He spoke of a rest hundreds of years later through David (4:7). This was referring to the present rest and the type still holds, since “there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”

The “second phase” of our rest, the eternal rest, is portrayed here as when we cease from our “own works, as God did from his” (4:10).

A. Jesus Is Superior to Moses (3:1-6)

“Wherefore, holy brethren . . . consider . . . Christ Jesus” (3:1) sets forth the very theme of the Book of Hebrews! Christ is above all the prophets, angels, Moses, Joshua, Aaron—above all! “Wherefore . . . consider . . .”! As “Apostle,” Jesus is sent to us; as our “High Priest,” He expiates, propitiates, and intercedes; He is our Mediator, “the man, Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). He’s our “all in all.”

With reference to the earthly mission of Jesus, the writer points out He “was faithful . . . as also Moses was faithful in all his [God’s] house” (3:2). But the superiority is highlighted as Paul refers to Jesus as “this man” (3:3). The obvious reference to the humanity of the Lord is for a comparison of His work in contrast with that of Moses. He “was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded [or established] the house hath more honour than the house” (3:3). The next verse reminds us, “He that built all things is God.” But Moses, though “faithful in all his [God’s] house,” was “as a servant” (3:5). In contrast, Christ is “as a son over his own house” (3:6). And, though “as a son,” He was yet the Builder, God “over his own house.” (See Romans 9:4-5.)

B. An Interposed Exhortation (3:7-19)

The last verse of the preceding section introduced a grave warning in the words, “. . . whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope unto the end” (3:6). Here again is a strong urging to act on the knowledge we have and not to drift through neglect, indifference or unbelief. Between the word *wherefore* (3:7) and the verse, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (3:12), is a parenthetical reference to the Israelites’ failure to enter the rest. The point is to base the warning on the fact that we could follow Israel’s tragic example of failing to hear God, hardening our hearts and thereby grieving God (3:7-8, 10). As they were rejected in God’s displeasure, so could it happen to us. “Wherefore. . . Take heed, brethren. . .” (3:7, 12).

The remainder of the chapter makes a definite application of these points to us personally. “Exhort one another daily” (3:13) is to urge one another onward. This must be by actions as well as with words. Sin, it is pointed out, is deceitful and will harden the heart. The farther we wander from God, the less aware we are of the sinfulness of sin. Let us set examples of holy, consecrated, dedicated lives and thereby “exhort [urge] one another daily.”

“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold. . .” (3:14) leaves no doubt about the possibility of falling short or provoking God (3:15), as the Israelites (3:16), and losing our reward. Their example is again pointed out and a specific reason is given for their failure to enter—“because of unbelief” (3:19).

At the root of indifference, laxity, and spiritual laziness is the ugly sin of unbelief. Remember the atheist who said:

Did I firmly believe, as millions say they do, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life determines the destiny in another, religion would mean everything to me. I would cast away earthly enjoyments as dross, earthly cares as follies, and earthly thoughts and feelings as vanities. I would strive to look upon eternity alone, and on the immortal souls around me, soon to be everlastingly happy or everlastingly miserable. I would go forth into the world and preach to it in season and out of season. My text would be, “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

The only thing that stops him is the sin of unbelief! “Wherefore . . . Take heed, brethren, lest . . .”

SELF HELP TEST

4. Jesus Christ—Greater than Moses

Complete the sentence.

1. Moses was but a _____ in the house of God. Jesus Christ is _____ over the house.
2. The Israelites under Moses were not permitted to enter the rest because of _____.
3. The rest into which Joshua led the Israelites was a type of _____.
4. “Exhort one another daily” (3:13) means to _____.
5. At the root of indifference, laxity, and spiritual laziness is the ugly sin of _____.

5. JESUS CHRIST—SUPERIOR TO JOSHUA (4:1-13)

The exhortation is carried over with the words, “Let us therefore fear . . .” (4:1). “The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (4:2). The gospel has been preached to us, but we too can “fall short.” In other words, even though we have believed and “do enter into rest” (4:3), there is the very real possibility of missing the eternal rest

The literal promise of rest to the Israelites was first made to Abraham. Then, after suffering the misery of slavery, the hope of a land of their own was a bright prospect. They began to follow Moses, but fear, doubt, and unbelief soon destroyed their faith and hopes. The majority failed to enter Canaan.

Canaan was a type of Christ’s rest (Matthew 11:28-30). The rest we now know is only the first phase of the true, eternal rest. It’s the “earnest of our inheritance.” Far superior to Joshua’s, this rest that Jesus gives will one day consummate in the heavenly rest.

The writer of Hebrews points out that a true rest yet remained for “the people of God” as God made known through David. This was several hundred years after they had occupied the land of promise, Canaan (4:6-9). The true rest, for which we are to labor, is a rest from our works, as God did from His (4:10-11).

“*For*” (4:12) implies a connection that exists between the terrible condemnation of the Israelites who did not believe the Word of God and us, should we prove unfaithful. “The word of God is quick [i.e., alive, not dead, eternal], and powerful [i.e., active, energetic, ‘that which is at work’], and sharper than any twoedged sword. . . .” And since “all . . . are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (4:13), it will behoove us to not only “preach the Word,” but “tremble at the Word also.

“The word of God is quick,” that is, it is the living force of God. It imparts life, energizes and propels its adherents. It’s “powerful,” or operative and effectual. Once it penetrates the heart, it will either soothe and comfort or disturb and agitate; whatever is needed to set the soul aright, the Word of God does!

Let us hear the Word, mix it with faith in our hearts, and “enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (4:11).

SELF HELP TEST

5. Jesus Christ—Superior to Joshua

Complete the sentence.

1. The word preached did not profit the Israelites, not being mixed with _____ in them that heard it (4:2).
2. Canaan was a type of _____.
3. The true rest for which we are to labor is a rest from _____ (4:10-11).
4. Hebrews 4:12 describes the Word of God as _____.

6. JESUS CHRIST—OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST (4:14-5:10)

ANALYSIS: After affirming, “we have a great high priest . . . Jesus the Son of God” (4:14), the writer sets out to corroborate the fact. He analyzes the qualifications and functions of the priesthood, along with the means of selection. In all respects, he shows that Jesus is qualified.

A. An Affirmation and a Pivotal Conclusion (4:14-16)

When Paul affirmed, “We have a great high priest . . . Jesus the Son of God” (4:14), he was setting forth a proposition to be proven. The Hebrews knew that God had given the law to Moses and that the Levitical priesthood was a vital segment of that law. Furthermore, none of its terms were to be abrogated, but all to be fulfilled. And the priesthood was to be of the tribe of Levi. How then could Jesus, in the framework of holy Scripture, be our high priest? These points were considered and covered.

The affirmation, “We have a great high priest,” is expressed again in I Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” He ascended. He arose bodily. This means that the humanity of our Lord serves as mediator between the eternal Spirit and the human family. That is, God looks at the estate of humanity through human eyes. His own human eyes. Therefore, He is our great high priest as well as our king—the King-Priest.

As our mediator—the great high priest—He neither offers daily sacrifices nor makes, in any manner, propitiation for sins. To the contrary, He mediates our case on the basis of propitiation *already made*. “He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (9:26) and “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin” (10:26). That supreme sacrifice was all sufficient.

Our approach to God is dependent upon our recognizing the mediatorial role of the Lord. Not only must we believe “we have a great high priest,” but that He is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (4:15) as well. *Infirmities* here refers to our “weaknesses or frailties.” Since He “was in all points tempted like as we are” (4:15), “he is able to succour them that are tempted” (2:18). As a sympathetic high priest, He is attentive to our needs and able to help.

“Let us therefore come boldly” (4:16). Here is the conclusion of the matter. Since we have such a high priest, we should approach God “boldly” □not brazenly or irreverently, but openly, confidently, and without reservation. Come boldly, expressing your weaknesses and frailties, knowing He will succour and lift you up! “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!”

“Let us therefore come boldly . . . that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to *help* in time of need.” We may be assured that we will “obtain mercy and find grace” if we will “come boldly,” expressing our needs. But the self-sufficient will go his way unaided.

B. The Functions, Qualifications, and Selection of High Priests (5:1-4)

To corroborate the affirmation that “we have a great high priest,” Paul outlined the functions, qualifications, and the means of selection of high priests with the intent to prove Jesus to be qualified for the role.

1. Functions

The high priests were to be occupied “in things pertaining to God” (5:1). They were to “offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins” (5:1).

2. Qualifications

Every high priest was to be “taken from among men” (5:1). Having their nature, he was thus able to “have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way” (5:2).

3. Selection

The high priest was to be “ordained for men” (5:1) “and no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron” (5:4).

C. Jesus Christ Is Qualified in All Respects (5:5-10)

1. Functions

While “in the days of His flesh,” He “offered up prayers and supplications” (5:7) and “though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (5:8). He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8). His sacrifice was the ultimate, of which all the others were but types. His was the supreme “sacrifice for sins.”

2. Qualifications

As “a Son” (5:8), He was “taken from among men.” Inasmuch as He was “in all points tempted like as we are” in His nature, He has compassion on the ignorant. Having walked where we walk, He knows our estate from the human standpoint.

3. Selection

Jesus was predestined to fill the office of high priest. As the Son of God (5:5), He was foreordained “a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (5:6). Again Paul reminded us, He was “called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec” (5:10). Consequently, in all respects Jesus fulfills the divine requirements for the office of high priest.

However, in the minds of the Hebrews a big question remained: How could Jesus, who was not of the tribe of Levi, be qualified as a high priest? Paul did not ignore this point. In fact, he had already given the answer. But the Hebrews were incapable of grasping it. Therefore, he launched into a stirring exhortation that continues through the sixth chapter. Then, in Hebrews 7, he again took up this vital point to prove Jesus is of a priesthood that is far greater than that of the Levitical order—the order of Melchisedec!

SELF HELP TEST

6. Jesus Christ—Our Great High Priest

True or False: Circle the correct answer.

1. There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.
 True or False
2. As our great high priest Jesus offers daily sacrifices for sins.
 True or False
3. We should approach God brazenly and irreverently.
 True or False
4. Jesus Christ was qualified in all respects as our great high priest.
 True or False

Complete the sentence.

1. The supreme “sacrifice for sins” was made by _____.
2. In Hebrews Jesus is proven to be of a priesthood that is far greater than that of the _____ order□the order of _____.

7. AN INTERPOSED EXHORTATION (5:11-6:20)

ANALYSIS: In an abrupt departure, the author pauses in his argument to chide the Hebrews for their dullness of hearing and lack of knowledge. This sharp reproof continues throughout the remainder of Hebrews 5 and ends on a higher note at the end of Hebrews 6.

A. The Reason for the Departure (5:11-14)

The “things . . . hard to be uttered” were admittedly deep and profound, but the real difficulty was with the hearers who were “dull of hearing” (5:11). This speaks of a sluggishness of mind, an attitude that stunts the spiritual growth of Christians. Such a disposition toward the deep things of God not only forbids growth, it causes digression!

As Paul pointed out, the “babe” has need of milk. The diet is to be broadened to include solids as one grows. But these had “become such as have need of milk” (5:12). They had “gone back” to an infantile stage.

The “strong meat” to which Paul was referring was a knowledge of “the order of Melchisedec.” He said these “of full age” were “those who by reason of use have their senses exercised” (5:14). In other words, if they had used “their senses,” they would have been able to “discern.” I wonder what his estimation would be of us.

Some say they could care less about the identity of Melchisedec. Some have the childish attitude that it doesn’t matter. Better grow up! What would the

inspired apostle Paul think of such an infantile attitude? Let us “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (II Peter 3:18).

B. The Solemn Warning (6:1-8)

In urging believers onward to full growth, the apostle mentions six fundamentals that he calls “the principles of the doctrine of Christ” (6:1):

1. “Repentance from dead works” (6:1).

The “works of the law” are not to be confused with the acts of submissive compliance with the gospel. No man can attain the eternal rewards through the “works” of the law or any other “works,” for that matter. Like any other sinner, the religionist who has not been born again (John 3:5; Acts 2:38) must repent. This is as fundamental today as it was then. All must repent. Whether it is from dead works or whatever, all must repent to be saved.

2. “Faith toward (*epi*, Gr. \square upon) God” (6:1).

“Without faith it is impossible to please him” (11:6) and “faith without works is dead” (James 2:20). A living faith, then, is an essential fundamental of the “doctrine of Christ.” To profess faith toward God and ignore the things He says is inconsistent.

3. “The doctrine of baptisms” (6:1).

The word *baptisms* is plural and refers to (a) the baptism in water and (b) the baptism of the Spirit (John 3:5; Acts 2:38). This is yet foundational with Bible believers. These are “the principles of the doctrine of Christ” (6:1).

4. “Laying on of hands” (6:2).

Believers were to “lay hands on the sick” (Mark 16:18); men received the Holy Ghost when believers laid their hands on them (Acts 8:17; 19:6). (However, the Holy Ghost was not given by or through the laying on of men’s hands! Jesus is the baptizer of the Holy Ghost, not man!) A gift was imparted when the presbytery laid hands on Timothy (I Timothy 4:14). These practices are still followed by Bible believers; they are fundamental.

5. “Resurrection of the dead” (6:2).

The Jews were divided regarding this doctrine. But in unison, the New Testament preachers proclaimed the fact!

6. "Eternal judgment" (6:2).

As long as God lives, sinners will suffer the torments of a lake of fire! Closely connected with the resurrection of the dead, this fundamental "doctrine of Christ" must be believed and preached by His church. Modernists deny it, but this basic fundamental must be held by all true Christians.

"Therefore," urged the apostle, "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection [full growth] . . . and this we will do, if God permit" (6:1, 3). Since these things are the primary principles, it would be silly to assume Paul meant to forsake or ignore these doctrines. His urging was to those who were well established in these points to continue to grow. The fact is that every new convert must learn these basic doctrines and be rooted and grounded therein. However, Paul urged a continuation of growth in knowledge of God in addition to this.

To emphasize the significance of this exhortation to full growth, Paul pointed out that if born again believers (as described in 6:4-5) "shall fall away" (6:6), "it is impossible" (6:4) "to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

The context of this weighty passage makes it plain that one can "fall away" to such a degree that he reaches a state of utter hopelessness. This corresponds with the words of the Lord relative to the "unpardonable sin," that of "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost." (See Matthew 12:31; Mark 3:28, 29; Luke 12:10.) It must be remembered that this is given as a reason ("For it is. . ." 6:4) for the exhortation to full growth. It is plain: grow, or die! (Of course, these are the two "poles" of the situation, and there is a wide range between them.)

In teaching this text, the teacher must strive for clarity, because one who has failed to "go onward" might assume he has "fallen away." It is easy to see how despondency could overwhelm such a person. There needs to be a clear understanding of the term "fall away." This refers to a state of complete apostasy from the faith after having enjoyed all the graces of the new birth. Who is to say when such a point is reached? Let us be careful.

Paul inserted an illustration of good and bad fruits and their end (6:7-8). Those who do not bring forth good fruits receive "the rain that cometh oft upon it" but bear "thorns . . . and briers." Consider their end (verse 8).

C. Believers Are Encouraged (6:9-12)

With a noticeable change of voice, Paul addressed his readers, “But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you . . . though we thus speak” (6:9). The stern, solemn warning is not weakened here, but strengthened. So often, strong exhortation can leave the impression that the speaker is pronouncing the doom of the hearers. This wise apostle encouraged our hearts with the fact that this need not be. In the following verse, he reminded us that God is aware of our “work and labor of love.”

The desire for diligent, dedicated disciples who will “inherit the promises” is expressed in 6:11-12. This is the longing of every true minister of God. For this reason they urge, exhort, teach, and preach—that they “might, by some means, save some.” This is the desire of a concerned ministry.

D. God’s Covenant Promise and Oath—Unchangeable (6:13-20)

For further encouragement, the writer reminds us that God’s promise to Abraham was obtained (6:13-15) “after he had patiently endured.” Since God confirmed this promise with an oath, the writer points out the significance of the “two immutable things” (i.e., the promise and the oath). Alluding to the custom among men of swearing by something greater than themselves, the writer reminds his readers that a statement confirmed by an oath means the end of all quibbling on the matter. And since God “could swear by no greater, he swore by himself” (6:13) that we “might have strong consolation” (6:18). Therefore, we have no doubt about inheriting the promises of God. We already have the “earnest of our inheritance,” and on the basis of God’s confirmed promise, we have a great “hope.” “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul” (6:19) and it reaches into the Heavens!

Though Abraham did not receive the promise in his lifetime, he saw it “afar off” (11:13, 39). And though he did not “obtain the promise” in his person, his seed did. Through his seed all nations of the earth were blessed (Galatians 3:16). So it was in and through Jesus Christ that Abraham “obtained the promise.” So it is with us, “the heirs of the promise.” And He “willing . . . to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that . . . we might have strong consolation” and “lay hold upon the hope set before us” (6:17-18).

Our anchor of hope reaches into the Heavens where our “forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus” (6:20). He pioneered the way for us to follow! He also said, “I go to prepare a place . . . that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2-3). In the work of the Levitical priesthood, the high priest went where the people couldn’t go—he represented the people in God’s presence. Through our “high priest,” we are brought, led into full fellowship with God! If we continue following our “forerunner,” we will one day be where He is in glory.

SELF HELP TEST

7. An Interposed Exhortation

Complete the sentence.

1. In this part of the epistle, the author chided the Hebrews for their _____ and lack of _____.
2. The attitude that stunts the spiritual growth of a Christian is _____

3. The “strong meat” to which Paul referred was a knowledge of _____

4. The six fundamental things that Paul called “the principles of the doctrine of Christ” are:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
 - f. _____
5. Paul urged these who were well established in these points or principles to continue to _____.
6. The term “fall away” (6:6) refers to a state of complete _____

7. So often, strong exhortation can leave the impression that the speaker is pronouncing the _____ of the hearers.
8. The apostle encouraged the readers by telling them, “We are persuaded _____ for you” (6:9).
9. The desire of a concerned ministry is that they “might, by some means

8. JESUS CHRIST AND THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD (7:1-28)

ANALYSIS: The exposition of the comparison of Jesus Christ's priesthood with that of Aaron's is again taken up in Hebrews 7:1 and carried out. Melchisedec is shown to be greater than Abraham, who is, admittedly, greater than Aaron. And since Jesus is a high priest "after the order of Melchisedec," His priesthood is greater than that of Aaron's or the Levitical order.

A. Melchisedec (7:1-10)

After hinting at the priesthood of Jesus Christ in the close of Hebrews 2, where we are told, "He is able to succour them that are tempted" (2:18), the writer speaks more plainly on the point in 4:14: "We have a great high priest . . . Jesus the Son of God." As was pointed out earlier, this was difficult for the Hebrew mind to comprehend. Since Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi, how could He, within the Law, fulfill the role of high priest? Paul now returned to the subject to clarify that point.

It should be noted that Melchisedec is mentioned here and in only two other places in the Scriptures: in Genesis 14; Psalm 110; and finally in Hebrews. (Yet there is quite a bit revealed about him, as we shall see.) After the appearance in Genesis, a thousand years elapse before he is mentioned again. Then the brief reference in the Psalms comes, and another thousand years slip by. And from these two vital "seeds" of God's Word, we have a wonderful exposition in Hebrews that reveals many marvelous truths.

Many and varied are the opinions concerning the nature and identity of Melchisedec. Some feel he was a Canaanite king of a local city, Salem. Others hold that he was a descendant of Shem and still others say he was a Hamite. Many say it matters little who and what he actually was since the type is the

main object of the writer's purpose in referring to him. While some hold that Melchisedec was a man only, others contend that he was a theophany, or a brief appearance of God, "made like unto the Son of God." The author holds this last view. While this would contradict the Trinitarian concept, it is in complete harmony with monotheism. Indeed, it appears to me to be the only view that does not lead into or depend upon supposition. Let us see if the Scripture corroborates this view.

"For this Melchisedec" (7:1) is identified by his name; it means "King of Righteousness" (7:2). We are already told that "righteousness is the sceptre of thy [Christ's] kingdom" (1:8). Since the scepter is the staff borne by a ruler as a badge of authority, who could bear it but the king of that realm? Would not one be guilty of usurpation if he bore the scepter of a kingdom while another were actually the king? Could one be called "King of Righteousness" who was less than the name implied? Could there be two Kings of Righteousness? If so, how?

"For this Melchisedec, king of Salem" reveals that he is "king of Peace" (7:2). Nowhere does the Scripture teach Melchisedec's kingdom to be a literal earthly domain, which could be located geographically. All who venture such speculations freely admit their efforts to be based upon assumption and supposition. Rather, it is obvious that these are characteristics of the kingdom of God "righteousness and peace" and Melchisedec is declared to be the supreme sovereign of righteousness and peace. Again, I say it would be usurpation to be less than God and have such a title! "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). (Joy is the result of righteousness and peace in the kingdom of God.)

The phrase "made like unto the Son of God" (7:3) is preceded by several points of similarity between this brief appearance of God and the actual Incarnation. This theophany not only blessed Abraham and received tithes of him; it was a prefiguration of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The sense of the phrase, then, is that in the theophany, the King of Righteousness, God Almighty, foreshowed Himself in a figure or type as King-Priest.

The points of similarity are easily recognized by one who has the revelation of the oneness of God:

- (1) "Without father" □ Jesus, creator of all things, was before all things (John 1:10; Colossians 1:17). As Son, He had no earthly father. As God, no father!
- (2) "Without mother" □ While Mary was mother of the humanity of the Son of God, she was not the mother of God! The self-existent One had no mother.

(3) “Without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life.” He “whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2) is “the first and the last” (Revelation 1:17-18).

(4) “Abideth a priest continually” is an accurate description of the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 7:3-5).

In these points (7:1-3) we see that the “order of Melchisedec” isn’t dependent on human ancestry, but is an ever-abiding priesthood. Furthermore, since the order of Melchisedec wasn’t of human lineage, it superseded the Aaronic order because it was before it and, as we shall see, superior to it.

And now, the following points are set forth to establish that the Melchisedec order is higher than the Aaronic order (7:4-11).

(1) Melchisedec, “whose descent is not counted from them” (7:6), received tithes from Abraham “the patriarch” (7:4). This is contrasted with “the sons of Levi who . . . take tithes . . . of their brethren” (7:5). These significant factors follow the apostle’s urging to “consider how great this man was” (7:4).

(2) Melchisedec, who was not of the blessed lineage, actually “blessed him that had the promises” (7:6). And, of this point, Paul pointed out that “the less [Abraham] is blessed of the better [Melchisedec]” (7:7). “Consider how great . . .” Greater than the patriarch who had the promises! What man could be so?

(3) It is then suggested that an ever-living priest with a right to receive tithe transcends that of the temporal and limited claims of a succession of dying men (7:8).

(4) Then it is pointed out that the order of Melchisedec is higher than that of the Levites because Levi himself virtually paid tithe to Melchisedec while in the loins of his father, Abraham (7:9-10). These points establish the superiority of our “great high priest, Jesus,” who is after the “order of Melchisedec,” over the temporal and imperfect order of Aaron.

B. Summation of the Comparison (7:11-28)

The Aaronic order is now shown to be imperfect and transitory because, the apostle reasoned, a priesthood of another order would otherwise not have

been spoken of in Psalm 110, after the establishment of the Levitical priesthood (7:11).

Then since the whole dispensation was based upon the Aaronic priesthood, “there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (7:12). This, he reasoned, is because “he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar [according to the law]” (7:13). This is evident, since Jesus was of the tribe of Judah and not a Levite (7:14).

Thus, we see a significant point of comparison. The Levitical priesthood, which was inadequate, was given through the Law, (7:11) which was also inadequate (7:19). Therefore, there was “of necessity a change also of the law” made. Hundreds of years after the establishment of the Levitical order, God spoke of the eternal order of Melchisedec, which, being adequate, filled the need. (Read Hebrews 7:21, 28.)

Again, it is pointed out that the power of the Levitical priesthood was “after the law of a carnal commandment” (7:16) while Christ’s priesthood, “after the similitude of Melchisedec” (7:15), was “after the power of an endless life” (7:16). Furthermore, “these priests [Levites] were made without an oath” (7:21) “but this [Christ, after the order of Melchisedec] with an oath” (7:21).

Further comparing, Paul noted, “They [Levites] were not suffered to continue by reason of death” (7:23), “But this man [Christ], because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood” (7:24). And then, finally, of the Levitical order, Paul said, “The law maketh men high priests which have infirmity” (7:28), while “such an high priest [Christ] became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (7:26).

The conclusion of the comparison is that we have in Him, at last, a perfectly availing, sympathetic, merciful high priest who is far superior to the Aaronic order.

SELF HELP TEST

8. Jesus Christ and the Aaronic Priesthood

1. In what three Scripture verses is Melchisedec mentioned?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

2. The author of our textbook holds the view that Melchisedec was a _____.

3. A *theophany* is a brief _____.

4. Give three points of similarity between Jesus and Melchisedec.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

Personal Study Notes

9. JESUS CHRIST—HIS BETTER COVENANT (8:1-13)

ANALYSIS: As was intimated in the closing verses of Hebrews 7, Christ's priesthood, proven to be better than the Aaronic order, is now set forth in full as the reality that was foreshadowed by that of the Aaronic order. Again the writer of Hebrews compares the two priesthoods with respect to (1) their sphere, (2) their functions, and (3) their effects. This comparison points out the sharp contrasts between the two covenants to which they respectively belong. In so doing, the apostle presses home to his readers the fact that Christ's is the better covenant. This is Paul's primary objective in this portion of the epistle.

A. The New Covenant Is Better than the Old (8:1-7)

The writer now begins to project the remainder of his theme into the reader's mind, using as a foundation his preceding argument, "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest" (8:1). He had used this point to prove that "the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (7:12). This is a key point of his argument. It is a pivotal point where the writer swung to another phase of his exposition—a comparison of the covenants. In this, he establishes the fact that a change from the Aaronic order is, in essence, also a change in the law, for the Mosaic law established the Levitical priesthood.

The "summary" (8:1-2) also becomes the basis for comparing the sphere of the two priesthoods. Jesus Christ's priestly role, mediatorial in essence, is "in the heavens" and of the "true tabernacle," while the Levitical priesthood was merely a "shadow of heavenly things" (8:5). The Tabernacle Moses made was to prefigure the "true tabernacle," and therefore Moses was admonished to "make all things according to the pattern" (8:5).

Now it is shown that a superior high priest is made the measure of the superior covenant of which He is now become mediator (8:6). In other words, the new covenant is as much greater than the old as Christ's priesthood is greater than that of Aaron. Furthermore, the "better covenant" is declared to be established upon "better promises."

For (8:7) introduces this sentence as a reason for what has been said in verse 6; that is, "a better covenant." The writer did not imply in this passage that the Law was imperfect. Quite to the contrary, Paul insisted that the Law is "holy, . . . and just and good" (Romans 7:12). The Law was adequate for its intended use, and it fulfilled all it was intended to. It was intentionally temporary, with a purpose of its own (Galatians 3:19), intervening between the promise to Abraham and its fulfillment in Christ Jesus. Therefore, we realize the writer did not make a derogatory reference to the first covenant by referring to the second as a "better covenant." The first covenant was adequate for its purpose, but it wasn't meant to equal the new covenant.

B. The New Covenant's Superior Promises (8:8-13)

"For finding fault with them" (8:8) refers to the inadequacies of the old covenant, and it is for this reason Paul asserted that God promised through Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34) "a new covenant" (8:8-12). This great promise of a new covenant, though addressed to Israel and Judah, was not made to them only. Though it was to come to and through them, it was universal□to all nations.

The writer of Hebrews establishes the fact from the Scriptures that the new covenant was not to be "according to the [former] covenant" (8:9), but was to be changed. The former or first covenant failed because "they [Israel] continued not."

In comparison, this next verse points out that while the first covenant was outward and formal□inscribed in stone, the second was to be inner and spiritual in nature□written on the mind and heart (8:10).

Then, under the new covenant, God had promised, "All shall know me, from the least to the greatest" (8:11). Such a personal acquaintance was unknown under the old covenant. Another promise upon which the new covenant was to be established was complete and full remission of sins. That is, God promised to be merciful to man's unrighteousness and that He would no longer remember man's sins and iniquities (8:12). Such was unknown under the former covenant!

The writer of Hebrews also points out that even in saying “a new covenant” the first was made old. And this was at the time of Jeremiah’s prophecy (8:13)! In this, Paul has firmly established the unalterable fact that a new covenant was not only a scriptural reality, but that the new covenant was based on “better promises” and therefore, a “better covenant.”

SELF HELP TEST

9. Jesus Christ—His Better Covenant

Complete the statement.

1. Paul’s primary objective in this portion of the epistle is to press home to his readers that _____.
2. Jesus Christ’s priestly role is in the Heaven while the Levitical priesthood was merely a _____ (8:5).
3. Moses was admonished to make all things according to _____ (8:5).
4. The “better covenant” is declared to be established upon _____.
5. Through the prophet _____ God promised a new covenant, as found in _____ (reference).
6. The first covenant was outward and formal and inscribed in stone, while the second was to be _____ and _____ in nature, and written on the _____ and _____.

10. JESUS CHRIST—THE SUPERIOR SACRIFICE

A. The Temporary Levitical Sacrifices (9:1-10)

Paul described in detail the Tabernacle and its furniture (9:1-5). However, to become absorbed in the details would be to miss the point of the passage; hence, we have the conclusion of the apostle in verse 5: "Of which we cannot now speak particularly."

The point is that it was here that "the priests went always . . . accomplishing the service of God" (9:6). In this, the sphere of the ministry of the Levitical priesthood is shown to be decidedly limited. The sphere of Christ's "more excellent ministry" as the "mediator of a better covenant" is shown to be far greater. Not limited to the earthly, it is "in the heavens" (8:1) "and of the true tabernacle" (8:2).

In 9:8-10 we are given a significant point of contrast, "The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." It was only "a figure . . . in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience" (9:9). It "stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation" (9:10). It was not meant to be permanent, but temporal. It was not meant to make man whole, but was a figure of things to come. And, as long as the former covenant and its earthly priesthood stood, "the way into the holiest of all was not made manifest."

B. The Eternal Sacrifice of Christ Jesus (9:11-14)

But (9:11) contrasts “Christ being come an high priest” with the Levitical priesthood in regard to the sphere of service. His priesthood is “by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands.”

Not only greater in sphere of service, but Christ’s priesthood is greater in its function. He became the sacrifice. “By his own blood he entered” (9:12); and, by His blood, He “obtained eternal redemption for us.” This one great sacrifice is greater than all the sacrifices offered by the Levitical priesthood.

Then we are shown that Christ’s priesthood is greater in effects (9:13-14). Since the blood of bulls and goats, though limited in its efficacy, did that which was intended by the Lord, “how much more,” the writer asks, “shall the blood of Christ . . . purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

C. The New Covenant Fulfilled in Christ’s Death (9:15-28)

“And for this cause” (9:15) is a connecting thought that means it is because of Christ’s sacrifice as having been described, that He is the “mediator of the new testament.” The death of the testator was necessary to put the testament in force (9:16-17) and the greatness of sacrifice implies the greatness of the testament. Furthermore, His sacrifice qualified Him for the role of mediator of the New Testament.

A testator is one who makes a will or testament. The will isn’t in force until the death of the testator (9:16-17). Here we see Jesus as both testator and mediator of the New Testament. Since the New Testament changes the Old, it must be admitted that the testator of the New is also author of the Old.

Then, too, this answers the questions concerning the salvation of the thief on the cross. He was saved under the old dispensation, the old covenant, because the new had not gone into force. Jesus, the testator, was yet alive. It was His to give and He gave the thief eternal life. But with the death of the testator, the last will and testament went into effect. That “will” was read to the world by the “executors” the testator had picked, the apostles, on the Day of Pentecost. No one has the authority to offer salvation to another on any other terms. It is forever settled in Heaven!

The first testament was dedicated with blood (9:18-22). Since “without the shedding of blood (there) is no remission” (9:22), “it was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified by these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these” (9:23). “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (9:28). This great sacrifice is sufficient for all men of all time.

SELF HELP TEST

10. Jesus Christ—The Superior Sacrifice

Give brief answers.

1. What was not made manifest as long as the former covenant and its earthly priesthood stood? _____

2. By His blood, Jesus Christ obtained what for us? _____

3. According to 9:16-17, what was necessary to put a will or testament in force? _____

4. Who is both the testator and mediator of the New Testament? _____

5. Why could the thief on the cross be saved under the old dispensation or covenant? _____

6. Give a scriptural reference showing that “without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.” _____

11. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF THE COMPARISON (10:1-39)

A. Summary of Argument (10:1-18)

1. Christ, the Once for All Sacrifice (10:1-10)

If under the Law, the apostle reasons, “these sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect” (10:1), “would they not have ceased to be offered?” (10:2). Then, in summarizing, he points out the fact that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins (10:4). But Jesus came, according to Psalm 40, to accomplish or put into effect the will of God “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (10:10). It was His will to “take away the first, that he may establish the second” (10:9). And, under the second or new covenant, “we are sanctified through the offering . . . once for all.”

2. Conclusions and Emphasis of Results (10:11-18)

In these concluding verses, the argument is woven together with a contrast that emphasizes the results of both.

The Levitical priesthood offered daily sacrifices that could not take away sin (10:11), “but this man [Christ], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God” (10:12). “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (10:14) and brought about the fulfillment of the prophecies of Jeremiah (10:15-17). Then, according to verse 18, “there is no more offering for sin” apart from this “once for all” sacrifice.

Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and men (I Timothy 2:5). There is no need for another. He is not only mediator, He is the testator or author of the will He mediates. He is our “all in all.”

B. Exhortation to Hold Firm (10:19-39)

1. An Admonition (10:19-25)

“A new and a living way,” untrodden by man until our great high priest opened and dedicated it for us, is now available. Now we have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.” Direct access to God. What a privilege! A blood-bought privilege at that! There was never a time in Israel’s history when all could boldly approach the Holy One. In fact, they had been restrained from coming too close. (See Exodus 19:12-13.)

But we must remember privileges have attendant duties and responsibilities. Paul now exhorted us to recognize and discharge the obligations of duty. The following are pointed out:

a. Our duty toward God.

We are to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (10:22). After Jesus’ pioneering and providing the way, it would be sheer negligence to fail to “draw near.” As we draw near, it is to be “in full assurance of faith” since we have “an high priest over the house of God” (10:21). He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities [weaknesses] and He is able to succour them that are tempted! Fail in this duty and lose the privilege.

b. Our duty toward the world.

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering” (10:23). Before men, there was to be a continuing testimony or witness. Some had, no doubt, begun to “waver” in this respect and the dangerous trend had to be checked. “Let your light so shine” among men of this world.

c. Our duty toward the church.

We are to “consider one another to provoke unto love and good works” (10:24). An attitude of concern and consideration toward your brother will “provoke,” stir up or incite, love and good works on his part. A bossy, holier-than-thou manner will do the opposite.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (10:25) is not only an obligation or duty to God, but to our brethren and ourselves as well. Gathered together in His name, we are honored by His presence in our midst. We must have this communion with God and our brothers and sisters in Christ. We owe it

to one another! No Christian is to be alone in the world. If there isn't a Christian assembly near enough for you to attend regularly, you should move or start making disciples. You need your brothers and sisters and they need you.

The admonition here is against the act of abandonment, which begins with carelessly failing to attend the gatherings of the church and, as we shall see, might well become utter apostasy, "forsaking the assembling."

2. Failure to Hold Firm Will Bring Judgment (10:26-31)

"For" (10:26) connects the following warning to the forementioned duties and responsibilities. The implication of the passage is quite plain: Negligence of Christian duty is a rather sure path to apostasy! When we know to do good and do it not, it becomes sin to us (James 4:17).

"For if we sin wilfully" (10:26) is closely related to the preceding verses. To abandon or "forsake the assembling" is to abandon the faith the body propagates. This constitutes a form of apostasy. There are no lone wolves in God's church! But in its own right, the verse makes plain the tragic possibilities of willfully sinning! "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth" refers to a full saving knowledge of Jesus Christ (truth). This is nothing less than a born-again experience according to Acts 2:38 and John 3:5, and an "opened" understanding (Luke 24:45; II Timothy 2:7).

"For if we sin wilfully . . . there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." No longer is the "sin offering" of the Levitical system available! There is no means by which the believer can approach God justified. No sacrifice that can be offered will be efficacious; "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin."

Does this mean that should one sin after he is born again, there is no hope for him? Certainly not! It means, however, he has nothing to offer as an appeasement to a God offended by his sin. But we have "an high priest," an "advocate" (I John 2:1), and we must "throw" ourselves upon His mercy in full repentance and faith.

But if we refuse to do this, we are willfully sinning and to continue such a course leads to utter hopelessness, complete abandonment of the faith, and apostasy. This brings judgment, which is to be fearfully expected (10:27).

The writer of Hebrews points out that under the Mosaic law any Jew who lapsed into idolatry was to be stoned to death for "transgressing God's covenant." Furthermore, this was admitted to be just, stern as it was

(Deuteronomy 17:2-7). But are not these who abandon or apostate Christianity guilty of a far greater sin (10:28-29)? Shouldn't they receive even greater punishment? The point was made, and he left the conclusion to the reader.

"For we know him" (10:30). To know God is to realize that He is just and righteous; it is to understand that retributive justice belongs to His moral nature. Every sin must be accounted for; justice demands it! And our God is just!

This God with whom we have to do said, "Vengeance belongeth unto me. I will recompense" (10:30). Judgment is sure! A just judge will render final judgment. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:31).

Thus, the apostle concluded in 2:3 the great central warning with words that are weighty and penetrating. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

3. Future Reward for Those Who Hold Firm (10:32-39)

After the sharp, stinging words of warning, the writer again changes his voice and reminds the readers of "the former days." Their past had included "afflictions," "reproaches," "bonds," and "the spoiling of [their] goods." All these things they had endured because they knew they had "in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (10:32-34). They had suffered with Christ; they were destined to reign with Him!

But their glorious past was in jeopardy. Jesus had said, "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19). Therefore, the apostle exhorts them, "Cast not away therefore your confidence [faith]" (10:35). For the lack of patience, they were in danger of not receiving the promise, even after they had done the will of God in the past (10:36). Salvation is a matter of the present, as well as the past!

After referring to the past and the present, Paul held forth the future rewards to these who "live by faith" and refuse to "draw back." With a strong, reassuring tone, he closed the thought with the opening of another: "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (10:39). Here he emphatically urged a confidence of heart, a faith that will lead one onward and inward. In fact, he introduced the theme that faith is the principle of spiritual life.

SELF HELP TEST

11. Summary and Conclusion of the Comparison

True or False: Circle the correct answer.

1. It is possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
True or False

2. Jesus Christ offered one sacrifice for sins forever.
True or False

3. The pastor is the only mediator between God and man.
True or False

4. The Lord cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities or weaknesses.
True or False

5. No Christian is to be alone in the world.
True or False

6. Negligence of Christian duty is a sure path to apostasy.
True or False

7. Should one sin after he is born again, there is no hope for him.
True or False

Personal Study Notes

12. FAITH—THE ONLY WAY (11:1-40)

ANALYSIS: Having set forth faith as the principle of spiritual life with a quotation from Habakkuk 2, "The just shall live by his faith" (10:19-39), the writer proceeds to clarify the points he has advocated.

First, he defines or describes faith. Then, he presents a series of biographical illustrations. By these examples, he shows that faith is the essential factor in each life, thus establishing the theme of the division, "Faith□The Only Way."

You will note that these examples are taken from several dispensations. By this, we see that faith has been the principle of spiritual life in every age, and still is (11:1-40).

A. Faith Defined or Described (11:1-3)

"Faith is the substance . . . the evidence" (11:1). The word *substance* is the literal rendering of the Greek word that means "that which stands under." In this sense, faith "stands under" and is the solid foundation that supports hope; thus, we have in faith "the substance of things hoped for."

But scriptural faith isn't wishful thinking or hopes of fantasy. Our hopes are based upon "that which is written" and our faith in the Word of God "stands under" as a firm foundation of our hope. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for."

The word *evidence* serves to remind us that true faith rests on evidence and is the conviction that results from proven evidence. But without faith this evidence cannot be seen! Faith is the "visual organ" of the soul that enables us to "see" as "evidence . . . things not seen" (1:1).

In this same sense, faith is a “hand of the soul” with which we can “grasp” or “lay hold on . . . things hoped for” and “things not seen.” And it is by faith that we “see” and “grasp” the “unseen realities” of the following:

1. Salvation.

Saving faith is active, appropriating faith that expresses itself in works. “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:20).

2. God’s hand in our daily lives.

All our trials become more bearable as we “see” the unseen hand of God in them. As He provides our needs, we can by faith see His hand. When His grace is needed and becomes sufficient, we see that holy hand in our lives.

3. Our eternal rewards.

Though these realities are not seen as yet, they are clearly visible to the eye of faith.

In a brief passage (11:2) Paul alluded to the power of faith in the lives of the “elders.” Their lives were controlled by faith. That is, they trusted in a deliverer, a Savior “not seen as yet.” They “hoped for” the deliverer on the basis of God’s promise. Then their lives were rewarded through faith. In life they had a goal, a purpose, a hope! After their lives ended, they “obtained a good report” by faith.

This first illustration brought forward of the nature of faith is different from all the rest. It is not the case of a believing individual, but an object of faith, a fact recorded, which we could only know on the authority of Scripture. A long chronological list of cases is in the mind of the apostle; and as the list goes back to the beginning of time, naturally enough the creation presents itself as a thing that we can only know by faith.

In this verse, faith is exhibited as a spiritual power or organ□that perceptive faculty of the mind by which we apprehend the truth spoken of. True, there are grounds in nature on which reason might infer that all things were made by a being of wisdom and power; but the mode of creation, as described in Genesis, could never have been discovered by man’s own researches. The mind grounds its belief, in this case, not upon investigation or experience or deduction, but upon the testimony of Holy Scripture.

Thus, we see that *faith is the foundation doctrine of the Bible* (11:3). The worlds were not created by or through faith, but our understanding of how they were created is a matter of faith. Through and by faith in the scriptural account of creation, we reject the fantastic suppositions and endless assumptions of evolution. The person whose faith is in the scriptural account of creation is intelligent because he begins with an intelligent God of creation. The skeptic who holds that matter and motion are the sole eternal elements has an unintelligent faith because he begins with unintelligent matter. To Christians, the faith expressed in this verse is both foundational and fundamental. To this we must adhere. Faith enables us to “understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.” That is, He spoke and it was! His creative utterance, “the breath of his mouth” (Psalm 33:6-9), was the means by which God framed all that exists in time and space! This “understanding” comes by and through faith in God’s holy Word.

In the light of these facts, consider the Trinitarian theory that God, a “first person,” created the worlds by and through a “second person” who was also God but separate and distinct from God, the “first person.” This is usually done by attempting to personify the “Word” in John 1:1. This is absurd. Such teaching is an overt denial of this precious passage as well as many others. The Word, by which God framed the worlds, is not a second personage in God, but the audible expression, the utterance of His divine will or thought (*Logos*□John 1:1). “He spake, and it was done” (Psalm 33:9).

Furthermore, the passage (11:3) reveals that God did not make the world of pre-existing materials, but He created it out of nothing! He spoke it into existence.

B. Examples of Faith in Those before the Flood (11:4-7)

As you observe these three examples, notice how each carries a striking similarity to a step in New Testament salvation. That is, in Abel, see the example of faith in the blood; in Enoch, see faith exhibited in the act (works) of walking with God; in Noah, see faith in the coming judgment, in “things not seen as yet.”

1. Abel□The Dead Witness (11:4).

The great distinguishing factor between Abel’s and Cain’s sacrifice was “faith.” That is, it was “by faith” that Abel offered “a more excellent sacrifice

than Cain.” How did he happen to have faith? Why didn’t Cain also have faith? They were brothers. Why the difference?

“Faith cometh by hearing” (Romans 10:17), and it is evident that they both had heard God’s will in the matter. Adam instructed both his sons, no doubt. Abel heard and believed. God had shown Adam a pattern of a blood sacrifice (Genesis 3:21) and Abel’s faith in the blood sacrifice was shown by his act of offering it.

Cain received the same instruction, but “not being mixed with faith,” he neglected to obey. Indifferent to God’s will in the matter, he offered a sacrifice of his own choosing. But God rejected it because it didn’t show forth faith by obedience. It was a product of self-will and indifference to God’s will, therefore, unacceptable to Him.

Thus, “by it [Abel’s sacrifice] he [Abel] being dead yet speaketh.” He speaks against self-will and indifference in things pertaining to God and Christian service. He tells us God’s way is the only way. He declares that faith is the better way—the only way!

2. Enoch—He Pleased God (11:5).

Since “without faith it is impossible to please God,” we know Enoch was a faithful man of God, for he left the testimony that he pleased God, and God took him! He walked with God. He moved as the Lord moved. He lived in harmony with God’s leadings. He, “by faith,” left a beautiful example of a dedicated, disciplined life. Faith was the principle of his spiritual life.

3. Noah—He Believed and Obeyed (11:7).

“By faith, Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet” believed! Though he had never seen anything that resembled a deluge, he believed God’s warning. We’ve never seen a “lake of fire,” but we have God’s Word on the matter! Some will scoff; others will refuse to think on such a dreadful thought; but these who believe God will follow Noah’s wise example. He “moved with fear.” This is a mark of wisdom because “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (See Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10.) He “prepared an ark,” a useless, unsightly structure; that is, until the “things not seen as yet” became a terrifying reality! His faith in God’s Word expressed in his works became an ark “to the saving of his house” and by that work of faith, “he condemned the world.”

Till yet, faith is the principle of spiritual life, "for he that cometh to God must believe that he is" (11:6). That is, man cannot approach God without being convinced that He exists, though "not seen." This requires faith.

Further, man must believe "that he is a rewarder." That is, he must not only believe God exists, he must expect to receive the "things hoped for." Such is the faith that pleases God!

Then, in approaching God with your petitions, you must not "ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:3) or you will "ask, and receive not." Let every prayer follow the pattern our Lord left us in the garden. After He prayed, "Let this cup pass from me," He concluded the petition with the words, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). The human will yielded to the divine.

C. Examples of Faith in the Lives of the Patriarchs (11:8-22)

Abraham's faith is seen in his unquestioning obedience to God. Called, he "obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (11:8) This faith was to be exemplified throughout the patriarch's lifetime. From this first act of faith, he followed the voice of God as it were blindly. "Now knowing" where it would lead him, but knowing it was right to follow, "he went out." He lived "by faith," choosing to pursue the spiritual goals (11:9-10).

He "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." He could have settled for the earthly and material inheritance of the land, but within his soul was a conviction based on God's promise that "better things" were in store for him. It was this faith that prompted him to sojourn "in a strange country" and dwell in tabernacles as a pilgrim and a stranger.

Faith alone can cause us to reject the lures of this present age and confess that we are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (11:13). By faith, we can declare, "This world is not our home!" By faith, we too look for that city!

Abraham's family shared his faith. Sarah, past the age of childbearing, conceived and bore Isaac, "because she judged him faithful who had promised" (11:11). And from Isaac an innumerable multitude of descendants came.

Though they didn't receive the promises in their lifetime, "having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed" (11:13). This is true living faith. Undaunted by outer circumstances, with strong persuasion, they embraced the unseen as though it were because of what God had promised. They "confessed," declaring "plainly that they [sought] a country" (11:14). Had they desired, they could have returned to their former estate (11:15). But believing God, they desired "a better country, that is an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be their God" (11:16). God honors these who honor Him! All they could base their hope and desire on was the promise of God, but that was enough, "for he hath prepared for them a city." He said, "I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3). Precious promises! Let us hold firm that we might receive.

Abraham's faith was tested many ways, but the most severe test was "when he was tried" and "offered up Isaac" (11:17-19). It was "in Isaac" that the seed of promise abode. Abraham realized that God had given him Isaac by supernatural birth. That is, there "sprang . . . even of one, and him as good as dead, so many" (11:12). Therefore, he knew that "God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him [originally] in a figure" (11:19). Abraham looked at Isaac's supernatural birth as "evidence of things not seen" and knew the same God who had given him from the "dead" in a figure, was "able to raise him up, even from the dead."

His descendants followed the pattern of faith. Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come "by faith." Jacob, at his death, blessed both sons of Joseph (11:20-21). Perhaps it is worthy to note that both Isaac and Jacob surrendered their wills to divine intervention. In both cases, the younger was blessed above the older. Faith finds its greatest exhibition in our lives when we can honestly say, concerning something very important to us, "Not my will, but Thine be done." By faith we can yield our lives to Him.

You will notice that each example illustrates a particular aspect of faith. Like a beautiful work of art, each detail adds depth and perspective to the comprehension of the composite whole. Each illustration amplifies the concept of faith. This was the intent of the writer.

D. Example of Moses' Faith (11:23-28)

The very fact that Amram and Jochebed relied on divine providence expressed their faith. "By faith" they hid him, "being not afraid of the king's

commandment" (11:23). God honored this by providing a means for Jochebed to raise her son at least through infancy. May God give us more faithful parents who will hide their children from the destructive forces of this present age!

"By faith," Moses renounced his position in the courts of Egypt (11:24). This was not a hasty action, but after "he was come to years" □ forty years of age. He had counted the cost. He had compared the path of "suffering affliction with the people of God" to enjoying the "pleasures of sin for a season." He chose the former, realizing that if the "enjoyment" of sin was only "for a season," the "affliction" would be no longer. "By faith . . . he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." His estimation of the "reproach of Christ" set it far above the "treasures in Egypt" in value. His choice was based upon "things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen." It was by faith!

Note the following factors involved in his act of faith:

1. He refused to accept a role separate and apart from God's people, no matter how lucrative it appeared. He could have reasoned that the position would enable him to help them, as Joseph had 400 years earlier. But in such a course of action his faith would have been in the position of power and not in God. He refused that in order to have the "unseen" power of God!
2. He made a deliberate, definite choice, being fully aware of all it involved. "Suffering affliction with the people of God" was more appealing than "the pleasures of sin." God's worst is better than Satan's best.
3. He esteemed through careful consideration of all factors "the reproach . . . greater . . . than the treasures of Egypt." His estimation was not based upon the present, but the future. He was taking into consideration where each path would lead. He considered "the latter end" of things because of the faith he had in God. Through that faith, he was able to see things not seen as yet! That was the deciding factor.
4. Having "respect unto the recompense of the reward, He forsook Egypt" (11:27) "as seeing him who is invisible." Even the miraculous deliverance was an act of faith. "By faith, he kept the Passover" (11:28). Faith was the principle of his spiritual life! Faith must guide our dealings in life, our choices, our estimations, our judgments, our every step. "For without faith it is impossible to please him" (11:6).

E. Exploits of Faith (11:29-38)

“By faith they [the Israelites] passed through the Red sea” (11:29), but the Egyptians drowned in the effort! The Israelites were no match for the Egyptians militarily, but “by faith” they were delivered from the hand of their enemy.

Jericho’s walls tumbled down before the force of faith that was expressed in seven days of obedient marching (11:30). Israel’s God honored the faith of their hearts with the work of His hand!

Even Rahab the harlot, having faith in the God of Israel, was saved from the destruction that came on the city. Her faith had motivated her to receive and hide the spies with peace (11:31).

Four judges, a king, and a prophet are named as witnesses of the power of faith (11:32) and their deeds are enumerated as evidence of their faith (11:33-34). After this, multiple mighty acts of faith are listed, establishing the strength of faith in the lives of men (11:35-38).

F. Perfection through the Promise (11:39-40)

After these mighty exploits of faith worked through the lives of these heroes of faith, they still didn’t receive “the promise” (11:39). “The promise” mentioned here is that of Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 9:6, and Joel 2:28, to mention a few scriptural references.

“These all . . . received not the promise,” yet their faith in the promise brought them “good report.” They fulfilled their part by faith in God’s overall plan—and, now “they without us . . . [are] not . . . perfect [complete]” (11:40). The New Testament believers, having received the promise God made to Abraham, complete the plan of which the Old Testament saints were a vital part.

SELF HELP TEST

12. Faith—the Only Way

Complete the statement.

1. _____ was the principle of spiritual life in every age and still is.
2. True faith rests on _____.
3. The foundation doctrine of the Bible is _____.
4. Faith enables us to understand that the worlds were framed by _____.
5. It was by _____ that Abel offered “a more excellent sacrifice.”

Matching: Match the names on the left with the statements on the right.

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| _____ Abel | a. Her faith motivated her to receive and hide spies. |
| _____ Cain | b. He forsook Egypt, as seeing Him who is invisible. |
| _____ Enoch | c. He offered a sacrifice of his own choosing. |
| _____ Rahab | d. He left the testimony that he pleased God. |
| _____ Abraham | e. He had faith in the blood sacrifice. |
| _____ Moses | f. He looked for a city that has foundations. |

Personal Study Notes

13. FAITH AND THE BELIEVER (12:1-29)

A. Our Exemplar, Jesus Christ (12:1-2)

The connective *Wherefore* (12:1) ties the exhortation that follows to the great array of witnesses of Hebrews 11. Using figurative speech, the writer depicts the Christian believer as a runner engaged in a race in a huge arena, surrounded by spectators. He urges us to run “the race that is set before us.” The whole “course” must be covered. No short cuts or extra “tours” that would be time consuming are allowed. But we must “run with patience the race that is set before us.”

Furthermore, he insists that we “lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us.” The sin, once recognized as such, is usually easier to lay aside than the “weight.” But we’re in the Christian race. To win. Weights impede our progress and must be laid aside. What’s the difference? How can a distinction be made between a weight and a sin?

A sin, as we all agree, is a definite crippler and will knock us out of the Christian race if allowed to remain in our lives. While a weight could be recognized as something less than sin that hinders our running, it is also a crippling element that can steal our victory. To want to hang on to such things is as foolish as a runner in a race wanting to wear an overcoat on the racetrack! There’s nothing wrong with the overcoat, but a runner has no need of one. In fact, the nicest overcoat becomes a weight and a hindrance to his progress. So it’s best to lay it aside.

The Christian will do well to recognize this principle in the Christian race. We must win! Our daily activities must be governed by the criterion of, "What will this profit me as a Christian? Will it hinder or help my progress?" And not by, "If you can't prove it's a sin, I'll keep it! I like it and it's my business what I do!" "Let us lay aside every weight," because we must win!

"Let us run . . . looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (12:1-2). Peter took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink! If we get our eyes on any distracting element, the result will be the same. Jesus is our great example□He endured the cross□He despised the shame□He overcame and sat down in victory over death, hell, and the grave!

B. Chastening Results in Spiritual Development (12:3-11)

When you are weary, "consider Him" (12:3). Remember, "you have not yet resisted unto blood" (12:4) as He did. Further, don't forget that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth" (12:6). So "despise thou not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him" (12:5). To endure chastening is to allow God to deal with you as a son (12:7). To be without chastening is to be without a father! Therefore, we ought to thank God for it when it comes, for by it we become partakers of His holiness (12:10). Though it is never pleasant, it always yields "the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (12:11).

C. An Exhortation to Endurance (12:12-17)

"Wherefore [for these reasons]" (12:12) said the apostle, since Jesus suffered death for your salvation, since you have never shed blood in your resistance to sin, since even your trials are expressions of your heavenly Father's love for you, and since the chastisements are meant to profit you in their results, surely you will never abandon the Christian faith! Again Paul exhorted us to endurance through fulfilling our duties to (1) ourselves, (2) our fellow believers, and (3) our God.

1. Our Duty to Ourselves (12:12-13, 15).

Returning to the metaphor of the race, the apostle urges his readers to remain resolute and strong in the presence of trials. The terms “hands,” “knees,” and “feet” represent powers of action, motion, and progression (12:12-13). This refers to the personal life of each believer. Each individual is to so walk the “highway of holiness” as to leave a smooth path behind that even the lame one might not stumble.

You can look at the faults of others and allow a root of bitterness to spring up and defile your heart. You cannot control others; it’s futile to try. But you can keep “looking diligently” to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. This will keep you from being defiled by a root of bitterness.

2. Our Duty to Fellow Believers (12:14-15).

A vindictive disposition toward others is not Christian! We are to follow peace with all men and, as the entire passage implies, have a genuine brotherly care for all. A person with a root of bitterness can injure the whole body. To harbor malice in the soul not only stunts the growth of that soul, it wreaks havoc in the church. We have a duty to our fellow believers to adhere to Christian principles of conduct.

3. Our Duty to God (12:14, 16-17).

We must not only follow peace with all men, but also we are told in no uncertain terms “holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” God is pure and holy; as His children, we too must be holy unto the Lord. Holiness must be followed after or striven for. To be holy we must crucify the flesh, renounce the world, and resist the devil.

“Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau. . .” *Profane* here refers to one who is worldly, common, and secular; one who has no appreciation for the spiritual; one who cares for things of the present and that which offers immediate pleasure or profit.

Such people will never fulfill their duty to God. They will follow where their lusts and earthly senses lead. They will ignore God. Let us consider the warning and continue our walk with God!

D. A Warning against Apostasy (12:18-29)

The comparison between Sinai and Zion (12:18-24) exhibits an impressive contrast between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations. This is followed by a final appeal to a steadfastness and constancy (12:25-29).

1. The Old Covenant (12:18-21)

Mount Sinai, dark and gloomy, is the scene. Israel is assembled around the foot of the mountain, forbidden and afraid to touch it. The God of Israel, unapproachable, is either shrouded in darkness or revealed in fire. Moses, exceedingly fearful, is unable to provide access to God for the people through his mediation. The blood is sprinkled on the people, ratifying the covenant, but unable to cleanse the conscience. The sound of the trumpet and a voice are heard that inspire fear!

Such was the giving of the old covenant. And the writer of Hebrews reminds his readers, "For ye are not come to the mount." Then he sets forth the contrasting picture of the new covenant.

2. The New Covenant (12:22-24)

"But ye are come unto mount Sion," radiant with light and crowned with the city of God. There are choirs of assembled angels. You are in the accepted church of the firstborn. You have access to God Himself. He is accessible, without terror, and acting as our mediator. His ever-cleansing blood of complete atonement speaks peace and pardon for all who have it applied to the soul.

What a contrast! Who could want to go back to the former? They couldn't if they wanted to, actually; it was no longer there in reality. Faith is the better way! Faith is the only way!

3. The Strong Warning against Apostasy (12:25-29)

This passage is an earnest exhortation that sounds three notes of warning:

- a. From Hebrew history (12:25) we learn that "they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth" by Moses and the prophets. As a result they were punished. How do we expect to escape if we ignore "him that speaketh from heaven"?

- b. From Hebrew prophecy (12:26-27), we see that He who shook the earth has promised to shake it again, and not the earth only, but the heaven also. Only "those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (12:27).
 "Wherefore [or inasmuch as]" (12:28) we have "a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." It is plain that we had better remain in the "kingdom which cannot be moved," for one day He will shake the heavens and the earth.
- c. From Hebrew theology (12:29) we hear Paul quote from Deuteronomy 4:24: "For our God is a consuming fire." Unchangeable, the great God of Heaven and earth is still a consuming fire against evil, as He was at Mount Sinai. His nature has not changed, and if we neglect or ignore His provision and will in this dispensation, the day of judgment will be to us a terrible day.

SELF HELP TEST

13. Faith and the Believer

Complete the statement.

1. In Hebrews 12 the Christian believer is depicted as a _____ engaged in a _____
2. Two things that impede progress and must be laid aside are:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
3. In running the race we must keep our eyes on _____
4. Paul exhorted us to endurance through fulfilling our duties to:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
5. The comparison between Sinai and Zion (12:18-24) exhibits an impressive contrast between the _____ and the _____ dispensations.

14. CONCLUSIONS (13:1-25)

ANALYSIS: As is the Pauline pattern, the epistle is concluded with practical exhortations. The readers are urged to give attention to certain aspects of their daily life, worship, and relationships in the church. With a concluding prayer followed by some personal comments, he closes the epistle.

A. Practical Exhortations for Daily Life (13:1-6)

“Let brotherly love continue” (13:1) carries the thought that the individual must allow it to continue with *him*. This is no passive attitude. In order for love to continue, it must have active expression. There must be tributaries through which “brotherly love” can find this expression. More than simply failing to harm our brother, we must do all within our power to help him!

The thought is extended to the realm of hospitality (13:2). Not only are we to be concerned with the brethren, but strangers as well. Then beyond showing hospitality to these who might come our way, the apostle exhorts us to show compassion on these who are in bonds (13:3) as though we were bound with them. This certainly bears a spiritual application as well as a practical one. There are these who are bound in sin to whom we must go with compassion, as though we were bound with them.

Not only is marriage declared to be honorable in all and the bed undefiled (13:4), but the tenor of thought implies that it must be kept that way, because of the latter part of the verse: “but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” Men may defile the sanctity of marriage in adulterous practices and escape, “but . . . God will judge.”

“Conversation” (13:5) involves the whole conduct of a man. Covetousness is the opposite of Christian contentment. A covetous person never gets enough of anything. The Christian has only to realize the greatness of his possession to find

real contentment: “For He said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” “So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper” (13:6). Let us be content with such things as we have. Beware of covetousness!

B. Christian Obligations to Officers and Doctrines of the Church (13:7-9)

“Remember them which have the rule . . . follow. . .” (13:7). This verse along with verse 17, which deals more with the leaders of the present, indicates that the tendency to apostatize might be more on the part of the people who are not the overseers or elders of the flocks. They are urged to “remember . . . follow . . . obey them that have the rule, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls” (13:7, 17).

What a heavy responsibility these words lay on the pastor’s shoulders! May we ever realize what this work involves. Souls are depending on hearing a clear note and following the example of a godly guide.

Not only are the officers of God’s church to be followed in obedience, but since Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever (13:8), the doctrines of His church are the same as they were in the beginning! Therefore, the apostle exhorts us, “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines” (13:9).

If we attend gatherings where strange doctrines such as the Trinity are preached, we might get carried away with them. If we don’t, some unstable soul might follow our example by attending meetings where divers and strange doctrines are preached and be carried about themselves. Their blood could be on our hands! Let us consider this.

C. The Christian’s Exclusive Privilege (13:10-15)

“We have an altar” (13:10), an exclusive altar! Therefore, we are urged to suffer severance from the society of this world, bear His reproach, and be with Him without the camp, even as the Hebrew Christians were urged to forsake Judaism (13:11-13). As Abraham, we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come (13:14).

At our exclusive altar, “let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (13:15). Let’s not pollute our sacrifice with indifference, unbelief, or impurity of any kind.

The priests were assigned definite portions of the sacrifices (Leviticus 16:27), except these such as the offerings on the great day of annual atonement where all was to be burned without the camp, with nothing being assigned to them. This prefigured the great offering of the Lamb of God that was without the gate, completely detached from the ritual or mechanics of Judaism and the Levitical priesthood.

In the same manner, “they [Levitical priests] have no right to eat” at this altar. If they partake and receive the benefits of the supreme sacrifice, they too must come out from among them and suffer without the gate of Judaism and the rest of man-made philosophy and religion.

The type, not understood before, unfolded before the eyes of the Hebrews as picturing the ignominious death of Christ.

D. Final Exhortation and a Prayer Request (13:16-19)

We too must follow Jesus without the camp to enjoy the benefits enjoined to His death. To cleave to Judaism was to reject Christ. Consequently, reason demands that this hold true of any religious system that is inconsistent with the gospel. To return to Judaism is to forsake Christ. We must forsake all even at the cost of reproach of this world. Everything that is inconsistent with truth and purity must be laid aside if we are to walk with Him without the gate.

“But to do good . . . forget not” (13:16) follows the reference to the sacrifice of praise and reminds us that God is pleased also with deeds. Good works are a vital part of Christian life and are not to be neglected. Hebrews 13:17 was covered in section 2 of this division. But notice the fact that your pastor must give account for your soul. The point is emphasized that it will be very unprofitable for you if he has to give account with grief! It is better for you to obey the exhortation, that he may do it with joy.

The apostle humbly requests the prayers of his readers (13:18-19). All true ministers of the gospel must be humble in their role if they are to remain in God’s service. The request for prayer is sincere and carries an assertion of integrity. This is a hallmark of Paul’s writings.

E. Concluding Prayer and Personal References (13:20-25)

Again, we see a Pauline trait in the brief, closing prayer, which suited the particular needs of his readers (13:20-21). Following another admonition to the brethren to accept the word of exhortation (13:22), the writer closed the great epistle with a personal commitment and a salutation to these who have the rule and to all the saints.

SELF HELP TEST

14. Conclusions

Complete the statement.

1. In order for love to continue in the Christian life, it must have _____

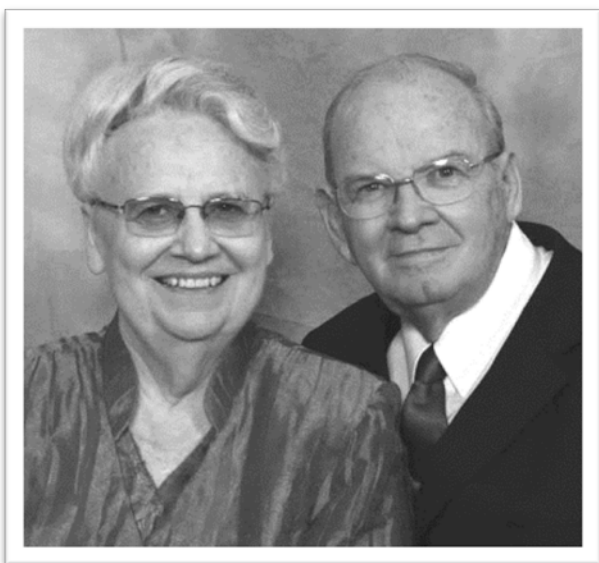
2. "Conversation" in the Scripture involves the whole _____
_____ of man.
3. Christians are not to be carried about with _____
_____ and _____ doctrines.
4. At our exclusive altar as believers, we are to offer the sacrifice of _____
_____ to God continually.
5. To cleave to Judaism was to reject _____
6. _____ must give account for the souls of believers.
7. A hallmark of Paul's writings was his request for _____

Missionary Spotlight: Bennie and Theresa DeMerchant

Unstopability

By Dolly McElhaney

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The DeMerchants' philosophy about working for God: Be on the side of faith and courage, and try to walk through every door that opens.

In Saint Louis in 1964, Harry Branding stood behind a young, newly appointed missionary and uttered these words: "I have many souls in the land where I called you. You will face many problems. Be strong, and be of good courage for I have many waiting for the message. Fear not. Be strong. Be of good courage. The brethren there and all

the brethren here will know that I called you and I sent you to this land."

The land is Brazil.

The young missionary was Bennie DeMerchant.

Today, forty-seven years later, the prophecy has been fulfilled beyond the wildest dreams of Bennie and Theresa DeMerchant. "We prayed prayers far beyond our thinking, trying to bust God," DeMerchant says, "but He played our hand, since it was not to make us millionaires, but for Him and for His name to be known and His power to fall."

Taking counsel from Harry Branding's prophecy, the DeMerchants shaped their own philosophy about working for God: Be on the side of faith and courage, and try to walk through every door that opens.

At first there seemed to be no doors at all! They struggled to adapt to the sauna-like climate and to understand a culture dominated by soccer and Carnival. They were the objects of a scam, of thievery, even of duplicity by the police. They spent hours each day studying the language, and finally, fourteen months after their arrival in Manaus, DeMerchant preached his first sermon in Portuguese to a few adults and a lot of children.

Every victory seemed to bring a setback. Growth was agonizingly slow but they didn't stop, and by the end of their first term, a building housed the budding Manaus church, a jungle outreach in Manacapuru had stabilized, and two promising preaching points had been established. And when DeMerchant returned to Brazil after deputation travels in North America, he brought back a seaplane.

The mission on wings, literally and figuratively. Vast areas of the Amazon River Basin had never been charted by the mapmakers, but DeMerchant began filling in some of these areas on his map with trained workers and a fleet of boats and canoes. The Brazilian government fueled DeMerchant's flying many mercy missions to the Indians; the expensive, leftover fuel took the little blue plane up and down rivers to establish preaching points that rapidly grew into churches. The work extended north toward the borders of Ven-ezuela, south along the Maderia to Porto Velho, east to Belem at the Amazon's mouth, and west toward Bolivia, Peru, and Colombia.





In 2007, the churches in Manaus honored the DeMerchants for forty-two years of dedicated leadership and vision.

DeMerchant learned that blessings sometimes come dis-guised in hideous forms. In a village where a healthy work had begun, a crazed man with a few followers clubbed and slashed to death six or seven people. When caught, the man claimed to be a UPC pastor. The news media spread the story across Brazil and around the world without checking its veracity.

DeMerchant was so angry at this false report that he wanted to fly in the village and confront the authorities. Instead, he suffered one of the worst cases of malaria he'd ever had. Afterward he discovered how merciful the God-sent malaria had been. "The saints in that village told me later that if I had gone up there with my plane, the people would have set the plane on fire and stoned me because of the media," DeMerchant relates. That church today is in the center of fruitful outreach.

Pam Schleusser recalls her father warning ministers of potential problems but allowing them to fail and to learn from their mistakes instead of taking over or assigning the task to someone else. DeMerchant remembers one of the times when he thought he was going to say, "I told you so," but the Brazilian shocked, then delighted him.

"One hundred sixty-five churches in the Manaus area wanted a convention center where they could all gather together," DeMerchant explains. "I strongly advised against the enormous cost of erecting a building that would shelter four thousand people with an open altar area for group praying at the end of every service."

The Brazilian saints ignored DeMerchant's counsel. They had learned unstopability from their missionary and were steeped in the power of prayer. They called it "The Jerusalem Project" and eventually erected not only "Jerusalem," but added two wings, which they call "Judea" and "Samaria." The completed structure holds eight thousand people that come from the present three metro districts, two with over a hundred ministers, in Manaus, the Amazon state capital.

Not to be outdone, the churches in the Manacapuru areas (churches that had to be subdivided three times due to growth) built their own center, "Jerusalem II." Other property has been acquired for more "Jerusalems": a lot for Jerusalem III in Eirunepe, one for Jerusalem IV in Itacoatiara to be dedicated in September, 2011, and another Jerusalem whatever in Boa Vista, the most northern state capital in Brazil.

Unstopability is one of the keys to working for God. "It's not the problem, but how you look at it," DeMerchant believes. As a result, there are nine hundred United Pentecostal churches in the Amazon Basin, with another three hundred churches scattered throughout the country. One thousand two hundred licensed ministers serve between ninety-five thousand and one hundred thousand saints. Over five thousand people have attended one of the seventy-one Bible schools: three thousand have graduated. *Full Throttle*, the story of the DeMerchants' ministry has been translated into Portuguese, and a high-quality magazine, *A Verdade (The Truth)* centers mostly on missions and Bible schools. Brazil sends eleven missionaries abroad to other Portuguese countries using the Faith Promise plan and Partners In Missions to fund outreach to those countries.

Doors now open in all directions, but one of the most thrilling doors to open recently leads to Indian tribes restricted from evangelization because they were designated reservations and restricted by the government. But closed doors can open backwards. The Indians from headwaters came downriver to nearby towns for supplies where the UPC had a trained pastor and local church and stayed to visit. The inevitable happened in reverse. "We are presently working in ten tribes. We have been asked to move in with a pastor and a Bible school among a nation of five thousand Indians," DeMerchant reports.

Another open door. By the grace of God, the DeMerchants will walk through it. With faith and courage. Unstopability.

Editor's Note: Appointed in 1964 as missionaries to Brazil, Bennie and Theresa DeMerchant are the UPCI's senior missionaries and have served the longest. They plan to return to Brazil in 2014 to continue leading the UPC of Brazil.