

The Book of Hebrews

Bro. Frank Shallieu

(1974 and 2000 Studies)

The following notes on the Book of Hebrews were compiled from two Bible studies led by Bro. Frank Shallieu, one in 1974 and the other in 2000. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Each paragraph preceded by “**Comment**” or “**Q**” (an abbreviation for “**Question**”) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original studies did not follow a prepared text but were extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the studies, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1974)

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

Heb. 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

The Book of Hebrews is a treatise to the Jews at large, whether in Israel or scattered abroad, to convince them that Jesus is their Messiah.

Starting on a noble theme, the opening two verses are very impressive, but why do they immediately go into this subject matter? The purpose of the book is to show that Jesus was sent of God as the Messiah, and the rest of the book will prove this point. Verses 1 and 2 are like a prologue, an introduction, that gives the motivation of the book—that God “in these last days” has spoken to Israel (as well as to Gentile Christians) by Jesus Christ.

“God ... at sundry [different] times and in divers manners [in a variety of ways] spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.” In other words, God spoke differently in the past. He spoke “in many and various ways” (RSV). The *Diaglott* interlinear has “in many parts and in many ways.” Some translations say that God spoke in *fragments* by the prophets, whereas there was more of a revelation in connection with the message of Jesus.

“God ... hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” Not only was this book addressed to the Hebrews, but also it was written by a Hebrew (Paul). Higher critics try to say that Paul did not write this epistle, but internal evidence indicates to the contrary, as we will see.

Comment: This book contains superb logic, and there was no greater logician than Paul in the early Church.

Why did Paul bring up the point that God spoke in this manner in olden times? He was trying to show that in the past, God suddenly raised up an individual—for example, a farmer, a prophet, or a king depending on the circumstance—to speak to the nation. Therefore, when Jesus came along and declared he was the Messiah, it should not have surprised the Jews if God now spoke through him, another *individual*. In the past, God often raised up an individual *very suddenly from unexpected sources* to speak for Him. Moreover, the individuals were not always the most popular people. Thus the fact that Jesus claimed to speak for God should not have been used against him. There were no grounds for saying that God could not speak through Jesus because he was a carpenter, because he was not educated in orthodox channels, because he came from Nazareth, because he was not of the priesthood, etc.

From the standpoint of history, it is much easier for us today to see that Jesus was the Messiah, for we *know* that he influenced the minds of the world in a way no other individual has. Even an impartial atheist would have to acknowledge that this man greatly influenced the thinking of people and nations. The perspective of the greatness of his name and works helps us to identify Jesus as the Messiah; it certainly gives us a bias whereby we are more ready to see the possibility, but in his own day, he was crucified. Yes, there was a time when he was popular with the people, but when his ministry ended in crucifixion, it took a little time for that stigma to be erased. Many could remember the circumstances of that day and had actually seen him on the Cross, so humility of heart and faith were prerequisites for having their eyes opened to

see him in his true role.

Therefore, Paul opened his epistle by showing that God used the *same method* with Jesus that He had used with the prophets in the past. He had spoken before through an *individual*, and He was doing the same thing now. And Jesus was greater than the Old Testament prophets—he was *God's Son*.

“God ... hath in these last days [of the Jewish Age] spoken unto us by his Son.” In Paul's day, a dispensational change was taking place, and some of the Israelites sensed it. Similarly today, Christians feel that somehow we are near the end of the age because strange events are occurring. There is a suspicion that maybe these are the last days.

“God ... hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by [on account of] whom also he made the worlds [the ages—Greek *aion*].” Jesus was appointed “heir of all things” after his resurrection.

Heb. 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Jesus is now “the express image” of the Father's person because he has the divine nature. After his ascension, Jesus was exalted to the divine nature, to God's likeness in form and appearance, although God's glory is greater.

Jesus is “the brightness” of the Father's glory; that is, he is a glorious being. Like the Father, Jesus has an effulgence, or *radiance*, about his person that is brighter than the noonday sun. Stated another way, Jesus' whole being radiates light.

In addition to emphasizing the change that was taking place, Paul was saying that the one who was rejected by the nation of Israel and crucified, who in the days of his flesh had preached the gospel, is the *true* Messiah that was predicted to come—and he is *alive in glory!* Made in the express likeness of God Himself, he is no longer a human being but a glorious spirit being in the likeness of his Father.

Notice the boldness with which this epistle was written. With many doctrines, we properly start out on the defensive, but here Paul began with *strong, direct statements* that *Jesus is the Messiah!* Paul spoke with confidence and strength. The nation of Israel regarded Jesus as an impostor, but Paul spoke boldly to the contrary. In fact, after Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit, all of the apostles spoke with authority in spite of their humble origin and background. Paul was not afraid to make these bold statements that on the surface, or from the customary viewpoint, seemed to be sacrilegious.

Comment: Of all the apostles, Paul could best speak of Jesus' glory because of his blinding experience while on the road to Damascus.

Jesus upholds “all things by the word of his [God's] power.” God empowered Jesus to carry out His plan. He gave Jesus the power and the authority to sustain the universe. Without God's commission, Jesus could not uphold “all things.”

Why did Paul say, “When he [Jesus] had by himself purged our sins”? Jesus *alone* took away *the* sin of the world. Later in the epistle, Paul emphasized that the blood of bulls and goats did not really take away sin. The sacrifices that the Jews *repetitiously* offered were really reminders of the sin that continued with them. As Paul would show, the continual Old Testament sacrifices

pointed forward to the sacrifice of Jesus, whose blood is the *only effectual* way to cancel sin. This Jesus did *once* when he gave himself.

Therefore, we think the words “by himself” emphasize the *effectiveness* of Jesus’ sacrifice as a means of canceling sin. The real reason he died was not because the nation of Israel put him to death but because the Messiah needed to die to cancel sin. *Jesus was the sin offering*. Only at the *very end* of the Book of Hebrews is the Church’s share in the sin offering brought in, for Paul’s purpose was to emphasize *Jesus* as the Messiah.

Heb. 1:4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

“By *inheritance* [Jesus] obtained a more excellent name than they [the angels].” One receives an inheritance *after death*—and so Jesus inherited the divine nature after his death and resurrection. He was the beneficiary of his own death too, for the honor and glory that he inherited were a result of humbling himself and taking upon himself the form of a bond servant and dying for man’s sin. Because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity, God highly exalted him and gave him a name which is above every other name in heaven (Phil. 2:9).

Up to this point, Paul just made statements without scriptural substantiation. He laid down a platform, and now he would proceed to prove each point with a Scripture.

Heb. 1:5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

Paul now started to quote Scriptures that the Jews should have been thinking of. Psalm 2:7 reads, “I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” Psalm 89:26,27 states, “He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.” The Apostle Paul was assuming that the Hebrews knew these Scriptures. With us, as Gentiles, we would have to go back to the Old Testament and read these Psalms. The Second Psalm would tell us about the Messiah. We would see that a King will be set up on high (on the right hand of the Father), that God will have the nations in derision, and that the King will eventually have the authority and the rulership of the world (the world will be given to him).

Notice that Paul did not enunciate all of these points in the Second Psalm. Because he was telling the Jews what they should already know, he merely quoted one Scripture to show that God had told them about the Son in the Old Testament. Paul was saying, “Who is that Son? Is he Abraham, Jacob, Elijah, or any of the other prophets or angels, human or spirit? That Son is Jesus and none other. Jesus’ declaration is true.” The Scriptures predicted this Son, yet the Jews thought Jesus was blaspheming when he said he was a God, namely, the *Son* of God. Paul was telling the Jews that they should have been expecting the Son, the Messiah.

Paul assumed that the Hebrews knew these Scriptures well enough to get the point without further elaboration. When he quoted the three verses, the particular Psalms should have come to their minds in entirety. Therefore, the Jews should have gotten the gist of what Paul was saying; namely, *Jesus is that Son!*

Heb. 1:6 And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

Verse 6 is a quote from Psalm 97:7, “Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods.” Paul used the term “all ye gods” from the

standpoint of the “angels of God.”

Heb. 1:7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

Verse 7 is a quote from Psalm 104:4, “Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire.” God uses both the animate and the inanimate as His ministers, or “angels.”

Heb. 1:8 But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

Heb. 1:9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Verses 8 and 9 continue right on from verse 7. Although God uses the animate and the inanimate as His messengers, he said to His Son, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Psa. 45:6,7). Jesus, who was anointed with oil *above* his fellows, will have a throne “for ever and ever.”

Heb. 1:10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

Heb. 1:11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

Heb. 1:12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

Verses 10-12 are a quote from Psalm 102:25-27, “Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.”

Heb. 1:13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

Psalm 110:1 reads, “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Starting with verse 5, Paul quickly rattled off seven Scriptures without explanation. For instance, here with Psalm 110:1, he did not explain that the one “LORD” was Jehovah, and the other “Lord” was His Son, Jesus. And with Psalm 45:6,7, Paul did not say that one “God” is Jehovah and the other “God” is Jesus. Having made suggestions in verses 1-4, he assumed the Hebrews would get the point because they were familiar with these Scriptures. The principle is the same with us. If we know certain Scriptures by heart and a suggestion is made that rings true, then instantly we grasp the point without the need for a long explanation.

Paul used multiple texts in the Old Testament that speak about a Son and liken him to a God and a Lord. David had a Lord who *sits on the right hand* of God; therefore, Jehovah is *over* that Lord. Paul was making the Hebrews think: Who is this mysterious being that God will honor and make King over all the earth? Is he the Messiah? Yes! Paul was deflating the Jews’ reasoning whereby they rejected Jesus as the Son of God. If they considered that teaching to be blasphemous, they would never be prepared to accept Messiah because they would be looking

for the wrong thing. Subsequently Paul showed that Messiah had to suffer and die, but here he was just identifying Messiah as a Son and a great God. (The Jews knew that Messiah was not Jehovah Himself, contrary to what the doctrine of the Trinity claims.)

Thus far, then, Paul had presented only the first part of his argument, namely, that in harmony with Scripture, the Hebrews should be prepared to anticipate someone who would claim to be the Son of God.

Verses 10-12

Why does verse 11 say that the *physical* heavens and earth, the physical universe, *will perish* but that *Jesus remains*? There are two thoughts, as follows.

1. It would be easier for the physical heavens and earth to perish than for Jesus to perish. Similarly, God said elsewhere, “My covenant stands; it is like the ordinances of the sun and the moon. If you can tell the sun to stop—if you can change the ordinances of the heavens—then you can nullify my word, what I predict. But if you cannot change my ordinances, then my word will abide, just as the sun and the moon abide forever.” Paul used the heavens as an expression of God’s faithfulness in connection with His covenants, as Psalm 72:5,7 states, “They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.... In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.” Therefore, if the heavens are everlasting, then Jesus is even more everlasting.

2. *If in the billions of years to come the earth did deteriorate, the human creation could change pastures and move elsewhere in the universe. The destiny of the human race would not in any way be jeopardized. For instance, many scientists say that the world is dissolving, that particles are going off into space, but other scientists feel there will be an era of retrieval. Who is to deny that the process could be like a circle—that what we see as worlds and universes flying apart may, at some future distant date, begin a cycle of return? In other words, the universe is pulsating.*

Thus there are two alternate explanations:

1. On the one hand, that which is an *impossibility* is spoken of as a *possibility* to further enhance the *impossibility* of Jesus’ ever waxing old or deteriorating in any sense—not his glory, his nature, or his actual life.

2. On the other hand, if billions of years from now, the physical heavens and earth should deteriorate, there would be no real problem from the standpoint of eternity because the effect would be like changing a garment, like moving from one pasture to another. It would still show that the universe was created as a habitat for beings to exist in. Whatever happens in the distant future is not revealed in detail in the Lord’s Word, but it would not be a problem. At present, we are just looking at a very bare outline of what God will specifically do billions of years from now.

In the Old Testament, “for ever” is an accommodating term depending on context. In some places, it is used in regard to specific ages with a *definite* length of time, and in other places, it means a long *indefinite* period of time and sometimes *eternity*.

Heb. 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

Why is verse 14 abruptly interjected? “Are they [the holy angels] not *all* ministering spirits, sent

forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" From Pentecost to the close of the Church, the primary activity, or work, of the holy angels is exclusively to serve those who will ultimately be heirs of salvation. Therefore, a consecrated individual has a number of guardian angels, one of whom is charged with the responsibility, while others assist him. Jesus said, "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:10). While the chief guardian angel is far away in heaven, the consecrated person is not left unprotected down here. Otherwise, the Adversary and the fallen angels could destroy the individual. The whole host of heaven is occupied in watching out for the development of Christians, whether or not they realize it. Moreover, the holy angels outnumber the unholy angels: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:16).

In verses 1-13 of chapter 1, Paul emphasized the Son. Nothing was said about the Church, but now, abruptly, verse 14 was added parenthetically for the *Christian*. Paul was addressing the Hebrews, but this verse was like turning aside to the Christian and saying, "You have been highly favored too. Not only has the Son been given a name above every name in heaven and honored in this fashion, as mentioned in the verses previously quoted, but you, as a Christian, have a role somewhat analogous to that of Jesus. He is an heir, and so are you." However, Paul did not dwell on this favor to the Christian, for to do so would have confused the Jew. Actually, the Messiah is a seed *class*, of which Jesus is the Head and the Church is his body.

Comment: Psalm 34:7 reads, "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."

Reply: Yes, that Scripture is pertinent, showing that there are many holy angels.

Notice verse 9 again: "God, even thy God, hath anointed thee [Jesus] with the oil of gladness above thy fellows [*plural*, that is, the Church]." Both the Son and the body members are in the picture, but in writing to the Hebrews, Paul was not emphasizing that these "fellows" are Christians. However, the insertion of verse 14 on the side furnishes a clue that the Church has a similar call and reward.

Comment: With the doctrine of the Trinity, verse 9 would make no sense, for surely Almighty God did not anoint Himself.

Reply: There is a definite distinction of rank, for without question, the Father is greater than the Son. The Adversary has blinded the minds of the world on this subject. He must have *actual influence* in the atmosphere that creates a smoke screen, as it were, or is like the power of a magnet, which can throw a delicate and accurate electronic machine out of whack. Electrical equipment operating nearby can distort radio or television reception and cause static. Accordingly, Satan's influence and power in the air blind the minds of people on religious subjects, even though they may be very rational, shrewd, mathematical, and precise on all other subjects. It is a miracle to have the simple understanding of truth.

The first few chapters of the Book of Hebrews are introductory. Primarily verses 1-4 of this first chapter lay down what Paul later proved, point by point. Later chapters will be very interesting.

Heb. 2:1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

Heb. 2:2 For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;

Heb. 2:3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

One of the key thoughts in verses 1-3 is predicated upon the identity of the angels in verse 2—“the word spoken by angels was stedfast.” It is true that the word “angel” has the connotation of “messenger,” but to help us identify the “angels” here, note that the following verses refer to literal *spiritual* angels: Hebrews 1:4,5,7,13 and 2:5,7,9,16. Therefore, we should not overlook the application to the *holy angels* in verse 2, which is in the same context.

In the Old Testament, angels came to earth as messengers, materializing as men, and spoke with authority. In many instances, they predicted punishments and judgments that came to pass. When they spoke sternly, therefore, their words were authoritative, being like a “thus saith the LORD.” For example, the Book of Genesis tells that three angels went to Abraham and that two angels subsequently visited Lot (Gen. 18:1,2; 19:1). Exodus 14:19 calls the cloud that was over the Israelites in the wilderness the “angel of God” because its pillar seemed to have a personality; that is, it led and succored them, and it also struck fear in and destroyed their enemies. No doubt the Logos was identified with the “personality” and work of this cloud. An outstanding example is when fire from the cloud destroyed Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1,2).

Verse 1 is a warning to take heed lest we let the things that we have learned and heard slip, or glide away. Verse 2 admonishes about the steadfastness of the angels’ word and tells that every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.

Verse 3 begins with, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great [a] salvation,” which was first spoken about by Jesus during his earthly ministry and “was confirmed unto us by them [the apostles] that heard him.” The “great salvation” was confirmed to Paul by the other apostles, who had personally heard Jesus speak. Here is a little clue that Paul was the author of the Book of Hebrews, for all of the other apostles had heard and seen Jesus during his earthly ministry. Having the daily experience of being with him, they not only did not need confirmation themselves but also could help Paul in this regard.

Heb. 2:4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

The word “them” is supplied and should be omitted: “God also bearing witness.” *How* did God bear witness of the “great salvation” with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit? His power was used in the raising of the dead, in the multiplication of bread, in Jesus’ walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee, in the voice from heaven on the Mount of Transfiguration, in healings, etc. In other words, God’s power enabled Jesus to do all of his miracles. Other examples of the use of God’s power were in connection with Jesus’ birth, the prophecies of Anna and Simeon, and the star that guided the wise men. All of these were signs and wonders at the time of the First Advent.

Why did God bear witness? His purpose was to show that *Jesus truly was the Messiah*. In the first chapter, Paul reviewed the Old Testament with a thumbnail sketch to show that the Scriptures alluded to some personality who must come and would be the *Son of God*. These prophecies pointed to and honored *Jesus*. Therefore, Paul was trying to get the Hebrews to realize that by accepting Jesus as the *Son of God*, they would not be blaspheming. The scribes and Pharisees put pressure not only on Jesus but also on his disciples and tried to ostracize them. In order to begin to remove these fears so that he could reason with the Jews, Paul first showed that the Old Testament prophesied of the coming of such an individual. He was saying, “Is there any harm in looking for that individual? Isn’t Jesus’ coming in line with the prediction that a great

one must come?" The Jews should have looked for and recognized Jesus as the fulfillment.

In chapter 1, Paul showed that Scripture justified the coming of an individual as Messiah. Chapter 2 shows that Jesus did *wonderful* miracles. Signs were given to reveal him as the Son of God—he healed the sick, raised the dead, etc., in line with his profession to be the Messiah. Jesus himself used this line of reasoning when he said, "If you find it difficult to believe on me, at least believe on my works" (John 10:36-38; 14:10-12 paraphrase).

Up to this point, then, Paul had presented two lines of evidence that Jesus was the Son of God. (1) Old Testament prophecies had spoken of him. (2) Jesus had given signs and wonders and performed miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit had come on individual believers.

Heb. 2:5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

The "world to come" is the third dispensation, the "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13). The fact that the angels will not have authority over the world to come implies they had authority previously. Since Satan is the god of "this present evil world," we know, by the process of elimination, that the angels were over the first world, the "world that then was," the dispensation prior to the Flood (2 Cor. 4:4; Gal. 1:4; 2 Pet. 3:6). Thus in the Kingdom Age, the angels will not be administering the laws; they will not have an executive role.

Heb. 2:6 But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

Heb. 2:7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

Heb. 2:8 Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.

In verses 6-8, Paul quoted from Psalm 8, which looks into the future as though it were a past event. In other words, Psalm 8 looks at the *fulfillment*. For example, verse 1 of the Psalm, a prophecy, is *not* true today: "O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens."

God expressed this prophecy through David. In writing, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" the Psalmist was referring to *mankind*, to "man" in a general sense (verses 3 and 4). David was saying, "What are we that Jehovah should honor us when He has created such great marvels in the universe, especially the heavens?" The great systems of planets, stars, and galaxies were all the work of God's fingers. When David considered man's physical bodies, they were *as nothing* in comparison with the *great* celestial bodies. Much Scripture is needed to strengthen one's faith as to the reality that God is mindful of man.

Verse 5, which reads, "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour," shows that man is on a lower plane than the angelic beings, yet he was crowned with glory and honor when originally created. Verse 6 refers to the fulfillment of the promise made to Adam: "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." The first dominion was lost through Adam's disobedience, but it will be restored to the obedient of the human race who pass the test in the

“little season” at the *end* of the Millennium (Rev. 20:3). From that time forward, each man will be a king going into the ages of ages. Stated another way, each man will then be his own lord.

The Kingdom Age is set aside for the correction and judgment of the human race condemned in Adam. With mankind needing help, a democratic form of government in the Kingdom would be a failure. Instead there will be a theocratic government with Jesus exercising all authority. Those who pass the test at the end of the Millennial Age and live forever, having been tried and proved faithful, will once again live in a democratic form of government.

Heb. 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Next Paul quoted verse 5 of Psalm 8 but included additional thoughts. “*Jesus ... was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death.*” He was “crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” In order to get the proper perspective, we have to analyze Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2:6-9. First, we will see that verses 6-8 of this chapter apply to mankind, and only verse 9 applies to Jesus. Paul alluded to Jesus in connection with Psalm 8 to show that (1) the dominion cannot be restored to mankind without Jesus and (2) despite the passage of time, we should not despair of hope. The Bible predicts that planet Earth will be restored to paradise—that man will get his kingdom back—but even though much time has elapsed without this transpiring, we should not get discouraged. Paul reasoned that if we have progressed in the divine plan to the point where Jesus has come on the stage of history and not only suffered and died but also been resurrected, these events are a *surety* that the *entire plan will be brought to completion*. God’s promises *will be fulfilled*, for the basis of the redemption has already been accomplished *in Jesus*.

Jesus had to be made flesh in order to take Adam’s place and provide the ransom price of redemption. Adam was a *king*, and all of his children would have been kings if he had not failed. Jesus came as a *King* to take Adam’s place. However, he had to partake of the *same* human nature and the *same* glory; that is, Jesus had to be exactly like Adam (*a perfect human being*) in order to be a substitute for him and to redeem the promises made to him in Psalm 8.

Heb. 2:10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

“It became him [God], for whom are all things, and by whom are all things” to make Jesus “perfect through sufferings.” All things are by and for *Jehovah*. God made Jesus the “captain of their [the Church’s] salvation.” The Church class are the sons of *God*, not the sons of Jesus. They are the “brothers” of Jesus (Heb. 2:11,12,17).

Heb. 2:11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

Both Jesus, who sanctifies, and the Church, who are sanctified, are all of one spirit, or mind. For this reason, Jesus “is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

Heb. 2:12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

Paul again quoted Scripture, as in chapter 1. Psalm 22:22 reads, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.” The first chapter primarily

emphasized the *role of Jesus*, God's Son, who was predicted as an individual in the Old Testament. Only in the last verse of that chapter did Paul bring in the Church, saying that all of the holy angels minister unto those who are to become the heirs of salvation. Now Paul was quoting Scripture to show that a *class* will be with Jesus, the Messiah. They are his "brethren" and "children" of God (verse 13). Jesus is not ashamed to be identified with these brethren (verse 11), and he will declare God's name unto them and in their midst sing praises to God.

Paul emphasized two reasons for Jesus' coming in the flesh. Through *death* as a perfect human being, and thus paying the ransom price, (1) he might destroy the devil and his works, and (2) he might be a sympathetic high priest for his brethren now and in the everlasting future and for the world of mankind in the Kingdom Age. Stated another way, Jesus came in the flesh for the technical reason of paying the Ransom, and he came in the flesh for the practical reason of character development. To become qualified for the future office of Priest and King, Jesus needed *personal* development.

Heb. 2:13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

"I [Jesus] will put my trust in him [Jehovah]." "Behold I [Jesus] and the children which God hath given me." Paul was showing that a company of "cabinet officers" will be closely identified with Jesus in the Kingdom.

Heb. 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

In what sense does Satan, the god of this world, have "the power of death"? Although Satan was the "father of lies," the original deceiver, Paul showed that the real guilt lay with *Adam*: "Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men [the human race]" (John 8:44; Rom. 5:12). Therefore, we repeat the question: How does Satan have the *power of death*? Mankind's course is ever downward, and if God left Satan alone indefinitely, he would eventually succeed in pulling *all* down into *incurability*.

Comment: That principle was illustrated with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. God destroyed the inhabitants for their own good, for if they had continued unchecked, their characters would have become incurable.

Satan has manipulated Adamic death to man's destruction, but he has no control over Second Death, for God will give every person a full and fair trial for life sooner or later. Therefore, we should "fear" God, the One who has control over not just the body but also the everlasting welfare of the soul. "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him [God] which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). Satan can put the body to death, but he cannot put the soul to death unless God lets go of the redeemed individual. In other words, the Adversary plays upon the inherent weaknesses of mankind. He capitalizes on the weaknesses inherited through the Fall and manipulates them to further debase man and bring him under control, even destroying him if necessary—unless God intervenes as in the case of the consecrated.

Heb. 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

"And deliver them [the Great Company] who through fear of [sacrificial] death were all their

lifetime subject to bondage.” The Pastor concluded that this verse applies to the Great Company class. However, it also applies to the world, for Jesus comes to destroy Satan. He will rescue not only the Great Company but also the world, who are in bondage to Satan as well. Probably the Pastor reached his conclusion, which might seem to be far-fetched, by reasoning on whom Paul was speaking to. If the Book of Hebrews is primarily addressed either to those who were already Christians or to those who were prospective Christians, then deliverance from the fear of death applies mainly to the consecrated.

Death is feared here from the standpoint that Satan is the god of this world and that those who want to live righteously and follow Jesus are persecuted and ridiculed. For every step they take that is upright, they will meet opposition in the world and even among the brethren to some extent. Here are some who are not courageous enough to stand up against others. Their being concerned about what other people think of them has been a hindrance and a blockage to their spiritual progress. They fear either the world or the brethren (or both), and they might actually go against their conscience because the majority think differently and exert pressure. Satan makes innuendos and suggestions through the brethren and takes advantage where he can to motivate evil propensities; he desires to sow discord. Both with mankind and the Church, Satan is the perpetrator behind the scene. Therefore, since Paul was *especially* talking to Christians, this verse applies to the *consecrated*, although the context includes mankind.

Among the fearful (Great Company) class of the consecrated, God allows Satan to destroy the flesh so that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:5). God sometimes permits a Christian to fall, to a certain extent, under Satan’s control and go into the world and wrestle with him there. The hope is that such individuals will, at some subsequent time, make a decision which results in their getting life. The consecrated of the Gospel Age have to seal their destiny at some time in the present life, either for good or for bad: Little Flock (immortality), Great Company (life), or Second Death (everlasting extinction).

When it is necessary for God to withdraw His power from an individual who is consecrated, the person will, hopefully, love Him at heart and be shocked into a realization of what has happened. Then the individual will bestir himself and serve the Lord faithfully henceforth. Examples are the scapegoat’s being sent into the wilderness, the great multitude’s washing their robes in the blood of the Lamb, and the foolish virgins’ getting the oil (Lev. 16:21,22; Rev. 7:14; Matt. 25:7-10).

Thus the Pastor applied verse 15 to the Great Company class. It would be very difficult to persuade many Christians with this line of reasoning, but we think the deduction is proper, for this chapter is giving a practical lesson for the consecrated now. Verse 1 addressed the Church, not the world: “Give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” The combined thought of verses 2 and 3 is, “If we neglect so great a salvation, how shall we escape a just recompense for every transgression and disobedient act?”

Heb. 2:16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

Jesus was made man, verse 9 tells us. Since Paul had already covered the lesson that Jesus became flesh and blood to redeem man (verse 14), why did Paul now go further and add that Jesus “took on him the seed of Abraham”?

Comment: Jesus would have to be of the seed of Abraham in order to be the blesser of the nations.

Reply: Yes. A Jew is schooled to think of the seed of Abraham as being a Jew, but technically, a

Jew is of one of the 12 tribes starting with Jacob and his 12 sons. Jews are the children of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. However, Paul went back further in his reasoning and showed that Jesus had to be a Jew of Abraham's lineage in order to be the spiritual seed of promise. In other words, at this juncture, Paul was emphasizing the seed of promise rather than the Law. Earlier, he emphasized that Jesus had to become a man. Now he said that Jesus also had to be the seed of promise.

Heb. 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Jesus became of the seed of Abraham and suffered and died for two reasons: (1) that he might be qualified for office as “a merciful and faithful high priest” and (2) that he might “make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” Verses 14 and 15 gave the same basic lesson of two primary reasons for Jesus' suffering and death: (1) that he might destroy Satan and (2) that he might deliver the people.

Heb. 2:18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

In what way was Jesus tempted?

1. Jesus had a personal confrontation with Satan and his reasoning. For example, Satan used the argument that suffering is not necessary (Matt. 4:8,9). The Christian has similar experiences along this line.
2. Jesus was “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” and “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Paul emphasized the suffering aspect because the Jews had difficulty seeing why it was necessary for this great Redeemer to die.

The Book of Hebrews was addressed primarily to the Jew to get him to make a proper decision that Jesus was indeed the true Messiah. Paul had already answered the blasphemy charge, and now he would take several chapters to discuss another point. “If Jesus is the Messiah, why did he die on a cross?” “If he is the Son of God, why did he have to suffer and die?” As taught under the Law, Jesus had to die for redemption purposes. In this book, Paul stressed the basic points over and over because Jewish prejudices ran deep and were crystallized.

3. Jesus took upon himself “our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses”; that is, in the healing process, virtue went out of him (Matt. 8:17; Luke 6:19). At great cost to him, his personal vitality was weakened. (Of course his strength was renewed later, for otherwise, he would have died prematurely from healing so many.) Nevertheless, Jesus had a sensation of *exhaustion* at the time, which would have tempted him to slacken his efforts, but he persisted. Because he was a perfect human being, his strength revived—he recuperated very rapidly—but then he exhausted and expended himself again the very next day, etc. In other words, he went on and on, driving himself along this line.

Jesus “was in all points tempted ... yet without sin.” It is sometimes said that Jesus could not be tempted with unholy thoughts or ambitions, but that is not the proper thought because *only Jehovah* could not be tempted in this way. As the Author of the universe, God is complete in Himself and is thus the only One who would have no sympathy whatever with sin. Every other sentient being in the universe, spiritual or physical, was created as a *mortal*. We know that the angels in heaven were tempted with sin, for they looked upon the daughters of men and saw that they were fair, and some fell in taking “wives of all which they chose” (Gen. 6:2). If the

holy angels were tempted with sin, why couldn't Jesus, as an archangel, one of God's created sentient beings, have also been tempted along this line? Therefore, we interpret Hebrews 4:15 to mean that Jesus "was in all points tempted ... yet without *sinning* [mentally]." However, we, as fallen beings, succumb to temptations, but as Proverbs 24:16 states, "A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again." "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). A Christian may have the highest ideals in walking *after* the spirit, but he cannot live *up to* the spirit, whereas Jesus did *both*. He walked perfectly *according to the letter* of the Law, and he walked perfectly *after the spirit* of the Law. Thus Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sinning. He had to be perfect in every respect in order to pay the ransom price.

Being made flesh, Jesus could have had the desire to marry and have a family, but he sacrificed these desires. It honors Jesus more to realize that he suppressed all of these desires and temptations *perfectly*, rather than to think that he was immune to such desires. Only because his character was sufficiently strong did he avoid contamination with sin. He was strong enough to resist. In other words, Jesus had the same experience as the holy angels. Like them, he resisted thoroughly—but with perfection.

The purpose of the Book of Hebrews was to prove that Jesus is the Messiah and to override the prejudice of the Jews. It is exceedingly difficult to break through a prejudiced mind. That is true with us as well in living a Christian life. Either our own prejudices or the prejudices of other people create a barrier.

Heb. 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

The word "Wherefore" is significant, for what follows, "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," tells that the epistle was primarily addressed to Jews who accepted Christ at first and then later on, through the pressure of orthodox Jewry, began to waver and have some doubts, thinking that possibly they had accepted Christianity too hastily. The orthodox Jews felt that Jesus had undermined Judaism. In addition, this letter was written to Jews who might potentially accept Christ. Since a large portion of the message was directed to Jews who had already consecrated but were beginning to have some misgivings, Paul was trying to bolster their confidence that what they believed is proper.

"Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Why did Paul call Jesus the "High Priest of *our* profession"? This title contrasts Christianity with the Mosaic arrangement and the typical Tabernacle. Just as a Levitical priesthood served in connection with the Tabernacle, so a priesthood is involved in Christianity.

Jesus is both "*the* Apostle and [*the*] High Priest of our profession." The word "apostle" means "one sent forth." *God* sent Jesus forth; hence Jesus is not an impostor. He did not presume to direct the Jewish people to his doctrine; rather, he had *divine* authorization, for he was sent forth from and by God to establish this new religion, which did not contradict but supplemented the Law. Jesus is the High Priest instead of the Aaronic high priest, who varied from lifetime to lifetime or because of a sickness or some other type of incapacity.

Heb. 3:2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

Paul likened the faithfulness of Jesus to the faithfulness of Moses.

Heb. 3:3 For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who

hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.

Next Paul contrasted the *glory* of Jesus and Moses. Why was Moses mentioned in verses 2, 3, and 5? (1) Moses, his life, and the services and activities surrounding him were a type of Jesus and his ministry; that is, they testified beforehand of the coming of Messiah. (2) The Jews regarded Moses as the greatest human being who had ever lived. (3) Moses was sent of God. When the Israelites were in bondage, God sent Moses to them with the message to come out of Egypt, and now Jesus, a *new* individual, was sent of God under a *new* arrangement, a *new* profession, and a *new* priesthood.

Paul did not downgrade Moses, for he said that Moses was faithful and would get his reward. He was used of God, but *Christ is even greater than Moses!* Thus Paul introduced the thought that Jesus is superior to Moses, and he contrasted the house of Jesus with the house of Moses. Why did Paul use the word “house”? Moses’ “house” was the nation of Israel, and prior to Christ, the whole nation was under the Law Covenant arrangement, which God had delivered to them by the hand of Moses. Therefore, the entire nation was Moses’ household until Christ came. There was now a new house with regard to Christ, as there had previously been a house with regard to Moses. The difference between the two households is that Moses’ was a house of *servants* and Jesus’ is a house of *sons*.

In chapters 1 and 2, Paul showed that Messiah would be an individual, he would appear down here on earth, and he would be *the* Son of God. Now Paul was showing that a *group* of individuals would be associated with Jesus, just as previously the whole *nation* was embraced by Moses and his household. If the Jews would reflect on Paul’s reasoning, they would see that Moses’ house was a house of servants because the language and the general tenor of their prayers under the Law Covenant were different in nature than the “Abba” prayers of the New Testament.

“For this man [Jesus] was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he [Jesus] who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.” The house of Moses was already in existence *before* he came, for God dealt originally with Jacob and Jacob’s posterity, who were called the “house of Israel.” Moses was very prominent in connection with the leadership of the house of servants, but that house was established in bondage before he came to them.

However, with the gospel dispensation, Jesus has the *preeminence* in all things. He came *first* and is the *Head* of the Church, which is his body. Thus Jesus laid the *groundwork* for the establishment of the house of sons. In other words, the house of sons was not already in existence when Jesus came at the First Advent, for he introduced the new house himself and laid the foundation by first proving his faithfulness. It was not until *afterward*, at Pentecost, that his house was accepted.

Jesus built the house in that he is the very foundation; he is *both* the builder and the foundation of the house. Stated another way, he is “the author [the *beginner*, the *starter*] and [the] finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2). Paul gave seed thoughts in the early chapters and then built upon them in later chapters. As we proceed in the Book of Hebrews, we will see that he returned to some of the thoughts previously expressed and enlarged upon them. For example, he mentioned the priesthood here and then expanded upon the thought later, showing there is another priesthood, the Melchisedec priesthood.

Heb. 3:4 For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

“He that built *all* things is *God*.” In other words, God is the builder in the sense of being the

Architect, whereas Jesus is the builder in the sense of being the *foreman or working contractor*; that is, Jesus is more intimately involved with the work and the daily details. Jehovah was mostly concerned with arranging the theoretical plan. The highest credit goes to Him, for He gave all the thought and care and selected Jesus as the master workman with Paul and other colaborer apostles underneath him.

Heb. 3:5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

Heb. 3:6 But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

“Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a *servant*, for a testimony [a type] of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ [was faithful] as a *son* over his own house.” The italicized words emphasize Paul’s reasoning.

“Whose [Christ’s] house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” We take many Scriptures out of context and use them as a motto. For instance, a plaque on the wall might say, “Hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” To apply the principle to us as Christians is proper, but if we read the verse in context, we will realize it is slanted to Hebrew Christians, who, after accepting Christ, began to waver and question if they were on the right course. However, if they hearkened to Paul’s message, they would be strengthened and ultimately get their spiritual inheritance.

Q: Please explain again how Jesus was the builder of the spiritual house of sons.

A: He started a completely *new* arrangement, beginning with the foundation. He did not work on something that previously existed but first had to die before there could be sons. He opened up a new and living way. Moses was the *recipient* of a house of servants, which was already in existence, whereas Jesus *began* a new house and brought to light a completely new hope.

Heb. 3:7 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice,

Heb. 3:8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

Heb. 3:9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

Heb. 3:10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

Heb. 3:11 So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

Why did Paul mention the hard-heartedness of the nation of Israel during the 40 years in the wilderness?

Comment: In emphasizing their stiff-necked nature as a people, he was warning both Jewish and Gentile Christians not to act similarly.

Reply: That thought is implied in verse 13.

Paul started out by saying that the Holy Spirit made a striking statement in Psalm 95:7-11, which begins, “*Today if ye will hear his voice.*” The text continues, “Harden not your heart, as in

the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.”

While this excerpt from Psalm 95 is interesting, why did Paul use it here? What bearing does it have on the whole subject matter of the Book of Hebrews? Paul’s point was that “today” applied to the *present*. The admonition applied back there in Israel’s history, and it still applied in Paul’s day. These verses were a *prophecy* of the Holy Spirit. Although they were a statement to the Jew back there and an explanation of why the nation did not enter into God’s rest but had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, the quote was still true for the Jews at the First Advent *if* their faith could step out and lay hold on the promises.

Hebrews 4:7 expresses a similar thought in regard to David’s day: “Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” In other words, this advice was true in the wilderness, it was true 500 years later in David’s day, and it was true in Paul’s day. The important thing is to enter into God’s “rest” by *believing* in His promises. Paul was saying, “The Israelites did not enter into God’s rest in the wilderness, very few entered in David’s day, and now that the gospel has been unfurled, it is even more appropriate to lay hold on the promises. The Christian’s rest is a rest of *faith*, not of works.

Heb. 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

Heb. 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Heb. 3:14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;

Heb. 3:15 While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

The implication is that the Jews to whom this epistle was addressed believed in the living God, but there could be a departure. Such a departure is not a radical rupture that comes suddenly and emotionally in one day but a *gradual, surreptitious* gliding away. Therefore, they were to “exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any ... be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” Later Paul enlarged on the deceitfulness of sin (see Heb. 10:24-27). For now, he continued to lay down seed thoughts.

Heb. 3:16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

Heb. 3:17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

Heb. 3:18 And to whom swear he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

Heb. 3:19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Although not all Israelites who left Egypt perished during the 40 years in the wilderness, the

entire generation over a certain age died except for Joshua and Caleb. Approximately 2 million Israelites left Egypt, and approximately 2 million entered the Promised Land—but those who entered were a new generation with the exception of Joshua and Caleb.

Failure to enter the Land of Promise was due to *unbelief*. A definition of “belief” is *faith and confidence* (Heb. 3:6,14; 4:2). “We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our *confidence* stedfast unto the end.” Daily association with and encouragement from brethren are important for mental advancement, recognition of truth, and development of character. Otherwise, we will become stagnant.

Heb. 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

Heb. 4:2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Heb. 4:3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

Heb. 4:4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

Heb. 4:5 And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

Heb. 4:6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

Heb. 4:7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Heb. 4:8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

Paul was addressing Jews who had previously accepted Christ, but why would they have done so? There are several possible reasons.

1. These Jews were looking for the Messiah, and when they saw Jesus’ works and miracles, they followed him.
2. They could not gain life by the works of the Law. They were burdened with the Law, for the letter of the Law kills. Being in bondage, they became despondent over their condition. “By [with] the law is [comes] the knowledge of sin [and conviction]” (Rom. 3:20). Therefore, Christianity was a wholesome relief from the heavy yoke of the Law.
3. Jesus’ words were full of wisdom and kindness. As was said of him, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46).

Many believed Jesus through the sheer intellect, wisdom, and kindness of his words and the miracles that he performed. However, when he was crucified and ascended to heaven, the Christian Jews were left alone to believe on his teachings, which were not securely rooted in many of them; thus their faith began to waver. They had initially experienced a rest of faith, but since that rest was based on emotionalism and was only temporary, they did not make the

truth their own. They should have reflected back to their initial experience and said, “I *know* that God called me.” To have faith and confidence to our dying day that God *did call us* gives us a great advantage. Similarly, Paul said that he had seen a vision on the way to Damascus and *he knew it*. Then, *years later*, he could still look back on that experience and *know* that he had received a personal call. To the contrary, many Christian Jews felt weak as soon as Jesus was taken away. They had not been indoctrinated deeply enough, and they lacked sufficient faith to follow the *invisible* Lord. Moses had that faith, which is described in Hebrews 11:27, “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him [God] who is invisible.” Moses held that confidence through a long life. Mixing the word with faith (verse 2) means that in order to have faith and confidence, we must always consider providences, past and present, and *keep reviewing* them.

“Let us therefore fear, lest any of us should come short of the promise of entering into his rest” (verse 1 paraphrase). This “rest” is not intended to be temporary or sporadic but is supposed to *abide and continue*. To show the continuing nature of this rest, Paul tied in the Christian’s rest with God’s resting on the seventh day. Those who have faith in God’s leadings, knowledge, plans, and purposes are privileged to enter into His abiding rest now, even in the present life. Thus there is a *continuing* rest in the present life and a *sealed, crystallized, permanent* rest beyond the veil, which cannot be lost. However, we must take heed not to lose the rest in the present life, for it can glide away and depart from us.

Our rest is based on the realization that we did come into the Lord’s family, that He did call us, regardless of our “downsittings” and “uprisings” (Psa. 139:2). This rest is a *mental confidence* in the Lord that we have the true religion.

Verses 4-8 show that God’s rest on the seventh day is a type, not a literal 24-hour day. The seventh “day” of the 7,000-year Seventh Creative Day continued beyond David’s day and the First Advent and still continues today. When the seventh day expires, Jesus will have subdued all enemies, the last of which is death, and will hand the Kingdom over to the Father so that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:24-28). Then God will resume His creative works and be active in regard to life on other planets and other spiritual abodes; that is, He will go into other works of the everlasting future. At present, God is waiting for the development and completion of the New Creation under Jesus. As Jesus stated in John 5:17, “My Father worketh hitherto, and [now] I [also] work.”

God’s resting from all His creative works on the seventh day points out the significance of the *tiny* planet called Earth. It is here that Jesus came and died; it is here that man was first formed, being made a physical image of God; and it is here that the forces of good and evil are fighting. During this time, everything else throughout the universe is left in abeyance. The other planets may be developing according to natural laws put into operation earlier, but God will *not* devote *personal* attention to the heavenly bodies until His rest is over. It is here that God made man and woman at the end of the sixth day and pronounced that they were good; then He rested. His creative works are suspended until the drama of good and evil is fully enacted here on earth. Stated another way, until this planet is brought into order and perfected, all other business has ceased, for all attention is focused on this planet.

In the beginning, the earth and the other planets “were”; i.e., God created them and brought them up to a certain level or condition of development. The material universe had been set in motion. Then, out of all these celestial bodies, earth was selected to be the trial place for man to be created and the Redeemer to come. In a very short time, man sinned and the seventh day of God’s rest started. Here the permission of evil was allowed to ensue without interference.

These thoughts tie in with Hebrews 1:14, which tells that *all* of the holy angels are “ministering

spirits” to the “heirs of salvation.” In other words, *everything* is concentrated on this tiny speck of a planet until the work is finished. Therefore, from the time Adam was created until the end of the Millennium is like a parenthesis in time during which all of the other work in the material universe has been suspended. At the end of the Millennium, that vacuum will be filled, and the creative work will proceed. On this planet, God has done certain things during the seventh day, such as raising Jesus from death and calling individuals to be of the Church—but these are spiritual workmanship, *not natural creative works*: “For we are his [God’s] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10).

Never again will God allow the permission of evil *anywhere* because He will never “rest” again. The only reason sin is tolerated for a time is that God is resting. If He were active, then His will would have to be done on earth as it is being done in heaven. Sin will not be tolerated when God ceases to rest. His personalized activity and direct involvement, as done previously, will resume at the end of the Millennium and continue in ceaseless and endless works of the future.

Comment: How wonderful God’s plan is! If other creations were going on now in the universe, Satan would introduce sin and evil in other places. Therefore, it is appropriate that Satan’s opportunity to rebel against God is confined to earth and earth’s atmosphere. When he is destroyed in an everlasting lesson, never again will sin be tolerated anywhere in the universe.

In verse 8, “Jesus” should be “Joshua” (see King James margin). The two names are the same in the Hebrew. When the Israelites entered the Promised Land under Joshua at the end of the 40 years, they did not fully enter into God’s rest.

Heb. 4:9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

The Lord’s people can enter into God’s rest now.

Heb. 4:10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

Just as the Father ceased from His creative works and committed all judgment to the Son (He let Jesus be the more active participant), so we likewise should cease from our own works and let Jesus do a work in our lives. God had such confidence in Jesus that He revealed the whole plan to him after his death and resurrection. Before that, Jesus was involved as the Logos by being sent to earth with important messages (to Moses at Mount Sinai, to Manoah, etc.). As the Logos, he alone had the privilege of saying, “I Jehovah” or “I am the LORD thy God.”

The individual who enters into God’s rest has confidence that Jesus is God’s primary agent in all matters down here. Paul was addressing Jews who had initially accepted Christ and then later began to waver. He was trying to show that Christians should have a *deep-rooted confidence* that Jesus is indeed the Messiah and that if a Christian’s faith—especially a *Jewish Christian’s* faith—in Jesus falters, his faith will be shipwrecked as far as obtaining the chief reward. One’s confidence can be inwardly undermined without the awareness of others—*until it is too late*. Thus unbelief and lack of confidence in Jesus are dangerous, for a Christian’s rest in the present life is a rest of *confidence in Jesus*—in *his* message and in what *he* will do for those who are faithful.

There are two kinds of gifts:

1. *Gifts of the Spirit*, such as speaking in tongues and prophecy, were *mechanically* given to the early Church.

2. Today those same gifts are given but in a little different light. For example, a current gift might be the ability to *understand* prophecy, the ability to *remember* Scripture, or the ability to *exhort*. However, instead of coming mechanically and instantaneously, today's gifts are *developed more slowly* from latent natural talents, and they are developed in accordance with the exercise of faith in and obedience to God's instructions.

In addition, there are fruits of the Spirit such as love, joy, and peace. The fruits are more abiding than the gifts, for gifts can deteriorate rapidly, whereas fruits gradually glide away. Paul tried to counteract this last condition in Hebrews 2:1, "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

Heb. 4:11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest [of faith], lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief [of natural Israel]." Paul compared the children of Israel according to the *flesh* with the children of Israel according to the *spirit*. The natural Israelites did not enter the Promised Land right away because they believed the fearful report of the ten spies instead of the favorable report of Joshua and Caleb. As punishment, they had to wander in the desert for 40 years, and the *next* generation, their children, entered plus Joshua and Caleb.

Why should we *labor* to enter into the rest of faith? The consecrated lifetime of the Christian should consist of *continuous* laboring to enter into the rest of faith. Time and energy must be expended in progressive laboring. The emphasis is not just on the *initial step* of consecration (the *decision* to enter the Promised Land) but on the *effort* to carry out that consecration and thus be ultimately found worthy to enter the antitypical Land of Promise. Therefore, the emphasis here is not so much on the 40 years of wilderness wanderings as it is on the *short time* in which the Israelites could have entered; the decision to enter, which all except two failed to make favorably; and the antitypical entering, which takes an individual's entire life or, from the collective standpoint of the whole Church, the entire Gospel Age.

The Israelites could not enter the Promised Land because of "unbelief." They felt that the obstacles were too great to overcome; namely, there were giants in the land, and the walls reached "up to heaven." Nevertheless, the "fruit of the land" was very good (Num. 13:26-28; Deut. 1:28). The admission regarding the fruit was like saying, "The reward of consecration for the Little Flock will *far outweigh* any obstacles in the present life." However, the Israelites' faith could not surmount the intervening obstacles. With the Christian, (1) faith is tested in making the initial decision of consecration, and (2) in order to get the full reward, faith must be *continuous* throughout one's consecrated walk.

If the Israelites had remembered and reflected on how God called them out of Egypt and worked miracles on their behalf, they would have had sufficient faith to enter the Promised Land right away. Instead they soon forgot all of God's works. In other words, lessons should be received into a heart of *faith*. As an illustration, after 30 years of consecration, if a Christian gets a hard experience that lasts awhile, he might say, "Maybe the Lord did not accept my consecration originally, and I would be satisfied with restitution here on the earth." Such thinking is dangerous, for in time, one can lose his spiritual hope. If we hear someone who is consecrated speak this way, we should jolt him back to reality by getting him to review the Lord's initial drawing and calling and his initial consecration decision. That decision must be continued *unto death*.

The danger is that just as the Israelites according to the flesh forgot what God had previously done for them, and then, after only a short time, were afraid of the giants in the land, so the

Christian can forget. God's great miracles included such astounding acts as the plagues on Egypt, opening the Red Sea, bringing water out of rock, a demonstration on Mount Sinai when God spoke and Moses came down with a shining face, and getting the Ten Commandments written with the finger of God. The forgetting shows what a leaky vessel man is. As Bro. Magnuson said, "The only way to keep a sieve full is to keep it submerged."

Heb. 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

What bearing does verse 12 have on the previous thoughts? Why did Paul bring the spiritual sword into his reasoning? When the Israelites entered Canaan, they used carnal weapons to fight enemies who were mightier than they in many instances, and God blessed them so that they could overcome. They used the natural sword and the Lord's blessing, and He gave them victory according to their faith and obedience. However, the battle of the Christian is *much more serious* in the sense that it is against unseen wicked *spiritual* foes in high places, and the sword is *spiritual* (Eph. 6:12). Paul was implying that the Israelites did not enter the Promised Land because of unbelief, even though the Lord gave them great victories with the natural sword and great miracles. As Christians, we fight spiritual battles with the spiritual sword, which is far more potent than the natural sword.

The spiritual sword is quick (living), powerful, and sharper than a literal sword. (The Revised Standard describes the sword as living, active, and sharper than any two-edged sword.) The Bible is a *powerful living* Word that is not to be read superficially, for we should absorb the *power and energy* that are in it. For example, when we have a difficult trial, certain Scriptures become very timely and meaningful. The Bible is not just historical, technical, and archaic knowledge, for the real, practical, up-to-date, living Word of TRUTH applies in our daily living. The Word of God is also *sharp* in that it can split a thought, motive, or intent. A literal sword cannot do this difficult and searching task.

The Bible pierces "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit." It divides between natural logic and spiritual logic (the logic of the Lord). For example, we might use human reasoning to understand a matter and come up with the wrong conclusion. But the Scriptures will enlighten us as to our error and reveal what God is really saying. The Bible gives us *God's* thinking by separating out the natural man's thinking.

The Word of God divides asunder "the joints and marrow." The sword of truth is sharp and *penetrating*. A big, heavy, broad sword bludgeons the enemy, crashing through his shield and breaking his head, whereas a stiletto sword, which is flexible, lightweight, and sharp, is designed for penetration and quick, rapid motion. The spiritual sword has both aspects; it can bludgeon externally (completely crush an enemy's argument), and it can skillfully penetrate, or pierce inwardly, into the very joints and marrow of the being.

The Bible is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." "Thoughts" may be good or bad, but the "intents of the heart" should always be good. The intent (the will, the motivation) is deeper than the heart; it is the real person. The Old Testament likens the intent to reins or kidneys, which are more important than the heart because they exert a more subtle control. The two reins "steer" the horse. The kidneys are related to the heart (trouble with the kidneys usually leads to trouble with the heart and vice versa).

Q: Just how does the Bible discern the thoughts and intents of the heart?

A: Sometimes we do not realize our own condition until we look at the Word of God. Like a

mirror, it helps us to see our faults and provides the remedy. The Bible has different aspects; it is a magnifying glass to give knowledge externally, and it is a microscope and a telescope to give both internal and external introspection. The internal aspect, which is emphasized here, needs a much sharper instrument to cut asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and thoughts and intents of the heart.

Q: What is the thought of a two-edged sword?

A: The spiritual sword (the Bible) cuts in *both* directions—it cuts friend, foe, self, and others. Bro. Magnuson also used the illustration that a poor ruler measures only one way. When we measure others or what should be done, that ruler measures us as well, for we should do the same. If we apply the ruler to others and their conduct, we must reflect on the same ruler as it applies to us. Otherwise, we have the wrong motive.

Heb. 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Heb. 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

Heb. 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Heb. 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

God (and Jesus as His representative) knows all and sees all. “All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him [God] with whom we have to do.... [and] we have a great high priest [Jesus].” The implication is that both God and our High Priest have the same divine attributes and abilities. Jesus has X-ray eyes, which are “as a flame of fire” (Rev. 1:14).

“Let us hold fast our profession because we have a great High Priest, Jesus, who can be touched by our infirmities, for he was tempted in all points just as we are” (paraphrase). The foes of the Christian are a little different from the foes of the Israelite. In the type, the Israelites had a simple job to do, namely, to slay the enemy utterly—man, child, and beast—and enter in. They had to exercise faith, enter the Promised Land, and slay the enemy. However, the Christian has a foe inside as well as outside. The inner foe (the joints and marrow of the bone, the thoughts and intents of the heart, the soul and the spirit) requires more attention than the outer foe, for the biggest battle of the Christian is a *mental* struggle. However, we are not alone in this battle, for Jesus personally assists us. Without his advocacy and forgiveness through his robe of righteousness, without his personal interest in us, we would become very discouraged, and we could not win the battle.

Jesus was tempted in all points “like as we are, yet without sin[ning].” We have a great High Priest because of his character, mercy, nobility, compassion, *interest* in us, and *ability* to assist. Therefore, having such a High Priest, we should continue to “hold fast our profession.”

Heb. 5:1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

Heb. 5:2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

Paul was using common logic. If the Messiah is to save man by becoming man, it actually works to man's benefit because by having been here, he *understands* man's problems and will thus be *sympathetic* and not judge too harshly. Otherwise, if the judgment is too harsh, it might crush the individual who is trying to come out from underneath the burden of sin. The high priest is to have "compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way."

There is a play on words here: the high priest is "taken from among men ... for men." Paul was referring to the Tabernacle arrangement, and later he applied the lesson to Jesus. In the type, the high priest was a *man*, a descendant of Aaron. He ministered on behalf of other *men* (the nation of Israel). As a *fleshly* mediator between God (a spirit) and fleshly man, the high priest was more sympathetic to the people. Therefore, with the high priest being of the same nature, the scales were tipped in favor of mankind. When he went before God to represent man and mediate, he was able to be a compassionate and merciful high priest. In the antitype, this principle applies with Jesus in regard to not only the Gospel Age but also the Kingdom Age.

The fact that this high priest was "compassed with infirmity" shows Paul was talking *first* about the natural, for Jesus was not "compassed with infirmity" from the standpoint of depravity and sin inherited from Adam. He was "touched with the *feeling* of our infirmities" *without partaking* of the fallen condition himself, without being a sinner (Heb. 4:15). But in the type, the high priest was actually a man and a sinner. Thus Israel's high priest had to cleanse himself before offering sacrifices for the people. (Of course Jesus did not need cleansing, as Paul emphasized in a later chapter.) Back in the type, the man, the high priest, should have had compassion because he, too, was a sinner. Realizing he was a man tended to make him sympathetic to the people's cause when he appeared before the Lord. Although Jesus was not a sinner, his being in close proximity to sin at his First Advent enables him to commiserate with us.

Heb. 5:3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

Aaron and his descendants (the successive high priests) offered for *themselves* as well as for the people. Paul continued to use common logic to show how wise God was in choosing the Messiah and making him flesh so that he would be a compassionate High Priest.

Heb. 5:4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

"No man taketh this honour unto himself," for he must be "called of God, as was Aaron." Verse 4 refers only to Aaron, not to his descendants, for not all of his descendants were called. For instance, if a successive high priest back in Israel's history had five children, only *one* would be the high priest eventually. Usually it was the firstborn, but a deformity or other irregularity might debar him so that another son would be selected. And later on, after a high priest got sick temporarily and could not officiate, the Israelites deemed it wise to have two high priests at the same time, but this innovation was the doing of man. The Bible type discusses only the *ideal* of *one* high priest, Aaron, representing Jesus, who does not get sick and does not die. Therefore, Aaron, not his descendants, represented Christ—even though they performed the same services and offerings. *Only Aaron* was called of God. As time went on, others might have been influential in choosing the high priest: the people, the Sanhedrin, the king, etc.

Heb. 5:5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.

"So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest," but *God* glorified him when He said at Jesus' resurrection and ascension on high after proving faithful at Calvary, "Thou art

my Son, today have I begotten thee.” At Jordan, God said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” but He did not “beget” Jesus until his resurrection and ascension (Matt. 3:17). God raised Jesus to the divine nature and to His own right hand of favor at that point in time (Psa. 2:7). After Jesus had proven his faithfulness and loyalty, God brought him forth and welcomed him.

Heb. 5:6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Verse 6 is a confirmation of Jesus’ faithfulness. The “order of Melchisedec,” which *combines* the office of priest and king, will supersede the Aaronic priesthood. (The literal Melchisedec, an individual, was both a priest and a king.) For the Christian, basically speaking, the Aaronic priesthood applies to the *present life of sacrifice*, even though on most days of the year, the high priest paid more attention to the people, typifying the services of the next age. *Tabernacle Shadows* speaks of these “subsequent sacrifices,” which took place after the Day of Atonement and apply to the millennial Kingdom, but we relegate them to a minor place and emphasize just three chapters in Leviticus. Chapters 8 and 9 were performed only *once in the lifetime* of each high priest, and chapter 16 was performed *once a year*. Hence, generally speaking, 364 days a year were devoted to subsequent sacrifices for the people. We properly magnify Leviticus 8, 9, and 16 because they apply to the Christian, but the subsequent sacrifices were far more numerous. In addition, the special religious holidays of Passover and Pentecost have an antitypical application primarily to Jesus and the Church, respectively—but again, they occurred only once each year. When these holidays are subtracted, plus the annual Day of Atonement, the rest of the sacrifices throughout the year were the people’s sacrifices—thank, heave, sin, trespass, etc., offerings.

Heb. 5:7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

Verse 7 applies to Jesus’ Gethsemane sorrow, when he “offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears” unto the Father, who was able to save him from Second Death. Jesus had two problems. (1) It was hard for him to die the ignominious death of a criminal, which grated against his better, or noble, nature. (2) His fear was Second Death, or extinction; that is, his chief fear was that he had not been completely faithful. He was “heard” in the sense of being assured that he had been faithful, but he was not “heard” in regard to the ignominious death on the Cross, which was part of his “cup” (Matt. 26:39).

After Jesus was “heard,” he was *calm and very controlled*. He awakened Peter, James, and John and went peacefully from then on until his death except for the brief moment on the Cross when he cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). He was solicitous for the weeping women and for his mother, he gave a look to Peter following the three denials, etc. Thus he was very conscious outside of his own thinking. His demeanor proves he was strengthened.

Why did Paul interject these thoughts into the Book of Hebrews? This book was addressed to Christian Jews, who began to wonder if Jesus really was the Messiah. The Jews’ most outstanding criticism of Jesus was blasphemy for saying he was the *Son* of God. Paul cleared up this argument earlier in the book by quoting from the Psalms. The Old Testament predicted a Messiah who was not God but his *Son*. Therefore, when Jesus claimed to be that Son, he should not have been immediately rejected as a blasphemer.

Now, in chapter 5, Paul introduced another thought; namely, not only would Messiah be the

Son of God, but also he would be a new priest, a Melchisedec priest. As prophesied in Psalm 110:4, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” Therefore, Jesus came not as an Aaronic priest but as a Melchisedec priest.

Not only did Jesus have to suffer and die, but he cried *strong* tears. Many are repelled when they see a man crying because they assume that the emotion is weakness, but Jesus was not crying for himself. His crying had nothing to do with personal valor, for he had the *highest degree* of courage. He stood up for God when all others forsook him; he died the death of the Cross, and he bore all the shame, spitting, and maligning. The reason he cried was that *he did not want to displease God*. That was *true humility!* The Christian is to have control, generally speaking, but before the Lord and in private, crying is quite in order—and sometimes even in public. The Christian is not to be a stoic—*proper emotion* is in order.

In answer to Jesus’ prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears in Gethsemane, an angel probably refreshed his mind on Scriptures from Isaiah and the Psalms that prophesied he would be faithful. Thus Jesus was assured he was not in danger of permanent extinction.

Matthew 26:38,39 reveals more of Jesus’ feelings when he “feared” on that evening. Upon arriving at the Garden of Gethsemane but before praying, he said, “My soul is *exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*.” A heavy weight of anxiety rested on him as to whether his offering would be acceptable to his Father. As he prayed about the matter, he asked that, if possible, the “cup” would be removed from him but added, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

What was the “cup”? Jesus was not referring to the physical aspect of dying on the Cross, for he had come to earth to die, and he was courageous. Rather, he was afraid that he might have come short somewhere in performing the sacrifice. The Pastor used the analogy of the type in which the high priest would die when he went under the Second Veil if he had not performed the sacrifice acceptably. In the antitype, Jesus was “under the veil” for parts of three days and nights when he was dead. His resurrection was pictured by the high priest’s rising up in the Most Holy.

Thus Jesus did not fear the Crucifixion, as horrible as it was. He knew in advance that he would be rejected of men, numbered among the transgressors, and crucified (“lifted up”—John 3:14). Nor were the ignominy and shame uppermost on his mind in regard to the “cup,” for even though these crushing experiences would seem to prove he was not the Messiah in the eyes of the people, they pertained to what *others* thought about him. Jesus’ major concern—what he especially feared, in addition to having come short of the sacrifice in some way—was losing communication for a moment when the Father would turn His face away. When cut off from the Father, whom he had served as the Logos and during his human life, Jesus feared that the alienation might become a *permanent separation*. The Scriptures hinted that he needed to have a feeling of alienation from the Father—but for how long? Was this experience necessary? Could that part of the cup be removed?

Jesus knew what crucifixion entailed, for crucifixions were taking place in Israel at that time. In fact, that was the common Roman method of execution. He either had been an eyewitness of other crucifixions or, at the very least, had heard about them. Also, he would have seen any crucifixions that took place while he was the Logos, before he came to earth. But paying the Ransom involved more than just suffering and dying, giving his human life. The thought that he had to actually be forsaken by God troubled him greatly (although he did not know the *degree* of that alienation in advance). Even though he was assured in Gethsemane that he had been faithful, he still had to experience alienation. If the alienation were permanent, not only would he be extinct personally, but also his mission on behalf of the human race would fail.

Q: If Jesus knew beforehand that he would be cut off from God, why did he cry out while on the Cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

A: The Scriptures seemed to hint that Jesus would have this experience, but there is no indication he knew the cutting off would be in the *full* sense like Adam. Jesus must have put two and two together regarding the corresponding alienation experience, but since he did not know the *depth* of the experience, he was surprised when it actually occurred; that is, the feeling of being *utterly* forsaken was worse than he had expected and hence the agonizing cry.

When the angel ministered unto Jesus in Gethsemane and assured him that he would not go into extinction, he was calm. Henceforth Jesus went to the disciples and said, “Sleep on”; he submitted himself to the abductors; and he was calm and controlled through his being nailed to the Cross (Matt. 26:45). Therefore, he might have deduced that the alienation experience would not occur. (However, the angel did not say Jesus would be spared the feeling of *utter* alienation from God.) It was necessary for Jesus to experience *temporarily* the *feeling* that he was going into Second Death, and that feeling came as such a great surprise to him that his heart broke. Subsequently, Jesus completed his course with the victorious cry, “It is finished!” Jesus had to drink every bitter dreg in the “cup.”

Comment: During the 3 1/2 years, Jesus repeatedly mentioned his coming death and glorification and being raised up to be with the Father, yet when he came to the last few hours, the pressures were so great that there was a feeling of uncertainty. Therefore, the pressures in life can sometimes make even the strongest Christian doubt temporarily.

Reply: Yes, just because a Christian is confident of victory right up to the moment of death does not mean he made his calling and election sure. And conversely, just because a Christian is fearful he has not been faithful enough and has moments of weakness near death does not mean he will not attain the Little Flock. An emotional reaction is not a reliable indicator because some are overconfident by nature and have too high an opinion of themselves. Only God can truly judge the heart and where we stand. We cannot judge ourselves in regard to our final destiny.

Paul had a purpose for stating that Jesus feared and prayed with strong tears to God and was heard. He knew that many would ask down through history, “If Jesus was the Messiah, why did he end up on the Cross, and why did he cry in Gethsemane?” Their attitude would be, “His faith and confidence should have been so great that he would not fear or express such emotions. If Jesus was the Savior, nothing should have moved him.” That line of reasoning had a very strong appeal and seemed to be correct, for the Stoics, who were trying to make inroads against Christianity with their Greek philosophy, thought Jesus was weak.

However, Paul reasoned that the Savior, who was predicted in the type, had to be *of men* and had to have *mercy and compassion* on the people who would come to him for help. “Every high priest taken from among men is ordained to offer these gifts and sacrifices on behalf of men” (Heb. 5:1 paraphrase). Therefore, it is logical that God would choose a Savior of a higher order with feeling and courage. Such an individual is far more noble than one who is impervious to conditions around him, for the latter would also be impervious to the needs of other people and would not be as apt to have a sympathetic ear for their problems and the ability to really help them as a consoling priest.

Paul was trying to reason in a subtle manner to give the proper slant. If the high priest in the type was chosen from among men so that he could weigh and estimate the people’s sins and cleanse them, he would be a merciful priest. Therefore, we should expect that the true Savior would also be merciful and sympathetic. Paul was trying to get this reasoning across. Jesus was

the *ideal* Savior, for he had a *blending* of qualities that are foreign to our nature. We ourselves are warped in one direction or another, so from a *human* standpoint, our ideal Savior would not be the Savior of the Bible. We have to be instructed of God as to what the ideal Savior is in *His* judgment. Then we will find that Jesus is a blending of *mankind's* two extreme views of what constitutes true nobility. The man Christ Jesus had the emotion, tenderness, compassion, and motherliness of a woman, as well as the virility, courage, and strength of a man.

Therefore, even though Jesus fell down on the ground and cried and supplicated and was not positive about the outcome of his life, Paul answered the argument in a very good way. We feel Paul inserted this reasoning to show that not only would the predicted Messiah be emotional, intellectual, courageous, and bold as a lion, but also love and sympathy would be in him to the utmost.

It is remarkable that although Jesus was a Son, God did not pamper him. With the consecrated, God makes allowances for differences in our innate moral, mental, and physical capabilities, but the standards and qualifications are the same for all, from the Head of the Church down to the last members.

Heb. 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

Heb. 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

The next question of the Jews would be, If Jesus is the Messiah, why did he suffer and end up on the Cross? Isn't that a proof he was not the Son of God? Paul first used common-sense logic. He said the reason for Messiah's suffering is that God wanted this new Melchisedec priesthood to be very sympathetic. In His wisdom, God made the Messiah flesh so that he could be most intimately connected with mankind, understand their problems, and be sympathetic. Permitting him to suffer qualified him as a merciful and faithful high priest. Paul alluded to the type to show that the high priest, who was selected to mediate between God and man, was a man; that is, the high priest was selected from among men for men (verse 1).

In chapter 2, Paul quoted Scriptures to show that the Messiah would have followers who would be his brethren and the children of God. Hence both the Messiah and his followers would be *flesh* in the present life. Accordingly, Jesus took not upon himself the nature of angels but *flesh* of the seed of Abraham (Heb. 2:16). Paul was trying to destroy every objection to the Son of God's appearing in the flesh.

Incidentally, the majority of Jews do not expect a literal, personal Messiah but consider the *nation* to be their Messiah. They are partly right, for they see that Messiah is a multitudinous seed, a composite body, but they see only the nation. Other Jews see only a leader. The truth is that the "Messiah" is both Jesus Christ the Head and body members—*both an individual and a company*. Paul was trying to bring in this truth by identifying Jesus as the Son of God and showing that followers would be associated with him. Jesus has "compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way" (Heb. 5:2). Those who looked upon the Master's followers perceived that they, including the apostles, were uneducated men. They felt that if Jesus really were the Messiah, learned and intellectual men would be associated with him.

The main sin that destroyed natural Israel was the sin of *unbelief*. The Christian Jew was also susceptible to this failing if he did not get straightened out on these issues. If not founded on the Rock, he would falter, and his faith would be shipwrecked by the arguments of unconverted Jews, who would undermine his faith by continually nibbling at the roots of his belief. Thus the Christian Jew had to keep his belief *alive*, and to strengthen his character and

faith, he had to *boldly* attest that Jesus is the Messiah.

Heb. 5:10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Heb. 5:11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

Verse 10 will be considered in a later chapter, along with Genesis 14:18-20, when the subject of Melchisedec comes up again.

Heb. 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

Heb. 5:13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

In what way is everyone who “useth [only] milk ... unskilful in the word of righteousness”? If the diet of a Christian is solely milk, he will remain a babe and not advance; he will be immature. Sometimes a mature person likes to have the opportunity to preach the gospel and the basic “principles of the oracles of God”; that is, he might help a beginner along by going back to the “first principles” and reviewing and teaching them. But to *remain* in that category and not go on to “strong meat” is definitely wrong. Unfortunately, many do this without realizing what is happening. We do not like to think of anyone as a babe, for that would be passing judgment, but the Scriptures tell us that if one continues to imbibe and feed on only milk, the irrevocable law is that he will remain a babe.

Notice that the milk user is unskillful “in the *word* of righteousness.” Paul was not emphasizing character development here. He was saying, “The *Word* sanctifies, for if we do not know what we are supposed to do, how can we do it?” Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Before we can be properly sanctified, we *first have to know truth*.

In Paul’s day, as well as today, many are not well versed even in the basics. For this reason, he said, “You have need of *milk*, not meat. You have to start all over again with the first principles of the oracles of God. For the time you have been consecrated, you ought to be teachers, but instead you need to be *taught again* the first principles.” The Jewish Christians were like *premature* babies who needed *special* attention just to survive and grow into normal babies.

Heb. 5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Verse 14 can be greatly misunderstood. What does “strong meat” consist of? What is the picture here? The Apostle Peter said we should “desire the sincere milk of the word” (1 Pet. 2:2). In the *beginning*, when truth is first received, it is wonderful if a babe desires and gulps down “milk” as fast as he can, but if he *continues* to have *only milk* for 20 years, he will be considered a spiritual dwarf, because he will remain a babe and will not mature.

It is good to desire the “milk,” the basics, in the beginning. Generally speaking, one should not jump to the strong meat right away, and the Scriptures warn that a brother is not to be elected an elder too soon (1 Tim. 3:6). Therefore, one must go through the period of being a novice. In fact, assimilating the rudiments of truth during the novice period of learning the basics, the fundamentals, is a prerequisite for strong meat to follow, but unfortunately, many are satisfied with the milk and do not go on to deeper truths.

Strong meat would choke, and perhaps kill, a literal baby, who could not digest it. Just as a baby grows from childhood to teenage years, to an adult, and finally to a *mature* adult, so the Christian should develop spiritually “by reason of use” and exercise. Thus Christians “have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” and go on to other things. Many have erred from the platform by saying strong meat is really milk that is used. Detailed talks have been given to the effect that we should desire strong milk and that going over the milk makes us mature. In fact, we were so disturbed that we went to one well-known brother after his talk. A prominent person overheard us, and as a result, we were never again invited to serve that ecclesia. However, the brother gave a very damaging talk on these verses that absolutely contradicted the Word of God. His point was that in using milk and in witnessing, etc., we become mature, whereas Paul gave *specific* signposts of advancement. In chapter 6, which enumerates the “milk” basics, we will try to go into Paul’s explanation. We are to ruminate on the basic principles and try to incorporate them into our life, but then we are to go on.

Q: Does having one’s “senses exercised to discern both good and evil” show wisdom?

A: In verse 14, Paul was not emphasizing maturity of character. For example, when he mentioned Melchisedec in verses 10-12, he did not go into detail because the Hebrew Christians were *babes*, whereas they should have been *teachers* considering their years of consecration. It would have been a waste of time for Paul to discuss Melchisedec at length. Since they were “dull of hearing,” Paul had to go back over the basics. They needed more *milk*, let alone meat. If anything, they were premature babes, for they had not even mastered the list in Hebrews 6:1,2. First comes “repentance from dead works” and then the exercise “of faith toward God.”

“Strong meat belongeth to ... those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” One goes from milk to meat by trying a *little* more solid food at first. In other words, a person asks questions and desires to know things other than the basics. Probing beyond the basics is a *mental* exercise, an exercise of the *mind*. We should retain the basics but desire to *grow* in grace and knowledge. We need to *study* the Bible and *think* and *question* and *reason* so that we will come to a clearer and clearer understanding.

Q: Is “strong meat” anything that goes beyond the basic, fundamental truths?

A: Yes. The Book of Hebrews is not talking about the “meat” of character development as, for instance, in Paul’s epistles to Timothy.

With each step of knowledge comes a step of responsibility. Those who do not go fully on may or may not get life. Much would depend on whether one *willfully obstructs* the progress of others. Such would be more accountable than those who are simply immature and lack personal incentive and an innate desire for more truth. The latter class would get a secondary reward and thus be of the Great Company, all things being equal. However, those who discourage progress in the Bible are more responsible. Hence there are not to be many teachers (James 3:1 RSV). It is one thing to make a mistake, for we grow in knowledge and grace. However, those of the consecrated who add to the Word of God get a penalty, and those who subtract from (oppose) the Word go into Second Death (Rev. 22:18,19). Therefore, if we do not understand a matter, it is better to say *nothing*.

Heb. 6:1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

Heb. 6:2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the

dead, and of eternal judgment.

Chapter 6 is really part of chapter 5 because it starts with, “*Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ [the milk, the basic foundation truths, the simple plan of God], let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works,*” which is the main theme of the nominal Church systems. Evangelists make this doctrine their whole mission in life: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.” Those who become converted and stay under such leadership will not grow to maturity; they never advance beyond the most basic milk.

Comment: That is the message of the Billy Graham crusade.

Reply: Yes, but at least he clearly understands consecration and does a good work up to a point. When a Christian is not being fed sufficiently, he should seek fellowship elsewhere. Unfortunately, what keeps many in the nominal systems is the emphasis on good works, which gives them a feeling of satisfaction.

Verses 1 and 2 give a list of the basic truths in the *order* in which they should be learned.

1. “Repentance from dead works” is the realization that a person is a sinner. He resolutely wants to renounce his past and sin, and he recognizes that Christ is his Savior. Reform from (that is, leaving) “dead works” comes as a natural result. Therefore, repentance and reformation are implied in this first step, and reformation will lead to the next step of exercising “faith toward God.” “Dead works” include the works of the Law and any means or way of salvation *other than Jesus*, such as self-justification.
2. “Faith toward God” is based on the text that God is the “rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). The individual has to have the feeling that there is a God, that God is faithful and will reward him, and that, having repented, he can go on and consecrate. Thus *exercising faith toward God* is approaching in the direction of consecration.
3. “Baptisms” is the next doctrine. The Jews had another experience, with some going first into John’s baptism and then into Jesus. Notice the orderly steps thus far: repentance, exercise of faith toward God, and baptism. Immersion into Christ’s death is *consecration*, the next step, which would be following in Jesus’ footsteps.
4. “Laying on of hands” comes next. We should keep in mind that this epistle was written while some of the apostles were still living. By this time, which was near the end of Paul’s life, the brethren knew the difference between the baptism of John and the baptism of Christ, but this understanding took some time, for early in the Christian ministry, those who had followed Apollos were not too clear on this subject. In regard to the laying on of hands, when a person consecrated, if he went to one of the apostles and that apostle laid his hands on the person, the latter received a special instantaneous gift such as the ability to speak in tongues, prophesy, interpret, or heal. Of course most of the brethren wanted the gift of tongues so that they could be the preachers and the teachers. Because the early Church had no Bibles, these gifts, which were greatly needed and were shared by the Church, benefited their meetings.

Today the consecrated do not receive a *mechanical* gift, but they do get a gift—usually a latent *natural* gift that the Lord blesses. Thus each of the consecrated is to soberly and realistically appraise what gift lies in him. (We are not to have either too high or too low an opinion of ourself.) If we do this and then watch God’s providences, we will be blessed as if we had the laying on of hands, although, of course, the gift would not be as discernible as an instant mechanical gift of the past. For example, instead of mechanically prophesying of a famine two

years hence, one might prophesy from the Word of God with regard to events yet future. The *mechanical* gifts that could be visually seen externally passed away but not the spiritual gifts that are developed more slowly. In fact, it might take ten years or a lifetime for a spiritual gift to manifest itself and be recognized. Each of the consecrated will be richly individually blessed if he operates along the lines of his talent.

5. “Resurrection of the dead”—in what sense was this the next sequential truth? The Scriptures assure the Christian that if he is faithful unto death, he will receive the divine nature in the resurrection (Rev. 2:10). This doctrine is directed primarily to the spiritual class, to those who come to the Lord in the present life. Hence the consecrated in the Gospel Age have a *heavenly hope*. This category would also include an understanding of the other resurrection classes, each in due order and time: Great Company, Ancient Worthies, and world of mankind. Therefore, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is the *hope of a future life*—the hope that if one is faithful, he will be rewarded by the Lord in one manner or another.

6. “Eternal judgment” is *age-lasting judgment*, or *restitution*. In connection with the world’s coming forth from the grave, there will be a judgment within a *limited* amount of time (the Kingdom Age) to prove one’s worthiness for everlasting life or everlasting death (extinction). Since “judgment must begin at the house of God,” the doctrine of eternal judgment also includes the age-lasting judgment of the Church and the Great Company, who are on trial before the judgment seat of Christ during the Gospel Age (1 Pet. 4:17).

Verses 1 and 2 give the divine plan in a nutshell. Many are satisfied with just this information; they feel that if one is faithful to these truths to the end of his course, he will make his calling and election sure. But Paul said that we should “go on unto perfection”—*beyond the milk*. If these six categories were all that we need, we could stop with the *First Volume* instead of studying the whole Bible.

Comment: It is interesting that the six categories are “the principles of the doctrine of *Christ*”; that is, they are each based on the doctrine of the *Ransom*.

Reply: Yes. Paul’s purpose was to show that just knowing an *outline* of the truth is not enough. We are to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4).

Heb. 6:3 And this will we do, if God permit.

Verse 3 shows there are other truths to learn. Paul was saying that any Christian who lacks an inner desire to go beyond these six categories is immature and a *babe*, yet that is about as far as many have gone. It has even been stated that the purpose of the Book of Revelation is to sidetrack from the more important doctrines and aspects of the Christian life. One who is familiar with the Word of God can see right away that such a statement is a *glaring discrepancy*.

Q: Did a consecrated individual make that statement?

A: Yes. The person was not saying that God did not write the Book of Revelation but that the book is not that important to study and know and that it would not be understood in the present life. Some feel that since Bro. Russell has not fully explained Revelation, who else is there? And so, many are not interested in pursuing a study of the Book of Revelation. The next step is to think that maybe God put the book there as a test and that those who study it will be deceived. In fact, a well-recognized person said publicly that those who are puerile in their thinking are interested in studying Revelation. Another person said of a study on prophetic subjects like John the Baptist and Elijah and Elisha, “Much to do about nothing.”

In Hebrews 5:11–6:3, Paul was emphasizing the importance of *doctrine* and *going on* in doctrine. He wanted to treat deeper subjects but could not because of the limitations of the Hebrews. In succeeding chapters, Paul did give some advance information, but he knew that not too many would appreciate it.

Heb. 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

Heb. 6:5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

Heb. 6:6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

In order to be of the class for whom “it is impossible ... if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance,” several steps must have been *previously* taken. Such individuals had to (1) be “enlightened,” (2) taste of the “heavenly gift” (partake of the Holy Spirit), (3) taste the “word of God,” and (4) taste the “powers of the world [age] to come” (the Kingdom) by faith. In other words, they have a basic understanding of the truth and have committed themselves in consecration.

This “falling away” is not just backsliding or temporarily going back into the world for a while and then being retrieved. For individuals who have this experience, the flesh is destroyed so that “the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5). Hence they are retrieved and do not “fall away” in the sense of the context here in chapter 6. Proverbs 24:16, which reads, “A just [righteous] man falleth seven times, and riseth up again,” refers to a different kind of “falling,” whereas verses 4-6 refer to a *permanent* falling away from the Lord unto *extinction*, or Second Death. For example, although it is dangerous for brethren to stop attending meetings, that action in itself does not indicate a Second Death condition in which it is impossible to return to the Lord; that is, a falling away from the *brethren* is not necessarily synonymous with a falling away from the *Lord*, for He may take certain other circumstances into consideration and be merciful in His judgment. Paul was speaking of a class whom it is *impossible* to renew unto repentance because they have committed the sin unto Second Death.

Since “babes” have consecrated and received the Holy Spirit, they are just as liable to Second Death as the more mature Christians. Properly speaking, the babe is as much a person, or soul, as an adult, whether he dies in one day or 50 years later. Jesus said, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62). In seeking counsel from others, some who have since fallen away were commiserated with and given the advice “Maybe the Lord did not accept your consecration.” Instead they should have been warned.

Paul was giving a guideline for knowing if we are liable to Second Death. If we have a basic understanding of the truth and have taken the steps outlined in verses 4 and 5, we can consider ourselves accepted of the Lord and hence liable to Second Death if we turn away. To later think that maybe we have not been accepted is very foolish.

Paul was not referring to a single transgression but to fruitage that has developed over a period of time. What is the long-term product of our heart garden—good fruit or thorns and briars that must be burned in the symbolic “lake of fire” (verse 8 and Rev. 20:15)?

Q: Is it necessary for one to be Spirit-begotten before he can go into Second Death?

A: That is true from a *practical* standpoint but not from a *technical* standpoint. For instance, four

Scriptures indicate that Judas sinned unto Second Death, yet he died *before* the Holy Spirit was given in a formal manner at Pentecost. Therefore, *knowledge* upon which one has *acted* makes a person liable.

Comment: Knowledge is God's gift to us, and we are not to spurn a gift from the Giver.

Reply: That is true, especially if a person has accepted the terms and then turns away.

Heb. 6:7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

Heb. 6:8 But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

Comment: Paul was saying that we should develop the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit and not thorns and briars, or we will be rejected.

Reply: Yes, Jesus said that we can tell a good tree from a bad tree by its fruits (Matt. 7:15-20). It is *impossible* for a good tree to bring forth bad fruit, and for a bad tree to bring forth good fruit. In other words, the class that has sinned the sin unto Second Death and thus cannot be renewed brings forth *briars and thorns*—not just weeds or *useless* material but briars and thorns that *hurt* others. One characteristic of the Second Death class is a thornlike or briarlike disposition, which does not develop overnight. Thorns and thistles commence with *seeds* just like the good fruit. As the seed grows, the individual should watch to see what is developing in his "heart garden." Those who always criticize others—those whose message, influence, and conduct are not constructive or conducive to peace—are bringing forth thorns and briars. Once this bitterness becomes a hardened or crystallized condition, it is almost impossible for such individuals to change. Some may become bitter for a short time as a result of a certain experience, but when the Lord humiliates them or gives them a hard trial, they respond properly and lose the bitterness. Such chastening and being rightly exercised are a favorable sign. However, a chronic disorder of bad fruitage that persists over the years is a bad sign.

On the one hand, we are to judge nothing before the time, and on the other hand, we are supposed to judge fruitage. In regard to those who produce evil fruits, we would hope that they were never recognized by the Lord in the first place, or they will go into Second Death.

Heb. 6:9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

Paul now turned away from a very delicate subject and added a note of *encouragement*: "Even though we thus speak, we are persuaded better things of you, beloved" (paraphrase).

Heb. 6:10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shown toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Verse 10 reminds us of the message to the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2:2-4, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Paul was the "angel" to this first church, and here, in his message to the Hebrews, he used the same doctrine. No doubt he had spoken on this subject on other occasions as well.

A primary feature of the message during the days of the apostles, the first stage of the Church, was the advice to Ephesus just read, and that is what Paul was saying here in verse 10. In other words, some who had initially received the truth with joy had tests of endurance after a while. They were distressed by others who were striving for leadership positions and promoted wrong doctrines, but they could not do anything about the situation. Similarly, just because we recognize a wrong does not necessarily mean that we can correct it. We might be in a group or an association where we have to weigh what we will do. Will we not fellowship with the brethren at all because of two individuals, or will we go to the meeting only when those two individuals are not leading the study? Will we withdraw fellowship just because two individuals grate on our personality or manifest a Nicolaitan spirit of taking control and dominating the meeting in a sense that is not helpful? Here was a class of brethren in Paul's day who did not renounce the truth or go into isolation but bore with the condition, even though they hated it. In properly assessing the situation, they realized that fellowshiping with the brethren was very important even under that circumstance, for as long as the individuals in question did not dominate the thinking of the group, they were to tolerate that condition. Thus they patiently endured and continued to attend meetings and did not leave the fellowship.

This class of brethren had faithfully done many good works over the years (witnessing and ministering to the saints and the sick). Now that they were getting old, Paul told them not to become discouraged when they saw certain conditions develop. Consider the Apostle Paul, who was mighty in logic and message, yet near the end of his life, most forsook him. In spite of his talent and the *power* that God gave him—actual, literal miraculous power to raise the dead and heal the sick, as well as his message, which was far more important—he did not have many friends at the end of his course. He could have become discouraged, for as he saw so many depart, it would have been natural for him to question whether or not he was in the truth. However, Paul remained faithful to the end of his course, even though very few out of the thousands he had ministered to were with him. And they forsook him in spite of his mighty and weighty epistles. Thus here Paul was addressing a class of individual believers who were undergoing experiences somewhat long this line.

Jesus said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you *falsely*, for my sake" (Matt. 5:11). To never be misunderstood or receive persecution would make us wonder if we are "bastards" (Heb. 12:8). Therefore, if we are being faithful to the Lord and His Word and others show reserve toward us or even withdraw from us, we should not get discouraged. Even if we are in the *right*, our mind can play tricks on us and make us doubt the propriety of our course. The old heart, which is deceitful and desperately wicked, tries to reason with the new heart along a number of lines, suggesting revenge, separation, bitterness, etc. We must fight these tendencies in the old man and *patiently endure* to the end of our course. Paul experienced rejection, so did Jesus, and so may we.

Heb. 6:11 And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

Heb. 6:12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

We are to show "diligence to the *full assurance of hope* unto the end." Two thoughts are in this admonition. (1) We are to give all diligence so that we will come to the condition where we have a full assurance of hope—and then (2) we are to *continue* in that condition until death. Paul said, "If a man thinks that he stands, let him take heed lest he fall," yet toward the end of his life, he had this full assurance of hope, for he said, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me

only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (1 Cor. 10:12 paraphrase; 2 Tim. 4:8). The Scriptures do not contradict, for sometimes they apply to different stages of our growth and development.

Being “slothful” is the same as slackening, being “weary in well doing,” and letting “the things which we have heard ... slip [glide away]” (Gal. 6:9; Heb. 2:1). In other words, we have to be careful about “hope,” for discouragement is a weapon of the Adversary. He would love to get us so discouraged in looking at our sins and shortcomings that we will give up—and especially if we think we can justify ourselves by our works. One of Satan’s tactics is to sidetrack us down a road that could lead to disaster. Therefore, the matter of hope is very important. We are to *continue with a full assurance of hope and press on toward the mark of the high calling.*

Heb. 6:13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself,

Heb. 6:14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

Heb. 6:15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

How did God confirm the covenant to Abraham when He “sware by himself”? God’s *own* word and person are the *highest* authority that could be appealed to. Hence to “sware by himself,” all He had to do was raise His voice above the normal tone. If His normal words of instruction are spoken with majesty and authority, then just raising His voice and saying, “*Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee,*” was an oath. God could swear by no other, for *He* is the highest authority. This is “swearing” in the *favorable* sense.

In one place, the New Testament tells us not to take an oath, but taking an oath is permissible under certain conditions (Matt. 5:34-37). The danger is in loosely taking oaths and then not following through. Jesus said that our yea should be yea, and our nay, nay. We should not overemphasize what we are or are not going to do but should say simply, “I will” or “I will not.” Otherwise, to emphasize and then not perform results is a weakening of character.

Q: Would Abraham *literally* have heard a voice say, “Surely blessing I will bless thee”?

A: Yes, Abraham heard God *emphatically declare* His intentions. The raising of His voice constituted not just an utterance but a *confirmed* utterance. Abraham was truly a “friend” of God for the Almighty to confide in him and to speak in such an intimate way (James 2:23).

Q: What promise did God make to Abraham?

A: The promise was, “Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.” God assured Abraham that if he would leave his land and go to a land God would show him, Abraham would be greatly blessed. Abraham did leave his father’s house, and the analogy is that the Christian similarly leaves father Adam’s house. Abraham was called to go to a strange land, and he obeyed. Leaving Adam’s house represents repentance, consecration, and starting to walk toward the Promised Land, which is actually beyond the veil.

Abraham did not enter the Promised Land until after his father Terah had died. Terah pictures the flesh, our humanity. The new creature is developed in an old organism, the old man, which must be left behind. Just as Terah accompanied Abraham all the way to Haran, so the old man accompanies the new creature. Spiritually speaking, the old man has to be tied down, beaten, and crucified continually and must die before the new man can enter the Promised Land. When this “tabernacle,” this house, the old man, is dissolved, another house in heaven will take its

place (2 Cor. 5:2; 2 Pet. 1:14).

Thus Abraham had a dual experience as he stepped out on the promise of God and journeyed in the direction of the Promised Land. When he got to Haran, which was just outside the Promised Land, Genesis 12:1 tells us that “The LORD had [*previously*] said unto Abram [when he was still in Ur of the Chaldees], Get thee out of thy country, ... and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee.” Now Abraham had fulfilled his commitment. He had been journeying and journeying to get to the Promised Land, but he stopped on the border, in Haran, where Terah died.

In the analogy, Paul was saying that God will not forget the good works previously done in our Christian walk—the patience exercised, the ministration unto the saints, etc.—but we are not to faint or get discouraged (Heb. 6:10-15). If we keep the *full assurance*, we will not lose the prize. We are to keep plugging and pressing on as Abraham did; he patiently endured, going on not knowing what experiences lay ahead, and so should we. After the long journey and many years, God said that He would fulfill His part of the contract. Because Abraham obeyed, he was guaranteed the land in due time. Abraham died not receiving the promise, but he exercised faith in that promise—and it *will be fulfilled*. Thus the implication is that Abraham must be raised from death in order to inherit the promise confirmed by God’s oath.

Some of the Jewish brethren were making things difficult by saying that Christians should obey the Law. They claimed that Paul was undermining faith in Moses and destroying the Law, and they taught that Christians should fulfill the works of the Law and the deeds of the flesh. Paul refuted this thinking in his letters to the Romans, the Galatians, and the Hebrews. Over the years, many were worn down by this erroneous thinking. The Judaizing element was a continual thorn in the classes. We are in an *endurance* race, not in a sprint or a hundred-yard dash. We are to make a slow, persistent, determined, aggressive effort rather than to run in spurts with starts and stops. When runners get a second wind, they run without fatigue. But to break through the barrier of hurting lungs and pain and get the second wind requires *real drive, determination, and sheer grit*. This sudden infusion of oxygen brings remarkable strength, which is like the “full assurance” of faith and hope that comes toward the end of our Christian walk.

Heb. 6:16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

Heb. 6:17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

Heb. 6:18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Heb. 6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

Verses 17-20 tell the purpose of God’s oath. Our hope is centered in *God Himself*, in *His* promise. “By two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we ... have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul ... and which entereth into that within the veil.” The “two immutable things” are (1) God’s word, or *promise*, and (2) His *oath*.

First, in His normal speaking, when God makes a plain statement and does not specially emphasize it, we can rely on that statement, or promise, as being *definite* and *immutable*. Why are God’s statements “immutable”? They are immutable because it is *impossible* for Him to lie.

Second, God's oath is also immutable. Therefore, (1) God's statement is impossible to refute, and (2) His oath emphatically declares it as such.

These two immutable things give us *hope*, the "anchor" to our souls. When we throw an anchor into the water, we hope it will hit bottom and lodge in a crevice or rock or embed itself in the soil so that when a storm comes, the boat will not be tossed adrift. Because of its weight and friction, an anchor is sufficient on a calm day even if it is not firmly grounded—but *not in a storm*. Therefore, in order that the Christian might have a *real hope* centered and anchored in God, He gave two immutable things—His *promise* was confirmed by an *oath*.

Heb. 6:20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Jesus, the forerunner, is "an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Earlier Paul said he wanted to tell the Hebrews many things about Melchisedec but could not because they were "dull of hearing" (Heb. 5:10,11). Then Paul talked about the basics of the truth and their relative value, and he discussed what type of progress the Christian should make. Now he returned to the theme of Melchisedec. Paul had laid the groundwork and would delve into the subject of the Melchisedec priesthood in chapter 7.

Heb. 7:1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

Heb. 7:2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

Chapter 7 is a continuation of chapter 6. Two texts are the basis of Hebrews 6:20–7:4. The first is Psalm 110:4, "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." The second is Genesis 14:17-20, "And the king of Sodom went out to meet him [Abram] after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he [Melchizedek] blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he [Abram] gave him [Melchizedek] tithes of all."

The word "Melchisedec" originally meant "King of righteousness." "Melchi" (Hebrew *melek*) means "king." Initially, *melek* meant "king" in a favorable sense, just as "Baal" meant "lord." Later on, an evil connotation became attached to the two words, Molech being the god of fire worship. "Sedek," the Hebrew *tsedeq*, means "righteousness." Based on the Genesis account, the meaning of Melchisedec changed to "King of Salem." Thus Melchisedec, who went out to meet Abraham, was the "King of peace," for "Salem" (Hebrew *shalom*) means "peace."

Melchisedec was also a "priest of the most high God." Probably he wore priestly garments and perhaps a crown because Abraham recognized him as a priest and a king.

Melchisedec "met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings." (Abraham had gone out to rescue Lot, who had been taken prisoner.) Melchisedec, the priest, blessed Abraham. Then "Abraham gave a tenth part of all" to Melchisedec. This information tells us that tithing was in existence before the Law. Certain customs that did not originate with the Law were made either mandatory or voluntary under the Mosaic Law depending on the circumstances. The Law codified many previously existing practices and introduced new practices and ceremonial rites. The whole compact package was based on a covenant arrangement that God

made with the nation of Israel.

Melchisedec was the king of Jerusalem in the days of Abraham. In David's day, the Jebusites occupied Jerusalem. At the time of Joshua, the Israelites could not extricate the Jebusites, and that hill remained unconquered all the way down to David. But prior to Joshua and earlier, Melchisedec was the king of Jerusalem.

When Abraham was returning with various spoils from the battle of the kings, Melchisedec and the king of Sodom came out and met him in the Valley of Shaveh, the King's Dale. Melchisedec came with bread and wine, which he offered to Abraham, and Abraham gave Melchisedec tithes of all that he had as a mark of respect and fealty. In other words, Abraham paid homage to the king of Salem.

Heb. 7:3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

Now Paul digressed and said that Melchisedec was "without father, without mother, without descent." He stated the matter this way because no information about the genealogy of Melchisedec is given in the Old Testament. Thus Paul was saying, "Very little is said about this king in the Scriptures except that he went out and blessed Abraham, and Abraham gave him tithes. We do not know about his background or the identity of his father and his mother." Of course Melchisedec had parents, but nothing in the Bible record indicates who they were. Therefore, the statement "without father, without mother, without descent" is not to be taken literally; it simply means there is *no record*. Since the Old Testament is silent on both his forebears and his descendants, Melchisedec is a *mysterious* personage.

"Having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." Again there is *no record* in the Bible of when Melchisedec was born, how old he was, or when (or if) he died. This lack of information should arouse our curiosity as to his identity.

Melchisedec was "made like unto the Son of God"; that is, he is a good *representation*, or picture, of the *office* of the Son of God. He was not the Logos because he was a *literal* king of Jerusalem who accepted *literal* tithes, but he reminds us of Jesus in some respects. In other words, Melchisedec was not a materialized spirit being. Rather, he is a *type of Jesus* in a different capacity than the type that is furnished by Moses or Aaron.

As revealed in Psalm 110:4, Melchisedec "abideth a priest continually." Jehovah said unto Jesus (David's "Lord"), "Sit ... at my right hand" (Psa. 110:1). (David was narrating this conversation.) Jehovah continued, "Thou art a priest for ever [to a consummation, for an age] after the order of Melchizedek." In other words, a *thousand* years after Melchisedec had blessed Abraham and *many* years after Melchisedec had died, even though there is no record of his death, God said in the Psalms, through David, that Melchisedec is a *pattern* (or picture) of *Jesus*.

Heb. 7:4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

Abraham was traveling along a road after the victorious battle with the kings when King Melchisedec intercepted him. Abraham gave him one tenth of the spoils in his possession plus one tenth of whatever else he may have had with him.

Heb. 7:5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

Heb. 7:6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

Paul spoke of the greatness of this mysterious king, Melchisedec. It is true that the tribe of Levi was great, for when the priesthood was set up, it was decreed that they receive voluntary tithes (one-tenth) from the other tribes of the nation. But, Paul reasoned, even though the Levitical priesthood got this significant honor, their tithes were given by *Abraham's children*, whereas Melchisedec got tithes direct from *Abraham himself*. Therefore, while the Levites were honored, they were not on the same level with Melchisedec.

Paul was keeping in mind the point that the Israelites so revered the literal Levitical tribe that they thought Jesus, if he were the Messiah, *had to be a Levite*. Since Jesus was of the tribe of Judah and came from Nazareth (not Bethlehem), the Jews reasoned, "How could he be the Messiah?" But Paul refuted their reasoning by putting them on the defensive. He showed that the Levites gathered tithes of the children of Abraham, whereas Melchisedec, who was *outside of the Levitical arrangement*, was more honorable than those *inside* the Levitical arrangement, for getting tithes and homage from the patriarch Abraham *personally* was a *greater blessing*.

"But he [Melchisedec] whose descent is not counted from them [the Levites] received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises." Paul was preparing the Jews to accept the fact that Jesus was not a Levite. However, not being a Levite did not disqualify him as the Messiah. In fact, Jesus was *more* qualified because he was on a *higher* plane than those of the literal Levitical tribe arrangement.

Heb. 7:7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

This verse is the crux of the matter. Abraham recognized that Melchisedec was his superior, and Abraham's paying the tithes demonstrated a *practical* deference. Abraham esteemed Melchisedec, whoever he was, as greater than himself.

Who was Melchisedec? If he does not represent Jesus as the Logos, he must represent someone who literally lived on the earth and someone we do not know much about. Few patriarchs are mentioned prior to Abraham—just Noah and Enoch. However, tradition mentions Shem, Noah's son, who slew Nimrod (Gen. 10:8,9). Noah lived 350 years after the Flood, for a total of 950 years. Shem, too, lived to a very old age. God gave Shem the plans for building the Great Pyramid, and he lived into the days of Abraham, who would have been a comparative youngster. Shem (Sem or Seth) is the great one of mythology with the title of "Righteousness," and others gave him distorted and uncomplimentary titles, such as "Pig," for opposing the worship of Nimrod. Thus there is good reason to think that Shem was Melchisedec.

Paul said that *without question*, Melchisedec was greater than Abraham. As the "Friend of God," the father of the faithful, and the one to whom God gave the special promise, Abraham was great, but others were probably esteemed even greater, such as Noah, Job, Daniel, Samuel, and Moses—and certainly Melchisedec (Jer. 15:1; Ezek. 14:14; Gal. 3:7; James 2:23). Jews boasted, "We have Abraham to [as] our father," but in a way, Paul was knocking that statement by his estimation of Melchisedec, who had to be greater to bless Abraham (Matt. 3:9).

Thus Paul was downgrading the theory of the Levitical arrangement in Aaron by showing it was a *temporary* picture to be superseded by a greater picture under the personification of Melchisedec. As king and priest, Melchisedec was greater than Aaron, who, being a priest only, with no kingly duties whatever, was an inferior type.

The Lord was intentionally silent on Melchisedec's identity because, being ostensibly without forebears or descendants, he was a picture of the sole *office* of Christ. Moreover, if Melchisedec's identity had been revealed, people would have delved into mythology and Nimrod, subjects that would have distracted from the Word of God.

The next point comes as a shock in some respects. Back in Hebrews 5:10-12, where Paul introduced the subject of Melchisedec, we had read, "Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." Paul was saying to the Jewish Christians, "It is difficult to speak to you about Melchisedec because you are babes and do not know the things you should know." Since the Old Testament contains very little information on Melchisedec, why did Paul criticize them? It was their *lack of interest and desire to know*. The very fact that this figure mysteriously appeared on the scene should have aroused their interest. The hint came a thousand years later in Psalm 110:4, showing that God still had Melchisedec in mind. Evidently, it was because Paul had the proper zeal and enthusiasm that the Lord enlightened him to see that Melchisedec represented the office of Christ in the Kingdom as King and Priest. Therefore, Paul was implying that if the Hebrews had been deep students, they, too, would have realized the significance of Melchisedec, but they were unskillful in the Word of God. Those who master the *principles* of Scripture are able to reason on many subjects.

With types in the Bible, there are two dangers: (1) overdrawing pictures, thinking everything is a type and, even worse with some, giving contemporary fulfillments in every case, and (2) being indifferent and unenthusiastic about types. These are the two extremes.

Paul was trying to show that the Bible has *clues* regarding Melchisedec. The name itself means "King of righteousness." Paul went back to the basic meaning and tried to teach *step by step* to show the Jews how to *reason*. He was taking them into his confidence. Earlier he said, "I would like to tell you many things," and now he started to teach them: (1) Notice what the name Melchisedec means. (2) He was the king of Salem. (3) He blessed Abraham. (4) Abraham gave him tithes. (5) The Levitical priesthood received tithes from the children of Abraham, but Melchisedec received tithes from Abraham himself, so Melchisedec is greater.

Then Paul led to another point that becomes apparent; namely, "Melchizedek" has a third meaning. While "Melchi," or *melek*, means "king," and while "zedek" means "righteousness," the Zadok priesthood will officiate in Ezekiel's Temple. The Aaronic priesthood will be superseded by the sons of Zadok. Because of their faithfulness, Zadok and his children will be the future priests down here in the Kingdom; that is, only the *Zadok* line of the Aaronic priesthood will serve in the new arrangement in Ezekiel's Temple. Today the word "zaddik" means "priest" to the Jews; in Europe, it is recognized as a great teacher, as a teacher of teachers. Hence "Melchi" means "king," and "zedek" means "priest." In the rest of the Book of Hebrews, Paul made his argument very clear that the new office of Jesus is on a higher plane than a servant along Aaronic lines. Jesus will be both *Priest and King*.

Heb. 7:8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

Heb. 7:9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.

Heb. 7:10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

Who would ever have dreamed that the Apostle Paul could dig *so much* information from *such*

a paucity of detail in Psalm 110 and Genesis 14? What powerful reasoning he produced! Everything is logical and simple, but look at the *strength* of the argument he built out of a little picture. Yes, the Levitical priesthood got tithes and were honored, but what happened to them? They are all dead; they were succeeded by others and still others. Paul showed that decay and change were in the Levitical arrangement, but nothing is said about the death of Melchisedec. The very statement “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” shows it is a *perpetuating* priesthood that is more blessed and honored than the Aaronic priesthood. Not only did the Levites die, but Levi was a descendant of Abraham—he came out of his “loins.” From that standpoint, the Levites paid tithes to Melchisedec. Paul very skillfully wove in the thought that not only did Abraham pay tithes to Melchisedec but so did the whole Levitical priesthood in the person of Levi, who was in Abraham’s loins. Thus the Levitical priesthood is subservient, or inferior, to Melchisedec.

Heb. 7:11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

If the Levitical priesthood could accomplish the desired perfection, then why did God say that the Messiah to come, David’s “my Lord,” would be a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec (Psa. 110:1)? Doesn’t this statement automatically suggest that God has a *superior* priesthood in mind?

There is scarcely any information about Melchisedec in the Scriptures, but *many whole chapters* tell about Aaron and the priesthood and what they did and their garments and their services. In spite of this obvious disparity, the Aaronic priesthood was transitory and temporal; the arrangement was passing away. What amazing insight Paul had! This logic is so *powerful* that he did not have to talk over our heads.

Heb. 7:12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

Paul now started to prepare for another argument that he would pursue later: “If the Aaronic priesthood was being changed, then a change of the *Law* was also necessary.” The Mosaic Law is temporary, for the New Covenant will be established in the Kingdom.

We should retain an open-mindedness to realize that certain pictures in the Scriptures can be superseded by higher pictures—just as the law of gravity is superseded by a higher law every time an airplane flies. The law of gravity is not violated; it is just superseded. And so the Aaronic priesthood still furnishes valuable pictures, even though the Melchisedec priesthood supersedes it. The Melchisedec picture is simply higher and more important. Paul was not disrespectful to the Law—the Law is honorable and good—but it should be esteemed only up to a certain level. Otherwise, conclusions will be reached that are not quite justified in the light of other Scriptures, which need to be harmonized. For example, the same great God said, “Behold, the days come ... that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah” and “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Jer. 31:31; Psa. 110:4).

Q: Does the Aaronic priesthood picture the Church in the flesh? Does the Melchisedec priesthood picture the Church beyond the veil?

A: Generally speaking, that is true, for Leviticus chapters 8, 9, and 16 pertain to the spiritual class in the Gospel Age, to the sacrificing and suffering priesthood, whereas Melchisedec shows the priests reigning as kings. But of course some pictures of the Aaronic priesthood in other

chapters pertain to the Kingdom Age.

In review, Paul reasoned that if the Aaronic priesthood was being changed to the Melchisedec order, then a similar change occurred with the Law, but in what way was the Law changed? The *ceremonial* requirements and features of the Law ceased. However, the *moral code* remains the same.

Heb. 7:13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

Jesus is “he of whom these things are spoken.” Instead of being from the tribe of Levi, he came from the tribe of Judah (“another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar”), as indicated by two Scriptures. “The sceptre shall not depart from *Judah*, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be” (Gen. 49:10). Jesus, is “the Lion of the tribe of *Judah*, the Root of David, [who] hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof” (Rev. 5:5). The New Testament tells that Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the city of David (Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:4,11).

Heb. 7:14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

Paul did not shirk what would appear to others to be a weak part in his argument; namely, Jesus came from the tribe of Judah, “of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.” In other words, the Scriptures do not indicate that the Messiah had to come from the tribe of Levi. A little later Paul would enlarge upon this point with emphasis.

Heb. 7:15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

Heb. 7:16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

Heb. 7:17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Again Paul referred to Psalm 110:4, which prophesied that the Messiah would be “a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” “After the similitude of Melchisedec [who was a type] there ariseth another priest [Jesus], Who is made, not after the law of a carnal [fleshly] commandment, but after the power of an endless life.” Although Aaron was specifically called of God to be the first high priest—he did not presume to take that office and honor upon himself—almost all of the subsequent high priests for the Aaronic priesthood were *born* into the office, rather than being selected by the Lord.

Heb. 7:18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

Verse 18 reminds us of Romans 8:3, which says that the Law “was weak through the flesh.” “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” The Law was perfect and strong, but because man was weak and imperfect, the Law was weak *in results*. Humanity, *being imperfect*, could not keep a perfect Law. Thus the Law was weak because of *man*; it was “unprofitable” because it could not bring man to perfection and *life*. Only Jesus, *being perfect*, could keep the perfect Law. He thus gained the right to human life, which he used as the ransom price, the price of redemption on behalf of mankind. Incidentally, this type of logic and

terminology is a proof that Paul is the author of the Book of Hebrews, for he wrote similarly in his letter to the Romans.

Heb. 7:19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

“The law made nothing perfect.” This statement is true because Jesus was perfect *before* the Law was given. He did not need the Law because he was born perfect: “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb. 7:26). However, he had no right to human life as a prize until he perfectly kept the Law. Therefore, by perfectly obeying the Law, he earned the fruit, the *reward*, of the Law, which was the *right* to human life forever on the earth.

“But the bringing in of a better hope did.” The “better hope” by which we draw nigh unto God is the *spirit* of the Law. Imperfect man can keep the *spirit* of the Law through *grace* and thus have the hope of gaining *life*. Stated another way, it is possible for those who are imperfect according to the flesh to gain the reward of the Law through an arrangement of *grace*, not of works. Thus, although “the law made nothing perfect,” the bringing in of grace and the spirit of the Law did.

Heb. 7:20 And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest:

Heb. 7:21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

As pictured by Melchisedec in the type, Jesus was made a priest forever with an oath. The Father’s speaking *firmly and strongly* constituted an oath: “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” To the contrary, when Aaron became high priest, no oath was involved. He merely stood there in obedience and was clothed by Moses and anointed into office, and he obeyed, staying within the Tabernacle arrangement for seven days. After that time period elapsed, he and his sons performed the duties of the priesthood.

Heb. 7:22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

Heb. 7:23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

Heb. 7:24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

Paul used *powerful* reasoning. The assertion of Christianity in his day was that Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem, the city of David, did many wonderful things and died on the Cross. The handful of believers claimed that he was the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament. Paul was saying that if a person with an unprejudiced mind humbly looked into Scripture to identify the Messiah, he would realize that Melchisedec is an *abiding and everlasting* priesthood, as opposed to the Aaronic high priests, who lived 80 years or so and then died, only to be replaced by another high priest. In other words, Jesus *died when he was fulfilling the type of the Aaronic priesthood*, which emphasized suffering, humiliation, and death. Therefore, Jesus could not enter into the office of the Melchisedec priesthood until after his death and *resurrection*, at which time he could say, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, [now] I am alive *for evermore*” (Rev. 1:18).

This explanation states, in just a few words, what part of Jesus’ life pertains to the Aaronic priesthood and what part pertains to the Melchisedec priesthood. His suffering and sacrificing

prior to his death and resurrection were pictured by the Aaronic priesthood. However, even though Jesus is a Priest and a King now by right, he is acting only on behalf of his people and is not yet reigning over the world.

Q: If Jesus is High Priest now under the Melchisedec priesthood, wouldn't the New Covenant be in effect?

A: No, for Jesus is also High Priest from the standpoint of Aaron. For instance, on the Day of Atonement, the first animal that was offered was the bullock, which represented Jesus' own life, suffering without the camp, and death. As the antitypical High Priest, Jesus offered the bullock, which represented himself, and he is still offering the Lord's goat, which represents the Church. In other words, in that picture, Aaron represented Jesus in his dealings with the Church but not with the world. Jesus is called a Priest of the Melchisedec order, but he is not reigning yet. As far as the Church is concerned, he is still performing as High Priest under the Aaronic priesthood and offering up the Lord's goat (Lev. 16:7-9). Jesus is the "Apostle and High Priest of *our* [the Church's] profession" (Heb. 3:1). Only when the Church is complete will Jesus reign (*exercise* the office of Priest and King) over the world. At that time, and on behalf of the world of mankind, the New Covenant will go into effect.

Melchisedec had more latitude, for he was not burdened down with all kinds of legalized ceremonies. He was just a "priest of the most high God" (Gen. 14:18). He did have sacrifices and make offerings, but very little detail is given about him in the Scriptures.

As stated in verse 22, Jesus was "made a surety of a better testament [*covenant*]," the covenant of *grace* for the consecrated in the Gospel Age. Verse 24 adds that because Jesus "continueth ever, [he] hath an unchangeable priesthood." Aaron and his sons died, but the Scriptures are silent about the death of Melchisedec. He mysteriously appeared on the scene, and he mysteriously disappeared. The Bible does not mention his birth or his death because God used him as a picture of this better priesthood.

Heb. 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Jesus is able to save "to the uttermost [those] that come unto God by him ... [because] he ever liveth to make intercession for them." In this verse, Jesus is operating under the Melchisedec priesthood. Because he is a priest forever under the order of Melchisedec, he is now dealing with his people; he "ever liveth" to help the consecrated of the *Gospel Age*. Thus verse 25 gives a *current* application to the Melchisedec priesthood. Here and in other epistles (such as Galatians), there are certain places where Paul gave a *partial* current application, whereas the *primary* fulfillment is *still future*. The primary design or application of the type of Melchisedec's being a king and a priest forever is to *The Christ* on the throne in the future; that is, Jesus and the Church will ultimately comprise the Melchisedec priesthood. (Paul subsequently explained the Church's part in the Melchisedec type. For now he was just trying to convince the Jews that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.)

With regard to "intercession," Jesus is our Advocate. He pleads with God for us, using mercy, tolerance, and patience.

Heb. 7:26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

"Such an high priest ... is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Why did Paul bring in this thought? With this *higher* priesthood, the

qualifications are higher; for example, it is an *abiding* priesthood (“for the age”—see verses 24 and 28 in the *Diaglott*). In other words, the Melchisedec priesthood will not last for millions of years, but it will last beyond the term of an ordinary man’s life; it will last *for an age*, and the one who is to be the Priest must live through that age.

How was Jesus “made higher than the heavens”? He was made higher than the *pattern* of heavenly things in the Tabernacle arrangement, in which Aaron was highly esteemed as the high priest. The reality is higher and better than the type.

The Gospel Age has been set aside for the selection of the priesthood, and Jesus’ priestly function now is on behalf of his own people. However, when The Christ, the Melchisedec priesthood, is complete, it will intervene on behalf of the world.

Psalm 110

The context of Psalm 110 is one of *glory*. The Messiah is to sit on Jehovah’s right hand until his enemies are made his footstool (verse 1). God will send the rod of Jesus’ strength out of Zion; i.e., God will inaugurate the Kingdom but use Jesus as His general and representative. Jesus is to rule in the midst of his enemies (verse 2). His people shall be willing in the day of his power, “in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning” (verse 3). Then the Melchisedec priesthood is mentioned in verse 4. All of these verses pertain to the *coming age of glory*.

Verse 7 says, “He [Jesus] shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he [Jehovah] lift up the head.” God will lift up Jesus as the Head of the Church. Leading up to this verse, Psalm 110 tells of the mighty things that Messiah will do in the future, his institution into office, the prerogatives that God will give him, what he will do, and how great he is to be. Then comes verse 7, which is like a verse *out of place*, for it reverts back to Jesus’ *human* experiences that *qualified* him for the office of King and Priest. Because Jesus drank of the brook by the way in his earthly sojourn—because he faithfully partook of life’s experiences and was obedient unto death—therefore, God honors him and exalts him to be King and Priest.

In Psalm 110, it is important to distinguish between God and Jesus. For example, verse 5 reads, “The Lord [Jesus] at thy [Jehovah’s] right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his [either God’s or Jesus’] wrath.”

Verse 6 states, “He [Jesus] shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads [rulers] over many countries.” This verse shows the *power* of Jesus’ reign. He will not brook any interference or tolerate any disobedience. Of course in the beginning, many in the host of Gog from Magog will die temporarily but subsequently be resuscitated from the grave. The deliverance of the Holy Remnant of Israel will be the first great act the world will appreciate and recognize as signifying that the reign has begun. This mighty act will be the manifestation to the world that God has taken His *great* power and begun to reign. While filling “the places with the dead bodies” will be a very strong judgment, it is not necessarily a Second Death judgment; the signification is that there will be no toleration of any disorder. The people will have to bow the knee to Jesus and confess that he “is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10,11).

Paul referred to Psalm 110 because the Jews were familiar with it and because they would agree that the context refers to Messiah. However, sandwiched in the Psalm is a reference to Melchisedec, whom they would not have thought of because they were so prejudiced in favor of the Aaronic priesthood. Paul’s pointing out the reference to Melchisedec in a context of power and glory would help the Jews to realize that Psalm 110 is *primarily* a prophecy of the Kingdom and the *future* work of the Melchisedec priesthood.

Heb. 7:27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

Verse 27 refers to the *continual* sacrifice ("daily" is a poor translation). "Who needeth not *continually*, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, ... for this he [Jesus] did once, when he offered up himself." Back in the type, there was a continual reoccurrence of the Day of Atonement service *every year*. (Leviticus 8 and 9 were done only once in the lifetime of a high priest, whereas Leviticus 16 was performed once annually.) Therefore, "daily" in this context did not signify that a sacrifice was offered every 24 hours but that the Day of Atonement services were performed continuously year after year. Where Daniel 8:11 says, "The *daily* sacrifice was taken away," the thought is that the "*continual* sacrifice" of Christ was taken away by Papacy. While in the type, the continual sacrifice was shown annually in a repetitious manner, the sacrifice occurred *only once* in its fulfillment, for Jesus' *one* sacrifice is *ever efficacious*.

The doctrine of the Mass more or less declares that, yes, Jesus died for man's sins. When a person accepts Jesus as his Savior, his past is forgotten, but henceforth, because he is imperfect, he is still going to sin. Therefore, he needs cleansing on a daily basis. But instead of referring the person back to Christ's original sacrifice, the Roman Catholic Church teaches the doctrine of the Mass, which makes null and void the daily (or continual) sacrifice of Jesus. This is a gross error in doctrine, for what was done *repetitiously in the type* is only done *once in the antitype*. The terminology can be difficult to apprehend with our Western-world thinking. In other words, what the high priests back in Israel's history had to continually perform in the type is a reminder for the Christian of Jesus' one sacrifice on Calvary.

In the type, the high priest "offer[ed] up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's [sins]." Leviticus 9:2 reads, "And he [Moses] said unto Aaron, Take thee a young calf for a *sin offering*." Accordingly, Aaron brought a young calf for a sin offering. Then Leviticus 9:7 states, "And Moses said unto Aaron, Go unto the altar, and offer thy sin offering, and thy burnt offering, and make an atonement for thyself, and for the people: and offer the offering of the people, and make an atonement for them; as the LORD commanded." Thus the calf that Aaron offered was a sin offering to make atonement for *himself* and for the sins of the people. The pronoun "thyself [himself]" would represent the body members, that is, "himself" in the sense of the Church, which is his body, his house, the Christ *class*. The first sacrifice was sufficient for *everyone*, but God was pleased to add another sin offering, a goat, for the sins of the people, representing the *Church's part* in the sin offering. "And unto the children of Israel thou shalt speak, saying, Take ye a kid of the goats for a *sin offering*" (Lev. 9:3).

Notice the colon after the word "people" in verse 7: "Make an atonement for thyself, and *for the people*: and offer the offering *of the people*, and make an atonement for them." In other words, the first sacrifice, the young calf, was a sin offering for *both* himself (the high priest's house, the Church) and the people (the world)—but the next animal, the goat, was the offering "of the people." The expression about "the people" was used *twice*. The intrinsic merit that cancels sin was within the *first* animal, which pictures Jesus' sacrifice and was for Aaron's house, but that same intrinsic value will also redeem the world. The people's offering, the goat, was merely a *supplementary* sin offering. The only reason it is valuable is that God includes the Church in the sin offering, but their inclusion was not necessary because Jesus' sacrifice is all that was needed as the price of redemption. Stated another way, the primary sacrifice was all sufficient, but God was pleased to include a supplementary offering. Leviticus 9:7 is quite definite and lays the foundation of what Paul was talking about. Moses told Aaron, "[1] Make an atonement [with the young calf] for thyself [the Church], and for the people [the world]: and [2] offer the offering of the people [the goat, representing the Church, for the world]."

Heb. 7:28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

Earlier in the Book of Hebrews, Paul quoted several Old Testament Scriptures to prove that the predicted Messiah would be the *Son* of God. Therefore, when Jesus came and claimed to be God's Son, the Hebrews should not have accused him of blasphemy. They had a wrong focus and understanding. Now Paul tied in the fact that not merely is Jesus the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, spoken of in the Psalms, but in addition, that High Priest is the Son of God.

“The word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.” God swore and will not repent, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psa. 110:4); that was God's “word of the oath.” In contrast, Aaron was just anointed; there was no oath in connection with the institution of the Aaronic priesthood. It is truly amazing how Paul could draw a whole reservoir of truth out of one little picture.

Heb. 8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

Why did Paul say, “This is the sum”? The *burden* of the Apostle's message thus far in the Book of Hebrews was to *prove that Jesus is the Messiah*. His claim to be *the Son of God* should not have surprised the Jews because whoever the Messiah was, that statement would be one of the truths he would distinctly point out. Paul asked, “Unto which of the angels did God at any time say, ‘Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee’?” (Heb. 1:5 paraphrase). What other spirit being is there whom God Himself addressed in a special manner and said, “Thou art my Son”? (Actually, the Father is responsible for the creation of all sentient beings, but only Jesus was particularly singled out.) Therefore, Paul tried to refute some of the chief objections in his day to Jesus' claim to be the Messiah.

Another objection was that Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi, so how could he be a High Priest? But Paul showed that another priesthood, the Melchisedec priesthood, was foretold in the Old Testament. Moreover, Messiah was to come from the tribe of Judah. To harmonize the Scriptures about the Aaronic and the Melchisedec priesthoods and about the tribes of Levi and Judah, Paul showed that the Levitical priesthood was *typical* and that what Jesus said and did comported very well with the Old Testament prophecies.

Paul had finished his argument—“This is the *sum*: We *have* such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” He had established the *fact* of Jesus' Messiahship; he had completed the *proofs* and eliminated the doubts. Now Paul would go on to talk about the work and ministry of Jesus and explain why he did certain things.

Heb. 8:2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

The Tabernacle in the wilderness was also true, but it was *typical and natural* and was pitched by Moses, whereas the *antitypical* “tabernacle” arrangement is *spiritual*, and it was pitched by *God*. Paul was not trying to undermine the reliability of Moses' Tabernacle. Rather, his point was that it was merely a *picture* (or shadow) of the *reality*, the “true [spiritual] tabernacle.” Those who were putting such an emphasis on the natural Tabernacle were saying that the Messiah had to be a son of Aaron, but Paul showed the fallacy in such reasoning.

Heb. 8:3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

In what way did the high priest in the type “offer gifts and sacrifices”? Primarily he was involved in the daily offerings of the people. Paul was saying, “It is true that the high priest offered gifts and sacrifices, but Jesus also had something to offer. Moreover, if the true tabernacle is spiritual, we should assume that what Jesus had to offer was a different and *higher* offering.”

“It is *of necessity* that this man have somewhat also to offer.” How could Jesus be the great High Priest if he did not have something to offer? Otherwise, the office would be superficial and merely a ritual.

Heb. 8:4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

If Jesus’ priesthood had an earthly or a natural application, then he would not qualify according to the limitations of the Levitical priesthood, for (1) he was not a son of Aaron and (2) that office was already occupied by others, who were performing the services.

Heb. 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mount.

The typical Tabernacle arrangement was an “example and shadow of heavenly things.” A similar expression is used in Colossians 2:16,17, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a *shadow of things to come*.” Incidentally, the language and reasoning used here in verse 5 prove that Paul was the author of the Book of Hebrews.

“Moses was admonished of God ... to make the tabernacle ... according to the pattern” shown to him on Mount Sinai. Moses, David, and Ezekiel were all shown patterns. “Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shown thee in the mount” (Exod. 25:40). Through the Logos, God showed Moses a pattern of the *entire* Tabernacle in a *finished* state, plus perhaps the preparatory steps. Probably he was given a *three-dimensional visual* picture, or vision, during the 40 days he was on Mount Sinai. In addition to receiving the Ten Commandments, he was well instructed. Bezaleel and Aholiab subsequently worked out the mechanics of how to accomplish the work, but Moses had the pattern and told them what had to be done.

We read about David in 1 Chronicles 28:11,12, “Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things.” Although Solomon built the Temple, it was David who received the *comprehensive* pattern. The pattern was all-inclusive, so in some respects, the Temple was really David’s. Solomon merely handled the mechanics of building it. Of the two, David was superior in God’s sight, for God gave the detailed plans to him.

Ezekiel 40:2-4 reads, “In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south. And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee; for to the intent that I might show them unto thee art thou

brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.” In a vision, Ezekiel was taken to the top of a very high mountain from which he could see a city on the south. Then a man took him on a tour and explained *all* the details of this future Temple—the gates, the widths, the heights, the number of chambers, etc.

Therefore, three individuals—Moses, David, and Ezekiel—received *very, very comprehensive* visions. In the Book of Revelation, the Apostle John was given a symbolic visual demonstration of the New Jerusalem, the Holy City (Rev. 21:2,10-23). In that picture, there was no Temple because the spiritual vision described a *heavenly* (not a natural) city. The Church class will not need a Temple when they are with God. However, the world of mankind will need a Temple and a priesthood—a visual mechanism through which God will deal with them in the Kingdom Age. This time there will be a better Mediator, priesthood, and covenant—but similar to the old arrangement under Moses.

Heb. 8:6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

When we get the force of this picture, all of the details enhance it and make it very beautiful because everything harmonizes. The second covenant will be very similar to the first covenant, especially in *principles*, but the second will be more effectual. Paul went to a *higher plane* in the Book of Hebrews, for he was teaching about the New Covenant not from the standpoint of man but from the standpoint of Jesus’ work and the work of the Church. Everything will be *better*: a better ministry, a better covenant arrangement, better promises, and a better Mediator. The results will also be better.

The term “mediator” more properly applies to the work of the New Covenant in the next age, for in the Gospel Age, the office of Jesus, as far as the Church is concerned, is more that of an Advocate (or Attorney).

Heb. 8:7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

Again Paul’s reasoning is powerful, the implication being that what is coming will eventually supersede what now is. Since Colossians 2:14 states that Jesus nailed the Law to the Cross, how do we harmonize the fact that the Jew is still under the old Law Covenant? For those Jews who die to the Law by accepting Christ and being immersed into his body, the Law is nailed to the Cross. Only by complying with these conditions is a Jew properly released from the obligations of the Law. Even if the Law is waxing old, it is still obligatory for the Jew who has not accepted Christ. Eventually, the old Law Covenant will be supplanted by the New Covenant, so as each day goes by and we approach nearer and nearer to this unknown date, the old is decaying and the new is coming more and more on the horizon and growing.

“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.” Paul used the word “faultless” in a limited or qualified sense. The Law Covenant is not “faultless” in that it is not eternal. It is not perfect in the sense that it cannot give life because imperfect man cannot keep the perfect Law and thus does not get life through it. But the Law did serve a purpose, for it was a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ (Gal. 3:24). The Law itself is good, but it will be replaced by a higher law, the New Covenant, with a better Mediator. Because no one can be saved by the deeds of the old Law, the New Covenant is needed.

Heb. 8:8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

Heb. 8:9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

“The law ... was weak through the flesh” (Rom. 8:3). The Law was actually strong and did give life rights to Jesus, but imperfect man’s inability to keep it was the weakening factor. That is what Paul was saying here. He found fault with the Jews in that imperfect flesh could not keep the Law. If the first covenant had been faultless and had given life to man, then the second (the New Covenant) would not have been needed.

Paul quoted from Jeremiah 31:31,32, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD.” The fact God predicted He will someday make a New Covenant with the nation of Israel—with the nation He led out of Egypt in the Exodus—shows that the old Law Covenant will be supplanted by a New Covenant. Therefore, the Jews should not be too wedded to the old covenant.

Paul approached this subject from a detached, methodical, scholarly, impartial standpoint. His very detachment was much better in the end because it built faith, not emotion. In one breath, he was destroying the arguments of the adversaries of Christ, but at the same time, he was building up layers of proof with substantial evidence.

Verse 9 tells us that the Law Covenant went into effect with the Passover. At midnight, after partaking of the Passover feast, the Israelites made preparations to leave Egypt. The following day they met at Rameses and went to Succoth and other places. The Passover was the first feature of the Law.

The nation of Israel “continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.” Paul was showing the ineffectuality of the old Law Covenant. Leviticus 26 tells how Israel would be blessed if they obeyed the Lord—in house, basket and store, children, flocks, etc. If they disobeyed, they would be punished, and if they *persisted* in disobedience, they would receive a “seven times” punishment of 2,520 years. The Law is still obligatory, however. If the Israelites had been obedient, they would have become a kingdom of priests, but they failed to qualify. Therefore, it was in this *intimate* sense that God disregarded them. He did find fault with the nation of Israel, but there is hope for them because of the New Covenant. Those who are right-hearted will respond under the conditions of the new day, and the results will be produced that had been anticipated under the old Law Covenant.

After establishing in this epistle that Jesus is the true Messiah, the true High Priest of Scripture, Paul would show what Jesus can do for the Christian as the Head of the new priesthood. He was now summing up and reviewing.

Heb. 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

Paul continued to quote from Jeremiah, “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 31:33). The New Covenant will succeed because it will be written *in the hearts* of the Israelites rather than being codified on stone or parchment. *Perfect* discipline and explanation, plus past experience

and the *ability* to perform under the new conditions, will have the effect of writing the New Covenant in their hearts.

“I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” The same principle that is stated in Amos 3:2 will apply in the Kingdom: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” The New Covenant will be made with the *literal house* of Israel, the *same nation* that the old covenant was made with, but this time people will become *individually* identified with it. To receive blessings under the New Covenant, the Gentiles will have to become Israelite proselytes, for God will be the God *of Israel*. All will become one family. The Gentiles will have to humble themselves to recognize the Jews, and the Jews will be ashamed of their past actions and rejection of Christ. As shown in Romans 11, God, in wisdom, designed that those who receive mercy can have mercy on others: Jews to Gentiles, and Gentiles to Jews. And this reasoning will also apply to Christians above, for God has had mercy on them; He has forgiven their sins, so they should be more tolerant of others.

Heb. 8:11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

Heb. 8:12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

Verses 11 and 12 are also a quote from Jeremiah: “And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34).

Verse 11 shows a universal *progressive* feature, for the entire Kingdom period will be required to effect the New Covenant, to complete the reconciliation of God and man, with Jesus being the Mediator. When the reconciling work is complete and the New Covenant is thoroughly effected at the end of the Millennium, there will be no more need for a Mediator. *Everyone* must first be resurrected—a process that will take time—before all will “know the Lord ... from the least to the greatest.”

The same was true of the old Law Covenant. The sprinkling of the blood *preceded* the reading of the Law to the people. Just as the old Law was sealed with blood, so the New Covenant will be sealed—it will go into effect—when the blood is applied, when the Ransom is paid over to Justice. Then will come the instruction of the people, which is comparable in the type to the reading of the Law. When the Israelites sinned, they were instructed as to what to do and what penalties would be inflicted, and under other circumstances, rewards were given. The antitype will be similar.

At present, the blood has not been applied, for it is mortgaged; it is on loan to the Church, the consecrated. When all of the consecrated have finished their course, the mortgage will be released and the blood will be paid over to Justice for the world. That will be one of the features of *practical* restitution. The *times* of restitution have begun but not restitution itself. Not until the blood is paid over to Justice can practical restitution begin and the sins of the world be forgiven. Then the inventions and technology will be meaningful.

Verse 12 is saying that God will be merciful to the unrighteousness of the Jew. Therefore, we should also be merciful—unless the individual is incorrigible and hardened in unrighteousness like the scribes and Pharisees who were the ringleaders in manipulating Jesus’ crucifixion and paying hush money to the soldiers after his resurrection. If we expect to have mercy ourselves, we must be merciful. Jesus taught us to pray, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others

who trespass against us.” Incidentally, we cannot forgive trespasses against God—only *He* can do that—but when trespasses are committed against us, we have the wonderful privilege to forgive.

Verse 12 is valuable advice because in finding fault with Jews who could not see the truth that Jesus is the true Messiah, Christians back there had the tendency to hate the Jew or the Jewish religion. Paul was counteracting that attitude by saying we have to be careful, for if God does not hold that kind of grudge, then neither should we. The advice inserted here about mercy and Jesus’ being the antitypical High Priest is a good lesson to remember. When people cannot see advanced truth, we are not to hold a grudge against them. At the same time, we have to let matters rest, for if we delay and go back and try to harmonize and reason with the party, we may jeopardize our own development. We should just go ahead with the advanced truth.

Heb. 8:13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

Other epistles show that the Law Covenant is still in effect for Jews who have not accepted Christ. The only way the Law Covenant waxes old is that *by faith*, we perceive the days are numbered wherein the old covenant will pass away. Progressively, then, we can figuratively say that the Law Covenant is vanishing. The New Covenant will be made with the house of Israel. Many Christians erroneously think that the New Testament is the New Covenant and that, therefore, the Christian is under the New Covenant. However, the Christian is under a third covenant, which is sometimes called the Sarah (or Grace) Covenant. The New Covenant, which is the “sure mercies of David” from one standpoint, pertains to the world (Isa. 55:3); it is referred to in Ezekiel 37:26,27, “Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

Heb. 9:1 Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

The Law has “ordinances” (regulations, ceremonies); that is, it contains a variety of features and thus does not consist of just ten laws. Included are descriptions of many conditions of *judgment*, *animal sacrifices*, and a detailed explanation of the *moral code*, as well as the *Decalogue*.

The Law also had “a worldly [natural] sanctuary.” The Tabernacle of “the first [Law] covenant” was made of *physical* material; a *literal* building, it pictured a *spiritual* (or “divine”) service. The Tabernacle was made by man but according to God’s instruction.

Heb. 9:2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary.

Heb. 9:3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

Heb. 9:4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

“For there [that is, in the *past*, in Old Testament times, in the wilderness] was a tabernacle made.” “The first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; ... is called the sanctuary [the Holy]. And after the second veil, the tabernacle ... is called the Holiest of all.” Paul was making a distinction between the *first* (rectangular) compartment (the Holy), where

the priests tended the Candlestick, the Table of Shewbread, and the Incense Altar, and the *second* (square) compartment (the Most Holy), which contained the Ark of the Covenant, but why did he imply that there were *two* tabernacles? We think of the Tabernacle as *one structure* composed of *two rooms*, whereas Paul used unique language here to teach a lesson.

Each “tabernacle” was entered by a different veil. The language shows two different time periods, two different conditions, and two different places (the “Holy” condition is down here on earth, and the “Most Holy” condition, the objective, is in heaven in the highest sense of the word). In other words, if a person walked through the Tabernacle, he would go through the gate, past the Brazen Altar and the Laver in the Court, under the First Veil into the Holy, and finally under the Second Veil into the Most Holy. The first tabernacle, or tent, represents the tabernacling condition of the present life where the consecrated are seated in the flesh “in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6); the second represents the finished temple condition beyond the veil. Or, stated another way, the Holy represents two classes in the flesh, the Little Flock and the Great Company, and the Most Holy represents the Little Flock in the spiritual condition, in perfection.

The furniture in the Holy is listed: (1) the Candlestick; (2) the Prayer “table,” or Golden Altar; and (3) “the showbread,” or Table of Shewbread. The Revised Standard Version lists the contents as “the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence.” The confusion in the translation of calling the Golden Altar a “table” probably occurred because that will be the designation for the altar in the Third Temple, where it will be a *prayer* altar only (Ezek. 41:22; 44:16). In other words, we believe the corruption of the text is based on the thought of the Table in the Third Temple. Verses 3 and 4 further confuse the matter by stating that the golden censer was in the Most Holy. “And after the second veil, [was] the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all [that is, the Most Holy]; Which had the golden censer.”

Several things have to be considered. First, there is no known translation of the Bible in existence today that is anywhere near perfect. For example, the King James contains a number of minor errors, but most of the errors are corrected by internal evidence. The Lord’s method is as follows. Just as He has allowed His message of truth to be expounded and represented by or through *imperfect* vessels who have the spirit of the truth, so various impediments, interpolations, and errors have crept into the text of the Word of God over the passage of time. However, these errors serve a purpose; namely, they furnish skeptics with ammunition to deny the *entire* Bible. Those who are hypercritical are stumbled by the letter of the Word, whereas God intentionally permitted the errors. Also, the Lord speaks to His people through the poor of this world, for not many wise, mighty, or noble are called (1 Cor. 1:26). Except for two, even the apostles were ignorant, unlearned men. This method makes the worldly wise stumble in their own conceit.

Despite these errors, there is really no problem, for in analyzing Scripture, we must have the testimony of two or three witnesses. “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (Deut. 19:15; John 8:17; 2 Cor. 13:1). In addition, *context* should be considered, and *all* Scriptures on a given subject should be studied to get the balanced *overall* thought. Then the truth becomes apparent.

And so *scriptural* evidence overrides the gloss in the Hebrews account, which has the golden censer (of the Incense Altar) in the Most Holy. (1) Back in the type in Exodus, the purpose of the incense was that its smoke had to *precede* the high priest by rising over the Second Veil and *entering into the Most Holy* ahead of him *lest he die*. Thus the aroma and cloud of smoke from the incense had to arise from within the *Holy*. Therefore, the high priest could not have been in the Most Holy until *after* he had offered the incense by sprinkling the dry powder over the censer filled with hot coals, and that censer was on top of the Incense Altar in the Holy. (2) The Book

of Exodus describes the Tabernacle furniture and where each piece was situated. The Incense Table (or Altar) is clearly stated to have been in the *Holy*. The description of the furniture in Exodus is reliable because it is *very detailed*, whereas the list in Hebrews 9 is not. Each piece is explained in detail, including its composition, and the dimensions are given, as well as the side of the room it occupied in its respective compartment. (3) In Solomon's Temple, the Incense Altar was placed in the *Holy*. (4) Numerous references *throughout the Bible* describe the Incense Altar as being in the *Holy*. Hence the weight of evidence is overwhelmingly contrary to the statement here in Hebrews 9. (5) In the antitype, the Incense Altar represents the prayers of the saints that are offered up now, in the *present age*, which is pictured by the *Holy*. (6) "At the time of incense," Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, had a vision at the Prayer Altar in the *Holy*, the vision being that he and Elisabeth would have a child (Luke 1:5-13). Since the high priest went into the Most Holy only *once a year*, the Incense Altar had to be in the *Holy*.

There is still another line of reasoning. The *original Bible manuscripts*, as written by the apostles, prophets, and others, have never been found. Thus *everything* we have today is a *copy* of the original. Moreover, the Bible has been translated into many languages, and the copies were done *by hand* up to the time of the printing press. After copying a manuscript for hours, a person got weary, his eyes were tired, and his mind became fatigued, so mistakes could easily result despite a high degree of conscientiousness and determination. In addition, the lighting was poor. Still another factor is that consecutive lines sometimes began with the same two or three words. Therefore, if the scribe was interrupted in his work, it was easy for him to resume several words later in the manuscript. The similarity of words and phrases that were near each other was conducive to omitting portions of the text. If a scribe made a mistake and then realized it, he often inserted the correction in the narrow margin and, therefore, not quite parallel to the place of the omission. When a subsequent scribe inserted the correction back into the text, it was sometimes inadvertently put in the wrong place.

And there is yet another way errors crept in. Sometimes *personal* marginal notes were later copied into the main body of the text by a different scribe. These were honest mistakes, for the monks knew how to write the language, but they did not know the sense. It is one thing to know the grammar and to be literate, but it is another matter to understand the *reasoning* of the text. They were diligent copyists, but they were not trying to reason out and analyze every single word, especially after hours and hours of work. When we read the finished copy today, an error may be obvious right away, but we need to consider the difficult conditions under which the scribes worked down through history.

The Lord intentionally permitted errors so that His people of the Gospel Age would have to *reason* line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, using the principle that by the mouth of two or three witnesses is a thing established (Isa. 28:10). We need corroborative evidence from the *Word itself* on hard-to-understand subjects. Thus the obvious error in the King James translation of verses 3 and 4 is corrected by *many other accounts* that tell distinctly about the furniture of the Tabernacle and the Temple.

The following example helps to explain how textual errors developed. If four hand copies were made of a manuscript, each copy would contain some errors, and the errors would vary from copy to copy. The four copies would each be recopied, and copies would be made of those copies, etc., etc. Therefore, as generations of the four copies were made down through the age, certain errors were peculiar to each family of manuscripts. Accordingly, some manuscripts are deemed more accurate than others, just as, based on analysis in translation, certain versions of the Bible are better than others. Therefore, not all manuscripts have the golden censer in the Most Holy. One example is Vatican Manuscript 1160, even though Vatican Manuscript 1209 contains the error.

Comment: It is interesting that God allowed the errors.

Reply: Yes. That is His method, just as He used the unlearned apostles and an imperfect “leprous hand” priesthood (Exod. 4:6,7). When Moses withdrew his hand the first time, it was leprous, but when he withdrew it the second time, it was clean. In the antitype, the same leprous Christian “hand” that ministers the Word of God in the present age will, if faithful, come out of the tomb in the resurrection whole and perfect. Thus the Lord’s method is to purposely make the wise stumble, for if the Bible were so brilliant and absolutely perfect, the intelligentsia would have it all to themselves and even try to shut out everyone else. Instead they do not take the time, expend the effort, or prayerfully beseech the Lord for guidance. If one has a prejudiced mind, he should go to the Lord in prayer and say, “I have a problem with something I cannot understand. Please help me in my weakness to understand how to properly regard this matter, which affects my faith.” The petitioner of such a prayer would be helped over the difficulty in some manner.

In other words, when there is something in Scripture that we do not understand, we should go humbly to the Lord in prayer, asking for assistance. This is especially true if the matter affects our faith. The answer may be delayed, but if having an answer is essential to our faith, help will come in one way or another, even if that particular question is left unresolved.

Q: Please explain again why the Lord called each of the two sections a “tabernacle”?

A: The Holy represents two classes of the Church in the flesh; the Most Holy represents one class of the Church in perfection. The implication of a first and a second “tabernacle” emphasizes that *two separate* conditions are being referred to; they are separately entered, showing two different time periods and two different places. We do not normally think of the antitypical Holy as a place because the Church is not a building with an organ and a choir, for example. Rather, the Church of God is a mystical body whose location is on earth in the present life. However, if we have the larger perspective of the flesh in the present life and the spirit beyond the veil in glory, we can say that the Holy and the Most Holy represent two different places, respectively. Then the two compartments, being like two completely different buildings, show a difference in time, place, and condition. In fact, the Scriptures magnify the Church in the flesh as a *tabernacling* condition, and the resurrection is likened to putting on the *house* that is above (2 Pet. 1:13,14; 2 Cor. 5:1-3).

Rather than to go into all the meaning and the composition of the furniture at this time, we will say very briefly that the “golden censer” represents prayers and faithfulness. Specifically, the incense pictures the perfections of Jesus, and the coals of fire represent the trials of life.

The “manna” is the “hidden manna” of Revelation 2:17, which pictures immortality. When this manna is once eaten, food will nevermore be necessary. The “golden pot” represents the divine nature. “Aaron’s rod that budded” primarily represents God’s election (or selection). Briefly stated, the “tables of the covenant” are the Law.

Incidentally, the Book of Hebrews is fragmented in one of the important manuscripts, and we would not be surprised if verses 3 and 4 are the exact location, which has been poorly patched up. The epistles to Timothy, Titus, and the Hebrews are imperfect, and the entire Book of Revelation is missing.

Heb. 9:5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

Two “cherubims of glory” shadowed the mercy seat. In verses 4 and 5, Paul did not “speak

particularly” of (go into detail on) the furniture in either the physical or the spiritual sense. Much could have been said about the cherubim and the mercy seat and about their being beaten out of one piece of solid gold, what the box was and how it was made of wood and overlaid with gold, what its dimensions were, etc. Here Paul merely showed that the first covenant had a literal, material structure with two compartments in which were various articles of furniture. He was setting the stage for an analogy and a comparison.

Heb. 9:6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

Heb. 9:7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

The priests (plural) went “always” (often) into the first room, the Holy, but into the second room, the high priest (singular) went “alone once every year” with blood. We could get technical and say that this statement is not true, but from the standpoint of Paul’s reasoning, it is true, for he was making a comparison along a certain line. With both the Tabernacle and the Temple, the priests went into the Holy every day to order the candlestick(s) and the incense and to pray and for other purposes, but there was a restriction with regard to the Most Holy in that only the high priest entered once a year.

On rare occasions, particularly with the Tabernacle, the priests went into the Most Holy but not the high priest; those occasions were when the Tabernacle was to be moved to another place, but the First Veil was taken down and used to cover the Ark of the Covenant. However, these exceptions were not important as a picture, so they are excluded from Paul’s reasoning. He was saying that in connection with the ordinances of service, the high priest went into the Most Holy only once each year. He purposely used *simplicity* here (as opposed to deep reasoning in other places).

Another exception when the high priest entered the Most Holy was at the time of a *national* crisis to seek advice from the Lord with the Urim and the Thummim. Again, as with the moving of the Tabernacle, this unusual circumstance is not to be considered here, for Paul was talking about *ordinary* service from the *public* standpoint. He was basing his argument on the fact that the high priest and the underpriests went frequently into the Holy, the first compartment, but only the high priest entered once each year into the Most Holy, the second compartment. “Into the second went the high priest alone once every year [on the Day of Atonement], not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.”

Not only were there two separate compartments, but also one was called “first” and the other “second.” This description suggests *action, movement, and progression, not fixed conditions*. Reasoning on the principle of *progression*, Paul said that the priests entered the “first” every day, but only the high priest entered the “second” once a year. Then, beginning with verse 8, he would start to analyze about Jesus, who went into the “first” during his earthly ministry but did not enter the “second” until he died. Paul traced Jesus’ life from Jordan to Calvary and related it to the Tabernacle arrangement. What the high priest did in the type once each year, Jesus did once in his lifetime. The repetition in the type was really a *memorial*—it reminded the people of the sacrifice—for theoretically it pictures the high priest entering the Most Holy *only once, not annually—once for all, forever!* The service was repeated annually merely to remind the people of the *one* sacrifice, the *one* entrance into the Most Holy. In emphasizing first and second *progression*, Paul was showing Jesus to be the High Priest in the antitype.

Heb. 9:8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

“The Holy Ghost this signifying”; that is, the Holy Spirit meant to teach the lesson by the Tabernacle arrangement that the way into the Most Holy was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. This analogy pertains to the Most Holy, not to the Holy.

We recall several points about the history of the Tabernacle. It was almost 40 years in the Wilderness of Sinai, and then it was moved to Shiloh in Israel. Little is mentioned about the Tabernacle from that point on, although we do know that the Ark of the Covenant was removed from Shiloh and eventually taken to Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem, where it was placed in the Most Holy. However, nothing further is said about the curtains and the other furniture in the Tabernacle; the account is just silent. The whole lesson is conveyed by the *Ark of the Covenant*. The condensed “acorn” picture is emblemized in the Ark, as far as the Tabernacle is concerned. Solomon’s Temple supplanted the Tabernacle, but in time, it was destroyed. Eventually, Zerubbabel’s Temple was built and then enlarged into Herod’s Temple. And after Jesus’ death, Herod’s Temple was destroyed.

The way into the Most Holy (“the holiest of all”) was made manifest when Jesus died, the veil into the Most Holy of the Temple being ripped asunder. The rending of the Temple veil at the very moment of his death was as though to say, “Christ is the new and living way.” The torn veil also signified that Jesus’ death was more important than any of the literal Tabernacle or Temple structures; his sacrifice had a *higher value*. Jesus was certainly superior to any priest who typified him, and his sacrifice was superior to any animal sacrifice. Paul was showing that *in every way*, the antitype is superior to the type.

Why did Paul present his argument the way he did in verses 1-7 and then say in verse 8 that the Holy Spirit signified the way into the Most Holy “was not ... made manifest, while ... the first tabernacle was yet standing”? He was showing the Hebrews that the priesthood they revered so highly was *only a picture* of something more important. The Tabernacle arrangement with the priesthood was a *teacher to lead them to Christ*. The Tabernacle was a picture; Jesus was the *real thing*. For Jews to forsake the practices of the old Law Covenant and come into Christ did *not* mean they were turning away from God. To die to the Law and become alive in Christ was a *new way*, so one’s conscience should not be troubled. Rather than dishonoring the Tabernacle arrangement by accepting Christ, they were actually *honoring* the picture. The picture was designed to show *Christ, his Church, and his work and ministry both in this age and in the age to come*.

A misguided conscience can do a lot of harm. Many brethren kill the influence and deeds of other brethren by a misguided conscience, and while doing so, they think they are doing God a service (John 16:2). For example, Paul had a wonderful conscience, but it was misdirected. When the Lord enlightened and educated his conscience, he responded accordingly. Many of us react *emotionally* and never mature beyond that state. We cling to our prejudices and go through life with *emotional* judgment. Instead we should proceed on the basis of a “thus saith the LORD.” In the Book of Hebrews, Paul did an extraordinarily masterful job in trying to educate the misguided consciences of the Jews with regard to their troubled condition over the Mosaic Law and Christ, yet he did justice to both in telling them how to conduct themselves.

Heb. 9:9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

Heb. 9:10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

Heb. 9:11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more

perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

Heb. 9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Heb. 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

Heb. 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

“Until the time of reformation” (verse 10) would be when Jesus came on the scene. He opened up the gospel, a new and living way, with all of its *spiritual* ordinances and callings and cleansing. That was a “time of reformation,” or change, from the Mosaic to the Christian dispensation, from natural to spiritual, from shadow to substance.

The “carnal [natural, fleshly] ordinances” of the Tabernacle and Temple services did not purge the conscience, but they did provide a shadow of good things to come and keep the nation of Israel holier than surrounding nations. In proportion as one tried to obey the commandments and ordinances of the Law, he had a closer relationship to God. The pictures and lessons of the Law were a schoolmaster to lead the Jews to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

In addition, the carnal ordinances did accomplish *some* sanctifying, as stated in verse 13: “The blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh.” The carnal ordinances led to a purifying of the flesh by providing the nation of Israel with ceremonial cleansing. There was nothing wrong with ceremonial cleansing if it was done with a good attitude and conscience, for it provided a *typical justification*. For example, when the nation, in obedience to God’s instructions, performed the Day of Atonement services, God was pleased and granted them a typical justification, for Jesus had not yet come. However, the services were not to be done hypocritically, with the people sinning willfully all year long and then thinking the Day of Atonement made everything right.

But typical justification is quite different from the *inner* cleansing and *real* justification that come through Christ. The former was ceremonial and superficial. The parable in Luke 18:10-14 illustrates this point. “Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.” Jesus concluded the parable by saying that the publican “went down to his house justified rather than the other [the Pharisee]: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” The Pharisee was patting himself on the back, as it were. Thus there are different degrees of justification. The Pharisee, who did not pray with a right spirit, had a nominal justification, whereas the publican went away *more* justified. Although the whole nation was superficially justified on the Day of Atonement under the Law, there were *degrees* of *individual* typical justification depending on honesty and humility of heart. Incidentally, the term “divers washings” in verse 10 means ceremonial cleansing of different kinds.

Almost all of the Jews went through the ceremony, but some were more fastidious and careful than others. Even though all Jews followed the Law to a greater or lesser extent, those who pleased God the most had *faith*—Moses, Daniel, Hannah, etc. *Faith and the compelling desire* to

please the Lord brought a *faith justification*.

The terms “the blood of goats and calves” and “the blood of bulls and of goats”—that is, the literal animal sacrifices—represent Jesus and the Church (verses 12 and 13). “Goats” and “bulls” (or “calves”) are plural because the sacrifices were repeated, and multiple animals were often offered. The bullock pictured Jesus, and the goat represented the Church.

The “ashes of an heifer,” which were used to purify others, represent the faithfulness of the Ancient Worthies and the lessons and/or instructional value we obtain from meditating on their lives and their walk of obedience. But why did Paul mention the ashes when he was not trying to teach about the Ancient Worthies here? He was only tracing this subject in generalities, for the ashes back there did do a certain amount of superficial cleansing in connection with the dead and leprosy, and they pertain to the work of the Ancient Worthies in the antitype. However, in introducing the ashes and the sacrifices of bulls and goats, Paul was emphasizing that *the real cleansing comes from Christ*. He was treading lightly on these types and just trying to show that Christ’s blood, the offering of himself, is the important thing. He was saying in effect, “We should accept Christ, for he is the Messiah. He does not contradict the pictures but, rather, fulfills the general outline of these sacrifices; he is the principal character.”

Heb. 9:15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

“For this cause [for this reason],” Jesus “is the mediator of the new testament,” but what is the reason? He entered into the Most Holy with his own blood—that is, by means of his death—so that he might sanctify the called ones. The function of a mediator is to mediate a covenant or contract between two parties. However, in order to be *this* Mediator, in order to reconcile the two parties of *God and man*, Jesus *had to die*. Although death is an unusual requirement for a mediator, Jesus’ death was essential, for he could not even begin to reconcile God and man until he first died for the human race. His death is the *basis* of reconciliation, forgiveness of sins, and justification. The death of a perfect man was required to satisfy justice. Therefore, Jesus’ death paid the ransom price, satisfied justice, and achieved forgiveness of sins.

Jesus’ death was “for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament [the Law Covenant], [so that] they which are called [the Church class] might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” In this age, there is an *individual* call, whereas in the next age, there will be an *open* call to everlasting life on the earth: “And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17).

Verse 15 applies particularly to the Jews—to those who were not only under Adamic condemnation but also in bondage to the Law because they could not keep it perfectly. As Jews, they were *doubly* cursed, which they took upon themselves at Mount Sinai when they said in unison, “All the words which the LORD hath said will we do” (Exod. 24:3). While the Law promised life to those who could keep it, it also demanded death to those who could not obey. Therefore, Jesus had to be a Jew, as well as die, in order to release those who were underneath the Jewish Law arrangement. Verse 15 is addressed to the Jews who were called.

Heb. 9:16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

“For where a testament [a will] is,” a death must have taken place; that is, a will goes into effect *after* the party (the testator) dies.

Heb. 9:17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all

while the testator liveth.

“A will is of force after men are dead; it has no strength while the testator lives” (paraphrase). Even though Jesus was the Messiah, he had to die in order to be a blessing in the *full* sense. Otherwise, he might have been a blessing in *temporarily* easing some of the sorrows of the human race and in his message, but there would have been a wide gulf between that accomplishment and what he can now do. A will has force when the testator (Jesus in this case) dies. In other words, while Jesus remained a human being, his blessings for mankind were limited. Incidentally, the Christian is under a new covenant but not under *the* New Covenant, which is to be made with the house of Israel after the Church is complete.

Heb. 9:18 Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.

The word “testament” was supplied by the translators. We would probably say that “the first *covenant*” was also dedicated with blood, “the blood of calves and of goats” (verse 19). But the meaning is the same, for a “testament” is a “covenant,” that is, the old Law Covenant.

Heb. 9:19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,

The dedication of the Law Covenant, the making and ratifying of the “first testament” with blood, is described in Exodus 24:4-8, “And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.” Half of the blood was sprinkled on the altar and half on the people. The blood came from bulls and goats; the bulls’ blood represented Jesus, and the goats’ blood represented the Church. The blood was taken from bulls and goats (*plural*) in order to provide a *sufficient* quantity to sprinkle 2 million people *representatively* after reading “the book of the covenant ... in the audience of the people.”

The equal division of the blood, with half being sprinkled on the altar and half on the people, showed reconciliation and the satisfaction of justice between the people and the Law (the book). Sprinkling the book and the altar represented the satisfaction of justice, whereas sprinkling the people represented their reconciliation through the blood. The equal division of the blood shows that the satisfaction of justice and reconciliation are *equally* important; that is, *both* are needed to effect salvation.

In the antitype, the blood has *not* yet been sprinkled on the altar and on the people. The Church has already been sprinkled in some respects but *not* the world. Christians have their “hearts sprinkled [now, in the Gospel Age] from an evil conscience” (Heb. 10:22). However, the world has not been sprinkled because the Ransom has not been applied or paid over to Justice. The application awaits the completion of the blood, which will occur when the Church is complete. Then will come the restitutionary processes from the standpoint of the reconciling of sin.

Thus a powerful argument for the application of the blood still being future is that the blood of “bulls and goats” must first be all secured in the antitype. The Church has not finished filling up

that which is left behind of Christ's sufferings and of his death; that is, the Church *shares* in Jesus' sufferings and death (Col. 1:24).

In connection with the Memorial, Jesus said that his blood (the blood of the new testament, or the New Covenant) was shed for the Church and for many (Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20). If the Church is not under the New Covenant, in what sense was the *blood of the New Covenant* shed for them? The blood has been loaned, mortgaged, and imputed to the Church, and when the Church is complete, that merit will be recalled, or taken back, and paid over once and for all to Justice on behalf of the world of mankind. At that time, the blood will be *permanently* relinquished, but now Jesus' blood is *temporarily* given to the Church like money in the bank—his blood acts as collateral, giving credit to the Church, so that they can be justified. By this arrangement, God can be just, and Jesus is the Justifier.

Comment: Without Jesus' covering, the Church would have nothing to offer.

Reply: Yes, that is shown in Leviticus 16 by the high priest's going *twice* into the Most Holy, first with the blood of the bullock, which was for his house (the body members and the household of faith of the Gospel Age), and then a second time with the blood of the goat, which was for a sin offering on behalf of the people. To date, only the *first* part of the offering is complete in the antitype; only the blood of the bull has been taken into the Most Holy.

Incidentally, while there is a certain plausibility that others can use—and very powerfully in a limited sense—by taking several Scriptures to show that the Church is now under the New Covenant, yet, to be consistent, that interpretation does not fit every case. As a principle, we have to harmonize *all* Scriptures on a given topic to be sure we have the truth. We can see why some Christians have trouble understanding the subject of the New Covenant. One of the beautiful features of the Harvest message is that it brings out the truth on this subject by making certain suggestions.

“Moses ... took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people.” Why were water, scarlet wool, and hyssop mixed with “the blood of calves and of goats” to sprinkle the book and the people? “The people” who were sprinkled were the *nation* of Israel, for the book and the people were blessed in a *congregational* fashion. Therefore, the signification is that in the antitype, the *world* will be sprinkled after the Church is complete.

“Water” represents the water of truth, and the “scarlet wool” pictures the Ransom. The color “scarlet” pertains to blood, that is, *death*, and the “wool,” being like yarn, shows that the theme of the Ransom is woven into the Old and New Testaments. The scarlet wool represents an understanding of the doctrine of the Ransom as taught throughout Scripture. In addition, the scarlet wool reminds us of the story of Rahab, who hid the two Israelite spies (Joshua 2). As a reward, she secured a promise that she and her family would be spared from death. As agreed upon, a scarlet cord identified her and her family when the Israelites besieged the city of Jericho. Thus her actions and the scarlet cord demonstrated her *faith*. Faith and *actions in harmony with that faith* are necessary to get life. Wool comes from a *lamb*, a picture of Jesus.

“Hyssop,” an herb of *purification*, implies *judgments*. “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean” (Psa. 51:7). The vinegar that was cruelly put on a hyssop reed to sponge Jesus' mouth while he was on the Cross pictures his personal suffering and chastisement (John 19:29). “The chastisement of *our* peace was upon him” (Isa. 53:5). The Church is also led as a lamb to the slaughter, for “all we like sheep have gone astray” (Isa. 53:6). In the next age, the disciplinary rod will be used; Jesus will rule the nations with an iron rod as well as a shepherd's staff. At the time of Passover, hyssop was used to splash blood on the lintel and doorposts of each house.

The first Law Covenant was a picture of a coming and *higher* covenant, which will have a better Mediator, better blood, a better “tabernacle,” and a better understanding of the “book.”

With regard to the antitype, the book of the Law and the people were sprinkled with blood to show, respectively, the satisfaction of God’s justice and the paradox of reconciliation of the world as a class and also as individuals. In other words, there will be a *general* application of the blood, and this sprinkling will affect the *individuals* upon whom it falls.

Comment: The sprinkling of the book of the Law shows God’s approbation of using His perfect Law in the New Covenant.

Reply: Yes, it shows not only the requiring of divine Justice but also God’s approval of this arrangement.

Heb. 9:20 Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

Heb. 9:21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

This language seems to give plausibility to the other side of the issue. Some of these verses can be troublesome if we do not have the proper perspective, for the language here seems to fit in with the Memorial picture. A superficial reading seems to support the thought that the Church is now under the New Covenant. When we read that the Tabernacle and all of its vessels have already been sprinkled and purged with blood, it is natural to ask, “Doesn’t that mean that the blood has all been collected?” Accordingly, those who believe that the Church is under the New Covenant start the application at the *beginning* of the Gospel Age. They claim that the sprinkling occurred at the start of the present age, and therefore, the people and the book apply to the Lord’s people being justified and cleansed and dealt with under the terms of the New Covenant during the whole age. That line of reasoning is powerful, but other Scriptures point up certain problems. We would like to harmonize the picture here, because it is a little troublesome to many.

From another standpoint, the blood has not yet been antitypically applied to the Tabernacle, the book, and all the vessels because the dedication of the Temple will take place when it is *complete*. In other words, only when the Temple (the Church) is *complete* can the dedication take place and all the vessels be sprinkled with blood. The Temple is still *in process* of construction; the stones are still *being brought* out of the quarry and quietly being built up into a holy Temple. As the Apostle Peter said, “Ye also, as lively stones, are [being] built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5). The blood is still being collected. Not until the Church and the blood are *finished* can (1) the dedication take place, (2) the blood be sprinkled on the world, and (3) the New Covenant be inaugurated. That will be the official dedication and the making known to the people that God has accepted the arrangement. The people who survive the Time of Trouble will then hear the terms of what will bring life and what will bring death. In time, the rest of mankind will be awakened from the grave to hear the words of the “book.” “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Rev. 20:12). The opening of these “books” is still future, pertaining to the next age. The dead will come forth from the tomb, the books will be opened and read, and the people will be judged again according to the things that are subsequently written. These events have to do with the end of the Gospel Age and the introduction of the Millennial Age from an *official* standpoint.

The point is that we can see why some Christians have great difficulty in understanding the time setting of the New Covenant; they believe it began at Pentecost and apply the whole picture during the Gospel Age. However, other Scriptures show that the Church first has to resist unto blood, thus filling up the cup. The Church is invited to share in Jesus' death, so that death is not yet complete. Applying the New Covenant during the Gospel Age *nullifies* a lot of other Scriptures. When two views are plausible, as in this case, we should take the view that satisfies *all* of the requirements. One requirement is that there is still opportunity to lay down one's life in the Master's cause and to be counted worthy to share in the Kingdom blessings. We present our "bodies [plural] a living sacrifice [singular]" (Rom. 12:1). The *one* "living sacrifice" of the goat class ("bodies" plural) is the calling of this age.

When we look at the whole spectrum on this subject, only this latter view, which the Pastor introduced in the Harvest message, satisfies all of the requirements. However, because it is difficult for some to realize that the Church is not under the New Covenant, we should be sympathetic to them, for certain Scriptures seem to support that teaching. At the same time, we can better appreciate what a blessing it is to be enlightened on this subject. It is harder for those who have been brought up and rooted in this other belief to break out of that concept than it is for children of consecrated parents who were not born with those prejudices.

Why did Paul use the word "enjoined" in verse 20? Moses said to the people, "This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined [*commanded*] unto you." In other words, a sense of *obligation* was involved in the commandment.

Heb. 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

By the Law, "*almost all things are ... purged with blood.*" *Individual willful sins* are not purged with Jesus' blood because they cannot be forgiven. There can be no free remission of willful sins. Rather, sins for which God sees we are personally responsible must be requited with *stripes* (punishments). Such sins cannot be forgiven just because Jesus died, for a sin against the Holy Spirit requires stripes. A *full willful sin* against the Holy Spirit merits Second Death, but there are *degrees* of willfulness. Most sins are a *mixture* of Adamic and partially willful sin.

Heb. 9:23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

The "patterns of things in the heavens" were purified with blood, but the "heavenly things" are purified with "better sacrifices" (*plural*), that is, with Jesus and the Church. Exodus 24:5 was read earlier: "And he [Moses] sent *young men* of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed *peace offerings* of [many] oxen unto the LORD." In other words, when the people were blessed with the blood of bulls and goats, many oxen were slain as a peace offering, and young men were involved with that offering, showing participation by a *class* (the Church in the antitype) in preparing the blood prior to its application upon the nation.

The "heavens" of verse 23 are the *true* spiritual condition of mind and life *down here*, that is, the true religious world on earth. The consecrated are seated "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6).

The blesser of the people of the next age, The Christ, is pictured not only by the priesthood (the High Priest and the underpriests) but also by the Tabernacle structure itself. The whole arrangement in the type is The Christ. The flesh-and-blood priesthood and the Tabernacle furniture picture the same work from two different standpoints. Here, then, are two powerful witnesses: the lessons of the priesthood and the lessons of the Tabernacle and its development.

Heb. 9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

The “holy places made with hands” that Christ did not enter were the Holy and the Most Holy compartments of the Tabernacle and the Temple, which the typical high priests entered. When Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers, he was only in the outer precincts of the Temple, relatively speaking. He went only into the Court, which the Israelites could enter. He did not have to enter the Holy and the Most Holy because he was so much *higher* than the type. When Jesus came, the type passed way, and he was fulfilling an entirely different picture. The Holy and the Most Holy “are the figures of the true [holy places]”; that is, the typical Tabernacle and Temples were a type, or shadow, of the true and higher “temple.”

Spiritually speaking, Jesus was in the Holy of the Temple during his earthly ministry. Even now he is still in the Holy in another sense, ministering to the Church by trimming the wicks, replenishing the oil, and doing the work of a High Priest. But first, he had to enter “into heaven itself, ... to appear in the presence of God for us.” (This activity was shown in the type when the high priest went into the Most Holy.) In other words, Jesus had to enter heaven to qualify as the High Priest; he had to die and give his life so that he could justify the Church class and enable them to have a spiritual calling. Antotypically, when Jesus went under the Second Veil in death, he entered the Most Holy (heaven) as a spirit being. Subsequently he came out of the Most Holy and again entered the Holy—this time as a spirit being—to officiate as High Priest to the Church. To repeat: Jesus first entered the Holy to live his consecrated earthly life as a new creature. Then he died, going through the Veil (his flesh) into the Most Holy, and became of the divine nature and of the Melchisedec priesthood.

Heb. 9:25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

The typical high priest entered into the Most Holy once a year on the Day of Atonement with the “blood of others” (Leviticus 16). The bulls and goats, the sacrificed animals and the offering of the blood, pictured the dead humanity of Jesus and the Church, respectively. In Jesus’ case, the dying took 3 1/2 years. Stated another way, when the blood was fully poured out of Jesus’ veins (a process that took 3 1/2 years), when he had actually expired on the Cross, his blood could be used as the Ransom.

A lot of these are pictures within pictures, and the Holy Spirit is needed to harmonize them. Otherwise, the pictures can be overdrawn to the point where they become an absurdity or a contradiction. No person can impart this understanding to another person, for the Holy Spirit is the teacher. We need sanctified common sense in connection with the Holy Spirit and instruction by others, particularly the Lord’s chief messengers.

Heb. 9:26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Why didn’t each high priest enter the Most Holy *just once* with the “blood of others” during his *entire tenure* of office, for example, when he was made high priest and then never again? In essence, the *repetition* each year on the Day of Atonement was a *memorial*, for altogether, the many annual observances of the Day of Atonement pictured *only the one death* of Jesus. In other words, the people were always to have *fresh in their minds* the one death of Christ—just as the annual commemoration of the Memorial is a *remembrance* of what Jesus did for us.

Verse 26 is an argument and safeguard against the doctrine of the Mass. In celebrating the

Mass, Roman Catholics erroneously claim that eating and partaking of the wafer and the wine (the symbols) have a cleansing effect and provide forgiveness of sins, yet Jesus said of the Memorial, “This do in *remembrance* of me” (Luke 22:19).

“But now *once* in the end of the world [the Jewish Age] hath he [Jesus] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” In summary, Paul was saying that this type, which was repeated annually, pictures the *one* death of Christ.

Heb. 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

“It is appointed unto men [the various high priests in the type] once to die.” Each high priest figuratively died once each year on the Day of Atonement. When a high priest literally died, his successor followed the same procedure, and on and on. For many centuries, this service was repeated annually to picture the *one* offering of Christ.

How do we harmonize the fact that in the type, the high priest went into the Most Holy *twice* each year—once with the blood of the bullock and once with the blood of the Lord’s goat? The first offering of the bull represented Jesus’ *personally* offering himself—and he did this *only once*. Thus going under the Veil the first time pictured Jesus’ *personal* offering in death. The high priest’s going under the Veil the second time represented the death of the body, the Church. Therefore, going under the Veil *twice* on the Day of Atonement pictured the *one* offering of *The Christ*: the Head first, then the body. The primacy of the Head is thus shown, but the offering of *The Christ*, the two parts, is really considered *one offering*. When the Church is complete, the one offering of *The Christ* will be complete.

Going under the First Veil represents consecration, the death of the human will. Going under the Second Veil pictures the death of the human body. Therefore, the high priest’s being under the Second Veil pictured Jesus’ death, his being in the grave, and his arising in the Most Holy pictured his resurrection. The high priest’s coming out of the Tabernacle and blessing the people pictured the *apokalupsis* or the *epiphania*, that is, Jesus’ revelation to the world (still future). In contradistinction, Jesus’ revelation to his people during the Gospel Age is more private. Those who are awake and alert during the present age can see that he has been successful, that he has indeed been raised, that he is a priest after the order of Melchisedec, that they have to live now *by faith*, and that he will bless the world in due time. When Jesus appears in honor and glory at the end of the Gospel Age, there will be no more need for an eye of faith with respect to either the Church or the world, for his reality will be made very manifest. “Every eye shall see him” (Rev. 1:7).

“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” In the type, if the high priest did something wrong, he died under the Second Veil and did not come up in the Most Holy. Therefore, the judgment took place when the high priest went under the Veil. If he performed correctly and faithfully, he came up in the Most Holy. Accordingly, the resurrection of Jesus is a *proof* of the validity of his sacrifice. When the Holy Spirit came with *power* on the assembled disciples at Pentecost, they were personally convinced that Jesus had indeed been raised and that his sacrifice had been accepted by God. When they each got a mechanical gift of the Holy Spirit at that time, they were certain that their views of Jesus after his crucifixion were not phantoms, for they had received the Holy Spirit as he had promised. The Holy Spirit came on them and called to remembrance things that Jesus had formerly spoken (John 14:26).

Incidentally, we are not speaking of the supposed Holy Spirit that now comes on some whereby they do healings but are not following much Scripture. Such individuals are so engrossed in the healing and other signs and symbols that they spend little time trying to understand God’s Word and prophecy. Therefore, *false* signs are being given today—and their

occurrences will increase as we approach the very end of the age. In fact, such signs and wonders will be one of the greatest testings of the true Church (2 Thess. 2:8-10). The religious leaders of the nominal Church will use these future lying wonders and deceptions as proof that a *supernatural power* is operating on their behalf. And they will be supernatural—a fact no one will be able to deny—but the Scriptures tell of the existence of *fallen angels* as well as *holy angels*. And there is a true gospel as well as a false gospel. Only those who know the *truth* and the *principles* of truth will have their eyes opened. This understanding *cannot be imparted* to anyone else. We are to study NOW when we have time to meditate on these things, for under conditions of trouble, duress, and pressure, there will not be time for such study. Even the Great Company will be deceived, at least temporarily, along lines that we are not fully aware of (Matt. 24:24). Later on, they will have a hard, bitter experience in which prophecies will be called to their minds. Those who are rightly exercised and renew their consecrations will be taken out of their lethargy and given the extra oil (Matt. 25:1-13).

Heb. 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

“So Christ was *once* offered.” While a high priest went under the Second Veil twice, the first time was for the “Head,” and the second time was for the “body.” The Head is pictured by the death of the bullock, and the body is pictured by the death of the goat. Jesus has already entered the Most Holy, but the entrance of The Christ is still future. Stated another way, The Christ, Head and body members, has not yet fully passed underneath the Second Veil.

“Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” On the Day of Atonement, the nation of Israel waited expectantly for the high priest to appear, for when they saw him, they knew the atonement had been accomplished. The fact that he came out alive indicated God had accepted the atonement. In their solemnity and appreciation of God’s acceptance of the arrangement and of the high priest’s coming out victoriously, the people fell down in adoration, prostrating themselves before God. The antitype, still future, will be when the world’s “high priest” (The Christ) is accepted. Romans 8:19,22 proves that the Church is part of the High Priest: “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God... For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” Just as Israel’s waiting for the atonement when the high priest came out pictures first Jesus and then the body members, so the whole world groans, waiting “for the manifestation of the sons of God.”

Comment: Haggai 2:7 says, “The desire of all nations shall come.” At the present time, the people do not know what they are desiring or what is coming, but the Kingdom will be for all nations.

Reply: After men’s hearts are broken in the Time of Trouble—after the people are put down on their knees and there is no other hope—imagine their reaction when a lot of accompanying *true signs* and wonders occur! As an illustration, an earthquake, darkness, and resuscitations accompanied Jesus’ death (Matt. 27:51-53). Similarly at this end of the age, when certain signs occur in heaven, as well as convulsions in nature and the resurrection of the Ancient Worthies, the people will begin to see that these miracles *tell the truth*. The people will then say, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (Isa. 25:9).

Comment: Colossians 3:4 also proves that the Church is part of The Christ: “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

Reply: Yes, Jesus and the Church have to appear to the world together.

“Christ was once offered to bear the sins of *many*.” The work of The Christ will really begin after the start of the general resurrection, when they will bear the sins of the whole world. Mankind will then come to the antitypical priesthood for cleansing. As priests, Jesus and his Church will evaluate penalties for wrongdoing. The individual problems of each person will be reviewed, and the priests will patiently deal with each member of the human family who comes to them for reconciliation and cleansing. After the establishment of the Law Covenant in the type, the people came to Moses with their problems. He sat down and judged them from dawn until night, trying to help them. Finally Jethro, seeing that Moses was wearing himself to a frazzle, suggested that servants assist him in the work. Subsequently a class was appointed in the nation to help Moses in judging the people. This arrangement represents the work of the Church in assisting Jesus in connection with the administration of justice in the Kingdom.

Comment: 1 John 2:2 states that Jesus “is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” Also, he “is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe” (1 Tim. 4:10).

Reply: Yes, Jesus’ being “once offered to bear the sins of many” can be applied two ways. He can be considered the Sin-bearer of both the Gospel Age and the Kingdom Age. Verse 28 seems to include both ages; that is, it describes a twofold work. As the Sin-bearer of the Gospel Age and also of the next age, Jesus is “the Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:14). In the large sense, the Atonement Day similarly includes both ages. The forepart of the Day of Atonement (the Gospel Age) pertains to the selection, development, experience, and preparation of the priesthood, and the work of the priesthood will take place in the second part of the Day of Atonement (the Kingdom Age).

Heb. 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

The Mosaic Law, more particularly the ceremonial aspect of that Law, was “a shadow of good things to come.” In what way was the Law a “shadow” portending good news of the future?

1. When the high priest came out on the Day of Atonement, he blessed the congregation of the people of Israel at large, indicating a blessing of the future, after the Gospel Age sin offering is complete. Other important feasts also portended a blessing, and even if the feast was somber, the lesson was one of forgiveness of sin.
2. Even though the rest will not be fully accomplished until the end of the seventh 1,000-year day, the sabbath was instituted as a day of promised rest, picturing the Millennium.
3. Sin was atoned for; that is, a means of cancellation for sin was shown in the type.

Although a “shadow,” the Law was “not the very image of the [good] things [to come].” For verse 1, Weymouth has, “Now, since the Law exhibits only an outline of the blessings to come and not a perfect representation of the realities, the priests can never, by repeating the same sacrifices which they continually offer year after year, give complete freedom from sin to those who draw near.” The Law is not a perfect representation of the realities because it has certain limitations and can only provide clues or hints of the reality, which will *far transcend* the importance and value of the type.

“Those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually [can never] make the comers thereunto perfect.” The sacrifices “offered year by year” are usually thought of as the Day of

Atonement sacrifices, which purified the *nation* and constituted a basis whereby the sacrifices of *individuals* were acceptable in subsequent days. In other words, at the end of every year, the Israelites had to have a fresh start, which was the cancellation of their *national sin* (Adamic sin, or the curse, in the antitype). The people were not dealt with and could not offer individual sacrifices until that sin offering was complete. That typical atonement was done once a year every year, continuously, down through the centuries.

In a sense too, the daily morning and evening sacrifices can be thought of as continual. On every calendar day of the year, the services commenced and ended with the offering of a lamb. *Regardless of what happened during the rest of the day—whether it was the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, Pentecost, or something else—a lamb was offered at both the beginning and the end of each day.* These daily burnt offerings pictured the *continual* sacrifice of Christ. Thus on every single day of the year, the nation of Israel was reminded of this lamb sacrifice, which foreshadowed the *one* offering of Christ.

In one sense, then, the expression “which they offered *year by year continually*” reminds us more particularly of the Day of Atonement sacrifices, which were done annually and repeated year after year. However, other prophecies (such as Daniel 8:11-13; 11:31; and 12:11) have to do with the continual morning and evening (daily) sacrifices. Thus when the account says that the “daily sacrifice” was taken away, we think of the morning and evening sacrifices, and when the Book of Hebrews speaks of the “year by year” (annual) sacrifice, we think of the Day of Atonement.

Heb. 10:2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

The Christian is not thoroughly purged from sin in every respect, yet Paul reasoned that the typical Levitical sacrifices were much inferior to the atonement that Christ brought because if they really canceled sin, the worshippers back there would have had no further consciousness of sin. How do we explain this reasoning from the Christian perspective? The sacrifices were repeated in the type, whereas in the antitype, Jesus’ personal sacrifice was “*once for all*” (Heb. 10:10). The continuity of service back there was not efficacious, but Jesus’ sacrifice is *ever efficacious*, for those who use the robe of Christ’s righteousness to apply daily for forgiveness of sin are cleansed. Christians are assured from the Lord’s own Word that they get a purging, a cleansing, of their conscience. Thus the antitypical Day of Atonement sacrifice occurs *only once*; the bullock (Christ) died *only once*, finishing his course at Calvary, and the goat (the Church class) dies *collectively only once* over the period of the Gospel Age. When the Lord’s goat sacrifice is finished, it, too, will be “once for all.” Stated another way, the goat is a composite class, whereas the bullock represented just Jesus, the Head, personally. If we think of both offerings (the bull and the Lord’s goat) from a detached and finished standpoint, the Head will have been offered only once, and the body will have been offered only once. Because the one sacrifice of the Church has been stretched out over almost 2,000 years, the Christ class members have not been discerned and are described as a mystery: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

Heb. 10:3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

Heb. 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

With the mention of “the blood of bulls and goats,” verses 3 and 4 refer primarily to the Day of Atonement sacrifices and secondarily to the institution of the Law Covenant arrangement at Mount Sinai (Heb. 9:19).

Heb. 10:5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

Jesus said to himself at his baptism at the Jordan River, “Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.” Probably this sentiment was not said aloud but was part of his meditation—it was the language of his heart—at the time of his consecration. This meditation continues through verse 9.

What “coming” is referred to in the clause “Wherefore when he [Jesus] cometh into the world”? At age 30 at Jordan, Jesus came *officially* as the Messiah to fulfill the requirements of the Law. Of course he initially came as a babe at his First Advent, but the process of his birth and growth to manhood, when he “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man,” was merely preparatory for this event at Jordan (Luke 2:52).

The statement “Sacrifice and offering thou [God] wouldest not” is often misunderstood. Since God instituted the sacrifices and offerings of the Law, He would not criticize or disapprove His own method. Therefore, the thought is that He would not accept them as the *ultimate* offering for sin. Those Jews who tried to faithfully obey the requirements of the Law were blessed accordingly, but the sacrifices and offerings were only pictures, not the reality.

The Jews had a hard time letting go of the type and accepting the reality. And that was Paul’s purpose in writing the Book of Hebrews, namely, *to urge Jews to let go of the form and ceremony of the Law and to accept the reality*. Some Christians use verse 5 to discredit any study of the Old Testament sacrifices and Tabernacle shadows and say we should study only the New Testament, but the sacrifices were *of God for a purpose*. Paul was trying to dissuade the Jews from an improper emphasis in observing and clinging to the type, for their Messiah had come, fulfilling the antitype.

“A [human] body hast thou [God] prepared [for] me [Jesus].” God assisted Jesus in being made flesh by transferring him from the Logos to human nature. Jesus was shrunk down, as it were, from his great and glorious being in his preexistence to a lowly birth down here. We are reminded of the type in which Aaron brought his *own* bullock for the sin offering. The bullock represented that when Christ came into this world, he was his own bullock; his perfect human nature was *separate* from Adamic stock, for he was without a human father. In contrast, the goat was taken out from among the people. Verse 1 said that the Law was “not the very image” of the good things to come; it was not a perfect representation of the reality. Aaron’s bringing the bull for himself is a good example, for the bull was not a perfect representation of Jesus, but it was the best that Aaron could do, whereas in the reality, God brought the antitypical bullock.

In Leviticus 16, the Lord’s goat came from among the people for the people. This procedure pictured that out of all peoples, nationalities, and tongues would come forth a Christ class. Thus Aaron brought his own bullock, which was for himself and his house, and the goat was for the people, the world, showing that the Church is part of the sin offering for mankind.

Heb. 10:6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

Verse 6, which can be misunderstood in two ways, should not be taken out of context to discredit the whole arrangement. The question is, Why did God have “no pleasure” in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin?

1. The type did not accomplish the desired reconciliation. For forgiveness of sin, God’s justice would have to be *fully* satisfied. He could not have *full* pleasure in the typical arrangement

because justification under old the Law Covenant was only *partial*.

2. The Jews only halfheartedly entered into the offerings and sacrifices because they offered sick and lame animals. Even though they did not understand the antitypical meaning of the sacrifices, they should have had confidence in God and been motivated by the proper spirit of obedience.

Verse 6 can also be read in the *present* tense. For example, Moffatt says, “In holocausts and sin-offerings thou *takest* no delight.” Previously God had *some* pleasure in the offerings that He had ordained, especially if those sacrifices were performed with the right spirit. Using the present tense would signify that now, *the reality having come*, God has no pleasure in the continuance of the type. Now that Jesus has come, the other arrangement is fading away. He came as the reality to fulfill the type, so the literal Tabernacle, Levitical priesthood, blood sacrifices, and Law Covenant are passing away. The reality has begun. The royal majesty of the Kingdom has approached; i.e., the opportunity of being identified with the *rulership* aspect of the Kingdom has begun. The “good news” of the Kingdom is *primarily* that if fallen man repents from his sin and accepts Jesus, he has the opportunity to become a joint-heir with Jesus in the Kingdom. Only in a *secondary* sense is the “good news” restitution. While the secondary application is more magnanimous in that more people are involved—the whole world—it was not the initial thought of the term “good news.”

Heb. 10:7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

When Jesus was baptized at Jordan, the “heavens” (the knowledge of his preexistence) were opened to him (Matt. 3:16). Prior to this event—that is, from the time he was born as a human until he was baptized at age 30—he did not know of his preexistence, although he had surmised he was the Messiah, for a sequence of unusual events had occurred to so indicate.

1. At his birth, shepherds in a field saw a vision in which the heavens were filled with angels. The message was, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.... Glory to God in the highest” (Luke 2:8-15). Not only did the shepherds disclose this event to Joseph and Mary, but also they noised it abroad to others.

2. When Jesus was about 1 1/2 years old, three wise men came from the East to see the King of the Jews (Matt. 2:2). With ulterior motives, King Herod called them in for an audience, but God overruled the situation to preserve Jesus’ life.

3. At the time of Jesus’ circumcision in the Temple, Simeon and Anna recognized him as the Messiah. Simeon had been promised that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. The Holy Spirit seemed to overpower him, and he recognized that somehow or other this infant was the promised Deliverer of Israel. At that point, he was satisfied to die, to go in peace. Anna the prophetess, a very religious widow, also recognized Jesus as the Messiah and prophesied.

4. No doubt Mary had at some time told Jesus that the circumstances surrounding his birth were unusual and that Joseph was not his real father. In addition, Joseph would have related the dream in which he was warned to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus (Matt. 2:13).

Therefore, it was no wonder that at age 12 in the Temple, Jesus said he must be about his Father’s business! However, he did not remember his preexistent glory until his mind was flooded at Jordan. Meanwhile, he grew in wisdom and stature. With a perfect mind and reasoning ability, the “wisdom” Jesus had as a boy was that he was the Messiah promised in

“the book” of the Law and the prophets. After all, how could he have *grown in wisdom* if, from the time he was a little baby, he had had all the wisdom of his position as the great Logos?

At Jordan, the knowledge of his preexistence *burst* on his mind. At that point, he recalled the personal instructions from God in regard to his mission down here on earth. Prior to that, up to age 30, he had gotten all of his instruction from the Scriptures. He asked deep and searching questions of the scribes and Pharisees because he desired information, and no doubt they gave him partial answers. Thus Jesus was learning and growing. Upon learning that under the Law, the priest officially presented himself for consecration and Temple service at age 30, Jesus realized that he should be baptized at the same age. Thus he learned by observation and the Word of God, not by remembering something God had told him in his preexistence.

When the dove lighted on Jesus at Jordan, John the Baptist identified him as the Messiah. In other words, prior to this incident, John did not know Jesus was the Messiah. However, the reason John hesitated to baptize his cousin was that he knew Jesus was too righteous to need a baptism for repentance for the remission of sins. In fact, even though John was a prophet of the Lord, he had the humility to see that Jesus was better than he, but he did not previously know him as the Messiah. Probably only John and Jesus heard God’s voice say, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” The dove and the supernatural voice were the two external signs, or “witnesses,” that convinced John of Jesus’ Messiahship. As a result of his preexistence flooding his mind, Jesus fled into the wilderness to assimilate all these facts in an orderly fashion. He prayed and fasted and then returned 40 days later to begin his ministry.

Incidentally, John’s baptism was for the sinner, the one who had broken covenant relationship. It was a way for the repentant one to wash away his sins and come back into covenant relationship with God.

The clue that Jesus did not know of his preexistence as the Logos from the time of his birth is the expression “being found in fashion as a man” (Phil. 2:8). At Jordan at age 30, Jesus discovered himself; that is, he realized he was previously the Logos. (Of course the angels, both holy and fallen, were aware of this fact all along, for angels had announced his birth and could see what was happening down here on earth.) *Jesus* found himself in fashion as a man and humbled himself, becoming obedient even to the ignominious death of the Cross.

For only 3 1/2 years of Jesus’ First Advent of 33 1/2 years as a human being did he know about his preexistence. Although he knew all the prophecies of the Word prior to his consecration because he had a perfect mind, it was only *afterward*, when he continued to progress in knowledge, that he understood more of their *meaning*. It is one thing to have a thorough knowledge of all the utterances and all the laws, but to see them with full detail required study. The Holy Spirit enlightened Jesus so that even after his consecration, he progressed in knowledge, for he began to learn things he had not known even as the Logos. Thus he grew as a new creature, for he was being perfected for office; he was made perfect by the things that he suffered (Heb. 5:8,9).

Heb. 10:8 Above when he said, **Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;**

“Above when he said,” signifying “what was stated above,” indicates that Paul was writing a letter. Paul was referring to what he had just written (above) on the same “page.”

“Sacrifice,” “offering,” “burnt offerings,” and “offering for sin” remind us of the offerings subsequent to the Day of Atonement. Leviticus chapters 1-7 mention burnt, meal, peace, sin, trespass, etc., subsequent offerings of the people according to the Law.

Heb. 10:9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

Verse 9 ends Jesus' meditation, which began in verse 5. What is the difference between verse 7 and verse 9? Verse 7 begins, "Then said *I*..." Verse 9 starts, "Then said *he*..." The apostles wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As Paul was trying to write his message to the Jew, verse 7 was a spurt of inspiration by the Holy Spirit, and Paul wrote down the words as if Jesus were actually talking. It was as though the Holy Spirit enthusiastically took Paul's pen for a brief moment and wrote in the first person for Jesus himself. Then Paul returned to the narration: "Then said *he*..."

What is the lesson to us? We should not prepare messages that are "too pat." As Christians, we sometimes prepare talks, and that is what they are—*talks*. Discourses that are read do not allow for anything inspirational to come on the spur of the moment, whereas the Lord can give reason and speak by the Holy Spirit. The speaker himself is blessed when a truth comes into his heart and life because he has let the Holy Spirit talk through him. There are two extremes. One extreme uses only cold, rational reasoning and does not want to recognize anything to do with emotionalism. The other extreme is too much emotionalism, as in the case of Pentecostals. A happy medium recognizes emotionalism that is in harmony with reason and truth. However, in the *final decision* on a matter—for example, in judgment and doctrine—emotionalism should be removed. Accordingly, we find right here in the Book of Hebrews that Paul did not just artificially write out the message, for in some places, it is as though the Lord took the pen.

Jesus "taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." He set aside the typical sacrifices that he might fulfill the antitype, the real sacrifice for sins.

Heb. 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

"By the which will [that is, by God's will or by the mind of Christ] we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," but the mind that was in Christ was the mind of God, or His will (Phil. 2:5).

Paul was emphasizing the ransom price, the basis of our justification: "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The intrinsic merit of the offering is in Jesus' personal sacrifice.

Heb. 10:11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

Heb. 10:12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

Heb. 10:13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

Verses 11 and 12 emphasize the continuity of *centuries* of time and *generations* of priests in the Tabernacle and Temple services. Paul was contrasting the *many* individuals in the office of the priesthood who died over the years with the *one* man, Christ Jesus, who came and died. The contrast was the *plurality* of the priesthood versus Jesus alone, a *singular* individual.

The Apostle Paul wrote this message to the Hebrews with *terrific power*. Imagine if we tried to introduce this subject with such strength! Sometimes we introduce a subject with great

trepidation, apologizing, backtracking, cautiously putting out feelers, and laying such a broad and general base that when we finally come to the point we have in mind, the allotted time has expired. But Paul, starting with the first chapter in this epistle, almost exploded into the subject matter. He came right to the point: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (Heb. 1:1,2). With no flowery introduction, he went immediately to the heart of the matter. Because the subject was so big, he did not want to waste time, paper, or energy on the frills.

Comment: Paul’s arguments powerfully invalidate the continuing priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church.

Reply: Yes, that is true because the Catholic Church tries to copy the Jewish priesthood and then adds certain embellishments.

“But this [one] man [Jesus], after he had offered *one* sacrifice for sins *for ever*, sat down on the right hand of God.” In contrast, the sacrifices under the Law Covenant were repeated and repeated either daily or annually.

Jesus “sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.” Very early in this book, Paul emphasized the prophecies that God would have a Son, that this Son would come here in the flesh, and that he would do an important work. Therefore, if Jesus said he is the Son of God, what is so startling or blasphemous about that statement when the Old Testament speaks of that very thing? The Jewish religious leaders were not prepared to recognize Jesus—his youth; his lack of background training in the priesthood; his coming from Nazareth; the fact that he walked on the roads, had no home, and slept with his head on a rock; mixed with sinners, etc. The Jewish people had difficulty too and were cautious because the priests did not recognize or endorse Jesus. Many people are followers and have no drive of their own in grasping certain truths; they go with the crowd. Therefore, Paul was trying to take the people’s hand and put it into the hand of God. He used natural logic and Scripture again and again in an effort to open their eyes. “Didn’t God say such and such? Doesn’t the very fact the offerings were *repeated* prove that they were not ever efficacious for cleansing from sin?”

Heb. 10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Heb. 10:15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,

“For after that he [Jesus] had said before.” The apostles began to sorrow when Jesus revealed he was going away and would not return until sometime later. He said, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2,3). Their sorrow intensified when he told them he would die. However, he said that he would not leave them as orphans but would send them a Comforter (the Holy Spirit) after he had gone. The Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth and cause all things to come into remembrance (John 14:26).

The Holy Spirit develops our power of remembrance. This power is not the mechanical remembrance of Scripture but the ability to call to mind certain key thoughts and principles. We may try to use our mind in our own strength, but unless the Lord answers our prayers, petitions, and desires, we will not understand or recall these superhuman truths.

Jesus “had said before” that the Holy Spirit would come. In other words, as Jesus had promised, not only do we have the Lord’s Word and testimony, but also we can feel the Holy

Spirit help our understanding. By this manifestation, we know—we have the *assurance*—that we have been begotten of the Holy Spirit. No man has to teach us that we have the Holy Spirit, that we are sons of God, and that our sins are forgiven (1 John 2:20). The Holy Spirit brings *conviction*; it is the spirit of power and of a sound mind. Not an empty “clanging cymbal,” the Holy Spirit is like a trumpet with a *true* sound (1 Cor. 13:1; 14:8 RSV).

Heb. 10:16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

Heb. 10:17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

Heb. 10:18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

In verses 16-18, Paul went over the same subject again, wanting to treat it from every conceivable angle. He was saying, “Remember that Scripture in Jeremiah 31:31-34.” In drawing a certain principle from the portion of that text pertaining to the remission of sins, he reasoned, “If your sins are remitted, why do you want to continue with these offerings and sacrifices?”

The situation is a little different with the Christian. When a Christian prays to the Lord, he knows he has taken the required steps of obedience and made a consecration, and thus he is in the family. As he asks for the forgiveness of sins each day, it is for *daily individual* transgressions and derelictions of duty, not for *Adamic* sin. Adamic sin is canceled on the candidate’s behalf at the time of consecration. Henceforth the person is on trial for life, and he is given a certain time period of grace in his life to make his calling and election sure.

However, in verses 16-18, Paul was not speaking of this situation with the Christian. He was saying that in the type, the atonement for *national* sin (picturing Adamic sin) had to be repeated over and over, whereas in the antitype, Jesus offered himself *only once* to cancel Adamic sin *for all*. (He was not talking about the *individual* errors of the people.) This lesson of *national* atonement is the *chief theme* in much of the Book of Hebrews. It was very much on Paul’s mind, even though he introduced general offerings and other topics.

“This is the covenant that I will make with them [the house of Israel] after those days, saith the Lord.” The New Covenant will be made with Israel at the beginning of the Kingdom, but since it will be a gradual process, it will not be fully secured until the end of the thousand years. The Mediator will negotiate the terms of the New Covenant between God and man during the entire Kingdom Age. Thus man will have to fulfill the conditions of the New Covenant before it can be fully binding on him—a work that will continue to the end of the Millennium. God will make the New Covenant with the house of Israel, but that covenant will effectually embrace the world of mankind indirectly through Israel.

“I [God] will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.” Putting God’s laws into the hearts and minds of mankind will be a *gradual* work, for laws are not written in people’s hearts overnight. God will *permanently engrave* His laws in the hearts and minds of the willing and obedient.

“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Both Israel and the world of mankind have sins and iniquities. Some Jews think that the New Testament is anti-Semitic because of expressions like this one. And they especially feel that way about the Apostle John’s writings because he used the term “the Jews,” which they consider disparaging, but he was just recording the facts. They should not be so sensitive, “for *all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

“Now where remission [cancellation] of these [sins] is, there is no more offering for sin.”

Heb. 10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

Heb. 10:20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

How does one enter boldly into the Most Holy “by the blood of Jesus”? Jesus’ entrance into the Most Holy in a literal sense as a spirit being was effected at his death. Thus “the veil” represents his flesh. In other words, when Jesus died, he entered the Most Holy, and being in the Most Holy and having secured the blood of redemption—having that price in his hand—he is in a position to listen through the Veil to the petitions of his Church. Thus the consecrated, who are in the Holy in the present life, gain an entrance into the Most Holy through their audible petitions. It is as though the consecrated are talking through a veil in making known their requests. Hence our boldness to enter the Most Holy in the present life is not a physical entering but an *audible* entering. The destruction of the flesh is necessary to enter the Most Holy, but our pleas can be heard now. *By faith*, we are represented in the High Priest, who is in heaven, and are intimately associated with him.

With his death and resurrection, Jesus opened up “a new and living way”; he “brought life and immortality to light” (2 Tim. 1:10). Although life and immortality were previously portrayed in types and shadows, their *forcefulness* was not seen until Jesus came and was faithful unto death.

The “new and living way” is contrasted with the “old way” under the Law Covenant arrangement. The old way ostensibly offered life—and Jesus did inherit life rights by keeping the Law perfectly—but in reality, it brought *death* for imperfect mankind. The Law magnified man’s unfit condition and thus his need for another way of obtaining life. “And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death”; that is, what Paul thought would bring life was actually a form of bondage to sin and death (Rom. 7:10).

“The veil,” sometimes called the “second veil,” was the curtain between the Holy and the Most Holy (Heb. 9:3). Both veils represent death, a barrier, for in order to get under either veil, a death is involved. The First Veil represents the death of the human *will*, or consecration. The Second Veil represents the death of the *flesh*. The term “through the veil” suggests that the Second Veil was rent, or torn, and this happened when Jesus died on the Cross. At that time, an earthquake rent the Temple veil from top to bottom.

Q: How does the breath of life return to God at death?

A: In regard to Adam’s creation, he was formed as a man, but he was not a *living* soul until the breath of life entered. At that point also, Adam received an identity. The life of every human being who has ever lived and died is “recorded” from the inception of the breath of life until it ceases, however long or short that period may be. Everyone who has ever breathed the breath of life is guaranteed a resuscitation from the grave. In other words, one must exit the womb and have the breath of life enter his lungs in order to qualify for a resurrection. As each one lives on, his life is recorded continuously so that when he comes forth from the tomb in the resurrection, he will remember all of his past experiences. Of course while a person is in the grave, there is no consciousness or knowledge, but the recording is preserved in heaven. Hence the statement about the breath of life returning to God at death is *figurative*, not literal. When a person dies, the oxygen in his lungs goes out into the air and disperses, and the body decays. In the resurrection, God will put the recording (the “soul”) in a new body, physical or spiritual depending on how the individual responded in the present life. “God giveth it [the

soul] a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body” (1 Cor. 15:38).

At death, the recording of a person’s life stops, but the recording is not destroyed. Rather, it goes into God’s archives, and He has agencies to take care of this process. God is not burdened with trying to remember every human being who has ever lived, for a record of his life is being perfectly “computerized,” as it were, so there is no danger of an oversight or a malfunction. At death, the record of a person’s existence goes into God’s archives, where it is stored until the resurrection, when it will be given a new body.

Incidentally, there is a lot of truth to the basic belief of many heathen religions. For example, in Egypt, it was claimed that each person has a “ka,” or a double; one went into the grave, and the other went to heaven. Actually, God is recording our ka, or double—our life—so that we need not fear what happens to our bodily organism. Jesus said, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul [the record in heaven]: but rather fear him [God] which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). *Only God* can destroy the soul, and this happens when one goes into Second Death. Those who stumble others and cause them to go into Second Death are said to “destroy the soul,” but no one can be written out of the “Lamb’s book of life” unless God personally makes that decision (Rev. 21:27). The “soul,” God’s record in heaven of a deceased human being, is inanimate and unconscious.

Q: Is Revelation 20:12 related? “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

A: There is a relationship. One book will be opened at the beginning of the Kingdom Age when mankind starts to come forth from the tomb. Part of that book will be a person’s own life, and then he will be given instruction which, in principle, will be in harmony with the Word of God. Mankind will be given the teachings of the Bible age but in a way that will be far more comprehensive and easier for them to understand because they will have not only the written Word but also living examples in the Ancient Worthies of how that Word should be kept, as well as advice and help from the invisible spirit world, namely, from The Christ.

There is probably more reality to the instruction to “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” than we ever realized (Matt. 6:20). We generally think only of laying up little favors that the Lord will do for us and little honors that He will give us.

Heb. 10:21 And having an high priest over the house of God;

Paul was speaking about Jesus to the Hebrews, who knew he was not a High Priest according to the flesh. But Jesus was a High Priest according to the spirit, that is, “after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb. 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:11,17,21). Since Paul had already established this reasoning, he now just called Jesus “an high priest.”

Heb. 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

What is the thought of “having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience”? Blood was sprinkled on the Tabernacle, its furniture, the people, etc., to picture sanctification and purification. The application of the *blood* made all of these acceptable to God and also whatever was offered on the Brazen Altar, for example. In connection with the Passover, the doorposts and lintels were sprinkled with the blood of the lamb. The doorposts represent the hearts of individual Christians. Blood is applied to each Christian as long as he stays in the household of faith.

Paul added, “Having ... our bodies washed with pure water.” The “washing” of the Christian’s body with “pure water” is a reference to the installation of the priesthood in the type. Before the priests began their services on behalf of the people, they were washed, blood was sprinkled, they were clothed with proper garments, and anointing oil was put on the head of the high priest. In the antitype, the Church class undergo corresponding experiences in the present life before they can officiate as priests in the Kingdom Age.

In addition to the typical priesthood being washed and representing the Church, animals that represented the fallen human nature were also washed. The killing of such animals was a convenient way of picturing the *sacrificial* death of consecrated Christians.

Still another representation occurred when the high priest washed *each day* before going to the Brazen Altar, and he also had to wash at the Laver before entering the Holy. He was “washed with pure water” in preparation for entering the Holy—that is, before drawing “near [the Prayer Altar] with a true heart in full assurance of faith.”

Paul was giving in a nutshell the principles underlying the teachings of the type. For the Christian, the thought is that with faith in the Ransom and a sincere heart, he knows he can seek and receive forgiveness through Jesus.

Heb. 10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

Although verse 23 has a deeper meaning for Christians in the Gospel Age as a whole, there was a particular application at the time Paul wrote this epistle. When Christ appeared in the beginning, disciples followed him and obeyed his message. Then he died and was out of sight, leaving them behind. No longer was he physically with them, so, as promised, he sent the Holy Spirit as a Comforter, or Helper, to guide them into all truth and to bring to remembrance things he had spoken so that they would be encouraged, comforted, and assisted in his absence. These early Christians witnessed to other Jews about the new and living way of Messiah, saying there was a better way than the Mosaic Law. To do this witnessing required great courage, for the Jews had such respect for Moses that they thought the Christians were undermining the Law; i.e., they thought the Law was the only way to God. Therefore, the early Church needed to have an *unwavering faith* that *Jesus really was the Messiah*, even if he was not of the Aaronic priesthood. Paul wanted them to lay hold on this truth without wavering. They were not to be browbeaten or discouraged into silence, which could lead to Second Death.

Regarding the Gospel Age as a whole, the thought might be given for verse 23: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

Heb. 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

We can provoke one another “unto love and to good works” by prayer, by giving words of encouragement, by meeting together (with questions and communal thinking), by example, etc. We should “consider one another,” that is, *think about* and meditate on how to provoke others to love and good works.

Comment: To “*consider* one another” does not mean to just passively think about the brethren. We are to actually help them to learn and study.

Reply: Yes. Another example would be to pray for someone who injures us, especially if he is a brother in the truth. We should try to do everything possible not to embitter him or to make

him pursue his wrong course whereby he gets so hardened that his character will be damaged. In other words, we should try not to increase the antagonism, and if the brother realizes he has done wrong, we should help him lest he become discouraged and faint by the way.

Paul was suggesting that we help our brethren in a *constructive* way. "Consider one another" implies *personalized* thinking of each other and giving thought as to how a person will react. We can ask ourselves, "What should be my attitude, and what will I do if such and such happens?"

How do we provoke to love and good works? (1) Consider, *think about*, one another. (2) Act. For example, we should manifest by our attitude and conduct that we have no ill will or feeling toward a brother based on what was or was not done previously; i.e., showing that we have nothing but good motives toward him is apt to result in a good response. In other words, it is wrong for anger to beget anger, for hatred to be rendered for hatred, or for evil to be given for evil, for then one dig will bring another sarcastic dig, etc., in a war of words. Conversely, *kindness* is apt to result in a *good* deed. (Incidentally, debates are another matter; they should be impartial and impersonal, and the motive of another should not be impugned.)

Comment: Love and good works should be found in us first, before we can expect to provoke these qualities in others.

Reply: Yes, we need to do advance work and exhibit control in ourselves first. We pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," and the Lord will no doubt hold us to these very words.

Heb. 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Verse 25 implies that there is more need for association and fellowship *today* and that assembling will become *increasingly* important *in the future*. The purpose of gathering together is to exhort one another. The assembling and exhorting is "so much the more [important], as ye see the day approaching." The "day" can be viewed in several ways, such as the Church's time of trouble and deliverance or the abounding of iniquity more and more as the trouble approaches. Whether we view the day from the nearness of the feet members' change or from the coming closer of the evil dangers, we need to keep assembling for self-preservation, protection, and the buttressing of one another. As the testings become more severe, we will need more encouragement. Therefore, we believe that more understanding will be provided along certain lines to help us stand. The additional understanding will be essential to counteract or counterbalance the increasing trials, persecutions, experiences, and discouragements of the future. According to the Book of Hebrews, fellowship is of *utmost* importance.

Q: Does 1 Corinthians 9:27 apply? "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

A: That text applies from the *personal* standpoint of the individual himself, whereas Paul was speaking *collectively*, but both standpoints are important. The Christian Jews back there knew that trouble was ahead. The value of assembling together was that some were more knowledgeable than others, so if the ones through whom the Lord gave admonitions stayed by themselves, the others would not know what they should or should not be doing. Thus maintaining fellowship and an interest in the brethren kept the group aware and alert.

Q: Were some neglecting to assemble together because of persecutions in the area?

A: Yes. We will come to that point shortly. If meetings were held in a particular house and the

enemies of truth were watching to see who was assembling there, the decision of whether to attend would be hard to make from the standpoint of the flesh. Those who were fearful would justify staying away with a Scripture such as, “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself” (Prov. 27:12). Paul was commending the faithful brethren for meeting together *boldly* no matter what the cost.

Heb. 10:26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

Heb. 10:27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

Here Paul was discussing the danger of Second Death, but there is a tie-in with verse 25. He was saying that those who do not fellowship and meet together are more liable to go into Second Death. There is a greater danger to those who avoid fellowship, for the more time one spends on the truth, the less time he will have for other themes and activities of the world.

Comment: We cannot develop love by sitting home alone regardless of how many books and volumes we have, for we need to learn to bear with one another’s weaknesses and infirmities. Love has to be outgoing; it is an outward expression of what the heart has been developing.

Reply: Of course there will be chafing and grating of personalities and thoughts when we get together in fellowship and study, but if we are rightly exercised, we learn to develop patience, character, and forbearance. Not only do we ourselves develop a better character, but our presence (our words and actions) can help others to see their shortcomings. If the one who is causing the chafing is there, that is to his credit. The very fact that people associate together in the name of the Lord, in spite of their temperament and character, is better than the ones of a sweeter disposition who do not meet. If a brother does things we do not like but gives evidence of sincerity and loving the truth, we must give him credit. These factors are all part of “considering” one another.

The thought is not that we have to meet with a particular group or that we necessarily have to experience certain trials, but our objective should be to meet with someone if possible. It is usually good to meet where we are not always in the limelight, that is, where we have to sit back and do the listening too. Opportunities of service are nice to have, but it is also proper to sit back.

Q: Was Paul saying that willful sin results from not assembling together for a long period of time?

A: He was speaking of habits. When we are in a meeting, our conduct and attention are riveted on spiritual things. If we stop attending meetings, we are more apt to waste time, and then there is more danger of going back into the world. The world, the flesh, and the devil are more apt to deceive those who forsake assembling together. Coals are kept burning and warm—they are more active and alive—by associating with one another.

Q: Was Paul saying that deliberately forsaking the assembling of ourselves together is willfully sinning?

A: We would be willful in that regard, but we do not think that was Paul’s particular point. The point is that we need one another’s fellowship. Therefore, it is foolish to think that the Lord wants us to stay apart or that He has called us to go it alone. Such attitudes lead to the monastic way of life and burying oneself in books. If we forsake fellowship, then other tendencies and

temptations that are besetting us will have more say in our life, and the more say they have, the more we yield. If we continue to yield again and again, we will become hardened in sin. Earlier Paul warned of the deceitfulness of sin and how it can sneak up on us. Fellowship is essential in order to cut wrong associations.

Comment: How can we develop love if we do not meet with anybody? How can we develop patience except by trial? When there is friction, we learn to develop the grace of patience.

Reply: Yes, that is sound thinking. How can we be patient with one another unless we are rubbed to make us exercise a grace that is not normal to us under other circumstances? Diamonds rub diamonds. The natural mind or heart is exceedingly deceitful and will justify a wrong course of action.

Q: Does verse 26 apply to a *serious willful sin*?

A: Yes. The verse is not talking about a transgression due to hereditary weaknesses, for no one is perfect by any means. In fact, if we were judged according to Moses' Law—and thus did not have the robe of Christ's righteousness—we would not get life. The serious sin of verse 26 pertains to a *habit of thought* that comes to a point of no return. For example, if a person does not fellowship with the brethren for one month, two months, three, four, five, etc., he gets hardened. Eventually, unless the Lord's providence stirs him up, he will cease to fellowship altogether. The longer one stays away, the less need he will feel for fellowship. Sometimes one is overtaken in a fault and disassociates, feeling unworthy, but then his aloneness makes him realize his need for fellowship even more. However, others do not get that sensation; they do not miss not fellowshiping. Those who do not meet over a period of time but still have a tender heart and conscience begin to miss the fellowship after a period of time and desire to return. This good responsive quality in their heart indicates hope. Otherwise, there is the possibility that they will become hardened in time, so that the truths which used to inspire and thrill them no longer have an enthusiastic effect.

As Bro. Magnuson used to say of this condition, "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!" (Lam. 4:1). In other words, we are in a dangerous condition if we ever get to the point where the truth will no longer revive, encourage, thrill, or move us. Then the gold, which is not supposed to tarnish, has dimmed, and the salt has lost its savor and cannot be revived. The point of no return comes after a period of time. Tendencies of going in the wrong direction *must be checked*; they cannot be trifled with.

Q: Is a certain type of personality more susceptible to this condition, for example, an introvert as opposed to an extrovert?

A: Some people have trials along certain lines more than others. What is a trial to one person may not be a trial to another person at all, so there are various types of trials and various types of individuals. The leader of a meeting should be aware of the differences in personalities. For instance, if he has no consideration and continually calls on someone who does not like to be called on, disregarding the person's feelings completely, this can be damaging to the one doing the misdeed as well as to the recipient. If the recipient gets too upset, he can disassociate with that ecclesia and fellowship elsewhere, but he should fellowship somewhere and not stay alone in a separated state. Fellowship is *essential*, even if it is with only two or three others.

The caution is against *habitual* avoidance of fellowship, not against missing a meeting now and then. Some feel an absolute obligation to listen to every talk at a convention and even to make their children hear them all. But we should be reasonable and take into account such factors as age and health. The important thing is to get there and have fellowship, but with the exercise of

reason to balance things out. In addition, we should analyze our heart and our thinking because otherwise, we might make invalid excuses for not assembling in fellowship.

Heb. 10:28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

It is significant that this verse does not say an infraction of the least commandment of Moses' Law resulted in death. Rather, the thought is, "He that *disregarded* Moses' law died." A *time* element is involved, for either the searing of the conscience or the hardening of the heart through the deceitfulness of sin happens *gradually*. It takes *time* to eventually get to the point where the Law is disregarded or despised through an emotional hatred or dislike.

Nadab and Abihu are examples in the type of two who "died without mercy under two or three witnesses" under the Law of Moses (Lev. 10:1,2). Also, a child who cursed his parents was put to death.

Heb. 10:29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

These individuals tread underfoot the Son of God and count the blood of the covenant as "an unholy thing," doing "despite unto the Spirit of grace." This condition develops over a *period* of time, and the individuals do not see their responsibility. As they gradually become hardened in sin, they do not realize their own condition.

One emphasis here is that if one does not fellowship and get other views and let others help him and also rub him the wrong way where he needs it, he is putting himself in a situation that could eventually lead to Second Death. However, the real thrust is as follows: *Any wrong habits of thinking or doing are dangerous and must be checked, for the end thereof is death if not checked.* Fellowship with the brethren is a deterrent.

The "blood of the covenant" refers to the New Covenant. We participate in the blood of the New Covenant *now*, but the covenant itself will be sealed *later*. Jesus' blood has been put aside for the future application on behalf of the world, but presently the merit of that blood is applied to the Church. The Church will become identified with Jesus as sharers in the sin offering. The blood of the Lord's goat will cancel the sin of the world, but the blood of the bullock *preceded and justified* the goat. Christ's merit is temporarily loaned to the Church. When the Church is complete, the merit of Jesus' blood will be applied to the world to remove the curse and bring restitution. Hence the "blood" seals, or secures, the New Covenant. The "blood" here has to do with *participation* in the cup; it is the participation of the *Church's blood commingled with Christ's blood*. Both are used to seal the New Covenant. If one who has understood and consecrated with the hope of the high calling subsequently renounces or gives up this hope, he is counting "the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy [common] thing" and is thus worthy of Second Death.

Heb. 10:30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

Heb. 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

If the robe of Christ's righteousness no longer covers a person's sins because he has trodden the Son of God underfoot, that person faces Jehovah direct and hence goes into Second Death. No one can stand before God without being in Christ.

Heb. 10:32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

Now Paul started to write from a more positive standpoint and to give encouragement. Why did he say to “call to remembrance the former days”? If we are discouraged with our lack of progress or our experiences—and especially if we should question whether the Lord ever dealt with us—we should recall how we first got the truth, how we responded, and how the Lord was pleased with the stand we took. To take that stand required *courage* at the time; it *cost* us something. Therefore, we can again and again take a courageous stand for the Lord as other trials arise. If we “endured a great fight of afflictions” once, we can do it again. We can stay firm for the Lord and continue in the narrow way until death. Of course the Christians in Paul’s day suffered a lot of persecution when they first heard the gospel and responded.

Heb. 10:33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

Verse 33 tells of two ways in which we can endure “a great fight of afflictions”: (1) We can be a “gazingstock” *ourselves* through reproaches and afflictions, and (2) we can associate with *others* who are being persecuted. When we take a stand with our life and consecrate, we pay a price that pleases the Lord. That stand can include being a “gazingstock” to our families and bearing their reproaches.

Heb. 10:34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

When Paul was in prison, the brethren who continued to associate with him suffered persecution. And when he was traveling through Asia Minor, the brethren who extended lodging and hospitality to him were shunned by neighbors and even persecuted. Sometimes the hatred ran so deep that the houses of Christians were burned down (their goods were “spoiled”). This was suffering with Jesus, and what they lost will be compensated for by treasure in heaven. Paul commended those who had that experience, for the trials were very severe. How many today would meet with brethren in a place where they *knew* there would be identification problems?

Hence partly by direct reproach to ourself because of faithfulness and partly by associating with others and the stigma that attaches to them, we can endure a great fight. Sometimes we receive persecution for standing up for others, for example, consecrated wives who stand by their consecrated husbands when persecution arises.

Having compassion for Paul *cost* something. For example, knowing that the Lord was using Paul and that he needed encouragement, Onesiphorus diligently searched for him and found him in the dungeon (2 Tim. 1:16). Even when Paul was under house arrest, those who came to him had to fight the thought that they were being followed, for often this type of thing is imagination. Many times we build up something in our mind when people are not even interested in what we are doing. Then we suffer persecution needlessly.

Sharing in the persecuting experiences of others is part of laying down our lives for the brethren. We should take *joyfully* the spoiling of our goods, as did these brethren of old, who had compassion on Paul. If we think about Jesus’ words and what Paul said, we will appreciate the *privilege* of that kind of suffering. “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matt. 5:12). Paul had such faith that when he and Silas were in prison and were beaten with many stripes, they prayed and *rejoiced aloud*. Why? Jesus had said, “If God ever gives you the opportunity to

suffer for His name's sake, you will have cause to rejoice." If we suffer because we are faithful to the Lord's command, He is *obligated* to reward us. The conditions of our call are, "If you do such and such, I will do so-and-so." The reward for right-doing may come beyond the veil, but it *must come* in either this life or the next life.

Heb. 10:35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

Heb. 10:36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

Heb. 10:37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Heb. 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

This wording of verses 37 and 38 reminds us of Habakkuk 2:3,4, "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." Either consciously or unconsciously, Paul quoted what he had learned in the Old Testament, properly applying it in a pertinent fashion to this experience. We must *daily walk by faith*. It is a *daily walk* of faith as well as a *fight* of faith and a *living* by faith. This pattern of life is *continuous*, based on *belief and confidence* in God's Word.

Heb. 10:39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Drawing "back unto perdition [Second Death]" can come from fear or enticements along many lines. "Fear" would include fear of suffering, fear of man, and fear of not being well received. We are not to let "the things which we have heard" gradually slip, or glide away, lest we draw back unto perdition (Heb. 2:1). The fact Paul now reiterated that theme shows it is an integral part of the Book of Hebrews.

There are different *degrees* of drawing back, for a Christian can fall back to either the Great Company or Second Death. Here Paul was cautioning against a fall to Second Death.

Heb. 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Here is a definition of "faith." "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Instead of "substance," other translations use expressions such as "confident assurance," "title deed," and "solid ground." Faith "gives substance to our hopes"; it is "the realization of things hoped for."

Romans 8:24,25 expresses somewhat similar thoughts in regard to "hope." "Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." The three graces are faith, hope, and love, but there is not too much difference between faith and hope. Faith, hope, and love might be likened to three phases in connection with the development of the new creature. Spiritually speaking, faith is related to begetting, hope is related to quickening, and love is related to birth. Faith is more theoretical, whereas hope implies a little more experience and obedience. The Pastor said that faith is the exercise of the mind with respect to God and His promises. Hope would include that ingredient as well as some personal experience with God. Thus there is a measure of *fortitude* in hope. Stated another way, faith plus fortitude equals hope.

Hope is the *anticipation* of something we expect, whereas faith is merely a *belief* in something. Faith is convinced that God exists and that He is the Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). Faith is convinced that God is love, etc., but hope is more—it is faith developed to the point where we *anticipate receiving the blessing*.

Incidentally, love contains a lot of ingredients—for example, kindness and patience—that are developed through experience. After developing love, we must stand fast, and if faithful, we will receive the reward.

Q: Does the Scripture “All men have not faith” (2 Thess. 3:2) indicate that some have inherent faith?

A: There are two kinds of faith: (1) *fruits* of the Holy Spirit and (2) *gifts* of the Holy Spirit. Gifts (or talents) are more or less mechanical, whereas fruits are richer because they involve *obedience and experience* in connection with God’s instructions. Faith as a fruit of Christian development is different from inherited (or natural) faith, which is something we possess prior to being called. Hence there is spiritual faith versus natural faith, the latter being somewhat dormant. “[Spiritual] faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

Without natural faith, it is *impossible* to please God. We must have this basic ingredient before we can make any progress. We must believe that there is an intelligent Creator and that He will reward those who diligently seek Him, especially if that search leads to consecration.

Q: Is inherited faith a gift?

A: Yes, inherited or natural faith is a *gift*, for we were born with it through a previous parent. Faith of this kind is the subsoil, or substance, that we must have originally in order to be called. It is like the chimneys, or veins, of blue soil in the African mines in which diamonds are found. “Blue” represents faithfulness.

Moreover, “the just shall *live by faith*” (Heb. 10:38). Not only did we have natural faith to begin with, but from the time of consecration forward, we (the “just”) are to *walk by faith, fight the good fight of faith, and be full of faith* (“faith-full”) unto death if we would be more than conquerors. The faith of a Christian starts as natural faith, then goes into a mixture of the two (natural and spiritual faith), and ends up as a very spiritual and mature faith if he is of the Little Flock.

What are some of the “things *not seen*” of which there exists evidence? The first is *God Himself*. We can know there is an intelligent Creator by observing His handiwork in the things that He has made. The second is *the soul*.

Heb. 11:2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

The “elders” are the Ancient Worthies of the Old Testament. They are called “elders” because they are *mature in character* and because they are *of the past*; they are the faithful ones of old.

By faith, the elders obtained the “good report” that they were faithful. They got not only a passing grade but also *cum laude* praise, and thus they will receive a better resurrection (although not the chief resurrection that is reserved for the Church). From *God*, they got a good report card with high grades because of their *faith*. An example of this good report card is Romans 4:3, “Abraham *believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*.” He was called the “Friend of God” (James 2:23).

We, too, must have faith in order to get a good report from God. Our natural faith, which we had to begin with, must be cultivated more and more; it must *grow*. We should pray, “Lord, increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). *Faith* is the *means* whereby *all* the faithful of the past, as well as of the present, are successful; that is, *through faith*, they are successful. As Jesus said, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even *our faith*” (1 John 5:4). The common denominator of faith in this chapter is *spiritual* faith in things *future*. All of the Ancient Worthies had faith in the *future*.

Verse 2 is saying that through *faith*, the Ancient Worthies obtained a good report from God. Of course their reward will come *after* the “church of the firstborn” is resurrected, but they have already gotten their passing grade (Heb. 12:23).

Heb. 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

“Through faith ... the worlds [ages, Greek *aionas*] were framed by the word of God.” By faith, we accept the fact that God predetermined the ages as they appear on the Chart of the Ages. In addition, God created the physical heavens by His “word.” We read about creation in the first chapter of Genesis, and we accept that explanation by faith. Each Creative Day was a *long* age of 7,000 years in duration. Of the last Creative Day, the “world that then was” covered 1,656 years (2 Pet. 3:6), and the “present evil world” is roughly 4,500 years long (Gal. 1:4). In addition, the Gospel Age lasts approximately 2,000 years, and the Millennial Age is 1,000 years.

If verse 3 is also applied to the first six Creative Days, the long 7,000-year epochs, the thought is beautiful, for it *combines* God’s creation of the *physical* heavens and earth by His word over a long period of time with the shorter *ages* of the last Creative Day (the Jewish Age, the Gospel Age, etc.). An example of creative acts accomplished by the “word of God” is Genesis 1:3, “And God *said*, Let there be light: and there was light.”

In other words, Paul was speaking of physical worlds, which are made of “things” (that is, substances) not seen, yet he used the word “ages.” Therefore, a *time* period was involved as well as the *ordering* of the earth for man’s habitation.

Comment: For verse 3, the Living Bible has, “By faith—by believing God—we know that the world and the stars—in fact, all things—were made at God’s command; and that they were all made from things that can’t be seen.” The New English Bible reads, “By faith we perceive that the universe was fashioned by the word of God, so that the visible came forth from the invisible.”

Heb. 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Abel offered a blood sacrifice, which was “a more excellent sacrifice than Cain,” but how did he know that a *blood* sacrifice would be more acceptable to God? What were the grounds for his *faith* to this end? When Adam and Eve sinned, God made coats for them out of animal skins. The shedding of the blood of animals—i.e., *death*—was necessary to get their hides. In addition, Abel may have received considerable instruction, but at the very least, an intelligent man who meditated on these things would have realized that it was necessary for blood to be shed as a covering for sin. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins, and Abel realized this fact when he brought his gifts to God, so he wanted to show his appreciation by a blood sacrifice. By *faith* in that previous act, Abel was aware that he should shed blood for his sacrifice.

Q: Is it possible that Adam could have offered an acceptable blood sacrifice previously and that Abel had observed this act?

A: Although conjectural, that thinking sounds reasonable, and Adam could well have done so. If so, Abel stayed in line with this practice, and there was a scriptural precedent in that *God* had made coats for Adam and Eve.

Q: Was Cain the oldest son and hence eligible for the firstborn blessing until he slew Abel?

A: Yes. It is interesting that in the Bible, many firstborn sons, who were in line for that blessing from a natural standpoint, ended up in a secondary class.

What did Cain offer? Genesis 4:1-5 reads, “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.” Abel was “a keeper of sheep,” a *shepherd*, and Cain was “a tiller of the ground,” a *farmer*. Since more work was involved in the growing of fruits and vegetables, a form of *self-righteousness* was involved with Cain’s offering.

“*By faith* Abel offered unto God.” This statement implies that not only did Abel know of the precedent of what God had done for Adam, but also his faith pointed forward to Christ, to a coming redemption, forgiveness, and reinstatement to favor. When Adam sinned, he and his seed were cast out into an unfinished earth and lost their former blessings. Cain, Abel, Seth, etc., shared in the results of this original casting out, but Abel had the conviction, or *faith*, to realize *God’s* clothing of Adam and Eve with animal skins indicated that sometime in the future, *He* would provide redemption and a covering for sin.

On the other hand, when Cain made his offering, it was probably more like giving someone a present; that is, faith was not a part of the offering. Cain’s nobility is not in question, for there is nothing wrong with an offering of “cereal,” a product of the ground. In fact, such freewill offerings were encouraged under the Law. Therefore, God was no doubt pleased with Cain’s offering, but He was *more pleased* with Abel’s offering. Not only did Abel’s offering cost him something, but also the element of *faith* was mixed in with it, showing that he *believed* what God would do in the future. Although both offerings were permissible, God showed a *preference* for Abel’s offering, and that is what disturbed Cain.

Abel may also have associated the shedding of blood when God provided skins for Adam and Eve with the promise that the seed of the woman would ultimately bruise the serpent’s (Satan’s) head. If so, he would have realized that somehow sin, evil, Satan, and death would be defeated in the future by a seed or personality or Messiah, and that the shedding of blood would be involved. At any rate, in making his animal sacrifice, Abel used his thinking powers and exercised faith in God and in His promises, whereas Cain’s offering was more along the lines of a *natural gift*.

How did God “testify” of Abel’s gifts? Abel’s sacrifice would have been burned, or consumed, on the altar, showing God’s acceptance. At that time, God would also have let it be known that He favored Abel’s offering. As a result, Cain became jealous and subsequently murdered Abel.

There is another “witness” as well. In addition to the sacrifice being consumed by fire at the

time, Jesus said that upon that generation of Israel would come “all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of *righteous Abel* unto the blood of Zacharias” (Matt. 23:35). In other words, Jesus testified of righteous Abel. He witnessed that Abel was still in God’s remembrance and that he himself appreciated what Abel had done. Thus Abel is commended as being the first righteous individual. Not only was there a witness while Abel was alive, but also years after his death, Jesus gave this testimonial. Moreover, Revelation 6:9,10 refers indirectly to Abel, among others: “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” In other words, just as Abel’s blood cried out, proclaiming Cain’s guilt and demanding retribution, figuratively speaking, so the blood of slain “righteous” Christians (the Little Flock) cries out. Although Abel is dead, his blood “yet speaketh.”

Heb. 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see [experience] death.” It would not be logical to think that God took Enoch so that he could not witness, or see, death happen, for several people had already died prior to his translation. Adam (and others) had many sons and daughters, so there must have been deaths, prior to Enoch’s translation, other than the ones that are enumerated in the Bible. And how would not witnessing death be a *reward* for faithfulness? Witnessing death is a needed experience for many to impress upon them the exceeding sinfulness of sin and its consequence: death. Therefore, for Enoch to be translated by faith so that he would not experience death is a completely different thought; namely, God somehow *preserved* him from death. Hence Enoch is still living today, and so is Elijah. (The Pastor concurred with this thought.) Elijah’s preservation is conjectural but reasonable, but Enoch’s preservation is plainly stated in Scripture.

The death sentence of dying within the thousand-year day was specifically *only on Adam*, so Enoch’s (and Elijah’s) preservation would not be a violation. (See *Reprint* No. 3377, “Enoch, Elijah and the Sentence.”) God said to Adam, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die [dying thou shalt die—see KJV margin]” (Gen. 2:17). The human race dies not because of personal sin but because of inherited sin through Adam’s transgression. Only Adam (one man) was on trial. The Ransom is beautifully expressed in Romans 5:12,18, “Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, ... even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”

There is a statement in the *Reprints* that if Adam had not sinned, Eve might not have died. That is because *only Adam* was specifically on trial. In fact, if Eve’s sin had anything to do with bringing the death sentence on the human race, then Paul’s argument would be null and void because he said that sin entered the world by *one man*. Eve sinned first, *before* Adam, but her transgression did not constitute sin entering the world as far as the death penalty was concerned. Eve was deceived, but Adam *willfully* ate the fruit and paid the penalty. Eve died because she was *of Adam*, the two being *one* flesh. Just as Adam and his children had to die, so Adam and his wife had to die because she was of his body, his flesh. The Ransom is beautifully taught because *only one man* was on trial. The order of sinning was (1) Satan, (2) Eve, and (3) Adam, but sin entered the human race through Adam.

Genesis 5:5,8,11,23,24,27 prove that Enoch did not die. In this genealogical listing, it is said of each one *except Enoch* that he lived so many years “and he died.” The account says of Enoch

that he lived 365 years and then “was not; for God took him”—a different phraseology! In “the world that then was,” the first dispensation, Enoch’s progenitors and successors died, but he did *not die* because he was *translated!*

These are only two of several lines of argument that are very obvious, unless one is prejudiced. If a person is prejudiced before he investigates a subject, he will not see the clues.

The word “translated” means to be taken from one place to another place. Acts 8:38-40, which describes an actual Biblical case of translation, is a confirmation: “And he [Philip] commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus.” They both came up out of the water, and then Philip disappeared; that is, he was physically translated to Azotus from his meeting place with the eunuch. After baptizing the eunuch, Philip was “caught away,” or removed bodily, from the scene to another area quite some distance away.

The reason for Philip’s translation was to impress upon the Ethiopian eunuch that a miracle had occurred. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to keep a feast. Now he was returning home and reading the Book of Isaiah while traveling, but he could not understand it. Along came Philip, a man, who provided the explanation that Jesus was the true Messiah. After the eunuch was baptized, he was ready to continue on his journey back to his homeland. In far-off Ethiopia, he would have little, if any, fellowship. As years went by, his memory might grow dim, so God gave him a startling experience (Philip’s miraculous translation) to increase and sustain his faith. Philip was only a man, but to the eunuch, he appeared to be a *literal* angel materialized, an angel sent by God. (Philip was an “angel” but not a literal one.)

The Apostle Philip was an “angel,” or messenger, when Nathanael was praying to God under a fig tree about Jesus (John 1:43-49). Philip came to Nathanael and said, “We have found the Messiah.” Nathanael replied, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Philip answered, “Come and see.” When Nathanael was approaching Jesus, the Master said, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” Offended, Nathanael asked, “How do you know who I am?” Jesus said, “*Before* Philip called you, I saw you praying under the fig tree.” As a messenger to Nathanael, Philip could just as well have been an angel from heaven, for he was the Lord’s tool.

Hebrews 11:13 reads, “These *all died* in faith,” but Enoch is *emphatically* stated as an *exception* (Gen. 5:23,24; Heb. 11:5). There Paul was summing up that the faithful ones of old had not yet received the promises, even though they had died in faith. And although Enoch is alive in the Garden of Eden, he still has not received the promise. He is in a status quo condition—preserved but not yet given perfect human life. The Church must first be complete (and also the Great Company) before the Ancient Worthies get the promises.

In addition to Philip’s and Enoch’s *physical* translations, there were *mental* translations in other instances. For example, when Satan tempted Jesus, Jesus was mentally taken to the top of the Temple in Jerusalem and urged to cast himself off the pinnacle (Matt. 4:5-7). That was a figurative translation.

Where did Enoch have the “testimony, that he pleased God”? Genesis 5:24 tells that Enoch “walked with God,” which means God greatly favored him, the implication being that a close fellowship existed between them. And Jude 14,15 hints that God confided some secrets of His plans and purposes to Enoch: “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they

have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” Thus Enoch was given *advance* information, no mention of which appears specifically in the Old Testament. Jude was privileged to write in a mechanical manner not only that Enoch was given this secret information but also that he predicted and publicly witnessed, prior to the Flood, of a future age when Messiah would come, accompanied by a *multitude* (“ten thousands of his saints”), in connection with the deliverance. The implication was that the Messiah was not only one individual but also a *multitudinous* seed: Christ and his Church.

Therefore, when Hebrews 11:5 says, “*By faith* Enoch was translated,” certain things become apparent. We know that Enoch walked with God, that God confided some secrets to him, and that Enoch preached of a coming time and a coming Messiah, so what does “by faith” imply? Faith is based on *knowledge*. Why, then, did Enoch have to exercise faith? God disclosed to Enoch His desire to translate him—He talked the matter over with Enoch—and got his approval. The translation would involve *sacrifice*, for Enoch was only 365 years old—still in the *prime* of life, as it were—and would have to leave his family and friends and go to a land he had never seen based on the promise of God that if he exercised the necessary faith and obedience by complying, he would be *richly* rewarded in due time. The implication is that God told Enoch something about His plans and what He intended to do with him, and Enoch consented to the sacrifice. Abraham and Enoch both went to a far-off land because of *faith* in God’s promises.

Q: Wouldn’t Enoch have died in the Flood?

A: No, because the Flood was universal over only the *civilized* portion of earth, not the whole earth. There are at least 50 reasons why the Flood could not have covered the entire earth. Why did God not destroy the Garden of Eden after Adam sinned but choose to *preserve* it with two cherubim and a flaming sword guarding the entrance (Gen. 3:24)? God prevented Adam from reentering the garden lest he return and eat of the tree of life and live forever. At the same time, he preserved the garden for Enoch’s and Elijah’s later arrival. Yes, Enoch and Elijah are *alive* in the *Garden of Eden* up to the present day. In other words, if fallen man could get back into the Garden of Eden and eat of the tree of life, he would not die, all other things being equal (that is, if God did not exercise His other prerogatives and interfere).

Q: Does Enoch picture the Church?

A: Yes. Noah was only the tenth generation from Adam, and Enoch was the seventh. Enoch pictures the Church, which is taken on the seventh day. However, when Enoch and Elijah are considered together in the type, they picture the Ancient Worthies. The bodies of the following individuals were not found: Enoch, Elijah, Moses, and Jesus.

Enoch was without company in the Garden of Eden for approximately 1,000 years before Elijah joined him. Elijah was also translated so that there would be *two* witnesses. “At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established” (Deut. 19:15; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). Confirmatory evidence (another “thus saith the LORD”) is needed—at least two witnesses and, if possible, three. In the Kingdom, both Enoch and Elijah will be able to testify of God’s power. There will be many surprises in the future, and this is one as far as the world is concerned. It will then be seen that the Garden of Eden is a reality, that there is some truth to the fictional “Shangri-la,” a secret valley at a high elevation in Tibet or China where one is supposed to live forever in a youthful condition but will wither and die if he leaves that valley. Mythology is based on *reality*. Myths are *distorted* truths, that is, distortions of what was once truth when properly understood.

Many people think that the Garden of Eden and other Old Testament accounts are fables, or mythical stories, with an allegorical or moral lesson, but they are *realities*. That is the problem

with education today—whether in the world or in present truth. We have to be careful not to spiritualize everything, or we will vitiate some of the more powerful and poignant parts of Scripture. In due time, Enoch’s and Elijah’s testimonies, plus the revealment of the literal garden itself, will prove the veracity of the Genesis account of Adam and Eve. Noah’s Ark will also be found. The world will be startled.

Reports recently came from the space lab that Noah’s Ark had been sighted. What they may have seen is another phenomenon on Mount Ararat—a large shape that looks like a boat but is not Noah’s Ark because it has a pointed bow and stern. However, if the object seen was rectangular, the men probably did see Noah’s Ark, which has been sighted in the past.

Heb. 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Verse 6 is a definition of *natural* faith, whereas verse 1 can be a description of *either* natural or spiritual faith, a conviction of either the Holy Spirit or natural faith. Verse 6 emphasizes the quality that a person must have when he initially comes to God; namely, “he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” The thought is not that if one is born with natural faith and he later gets spiritual faith as a fruit, his natural faith disappears. No, he has both faith as an inherited gift and faith as a fruit.

Q: Did Timothy have natural faith?

A: Yes, Paul perceived that Timothy had natural faith through his grandmother Lois and also his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5,6).

In seeking the Church class, God looks over those with natural faith, and *of those*, He calls whom He chooses. He looks over this “blue ground,” and from this ground of faith, He selects the diamonds. For example, the gospel was turned from Asia, when Paul was told in a dream that God wanted him to go over toward Europe, to Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10). Then the gospel went to Greece, Rome, France, Spain, Britain, and the United States, traveling westward, generally speaking. Not all who have natural faith are called. Similarly, the Kingdom of heaven class have to be humble, but not all meek, humble, and honest people are called. However, if a person acts on and cultivates his natural faith and is seeking God, then God will probably call him. If a person has a gift of faith and neglects it, if he finds he has this gift and then goes contrary to it, not responding to providences and opportunities, the faith will become sterile. But if a person has this natural quality of faith and is yearning and seeking if haply he might find God, the chances are better that he will be called (Acts 17:27).

We cannot be proud or boast that we have something of our own worth which caused God to be interested in us. God knew us *before* we knew Him, and He chose us for His *own* reasons, just as a potter chooses the clay. Without natural faith, we will not make any progress at all, yet just having natural faith does not guarantee that a person will be called. It is a matter of *selection*, and God selects whom He will. Consider John the Baptist, who was the greatest man living at that time other than Jesus, yet he was not called to the Church (Matt. 11:11). The most *honored* act at that particular time was to announce Jesus’ presence. The other apostles were not fit for that work, so God selected John the Baptist, even though it meant that he was not eligible for the high calling and that “he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” The potter (God) has this prerogative over the clay.

Q: Would some in heathen lands have this inherent faith and thus be called?

A: Yes. Even if one does not know who God is or His name, one must believe that He exists in

order to come to Him, and some in heathen lands have this natural faith. Of these, a few are called, for the Little Flock will come from every nation, but proportionately speaking, there will not be as many from heathen lands.

Heb. 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

A whole story is in this one verse. Noah, just like the other Ancient Worthies, *acted on his faith*. We are reminded of the statement “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). All of the Ancient Worthies performed deeds (“works”) motivated by *faith*.

Notice the language: Noah was “warned of God of *things not seen* as yet.” And the definition of faith in verse 1 is, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of *things not seen*.” Thus faith is *conviction and action* based upon things that are not seen, and those unseen things can be in the past, the present, or the future depending on the circumstance.

Noah was “moved with fear”—a reverential and godly fear—in regard to a destruction that was to come. If Noah had not acted, by *faith*, on the information God gave him, he and his family would have perished. Hence Noah was moved by a godly fear and reverence “to the saving of his house [his family].”

In what way did Noah “condemn” the world? He *preached* righteousness and the coming Flood because he *believed* God, and he *acted* on that belief, whereas the others laughed at him and did not act. Although not mentioned in the Genesis account, the ridicule and scoffing are implied by reasoning on what happened back there. Incidentally, too, there were books in the past, such as Jasher, that do not exist today (Josh. 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18). Those books are not needed now, but evidently, they served a purpose at the time they were written. Also, a prophet can be moved mechanically. For instance, when Joseph and Mary took the eight-day-old Jesus to the Temple, how did Simeon know that the babe was Christ? How did Anna the prophetess know? That enlightenment was given to them on the spur of the moment, or perhaps they had a dream. Another instance occurred toward the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry. He instructed two of his disciples to go to a certain house where they would see, as a sign, an ass and her colt (Matt. 21:1-5). They were to release the animals and bring them to Jesus. He knew in advance that the master of the house would question their taking the animals and told the disciples to say, “The Lord hath need of them.” Then the man would let the disciples take the animals. Based on the disciples’ reply, how did that man know what the animals would be used for? Perhaps he had prayed earnestly to God for an opportunity to give something of service. Then, lo and behold, right after the prayer, two men started to take his animals. With the previously instructed reply, what at first looked like a theft was recognized as an answer to prayer. A similar incident occurred in connection with finding a prepared room for partaking of the Memorial (Mark 14:13-16). Many unusual things have happened in conjunction with prayer.

Noah “became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” Even in the *present* life, he was rewarded to some extent, whereas some of the other Ancient Worthies received little. Noah worked long and hard for 120 years under discouraging conditions building a large ocean-going vessel on dry ground when it had never rained previously (Gen. 2:5,6).

Consider Enoch again. How was he translated “by faith”? In advance, God made a proposition to him: “You will have to sacrifice your present surroundings and family and friends if you go to a place that I have kept in reservation for you.” Enoch agreed, submitting *voluntarily* to the proposition. And when he was 365 years old, God translated him to the Garden of Eden so that he would not experience death. Because of his *faith*, Enoch sacrificed to leave everything behind

to go to another place. Noah, too, had to sacrifice, for he was a “gazingstock” as he worked to build the Ark. His pleasures were more or less nullified to get the Ark completed in 120 years with only three other men (his sons) helping him. Enoch was taken to a place he had *not seen*. Noah had faith that an *unseen* flood would occur. And that is the definition of faith—faith is based on the *unseen*. As Paul said elsewhere, the unseen things are more real than the things that are seen (2 Cor. 4:18). The unseen flood was *very real* when it occurred! The unseen place Enoch was taken to was *very real*!

Heb. 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

Abraham was called to go to an *unseen* place, to a land that God would show him, “which he should *after* receive for an inheritance” (Gen. 12:1). When Abraham arrived at Canaan, he might at first have thought that he would get the inheritance right then and there. But *no*, his being there was *temporary*, and *again* his faith was tested.

Heb. 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

Abraham dwelled in “tabernacles” with Isaac and Jacob, but in what way? The word “tabernacles” shows that Abraham’s being in the Promised Land was only *temporary* at that time, that his inheriting it was yet future. The three (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and hence grandfather, father, and son, respectively) dwelled in tabernacles together in the sense that all three were alive at the same time for a while but did not inherit the land. The test of faith continued when God not only promised the land to Abraham but also promised it later to Isaac and still later to Jacob. All three were heirs of the *same* promise. Isaac and Jacob were “heirs with him [Abraham] of the same promise,” yet they, too, “sojourned in the land of promise, as in a *strange* country.”

Heb. 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Abraham “looked for a [heavenly] city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (see verse 16). *God* is the builder and maker of this “city,” so it is a *sure* city, not a tabernacle but *well established* with *everlasting* and *secure* foundations. Hence Abraham looked for *future security* in contrast to *present insecurity*. He dwelled *insecurely* in the current life, living like a nomad, traveling from place to place. He “tabernacled” with Isaac and Jacob in temporary quarters, while looking for a *future permanent, secure residence*.

The implication of a “heavenly” city is that eventually *all of the Ancient Worthies* will get a *spiritual* reward. They will obtain a *heavenly* inheritance. Other Scriptures support the thought that *after* the Kingdom Age, the Ancient Worthies will get a future secure, permanent, heavenly (spiritual) reward. Pastor Russell mentioned this thought in a statement in two articles in the *Reprints*. Scriptural clues are as follows:

1. The Ancient Worthies will shine “as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. 12:3). The Church will shine “as the brightness of the firmament [the sun],” and the Ancient Worthies will be as the stars. The sun is the most prominent star from the standpoint of its influence on the earth.
2. During the Little Season at the end of the Millennium, the forces of Gog and Magog will go up against Jerusalem. Satan will go abroad in the earth, stirring up followers to encompass the “camp of the saints” (Rev. 20:9). Since Jerusalem will be the capital of the world at that time, the Ancient Worthies will be headquartered there. Therefore, Jerusalem will be their “camp,” and

the word “camp” suggests a *temporary* position. As a reward for their work with mankind and their teaching, which will require much patience and sacrifice during the Kingdom, the Ancient Worthies will get spirit nature.

Since during the Kingdom Age, the Ancient Worthies will be the *visible* representatives of the *invisible* Little Flock, the saints in glory, they can also be called “saints.” As “princes” here on the earth, they will be the messengers of the unseen Church, who will be with Jesus, reigning as kings and priests (Psa. 45:16). There is a precedent in the Old Testament, for Aaron was called a “saint” in Psalm 106:16. Described as “holy men of God,” the Ancient Worthies were sanctified, or set apart, for a service (2 Pet. 1:21). Thus there are both Old and New Testament saints. The difference is that they were developed in different ages under different covenants, but they will all get *spiritual* rewards, with those of the Little Flock being the highest.

3. There were *four* divisions of the tribe of Levi around the Tabernacle. In the *Sixth Volume*, the Pastor said that one of the divisions, the Gershonites, represented the world of mankind; the Kohathites pictured the Ancient Worthies; the Amramites were the Little Flock; and the Merarites represented the Great Company. But there is a problem, for the Levites had *no inheritance in the land*, so symbolically none of the four divisions of Levites could prefigure a class that would inherit the earth. The Pastor did not use this line of reasoning in the *Sixth Volume* to teach that the Ancient Worthies would receive a spiritual resurrection, but when a sister questioned him about the Gershonites, he replied, “I had never thought of it in that way.” We believe that she was correct, for the Levites did not have an inheritance in the land. In that picture, the *12 tribes of Israel*, which also encircled the Tabernacle but were beyond the Levites, represented the *saved* world of mankind, not the Gershonites. The four divisions of the Levites represented those who will have an ultimate *spiritual* destination. Thus the picture around the Tabernacle will not be complete—the classes will not be crystallized—until the end of the Millennium. In the *final* picture, the *12 tribes* represent the *saved* world of mankind.

In addition, there is a lesson on the *functions* of the four divisions of the Levites, but we will treat that subject at some other time, Lord willing.

4. God gave the promise to Abraham, “And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan” (Gen. 17:7-10; 35:12). In other words, Abraham will literally inherit the land that he saw but only on a *temporary* basis, for the *earthly* inheritance will be handed over to his “seed” after him at the end of the Millennium, when he gets a *spiritual* reward.

5. Elijah and Moses were with Jesus in the vision on the Mount of Transfiguration, and *none* of their bodies were ever found. God hid Moses’ body. Although his sepulcher is there to this day, no one knows where because God secretly buried him (Deut. 34:6). Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind and translated. Jesus’ body was extricated from the grave clothes, or wrappings, and never found. Neither was Enoch’s body found because he was translated. Depending on the picture, Elijah, Moses, and Enoch all sometimes picture the Church or The Christ. Jesus, too, can picture The Christ as well as himself personally. But Elijah, Moses, and Enoch can also picture the Ancient Worthies. Their bodies not being found shows symbolically—that is, in the type—that all will eventually get a *spiritual* reward, or inheritance. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15:50).

6. The Ancient Worthies “desire a better country, that is, an heavenly” (Heb. 11:16).

Heb. 11:11 Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

The miracle with Sarah is that she had a child when she was past age, but *faith* was involved.

In Genesis 17:15-19, the angel promised Abraham that he would have a son, as follows:

“And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.

“And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

“Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

“And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

“And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.”

A reaffirmation was given in Genesis 18:9-15 that indeed Sarah, his wife, would bear a son.

“And they [the three angels] said unto him [Abraham], Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.

“And he [the Logos] said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.

“Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

“Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

“And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?

“Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

“Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.”

Overhearing the reaffirmation, Sarah “laughed within herself.” Sometimes an entirely different slant is put on Sarah’s laughing, namely, that she laughed at God’s triumph over the seemingly impossible. But notice what the account says. At the moment of her laugh, she was not thinking about triumph because she reasoned that not only was she old, but also Abraham, her lord, was old. Was it possible that she could enjoy renewed youth and thus bear a child? Both of them had problems.

While men *older* than Abraham were able to bear children at that time, Abraham had apparently aged fairly quickly. Shem was still living then, and Noah had children when he was 500. Therefore, chronologically speaking, the miracle was not in Abraham’s age alone, but if he was 100 years old and *also infirm*, that was another matter. In contrast, Moses died at age 120 in the peak of health, but the implication with Abraham is that he had aged prematurely compared to others. Also, after the Flood, the patriarchs began to live shorter lives, although in

this overlapping period, some still lived a long time, while others did not. For example, Joseph died at 110 and Jacob at 147.

Moreover, at 90 years of age, Sarah was unable to bear. Evidently, she no longer had suppleness of bone, and other physical changes had occurred. Therefore, according to today's logic, the miracle of childbearing applied more to Sarah than to Abraham because some men bear children at age 60 and 70. The point is that Abraham had aged prematurely, whereas Sarah had undergone a normal female physical aging process.

When Sarah first heard the news, she was shocked and stunned, and the thought came to her of the *seeming impossibility* of the situation. The laugh was not one of triumph. The shock and suddenness of the announcement caught her off guard, but when she reasoned on the message, she *believed* the words of the Logos. For the next nine months, she exercised *faith* in his announcement and prepared for the birth of the child. This must have been a trial to her, for others, knowing her age, would have ridiculed her for preparing for a coming birth. No doubt others laughed at her behind her back.

Notice what was said to Abraham: "Where is Sarah?" Abraham answered, "In the tent." It was as if the Logos was going to tell Abraham a secret, but Sarah overheard from within the tent. Evidently, the Logos had his back to the tent, but he must have had a stentorian whisper. Since Sarah laughed *inwardly*, how did the Logos know she had laughed? The Logos said in effect, "This is no laughing matter. The words are true." In other words, even though his back was turned, he was given special insight and knew what was going on.

The point is that Sarah's faith consisted *not* in her *immediate* acceptance of the message, for that would not be rational. Faith is the *exercise* of the mind on the promises of God. *First* comes a little reflection, and *then* comes obedience. (It was the same earlier with Abraham. God told him to leave his homeland and go to an unknown place. Abraham first considered the promise and *then* made preparations to leave.) Thus Sarah manifested her faith by living under scoffing. To repeat: *Living under ridicule constituted the exercise of her faith—not one little act but living for a period of time under that condition.* Similarly, when Abraham decided to go to an unseen place, he had to *walk and ride* that route, which took many months and included many trials. He could have given up after two or three days, asking, "Is the hardship worth it?" and returned to his homeland. Therefore, God wants us to *live and walk* by faith.

Heb. 11:12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

"Therefore sprang there even of one, and him [Abraham] as good as dead." The term "as good as dead" suggests that there was something infirm about Abraham because others were 100 or older when they had their first child.

Therefore sprang from Abraham "so many [1] as the stars of the sky in multitude, and [2] as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable." The seed of promise to come from Abraham's loins was to have *two* parts, and as the stars and the sand are "innumerable," so would his seed be. There were to be *two kinds* of seed, *two classes*: *celestial* (spiritual, heavenly) and *terrestrial* (natural, earthly).

The *earthly* seed, pictured by the sand, will embrace all who get life under the New Covenant. That number will be *tremendous*, perhaps 60 or 100 billion. The Jews were accustomed to representing a big number by the sand of the seashore (Gen. 32:12; 41:49; Josh. 11:4; Judg. 7:12; 1 Sam. 13:5; etc.). Instead of a scientist's saying, for example, 10 to the 213th power, which is meaningless to the average person, the Jews used a practical expression.

The *spiritual* seed, pictured by the stars, is the spiritual Isaac seed, the Little Flock (Gal. 4:28). Imagine being in Sarah's place and having her experience. The promise was that she would be the mother of *millions*, let alone that she would have one child—and yet she was *barren*! In addition, kings would proceed from her (Gen. 17:16). The promise to Sarah reminds us of what was said to Rebekah in Genesis 24:60, “Be thou the mother of thousands of millions”; that is, “Be thou the mother of *billions*.”

There are other similarities between Sarah and Rebekah. Both were married to a man who was given the same promise. Abraham and Isaac both spoke of their wives as being their sister (Gen. 20:2; 26:8,9). In both cases, the claim was made to “Abimelech,” although this was not necessarily the same person, for “Abimelech” means “father king,” that is, “patriarch.”

Heb. 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Except for Enoch, “these all died in faith.” The context shows that he was the exception among those mentioned in chapter 11. Enoch did not die; he “was translated [so] that he should not see [experience] death” (verse 5). Therefore, the statement “these all died in faith, not having received the promises” is a generalization, for all of the other Ancient Worthies listed in this chapter died. Incidentally, Elijah is not mentioned by name in chapter 11, yet we know that he was an Ancient Worthy because he is called “a man of God” and the Scriptures indicate he was faithful in his calling (1 Kings 17:24).

All of those mentioned in this chapter, *except for Enoch*, died in faith. The principle is the same in 1 Corinthians 15:27, “For he [God] hath put all things under his [Jesus'] feet. But when he [God] saith all things are put under him [Jesus], it is manifest that he [God] is excepted, which did put all things under him [Jesus].” When all things are put under Jesus' feet, the Father is an exception. Thus Paul was saying that all of the Ancient Worthies who died, died in faith.

The Ancient Worthies did not receive the promises but saw them “afar off, and were persuaded of them.” This “persuasion” is a reminder of the definition of faith, which is the evidence, conviction, or persuasion of things not seen (verse 1). Again we see that the Book of Hebrews was written by the Apostle Paul, for it was customary for him to take one little premise and extract all kinds of information, drawing accurate analogies like a mathematician.

Not only did the Ancient Worthies see the promises afar off and become persuaded of them, but also they “*embraced them*”; that is, they *consecrated*. Verse 13 describes the *action* of faith; the Ancient Worthies *saw* the promises “afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed.” Faith is more than credulity and theory. First comes mental acceptance—believing that God is. But mental acceptance is not enough, for even the devils believe and tremble (James 2:19). Real faith includes *believing* things that are not seen, *being persuaded of them*, *embracing* (or laying hold of) them by consecrating, and *confessing* them. Romans 10:9,10 shows the importance of confession: “If thou shalt *confess* with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth *confession is made unto salvation*.” Belief alone is not sufficient; one must *declare* his faith. All of the Ancient Worthies had this faith in the *full* and *complete* sense. They confessed “that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

Heb. 11:14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

Heb. 11:15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

Heb. 11:16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Verses 14 and 16 complete the thought of verse 13, telling why the Ancient Worthies confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on this earth. They declared “plainly that they seek ... [and] desire a better country, that is, an heavenly [country].” Enoch, Abraham, and Sarah (by being the willing wife of Abraham) all left a place and had opportunity to return but did not because they desired a better heavenly country. Their faithfulness was proved by their not returning.

Q: What about Noah?

A: Although Noah did not literally leave a “country,” he sacrificed the pursuits of the present life. In curtailing his liberties of living a normal life, he built a boat for an unseen flood that had not yet occurred. His time, effort, and speaking were all devoted to the coming judgment. Thus he showed that he was not in harmony with his surroundings and public opinion.

Comment: In other words, he could have “returned” to the ways of the world.

Reply: Yes. We have to reason this way with *all* of the Ancient Worthies, for they were faithful and did not go back to the ways of the world. Many of them left a condition both physically and figuratively, but *all* of them were not “mindful of that country from whence they came out” and hence did not return. Faith is more than just a mental attitude. The cost was great.

Q: Is the “city” the spiritual reward that God prepared for the Ancient Worthies?

A: Yes, but they will receive their reward in two stages. With their initial better physical resurrection to human perfection, the Ancient Worthies will lead many to righteousness (Dan. 12:3). But at the end of the Millennium, when all of the human race who get life also attain a perfect human body, the resurrection of the Ancient Worthies will no longer be “better.” At that time, therefore, in order to preserve that upper category, the Lord will give the Ancient Worthies a spiritual reward.

Heb. 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

The *original* trying of Abraham occurred when he was promised that if he would leave Ur of the Chaldees and enter the land he would be shown, God would make of him a great nation. Abraham obeyed, and in the ensuing covenant, he was told that his seed would be blessed. First, Ishmael was born to Hagar, and later came Isaac, the child (or seed) of promise, whom God eventually asked Abraham to offer up in sacrifice.

Notice that Isaac is called Abraham’s “only begotten son,” even though he had Ishmael and later six other children by Keturah. Isaac was the only son, the child of promise, in an accommodated sense, that is, from the standpoint of the Abrahamic promise. However, since the term “only begotten,” as it is usually understood, does not fit in this case, the meaning is assumed to be that God recognized *only Isaac* as the son of Abraham.

Heb. 11:18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

The thought is, “To whom [Abraham] it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.”

Heb. 11:19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Abraham accounted that God was able to raise up Isaac, “even from the dead; from whence also he [Abraham] received him [Isaac] in a figure.” From a practical standpoint, Abraham’s faith was so strong that he believed God could and would raise Isaac from the dead in order to fulfill the promise.

However, the phrase “in a figure” has an additional application, for Abraham had *fully* intended to obey God. Therefore, it was as if Isaac were actually slain, for if the angel had not stayed Abraham’s arm, Isaac would have been killed. This “figure,” or type, was an allegory of Jesus and the fact that God would have him slain on behalf of the sins of the world. Thus from both a practical and a figurative standpoint, Isaac was a picture. Incidentally, Abraham had only three days’ notice with regard to the command to slay Isaac.

Heb. 11:20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

Isaac exercised faith “concerning things to come” when he blessed Esau and Jacob. The promise still had not been fulfilled, yet he passed it on before his death, manifesting his confidence that the promise would be fulfilled.

Jacob deceived Isaac and thus got the chief blessing, which was intended for Esau, the firstborn. Therefore, to be sure we get the point regarding Isaac’s *faith*, Paul mentioned both sons here. Isaac *believed* in this future promise, which was assured to his seed, and the blessing he imparted before his death manifested the confidence he had with regard to the future. The things *yet unseen would be fulfilled* despite the deception.

Heb. 11:21 By faith Jacob, when he was a-dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

When Jacob was dying, he blessed both of Joseph’s sons and worshipped. How did giving the blessing manifest his faith? The Israelites were in Egypt when Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh. Therefore, by faith, Jacob foresaw the day when they, or at least their progeny, would end up in the Promised Land and have their share of the inheritance there.

So that the proper blessing would go to each, the Holy Spirit overruled and caused Jacob’s hands to be crossed when he gave the blessing to Joseph’s two sons. As Jacob, who was practically blind, reached out, his hands mechanically crisscrossed. After Joseph shrewdly manipulated his two sons into the position he wanted, Jacob said, “I know what I am doing.” Even though Jacob “knew,” it was really the Holy Spirit that discerned, for Jacob was blind (Gen. 48:13-20).

Q: Why didn’t the blessing go to Joseph instead of to his two sons?

A: Jacob was 147 years old at the time, and of course Joseph was much younger (Gen. 47:28). The older of the two was given the greater priority and prestige, just as the patriarch Shem was higher than Abraham. Not only did the Holy Spirit enlighten Jacob to know what he was doing and to force his hands to be crossed, but also the Holy Spirit knew that Joseph would not get into the Promised Land alive (his bones were taken there). Joseph died in Egypt, but his progeny participated in the Exodus.

There is another reason why Jacob blessed the two sons instead of Joseph. The promise went to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but it did not go to Joseph. However, so that Joseph would not feel slighted, God comforted him in saying, “While you are not getting the blessing direct, you are getting a double portion through your *two* sons, both of whom will have part of the inheritance.” (Jacob’s other sons received only a single blessing.) Thus Joseph had a *double* representation in the 12 tribes.

Jacob and Leah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Abraham and Sarah were all buried in Hebron in the one tomb in the Machpelah cave, which Abraham had originally purchased. When Joseph’s bones were taken to Israel, they were buried near Shechem (Nablus today), but his grave has never been found. Joseph’s burial place, with Egyptian inscriptions on the coffin, may be found in the future as one of the “signs and wonders” in the land of Israel (Gen. 50:26; Exod. 13:19; Jer. 32:20). Being second in Egypt and a national hero, he was probably buried like a Pharaoh, for the respect and homage of Egypt would have attended him.

In treating this serious subject of faith, chapter 11 brings in interesting little details. Jacob gave the blessing when “the time drew nigh” that he must die, “and [he] worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.” Why was this detail about the staff mentioned? Genesis 47:30,31 reads, “But I [Jacob] will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their buryingplace. And he [Joseph] said, I will do as thou hast said. And he [Jacob] said, Swear unto me. And he [Joseph] swore unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed’s head.” This latter expression about Jacob’s bowing “himself upon the bed’s head” was a symbolic gesture. To indicate his faith that the promise *would be fulfilled* after his death, Jacob bowed his head over the bedpost as if it were a staff.

Heb. 11:22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

When Joseph was dying, he commanded that his bones be taken to Israel when the nation left Egypt. In other words, Joseph, too, had faith in the *unseen*—that the Israelites would get to the Promised Land. He embraced the promises in advance and acted accordingly. To remember the promises at the time of death *doubly* indicates faith.

Q: Were there any promises in regard to leaving Egypt?

A: Yes. The primary promise that gave hope of the deliverance of Israel is Genesis 15:16, “In the fourth generation they shall come hither again.” Abraham was told that his seed would have trials and tribulations for 400 years, first at Ishmael’s hand and then, later, for 215 years in Egypt, where the Israelites would be cruelly treated and kept in bondage. In the fourth generation, God would call them out of Egypt. The time period was given in round numbers as 400 years. Therefore, the Israelites were not able to pinpoint an exact date for the Exodus because the specific time period was not foretold. It was 430 years from the Abrahamic Covenant to the Law (215 + 215 = 430 years). The round number 400 was a test of faith, for it was not until 30 years later that the deliverance came. No wonder the Israelites were groaning for deliverance! The release was anticipated, but it did not come as soon as they had hoped.

Q: How were the four generations reckoned?

A: The word “generation” in Genesis 15:16 can be considered from two standpoints. There were four generations in 400 years, or four centuries, so *one* generation would be *100* years in round numbers. Also, in tracing the genealogy back through Amram and Jochebed, Bro. Edgar showed that only three generations were in Egypt. The 400 years of persecution began with the mocking of the Isaac seed by Ishmael and kinsmen. During the 215 years that the Israelites

were in Egypt, the persecution continued.

Heb. 11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

Moses' parents risked their lives to hide baby Moses for three months in opposition to Pharaoh's decree that every male child was to be killed (Exod. 1:22). The reason for this action by Moses' parents was *deeper* than just parental love for a baby. They saw that he was "exceeding fair," "proper," and a "goodly child"; that is, because the baby was so unusual in appearance, they believed that his birth was providential and that he was destined to live (Exod. 2:2; Acts 7:20). Furthermore, Moses may have been a child of prayer. In addition to the miraculous circumstances surrounding his nativity, it is possible that unusual circumstances occurred even earlier, during Jochebed's pregnancy. For example, his parents may have dedicated him to the Lord prior to his birth, or a prophecy may have been uttered of which the Bible is silent. Thus they risked their lives by the exercise of faith in that direction, and their faith was based on some kind of *knowledge* about the future. We can make this deduction because all of the preceding exercises of faith in chapter 11 were specifically understood. The Ancient Worthies all had some *basis* for their hope, regardless of how things might have appeared on the surface. Faith is *more* than credulity. The prophecies indicated Israel would be delivered around that time, and somehow Moses' parents may have suspected he would be the deliverer. At any rate, they hid him because of their *faith*.

When Jesus was born, shepherds were informed of the birth through a vision. And Mary was given nine months' advance notice that the Savior would come of her womb. Hence Mary had *knowledge* prior to Jesus' birth. The arrival of the shepherds when he was born and the account of how the angel appeared and instructed them were a confirmation that the babe was destined to be the Son of the Most High. The parallelism suggests that Moses' parents were likewise given prior insight into Moses' future role and destiny.

Exodus 2:1-8 tells about Jochebed's purposely putting baby Moses in an ark in the bulrushes (called "flags" in the King James). Knowing that she could not keep the child hidden in her home indefinitely, she conceived a plan. No doubt she gave instructions to Miriam, Moses' sister, on what to do when Pharaoh's daughter came down to wash herself in the river. Jochebed may have known that Pharaoh's daughter was childless and felt that she would take pity on such a beautiful child. Miriam stood "afar off," watching to see what would happen. At an opportune moment, she offered to fetch "a nurse of the Hebrew women," that is, Moses' mother.

The name Moses means "drawn out [of water]." Several Pharaohs of Egypt had the name Moses; for example, Rameses is really Ra Moses. The name Moses is both Egyptian and Hebrew, however, for in Israel was Moshe (Moses) Dayan.

Another similarity between Moses and Jesus is that Jochebed received *wages* for nursing her own baby (Exod. 2:9). Mary and Joseph were provided "wages" by the three wise men, whose valuable gifts were sold to support the holy family in Egypt, where Joseph had no employment (Matt. 2:11).

"By faith Moses ... was hid three months of his parents [plural], because *they* saw he was a proper child." Moses' father is included in the exercise of faith. "They were not afraid of the king's commandment" because they were convinced that Moses' birth was providential. Another line of evidence was their knowledge that Moses was the *fourth* generation (Gen. 15:16). Hence with both Jesus and Moses, there was general *expectation* prior to their births.

Heb. 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Moses "was come to years" at age 40, as was the custom in Egypt. (In Israel, a man came of age at 30.) No doubt Moses was 40 when he defended the Hebrew and killed the Egyptian, for he was 40 when he fled Egypt (Exod. 2:11,12). He was in "solitude" in Midian for the next 40 years, and then he led the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years. Thus three "40s" were in his life.

Moses acted "by faith," declaring himself a Hebrew at age 40 when he killed an Egyptian who was afflicting a Hebrew. "By faith," he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." (If Moses had remained silent, there is a strong possibility he would have become the Pharaoh of Egypt in time. At the very least, he would have had a very high position with great wealth, being esteemed and honored as an Egyptian.) Moses' positive decision reminds us of Jesus' determination at age 30, when he came of age, to serve the Lord and be baptized at Jordan. In a sense, it could be said that Moses consecrated when he decided to defend the Hebrew.

It would be interesting to know the occasion and circumstances when Moses "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Evidently, some incident occurred when he had to declare himself. This was a *moral* issue for Moses, for although he was learned in the wisdom of Egypt, his mother had nurtured him, and that contact was probably not fully broken. Although he was trained in Egypt's ways, he had a religious background.

In order for one to be a Pharaoh in Egypt and to be recognized by the people at large, the seed had to be reckoned through the mother, a female. (In Israel, the heir apparent was through the male.) Thus being "called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" would have made him an heir apparent to the throne.

Heb. 11:25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Moses chose to "suffer affliction with the people of God [the Hebrews, who were in bondage]." Apparently, the Egyptian public were prepared to accept him as an Egyptian, as a legitimate son of Pharaoh's daughter, but he knew he was not. He had *knowledge* of his background, which had been transmitted by his mother. Moses chose *not* to be recognized as an Egyptian and *not* "to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Heb. 11:26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

In what way did Moses know how to esteem "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt"? He had *faith* that the promised Deliverer (the Messiah) would come, and he *acted* in harmony with that promise.

What Scripture gave him a reason for this faith? Not only was there a general promise that of the seed of woman would come the Deliverer, but also a promise was given to—and thus became identified with—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Later the promise was given that Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. Being an Israelite himself and knowing that Messiah would come of the Israelites, Moses acted accordingly—in *faith*.

Moses must have been tall, strong, and handsome, as well as noble in appearance. His strength was proven by (1) his killing the Egyptian and (2) his defense of the women in Sinai who came to the well to get water for their flocks. Moses drove off the shepherds who tried to interfere.

Moses chose to be identified with Israel in a gradual manner by getting involved in two disputes: (1) between an Egyptian and a Hebrew (Exod. 2:11,12) and (2) between two Hebrews (Exod. 2:13,14). Not taking too kindly to Moses' intervention, the one who was in the wrong responded, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" Afterward Moses fled Egypt because of fear (Exod. 2:15).

Moses "had respect unto the recompence of the reward" of a better resurrection (but not the chief one). All of the Ancient Worthies had more enlightenment and insight than we probably give them credit for. However, they did not see that the Messiah was a *multitudinous* seed, the Head and a *body* of Christians. That concept was a mystery until the Apostle Paul and others revealed it (Col. 1:26,27). But the Ancient Worthies clearly had faith in a coming Messiah.

Heb. 11:27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

When did Moses forsake Egypt *by faith*, "not fearing the wrath of the king"? This verse could not apply to his earlier flight to Midian after killing the Egyptian and hiding his body in the sand or after intervening with the two Hebrews, for the Exodus account states plainly that Pharaoh sought to kill him and Moses fled in fear (Exod. 2:14,15). Therefore, Moses "forsook Egypt" *without* fear at the time of the Exodus.

It is remarkable that 40 years later—following the fear that had caused him to flee Egypt—Moses returned to the very courts of Egypt (the lions' den, as it were) and repeatedly warned, exhorted, and reprimanded the Pharaoh, giving him a tongue-lashing and speaking sternly when he saw that the king's heart was hardened: "If you do not do such and such, a plague will occur." Moses had a great deal of courage. In fact, he probably had so much courage that the Pharaoh was a little shaky and in doubt as to what to do with this man. The Lord's spirit was on Moses with *great power* at this time. Imagine Moses' coming out of the wilderness and marching right up to Pharaoh and saying, "Let my people go!" He would have been a *very impressive* figure. While Moses had been in the desert tending sheep, looking at the stars, etc., he still must have had a tremendous nobility of countenance, bearing, and character, for when he approached Pharaoh, it was with *power*. The office of Pharaoh commanded such authority and respect that for any man to have the impudence to oppose and threaten him was truly astounding. Pharaoh could have had Moses killed instantly, so for him not to do so means that Moses was an electrifying personality. He did not fear Pharaoh, and Pharaoh knew it by his manner. All of these factors were part of Moses' *faith*.

Moses "endured, as seeing him [God] who is invisible." Moses worshipped the *unseen* God, whereas Egyptian worship was predicated on things that could be *seen*. *Pharaoh* was worshipped as a god, and he had a huge and elaborate *temple with statuary and incense*. Then along came Moses asking the people to worship a God for whom there was no image. Moses asked that the Israelites be allowed to go three days into the wilderness to worship an *invisible* God. His faith was so strong that he worshipped an invisible God as if He were *visible*.

Paul continued to carry on the theme of the invisible, the unseen. He defined faith as "the evidence of things *not seen*," and the *invisible* God was part of that "evidence." The definition of faith is not just a pretty phrase or a theological term, for it *motivated* the Ancient Worthies to move mountains, as it were.

Heb. 11:28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

In what way was the Passover kept "through faith"? Moses (and the Israelites) had *faith* that

the blood on the lintels and doorposts would protect them. (Incidentally, the nation had to be educated, for they were not too pleased with Moses in the beginning. He had to do signs and miracles, and gradually the people realized that God was with him.) To put blood on doors and go through the ritual of slaying and eating an animal sounded strange to the Egyptians, who said, “You mean you believe in an *invisible* God?” God was pleased that the Israelites humiliated themselves and had the faith to go through all of these steps. Paul expressed the principle in 1 Corinthians 1:21, “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” The Passover was more than just the one day. It included the slaying of the lamb, the eating of the lamb, and the seven days of unleavened bread.

Heb. 11:29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

Notice the transference of faith to now include the nation. Verse 28 reads, “*He* [Moses] kept the passover.” Verse 29 says, “By faith *they* passed through the Red sea.”

Moses and the children of Israel exercised faith in going through the Red Sea. At first, not much faith was required, for they could see a path opening up in the Red Sea. Where faith entered was in the realization that *2 million* of them had a *distance* to go to get through the parted waters, and the Israelites could have feared that the waters would close in on them. We can have a lot of faith on the spur of the moment, but the more we think about a situation or trial and consider the problems, the more our faith may waver. Our faith can weaken if we try to rationalize it according to physical things, and that is what happened to ten of the spies who went to search out the Promised Land. The more they thought about what they had seen, the less they wanted to enter.

Thus the Israelites had *faith* that the waters would not close in on them. Based on faith and the confidence that God would deliver them, they went over on dry ground. When the Egyptians looked at the same dry passageway that had opened up, they debated whether to follow. They would have reasoned, “The sea is not closing in on the Israelites, and since it has been that way for a little while, there must not be much danger.” They reasoned from the standpoint of the *flesh* and *confidence in the flesh*. After thinking the matter over, they “assayed” to go through the Red Sea and pursue the Israelites, but the waters closed over them and they drowned.

A review of the Ancient Worthies considered thus far is as follows. Abel, Enoch, and Noah exercised faith *before* the Flood, that is, in the first “world.” Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses’ parents, and Moses exercised faith *after* the Flood. Other Ancient Worthies in these time periods are not covered in chapter 11. For example, Rebekah exercised faith in going out to marry an *unseen* bridegroom in an *unseen* country and in departing immediately from her family.

Heb. 11:30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

After leaving Sinai, the Israelites prepared to enter the Promised Land and conquer the city of Jericho. They encompassed the city daily for six days, and then on the seventh day, when they had circled the city another seven times, the priests gave the signal, the people shouted in unison, and the walls of Jericho fell down. The Israelites then captured and destroyed the city.

The *collective* faith of the people, instead of an individual, was manifested in their obeying the instructions of the Lord. They exercised *faith* in obeying and also in taking *time* to *daily* march around Jericho and to *wait* and be patient for a whole week. The strategy of the Israelites must have been confusing to the inhabitants dwelling within the city walls. When the walls fell down

on the seventh day, those of Jericho saw that the God of Israel was helping the Israelites.

Not only did the Israelites' obedience *manifest* faith, but also the walls fell down *by* faith. In other words, some mysterious *power* is related to faith. Probably God timed an earthquake to coincide *exactly* with the people's shout, but nevertheless, the falling down of the walls is accredited to *faith*. We are reminded of Jesus' words that faith can move mountains (Mark 11:23). Of course in order to be effective, faith must operate in harmony with God's will and purposes. We cannot just go out and tap that faith for any little whim we may have and then think the request will happen, but where a desire is legitimate, clearly having the Lord's approval and blessing, *faith anticipates victory*, even though time and fatigue may be involved.

Q: Could the people's united shout have caused the walls to fall?

A: We do not think so because the picture is symbolic. The multiple circlings of Jericho and the walls falling down are a picture of the end of the age. The "shout" is the final message of the Church, the lesson being the same as that in the Gideon picture.

The walls were an obstacle that seemed impregnable to the natural mind. The Israelites were in a dry, *hot* valley, for Jericho is near the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth. The strategic advantage was definitely in favor of the inhabitants of Jericho, the defenders of the city, who were up on little mounds, or hills. Meanwhile, the Israelites had a problem in trying to get up there. Spiritually speaking, the figurative lesson is that *our faith overcomes the world*.

In this eleventh chapter, Paul was trying to show the POWER of faith—what it will do—and some who have manifested such faith. Christians can get valuable lessons by meditating on the events recorded here. The *results* of faith are shown, as well as what faith can do for the individual.

Heb. 11:31 **By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.**

Rahab hid two Israelite spies in her house so that they would not be captured. The people of Jericho were unlawful occupants of the Promised Land, and the spies were searching out the land to ascertain any vulnerable points. If discovered in her deed of hiding the spies, Rahab would have been put to death. Hence she manifested *strong faith* in risking her life.

In *each* case, faith was not credulity; it was not emotion or a sudden intuitive feeling of the righteousness of a cause. Therefore, it is not reasonable to assume that Rahab merely acted on impulse on the spur of the moment. Rahab had heard what God had done for the Israelites, so she had faith in their God. Thus she had *previously meditated* on the experiences of the children of Israel and the miracles that had attended them in their journey, starting with the parting of the Red Sea and including the happenings during the 40 years in the wilderness. Not only had God fed the Israelites with manna, but there were repeated occasions when they, a *shepherd* people, had defeated a *warrior* people. The point is that faith is based on the *exercise of the mind* with respect to God's dealings and His promises.

Q: Was Rahab an innkeeper rather than a harlot?

A: Rahab was indeed a "harlot." In the New Testament, some who showed the most affection for Jesus were previously disreputable characters, for example, Mary Magdalene with the seven devils and the woman of Samaria who had had five husbands (Mark 16:9; John 4:17,18). Jesus also had compassion on the woman who washed his feet with her tears. Others criticized his tolerating this woman to even be near him, saying that, according to the Law, she was

ceremoniously defiling him by her presence and touching him. However, they did not realize the meaning of the Law. Ostensibly a lot of things may appear to violate the letter of God's command when, in reality, there is no violation. If they had understood the *philosophy and principles* that were being taught, they would not have criticized Jesus. He replied, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:47). In other words, the one who is forgiven much, loveth much. Her expression of gratitude and her desire for forgiveness, coupled with her tears and humiliating herself as a woman, using her hair to dry Jesus' feet, were real repentance.

A lot of "scholarship" today tries to minimize Rahab's background, saying that she was an innkeeper and not an actual harlot. However, we should accept the scriptural statement just as it reads. In risking her life, Rahab repented and was converted; i.e., she changed her lifestyle.

Rahab subsequently manifested her faith in another way by putting a scarlet cord out her window and by beseeching that not only her life but also the lives of those in her father's house be spared. The Christian similarly gets rewards for faith in the present life, even though the bulk of the reward will come beyond the veil.

Heb. 11:32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

In this one verse, six Ancient Worthies are mentioned by name for their *faith* in things not seen and for *acting* on that faith. The "prophets" (plural) are also commended.

Heb. 11:33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

"Through faith," the prophets and faithful ones of old did many things. Very often our studies are relatively superficial at first. In studying these chapters, we are more concerned—and properly so—with getting the spirit and the lesson. Then we go a little deeper in each subsequent study, for it is better to tread safely and softly than to rush in with a predisposition to interpret too quickly. Accordingly, this chapter is much appreciated, but we will take some time to reflect more deeply on parts of the next few verses.

"Who through faith subdued kingdoms." David "subdued kingdoms" in his victories and appealing to the Lord for enlightenment from the Urim and the Thummin. He manifested faith in getting and obeying instructions. Another example is the nation of Egypt, which was greatly impoverished through the faith of the Israelites, who hearkened to Moses in the Exodus. And Joshua conquered "kingdoms" when he entered the Promised Land. Many of the Ancient Worthies "subdued kingdoms," but Paul probably had Jeremiah in mind when he used this terminology.

How did Jeremiah destroy kingdoms by faith? God said, "I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant" (Jer. 1:10). Jeremiah was set as a prophet over particularly the nation of Israel but also over neighboring nations. He predicted the judgment and destruction of not only Judah but also other nations, such as Moab, Egypt, Babylon, and Ammon (Jeremiah 46–51). He was "set" for the purpose of destroying kingdoms, but he did no carnal fighting; in fact, he did not even have a sword. Rather, he destroyed *verbally* through *prophecy*, and he had faith that the prophecies *would be fulfilled*. God told Jeremiah what He intended to do and instructed the prophet to speak the message publicly. Jeremiah did not just merely narrate the prophecies but spoke with *such feeling and power* that it was as if *Jehovah Himself* were speaking. And that indeed was the case, for God was speaking by the mouth of Jeremiah.

When Jeremiah made these forceful pronouncements, there was danger—not only for his personal safety because the message was unpopular but also because he would be subjected to ridicule, shame, embarrassment, and humiliation if the prophecies did not come to pass. Nevertheless, *in faith*, Jeremiah had the *utmost* confidence that the Lord’s Word was true and that these things would happen shortly. When the destruction of Judah, etc., actually occurred, he was accredited with pulling down nations, for his faith had reached out *in advance* in making the pronouncements. God timed the destruction so that it came to pass *exactly* as Jeremiah had said, and God’s wrath was assuaged *exactly* when predicted, that is, after the 70-year period. Thus Jeremiah “rooted out” and “destroyed” in 606 BC, and he restored (“planted” and “built”) in 536 BC; both aspects were accredited to him.

Therefore, we think Paul had Jeremiah in mind here. As we go along, we will see that he first had individuals in mind, and then he mentioned groups a little later.

“Who through faith ... wrought righteousness.” Samuel delineated principles of righteousness, for example, “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22). He lived a humble pastoral life (as opposed to Gideon, for example, who manifested faith as a warrior). Samuel was a seer and a man of peace.

John the Baptist preached righteousness and repentance. Also, Elijah wrought righteousness by bringing reform to the nation of Israel in connection with the prophets of Baal.

“Who through faith ... obtained promises.” Other translations have “procured promises,” “received promises,” “deemed the fulfillment of promises,” and “saw God’s promises fulfilled.”

“Who through faith ... stopped the mouths of lions.” Daniel “stopped the mouths of lions”—and they were hungry too! King Darius exercised a little faith, for he went out early in the morning and called down to Daniel to see if he was safe in the den, thinking that perhaps Daniel’s God had delivered him. Incidentally, Daniel was an old man at this time, being at least 100 years old. When he was removed from the lions’ den, King Darius elevated him to a very high position and cast his conspirators into the den, where they were devoured. Several of the kings, including Nebuchadnezzar, were hotheaded and did not hesitate to set an example when they thought they were justified in their causes.

Heb. 11:34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

“Who through faith ... quenched the violence of fire.” Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (the three Hebrew children) quenched the violence of fire on the plain of Dura with King Nebuchadnezzar.

“Who through faith ... escaped the edge of the sword.” David certainly escaped the edge of Goliath’s sword, but he was already mentioned by name. Elijah may come under this category. Ahab sent out 50 soldiers with the instruction to apprehend Elijah and take his life. Elijah sat on the top of a hill, and when the king’s men came to kill him, the prophet called down fire from heaven to destroy them. Ahab sent a second group of 50, who also were destroyed by fire. When the third group of 50 was sent, the captain, knowing about the fate of the two previous groups, begged Elijah’s mercy. The captain was obligated to fulfill the king’s wish but was in a quandary. If he disobeyed, the king would kill him, and if he obeyed, Elijah would call down fire from heaven and kill him. The only way to avoid the problem was to get Elijah to voluntarily come down and go to the king. When “the angel of the LORD” told Elijah to go and not be afraid, the prophet complied (2 Kings 1:9-15).

“Who through faith ... out of weakness were made strong.” After Paul enumerated some of the Ancient Worthies by name, he began to think of others and just mentioned them in generalities by using incidents from their lives. Samson, Jeremiah, and Gideon fit this category, although they were discussed earlier.

“Who through faith ... waxed valiant in fight,” and “who through faith ... turned to flight the armies of the aliens [Gentiles, strangers].” The lives of many Ancient Worthies exemplified this characteristic.

Heb. 11:35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

Through faith, “women received their dead raised to life again.” The Shunammite woman’s son was brought back to life by Elisha (2 Kings 4:8-37). She had set aside a little room for the prophet to use when he came to her house. One day she received the bad news that her child had died. She contacted Elisha and constrained him to travel to the dead son, for she was convinced that the prophet, through the power of God, could restore the child to life. Elisha “went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his [the dead child’s] mouth, and his eyes upon his [the child’s] eyes, and his hands upon his [the child’s] hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.” Thus Elisha lay on the child and breathed into his organism (mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, as it were), and the child revived. The Shunammite woman’s *faith* had much to do with the miracle.

With Elijah too, a woman received her dead son back to life (1 Kings 17:8-24). Elijah took the son of the widow of Zarephath “and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child’s soul come into him again. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.”

“Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance.” This clause is in the plural too. We do not know how all of the Ancient Worthies mentioned in the Bible died, but all were faithful “that they might obtain a better resurrection.”

Heb. 11:36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

Again all of these sufferings were endured through faith. John the Baptist was imprisoned, and Jeremiah was put in stocks.

Heb. 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

“They were stoned, they were sawn asunder.” According to tradition, Isaiah was “sawn asunder.” Zechariah, son of Jehoiada the priest, was stoned to death when he tried to turn the people to righteousness (2 Chron. 24:20,21). Naboth was also stoned to death (1 Kings 21:5-14).

Elijah and John the Baptist “wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins.” In fact, because

Elijah was characteristically garbed in rough dress, when John the Baptist came along and was similarly dressed, some thought he was Elijah raised to life. John the Baptist's rough clothing was the result of his primitive life, which included eating locusts and wild honey.

“Being destitute, afflicted, tormented.” Now the list is getting too general to particularize.

Heb. 11:38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

The world was not worthy of these faithful Ancient Worthies. They wandered in deserts, mountains, and caves.

Heb. 11:39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

Heb. 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Again these statements are general, for the Bible states plainly that Enoch did not die. Enoch is not mentioned here, and we do not know much about his personal life, yet some of the expressions that are enumerated would include him, for certainly he manifested courage and righteousness in the antediluvian period. If Noah had to preach righteousness amidst a perverse generation in connection with the coming Flood, then Enoch, who lived just before Noah's day and walked with God, also saw iniquity and prophesied of things to come. If the hypothesis is true that there are 144,000 Ancient Worthies and only two of them did not die, then 143,998 died, and the statement of Hebrews 11:13, “These all died in faith,” truly is a generality. Moffatt translates Hebrews 11:5 as, “It was by faith that Enoch was taken to heaven, so that he never died (*he was not overtaken by death, for God had taken him away*). For before he was taken to heaven, his record was that *he had satisfied God*.” Of course Enoch is not in heaven, but Moffatt understood that Enoch did not die. None of the translators would think of him in the sense that we do, namely, that he was preserved as one of two witnesses to be seen in the future in the Day of Judgment.

“God having provided some better thing for us, that they [the Ancient Worthies] without us should not be made perfect.” The implication is that the Church has to be glorified *before* any of the Ancient Worthies can come back to life, being made perfect through their resurrection. They have already passed the test of faith, so when they come forth from the grave, they will *instantaneously* be made perfect. In contrast, the human race will *gradually* be brought up the road to physical perfection and then, later, moral perfection based on obedience.

The Ancient Worthies will obtain a “better resurrection” (verse 35). Ultimately they will have a spiritual resurrection. The terminology “unto thee, and to thy seed *after* thee” shows that the Ancient Worthies will leave the natural inheritance behind (Gen. 17:7-10). When the account says that the Ancient Worthies will get a better resurrection, it would be rather strange to feel that their reward was simply coming forth from the tomb perfect. In the final analysis, if they were to *remain* as perfect humans forever, their reward would not be any different from that of the obedient of the world of mankind at the end of the Millennium. It is true that when the Ancient Worthies come forth from the grave physically perfect, they will be rewarded in the sense of being a step ahead of everyone else on the human plane. But as the world of mankind walks up the highway of holiness and gets closer and closer to perfection and enters into the age beyond the Millennium, they will be the same as the Ancient Worthies. Therefore, the perfection of organism would not be a real reward for the Ancient Worthies in the sense that Scripture evidently indicates. However, if they were changed to *spirit* nature, they would have

a *lasting* “better resurrection” than the world of mankind. Therefore, the term “better resurrection” implies more than coming forth in the Kingdom perfect; it implies the “heavenly” city they looked for (Heb. 11:16). Evidently, they had *some clue* of a spiritual resurrection. Quite a lot of *fragmentary* information was known by the faithful of old. They had glimpses into the future of which we are not aware.

We can reason another way on verse 40. If it is true that God will not make the Ancient Worthies perfect until the Little Flock is changed, then the implication is also that the Ancient Worthies cannot come back until the Great Company is off the scene, for Christ’s merit is loaned, or imputed, to the *whole* “church of the firstborn” (Heb. 12:23). Legally, restitution from sin cannot begin until Christ’s merit is released and goes back into the “bank,” as it were, to be *permanently* paid over to Justice *forever*. Then the curse on the human race will be lifted, and the Ancient Worthies will be instantaneously raised to perfection. The world will be gradually raised and restored as individuals back to perfection according to obedience.

Heb. 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

In the clause “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,” why did Paul use the word “also”? The usual explanation is that “also” refers to the Ancient Worthies of the previous chapter as being the “great cloud ... of witnesses.” However, the Ancient Worthies are in the tomb, so they cannot literally behold Christians running their race in the present life. Therefore, how could they “witness” the development of the Church in the Gospel Age?

Of course God sees the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:9,10; 48:3,5). When the picture is finished and is seen as a drama of those who really are faithful, of both the Old Testament and the New Testament ages, then all who look back in retrospect will appreciate how God visualized and foretold the whole story.

The point is that verse 1 can be viewed from the standpoint that God, Jesus, and the holy angels (and even the unholy angels) are all “witnesses” of the spectacle, or drama, being enacted down here on earth. They are certainly a “great ... cloud of witnesses,” a *live* audience, as it were. It is true that we have the example of the Ancient Worthies, but in addition to their example and the edification we receive from meditating on their lives, we ourselves are a spectacle. Our consciousness of being such a spectacle should exhort us to press on in faithfulness, to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and ... run with patience the race that is set before us.” *We are being watched by God, Jesus, and the holy angels!* These spiritual beings are looking *down* on the development of the Church from Pentecost to the date of its completion.

Q: In a sense, aren’t we a spectacle to the world as well?

A: Yes, but only in the limited sense of each contemporary generation. In contrast, the spirit beings have been *looking down* on the *entire* spectacle of the development of the Church ever since Pentecost. They will continue to view this development until the Church is finished. It is true that the world takes cognizance of the Christian, but there is no particular interest except where the path of a Christian crosses the path of an unconsecrated person. One reason the world is not that concerned with the lives of Christians is that the example is a reproach to the unconsecrated.

Comment: The word “cloud” seems to imply that the witnesses are above us.

With the Church having the testimony and the lives of the faithful of the past as an encouragement and also having the realization that these other *live* spectators are beholding them in the present life, the setting of chapter 12 is like an *arena with a race going on*. The Apostle Paul was beginning to use the illustration of a race that is being watched with excitement and interest. God, Jesus, and the holy angels are looking down on this race with great interest. As they see the candidates of promise, who are legally running the race course, it is a great drama to behold.

“Let us lay aside every weight.” First, we will consider the *natural* illustration. During a literal race, the proper clothing is worn, such as lightweight sneakers and shorts—clothing that is light and will not impede movement. Prior to the race, however, the runners run the course with heavy shoes, even inserting metal weights. They practice over and over again in this manner. Then, on the day of the race, the weights are released, and the runners are encouraged with their speed, having a feeling of liberty.

“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.” Spiritually speaking, Paul was sliding from the *natural* custom and practice of these athletes to the correspondency with the Christian in running his race. The “weight” corresponds to the *sin* that so easily besets us. This besetting “sin” would differ from individual to individual; that is, it is whatever particularly and tenaciously follows and troubles us in connection with our walk with God. We should lay aside this sin with definiteness and authority. We are reminded of how the Israelites were told to *thoroughly get rid of* the Canaanites in the land. The principle is the same with us.

Paul said to lay aside “every weight, and the sin.” The “sin” is the particular weakness that each Christian has. Examples of “weights” are the cares of this world, entanglement in business, and other engagements that occupy time, expense, and energy. Our attitude should be, “This *one* thing I do” (Phil. 3:13). Therefore, the shedding of the weights would include not only sin but also indulgences in legitimate pleasures that should be sacrificed as much as possible in order to afford the Christian a better opportunity to run the race.

“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” The race is not a 100-yard dash or even a one-mile race but a *marathon*, a *lifetime* effort. We are to be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). A marathon runner does not start out sprinting when he knows 30 or 40 miles lie ahead, for otherwise, he would quickly expend his energy. Therefore, knowing that a long, grueling race is in front of him, the athlete tries to *pace* himself; that is, he tries to realize his limitations, to know and consider carefully his good points as well as his bad points, and not to become discouraged or despondent. If a marathon runner runs too fast, he gets winded and becomes discouraged, whereas if he paces himself for a grueling, fighting, long race that will require all of his energy, he will run in a *disciplined* way, pressing on *steadily*.

In a literal marathon, there is just one winner, but in the Christian race, 144,000 will win the race. However, we are not in a race where a baton is passed to the next runner, for even with 144,000 getting the prize, Paul said that we are each to run as if there is only *one* prize and *one* winner. We are not to run carelessly, looking back now and then to see if we are ahead of the crowd. A lot of runners make this mistake, and then they lose the race, despite their great energy and strength. They should not pace themselves by what others are doing. Instead of paying so much attention to fellow runners, they should concentrate on the *goal*, the *end* of the race, the *prize*. The same principle applies to Christians—we are to concentrate on the prize of the *high calling* and on *Jesus*.

Heb. 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the

throne of God.

Jesus is the “author and finisher” of our faith. What is another way of saying this?

Comment: Jesus was the first to be elevated to the divine nature, and he will help us finish our race for the prize of the high calling.

Reply: Yes. In other words, there are two thoughts in this statement.

1. Jesus began a race and finished it. He started his own personal race, and he won.
2. Now, instead of just sitting back and letting Christians run their individual races alone, Jesus assists them with his experience. He assists them like a coach. Just as a coach points out weaknesses and provides counsel, so Jesus is the “coach” of the Christian “athlete,” loyally aiding the runner from the start of the race until the end. “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world [age]” is the principle, whether we consider the Church as a whole in a collective sense or as individuals (Matt. 28:20).

Thus two thoughts are incorporated here: Jesus’ own personal race, which he won, and the example and help that he gives others. The second half of verse 2 deals with his personal race.

“Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.” This joy, which enabled Jesus to endure the Cross, was more than just personal honor, for in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed to be glorified with the glory he had with the Father as the Logos; that is, he would have been satisfied merely to be reinstated with no reward (John 17:5). Therefore, the “joy” set before him was being the Mediator, the agent of blessing to the world in the next age. As one of the two “sons of the morning,” the Logos joyed over the creation of Adam (Isa. 14:12; Luke 1:78; Rev. 2:28). When the human race was plunged into sin and death, he was probably depressed and sorrowful, but the Father subsequently confided that He had a plan and that Adam’s sin was no surprise. God knew of all these contingencies before they began to arise and then gave the Son the privilege of participation in the plan. In other words, the Logos sorrowed at the plight of the human race and was exceedingly joyful to realize God’s plan.

Therefore, what kind of knowledge did Jesus have as the Logos in heaven? The implication here—and other Scriptures confirm it—is that he knew, prior to his coming to earth, that crucifixion would be part of his sacrifice. At the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus said, “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause [purpose] came I unto this hour” (John 12:27). Even in Gethsemane, Jesus realized that he had to die. Therefore, he was not praying to be relieved of death, but he wondered if there could be some relief of certain things in connection with that death.

However, it is possible that the Logos did not know until *shortly before* coming to earth that *he* was to be the Messiah. Just because he appeared to Abraham, etc., does not mean he had a *full* understanding of all that God was doing. At the last minute, as it were, the Father could have told him that the types and pictures pertained to the work of the coming Messiah and then extended the invitation to do that work. God would have told the Logos that he could be changed from a spirit being to a human being and go down to earth on this errand of mercy. God made this offer to the Logos, for “no man taketh this honour unto himself” (Heb. 5:4). In other words, God selected him to be High Priest just as He had selected Aaron in the type. Jesus did not presume to take this honor unto himself.

The Logos was *transferred* from a spirit being to a human existence. He did not die as a spirit being—the life was simply transferred from spirit nature to earthly nature. The Logos was

made aware in advance what this transfer involved and what his mission and errand of mercy were to be. However, once transferred, Jesus did not become aware of his prehuman existence until his baptism at Jordan, when the “heavens were opened unto him” (Matt. 3:16). It would be unreasonable to say that all the Scriptures opened to him at that time, but the knowledge of his prehuman existence flooded his mind. Then, armed with his previous knowledge as a spirit being, plus having gained an understanding of the types, Jesus went into the wilderness to study the types more carefully, for he had “found [himself] in fashion as a man” (Phil. 2:8). Until his consecration at age 30, there was a mental block with regard to his prehuman existence. From that moment on, he spoke and acted as his Father had taught him (John 8:28).

“Despising the shame.” Did Jesus *despise* the shame of the Cross? No. This word is a poor translation of the Greek, for it does not accurately describe the attitude with which Jesus met his trials. The thought is “*regardless of the shame*” or “*disregarding the shame,*” for Jesus *suffered and agonized* through it. He was not immune to the shame like a stoic, for not only did he say, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,” but also he sweat blood in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:38). He was both compassionate and emotional. Therefore, the phrase “*regardless of the shame*” more accurately describes the manner in which he endured the experience that led to the Cross.

Jesus “is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Jesus is not God but a *separate* personality sitting at the right hand of his Father. In Revelation 3:21, the glorified Christ said, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” In other words, the Father has a throne, and immediately next to it is Jesus’ throne. Since Jesus is sitting in the Father’s *intimate* presence, being on an elevated plane of authority in the divine family, it could be said that he is seated “in” the Father’s throne, even though he is actually seated on his *own* throne at the right hand of the Father.

This particular posture of Jesus’ sitting on his throne to the right of the Father has applied *throughout* the Gospel Age, that is, ever since his death and resurrection. It did not begin in 1874, 1878, 1914, etc. Paul was emphasizing the “sitting” aspect, which pertains to inspection, observation, and inherent power and authority, and *not to the exercise of power*, which will occur when Jesus (“Michael”) *stands up* after the Church is complete (Dan. 12:1). The only standing posture of Jesus that is related to the Church at his Second Presence is his statement “I *stand* at the door, and knock” (Rev. 3:20). However, this “standing” pertains to making known his *presence*, for when a man stands at a door and knocks on it, we know he is here. But when Jesus arises from a seated position to *stand* forth, it will be the *exercise of his reign*—yet future. Now Jesus is still seated on a cloud with a sharp sickle, as a refiner, etc. (Mal. 3:3; Rev. 14:14). His standing up is a *future* posture. In the Second Psalm, the implication is that Jesus is seated, awaiting an appointed time to rise, or stand up, and break the *nations*. When he arises from his throne, it is not to reign over his Church because he has reigned over his Church ever since his ascension and Pentecost.

Heb. 12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

How did Jesus endure “such contradiction of sinners against himself”? Being *perfect* in an *imperfect* world, he had continual trials and difficulties, first, because of the perfection of his flesh in the midst of an imperfect human race and, second, because of the contradiction of the sinners themselves, who opposed, ridiculed, and tried to trap him with questions. The contradiction began at Jordan and *climaxed* with his *crucifixion*. During the last week of Jesus’ life, the contradiction was particularly noticeable, especially when he was on the Cross, where statements were uttered such as, “He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of

Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him” (Matt. 27:42). The people mocked him, reviled him, spat on him, put a crown of thorns on his head, etc. Sinners contradicted the one who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb. 7:26). *Whatever* experience a Christian might have, it is *nothing* in comparison to what Jesus endured because we are *imperfect*. Many of our experiences are due to our imperfections rather than to our faithfulness.

“Lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” This thought is associated with the idea of a *race*. While the Apostle Paul may seem to be rambling in many directions, bringing in all kinds of pictures and complexities, he never left the central theme he had in mind. Whether a marathon runner will win the race has a lot to do with his *mind*. It is not always the runner who trains the most who wins the race, for the winner has *brain power, will, determination, energy of mind, and zeal*, as well as a trained body. Mind and body, both *inner strength and externally developed muscles*, are needed to *press on no matter what*. If the marathon runner starts to say, “What is the use of all this?” or “Look at all those fellows ahead of me”—if he entertains any thoughts of *discouragement*—he will lose. The battle is in the *mind*, even though the flesh is groaning. The moment the marathon runner gives up in his mind, he stops the race. Thus the Christian fights a *mental battle*. Paul was saying, “Do not get weary and faint in your *mind*. Have zeal and determination—*inner strength!*”

Heb. 12:4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

“Ye have not yet resisted unto blood [*death*].” Why does the expression “resisted unto blood” mean death? The *shedding of blood* indicates death. Blood *in the veins* is a symbol of *life*; blood *outside the veins* (i.e., “shed”) is a symbol of *death*. Paul was saying that we should resist *unto death* in “striving against sin.” Again this verse refers to a marathon, which is a *real battle*.

Heb. 12:5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

Heb. 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

“My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.” Why was this exhortation brought in here? The implication is that this epistle to the Hebrews was *absolutely needed*. The Hebrew Christians had even more problems than the Gentile Christians. This epistle was essential to confirm the faith of the Hebrew Christians that they were not violating God’s Law by accepting the gospel of grace in the person of Christ Jesus, who was not even a priest according to the Law. They were beginning to forget certain truths and lose some of their zeal for the Lord Jesus. The message to Ephesus, the first church, was that they had forgotten their first love. This flagging of zeal did not pertain just to works because Jesus said, “I know your works, your energy, your patience, etc.” (Rev. 2:2-4 paraphrase). Rather, their zeal was waning in regard to their *personal love* for the Savior. Paul was referring to this personal love in calling the Hebrew Christians “sons,” a term of personal warmth (verse 6). They were running the race—that was not the criticism. But they were starting to lose their objective of looking at the goal, and they were beginning to not feel the *personalized attention* of the Master with regard to their trials and experiences. We can have the same problem. If we forget that the Lord is looking over us *individually*, we will get discouraged and feel left out.

Comment: Unfavorable experiences and trials are proofs that we are *sons*, and not bastards (verses 5-8).

Reply: The implication is that the hard experiences of a long, rugged marathon correspond to the hard experiences a Christian gets in running the race course of life. These hard experiences are necessary and are not any indication of disfavor.

There are two kinds of chastening:

1. *Disciplinary* experiences help mature, educate, and edify us. In other words, chastisements discipline us.
2. Chastisements are also given for *wrongdoing*.

As Christians, we receive both kinds of chastening. We are not to “despise [disregard] ... the chastening of the Lord” for *disciplinary* purposes. Nor are we to “faint when ... rebuked” for *wrongdoing*.

“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” The Father’s motive is good in both instances, for He wants to develop our character. Therefore, He needs to (1) both harden us and make us tender and sympathetic and (2) correct us for wrongdoing.

Heb. 12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

Heb. 12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

When we are corrected for wrongdoing, we should not be discouraged any more than in a natural family situation. If a father or mother spans the child, the punishment is not an evidence of lack of love. In fact, the discipline indicates the opposite—that there is a family relationship and the parent is interested in the development of the child.

“If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” If one does not get chastening, he is an illegitimate child. Thus every son *must have chastisement*, or he is not a son. The Christian is *called to suffer*. The very purpose is that the *trial* of our faith might *prove* us (1 Pet. 1:7). Therefore, sorrow and hard experiences are to be expected.

For the same reason, Paul said in verse 5, “Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto *children*.” Then he quoted Proverbs 3:11, “My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction.” Paul was saying, “You are sons. Therefore, any experience you get, even for wrongdoing, should not make you overly despondent, for the chastening is for your *good*. The Father is disciplining you as a child.”

Comment: On the natural plane, the child is reared by the parents to have the very finest character. Accordingly, our spiritual Heavenly Father wants the Christian’s character to be developed to the highest degree that would suit him with a spirit nature, so the development has to go many steps higher in order to be satisfactory.

Reply: Yes, the development has to be higher than the natural love and the natural calling and education, which an unconsecrated earthly parent thinks of with a natural mind.

Heb. 12:9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

Heb. 12:10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

When parents correct their children, the real motive is often *pride* to a large extent. They want an obedient child not only for their own pleasure but also for showing him off to others. Or they may want the child to excel in some way so that they can boast and receive honor through the child. Thus a degree of pride and selfishness is sometimes mixed with parental love. At least, however, the child is being disciplined. Certainly the child would be much worse off without discipline.

However, God disciplines from another motivation. His discipline is for our *highest* good and *eternal* welfare—“for our profit, that we might be partakers of *his* holiness.”

Comment: Because the human race is imperfect, parents are *inconsistent* with their discipline. They do or do not render correction according to their mood (their “own pleasure”).

Reply: Yes. Sometimes they discipline out of impatience or emotion, whereas in a calmer mood, they would not issue a reprimand. And sometimes parents will beat a child just to be like a king or a tyrant. They cannot manipulate outsiders, so they treat the child like a puppet that they own—and a wife too at times or vice versa.

What does the term “Father of spirits” signify? From one standpoint, only Christians can properly recognize God as their Father in the present life because He is the Father of those who have become His sons or of those who are about to become His sons through consecration (“My son, give me thine heart”—Prov. 23:26). Thus only those who are approaching Him or who have already sealed their association with Him by consecration should call Him “Father.”

However, Paul used the term “Father of spirits” along another line. The word *Father* means “Life-giver,” and *spirit* means “breath” or “wind.” Adam became a *living* soul when God breathed into his nostrils, that is, when God’s spirit entered him. Thus for God to be the “Father of spirits” means that He is the Author of *all* life. While in the present life, He is the Father of only the consecrated, He will ultimately be the Father of *all*, the Father of the *whole* universe. Incidentally, Jesus will be the age-lasting “Father” of the human race in the Kingdom Age, and God will be the “Grandfather” in that relationship (Isa. 9:6).

In other words, God’s ulterior objective and motive are the blessing of *everybody*: the Church in the present age, the world in the next age, and others in other worlds throughout the ages of ages. God is the Author and Creator of everything having to do with life. He is the Life-giver, or source of all life, that is, of all “spirits.”

Those who cooperate with the Father come into alignment with His arrangement. And those who *remain* in alignment, or harmony, with God will get *life*. That is what Paul was saying: “Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and *live*?”

Heb. 12:11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

How do we harmonize “count it all joy” with “no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous” (James 1:2)? “Count it all joy” means to “*reckon* it all joy.” The expression does not mean that the chastening, or trial, is all joy at the *moment* one is *undergoing* it, but that *ultimately* it will be all joy. The trial is to be considered from the standpoint of the outcome.

“Afterward it [the chastening] yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are [rightly] exercised thereby.” Peaceable righteousness will come after a chastening experience is over *if* one has been rightly exercised by it.

The subject of the marathon race subtly continues here in chapter 12. Without actually mentioning the race, Paul kept the analogy within those confines. (Similarly he kept the original definition of faith in mind throughout the long previous chapter.) “Exercise” is involved; i.e., we must be properly exercised by our experiences in the *race* for the high calling.

Heb. 12:12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

Paul was saying, “Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees—and RUN! Win that race! Do not get fatigued and droop.” As a runner holds up his hands, his chest is elevated and his lungs are aided. Thus there is a physical advantage—and a spiritual advantage as well. If our mind is rightly attuned and we have the goal in mind, looking unto Jesus, the beginner and finisher, we have a good chance of winning the race.

Another way to “lift up the hands” is through prayer. Trying to overcome things in our own strength and righteousness, without praying and pleading for help, can result in repeated failures.

Heb. 12:13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

“Make straight paths for your feet.” A straight path has *no* detours, and there is *one* goal: “This one thing I do” (Phil. 3:13). Paul was still using the analogy of a race. In a literal race course, if the runner strays out of his lane, the course will be longer for him, and he will lose or at least jeopardize his winning. With the Christian, a detour could lead to an association or fraternization that would cause him to lose the race.

“Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.” “That which is lame” would be a *weakness*. We are to stay in our lane and make straight paths; that is, we are to *constantly curb* desires and tendencies to go astray.

“But let it [the weakness] rather be healed.” Although not true in a literal race, the Christian can actually gain momentum, health, and strength, spiritually speaking, as he presses on toward the prize of the high calling. He is to stay in the course and regiment himself in righteousness so that the weakness will be overcome and the right way will become the habitual action or reaction. Sheer obedience strengthens one’s character, faith, and determination and makes him more successful. On the other hand, deviations exact a penalty.

Heb. 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Heb. 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

Heb. 12:16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

Heb. 12:17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Verses 14-17 are a little unit by themselves, pointing out two particular dangers: the loss of (1) peace and (2) holiness. A “root of bitterness” is the *opposite* of peace, for it adversely affects the peace not only of the individual but also of others. “Fornication” and worldliness are the *opposite* of holiness, as illustrated by Esau’s being a “profane person” who sold his birthright for one morsel of meat. He was a profane, worldly person in his desires along natural lines, and he was a fornicator in that he took wives from among the forbidden tribes (Gen. 26:34).

Although the “root of bitterness” was probably a particular trial in Paul’s day, these two temptations (the destruction of peace and holiness in the Christian) have applied to *all* periods of the Church with almost equal emphasis. Therefore, we are to watch (to look diligently) so that no root of bitterness will develop to destroy our peace. Our motives should be pure.

When Esau “would have inherited the [spiritual] blessing, he was rejected.” Although he did not receive the spiritual inheritance, or birthright, he did get the earthly (natural) part of the Abrahamic promise. “For he [Esau] found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” Esau lost and could not get back the birthright of the firstborn (and the implied spiritual blessing to come to the firstborn).

It is not clear just what Paul had in mind regarding the Jewish Christians he was addressing. Was he intimating Second Death here or just the loss of the chief blessing? The Scriptures can be reasoned either way, but Paul allowed them to be taken in the more severe way in connection with certain other statements later on. And even here he implied Second Death by saying that without holiness, no man shall see the Lord (verse 14).

When we started this epistle, we discussed that Jewish Christians were having their faith in Christ undermined. Jews who were under the Law and then accepted Christ were subsequently assailed by Jews who said the Christian had to obey both the Law and the gospel of Christ. The danger was that the faith of Jewish Christians would begin to diminish and the works of the Law would increase. In time, they would be going back to their old trend of thinking under the Law. If these Jewish Christians were not pulled out of that rut—if they exalted the Law again—they would go into Second Death because little by little, their spiritual hopes would become dim and eventually cease altogether. Christian deeds should be prompted by *faith*, not by the self-justification of the Law.

The Genesis account does not mention that Esau sought the birthright “carefully with tears.” He importuned for the chief blessing. Paul had a tremendous insight into many things that are not recorded in the Old Testament (Gen. 27:34-38). “One morsel of meat” means “one morsel of food,” for Jacob did not eat meat. The thought is that Esau sold his birthright for a *material blessing*. Here is another proof that a “meat” offering was a meal (or cereal) offering.

Heb. 12:18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

Heb. 12:19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

Heb. 12:20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

Heb. 12:21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

Heb. 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the

heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

Heb. 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

Heb. 12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Recurring themes are characteristic of Paul. In verse 22, he returned to a theme that he had stated in verse 18: “Ye are not come unto the mount [Sinai] ... But ye are come unto mount Zion.” The Christian is not to come unto Mount Sinai, but he is to come unto *spiritual* Zion. We will consider the double comparison.

In the natural application, the Israelites literally came in contact with Mount Sinai, which was not to be touched in connection with God’s appearance; they were to keep a respectful distance under penalty of death. This fact fell in line with Paul’s reasoning, namely, how severe God’s judgment is. But all of a sudden, Paul changed the reasoning. He was trying to say that the mountain Christians come to does not correspond to Mount Sinai because it was related to the giving of the Law. Instead the Christian comes to *spiritual* Zion. However, *spiritual* Mount Zion is based on a *literal* mountain in Jerusalem.

This picture is unusual, for even though Paul used two *literal* mountains as an illustration, he was comparing Mount Sinai from the *natural* standpoint and Mount Zion from the *spiritual* standpoint. What was Paul’s purpose in this comparison? He was trying to *separate* the Jewish Christian’s mind from the idea of the *Law*.

The nation of Israel had a very impressive experience at Mount Sinai when they saw God in a figurative representation (Exod. 19:16-20; 20:18-20). There were dramatic demonstrations of nature (an earthquake, lightning, thunder, a volcanic eruption, and a dark cloud) plus a voice and the sound of a trumpet. No wonder the people were so frightened that they wanted only Moses to speak to them and the demonstrations to stop. They desired Moses to get the information firsthand and then repeat the instructions to them. So awesome was the setting that even Moses’ confidence was shaken, despite the fact he had a special relationship with God and had heard His voice before. He had a certain fraternization in the sense that God befriended him and had spoken to him for 40 days on the mount on two different occasions. Yet “so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake [shake]” (verse 21).

The “voice” of the trumpet had a certain peculiarity. It was powerful, being more like a ram’s horn, which was normally used for a religious convocation or a meeting with God of some kind. It made a whining sound, waxing louder and louder in volume and ending with a percussive effect.

Incidentally, Mount Sinai and the valley below, in which the Israelites encamped, had excellent acoustics. Sounds uttered above ricocheted and reverberated back and forth along the steep walls of the hills so that they could be heard with clarity by those gathered below.

In verse 22, Paul was discussing the *heavenly* Jerusalem, but first, we will consider the *earthly* Jerusalem. All the males of Israel were to congregate there three times a year for the three major feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. They traveled *up* to Jerusalem to the Temple, converging on the capital city to observe the feasts. So frequently was this done that a portion of the Psalms consists of the Songs of Ascents, which were sung and rehearsed as the people climbed upward toward Jerusalem (Psalms 120–134 RSV and NIV). Also, these Psalms were sung symbolically on the Temple steps. This thought is borne out by Paul’s illustration:

“But ye are come ... to the general assembly” (verses 22 and 23). As the whole nation of Israel went up to a convocation, or “general assembly,” in Jerusalem in the past, so in the Gospel Age, all things are converging on a point of time at the end of the age. Spiritually speaking, God has ordained a special gathering together to a condition, or event. Thus 2,000 years ago, Paul said prophetically, “Ye are come unto [spiritual] mount Zion.”

Let us consider what will transpire. “Ye are come unto” the following:

1. “Mount Zion” (the Kingdom).
2. “An innumerable company of [holy] angels.”
3. “The *general* assembly and church of the firstborn” (the Little Flock and the Great Company). In the large sense, the Great Company is part of the “church of the firstborn,” for all of the consecrated overcomers of the Gospel Age must be off the earthly scene *before* the Ancient Worthies are resurrected. (The word “and” should be “even”: “The general assembly, *even* [Greek *kai*] the church of the firstborn.”) The Ransom is mortgaged until the faithful consecrated of this age have received their change. Only then can true *restitution* blessings of forgiveness of sin and the removal of the curse begin for the world, although, of course, the “*times of restitution*” began in 1874 (Acts 3:21). “*Two parts*” must be “cut off and die” before the Redeemer comes to deliver Israel and raise the Ancient Worthies (Zech. 13:8,9).

Since the Great Company is part of the “general assembly” and the “church of the firstborn,” the names of this class, as well as those of the Little Flock, are “written in heaven.” The names of *all* the consecrated have been written in heaven, but in the “book of life,” it is possible for one’s name to be erased (in Second Death) or omitted from the honor roll (as will happen to the Great Company) (Phil. 4:3). For those of the consecrated who are “more than conquerors” in their faithfulness unto death, not only will their names be in the book of life, but also they will be in a special section, or “honor roll” (Rom. 8:37). The names of the Great Company will simply be there but without special honor.

4. “God the Judge of all.”
5. “The spirits of just men made perfect” (the Ancient Worthies).
6. “Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.”

Thus the sequence is (1) angels, (2) Gospel Age church of the firstborn, (3) God, (4) Ancient Worthies, and (5) Jesus, but what is the reason for this order? The angels will already be on the scene in heaven when the Little Flock and the Great Company get their spiritual change. But why are the Ancient Worthies inserted between God and Jesus? There will be an entrance corridor in heaven. If a conqueror (the Little Flock) of a foreign land (earth) returned in triumph to his home city (heaven), he would be acclaimed by the multitudes (the holy angels) as he made his way to the emperor (God Himself), the central figure on the throne, who would have his most honored assistant (Jesus) at his right hand. Honor will be given to God first, but why are the Ancient Worthies mentioned between God and Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant? The sequence emphasizes the relationship stated in chapter 11, namely, that “they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb. 11:40). The Ancient Worthies cannot come on the scene until after the two Gospel Age spiritual classes are developed. The order of names in Hebrews 12:22-24 helps to explain why Paul made the statement of Hebrews 11:40.

The Little Flock will be specially honored by being introduced to the Father as *individuals* and by *name* (Rev. 3:5). Later the Great Company will come into the King’s palace for the marriage

supper and be presented as a *class*, or group, before the throne (Psa. 45:14; Rev. 19:9). Both the Little Flock and the Great Company will get white robes, but in addition, the Little Flock will *walk with Jesus* in white (Rev. 3:4). The order of resurrection is (1) Jesus, (2) Little Flock, (3) Great Company, (4) Ancient Worthies, and (5) world of mankind.

We are trying to show that the sequence in verses 22-24 does not contradict other pictures. However, some of the details here are not in the other Scriptures. Notice that verse 24 calls Jesus “the *mediator* of the new covenant.” At the present time, he is the Church’s *Advocate*, not their Mediator. Through the merit of Jesus, we have direct communion with the Father. Just as Moses was up in Mount Sinai and spoke to God face to face, as it were, so through Jesus’ merit, the Christian can come before the Father and talk with Him direct, spiritually speaking. Because we have this access, Jesus is the Advocate for our imperfections, trials, need for counsel, etc. The fact he is called the “mediator” indicates that the Ancient Worthies will be resurrected to human perfection—they will be made perfect—*just before* the mediatorial Kingdom is established. Jesus will be the *world’s* Mediator, and the Ancient Worthies will be resurrected immediately before he acts as the Mediator of the New Covenant.

In essence, then, the “general assembly” is coming to the *inauguration of the Kingdom*, which will be preceded by the marriage, the introduction of the Little Flock to the Father, the marriage supper, and the resurrection of the Ancient Worthies. After these events, the Kingdom will be inaugurated, and restitution blessings will begin to flow to mankind.

Verse 1 of this chapter speaks about the Church’s “great ... cloud of witnesses,” the holy angels, who are the same as the “innumerable company of angels” mentioned in verse 22. They are in the “grandstands” watching the “gladiators” in the arena (earth) down below fight the good fight of faith. Those of the consecrated who are more than overcomers will receive the crown of victory when they go up into the “assembly” itself.

7. “The blood of sprinkling.” In order for Jesus to be the Mediator of the New Covenant, his blood has to be paid over to Justice, as shown in the Day of Atonement picture. However, although the spiritual classes must be developed first, the blood will not be applied the moment the last members of the Little Flock die. The thought is not that when the blood is no longer mortgaged, it will immediately be paid over to Justice. An illustration corroborates this thinking; namely, when Jesus went to heaven after his resurrection, there was a ten-day waiting period before the blood was applied and mortgaged over to the Church. The antitypical blood was applied on the fiftieth day, the Day of Pentecost. Therefore, it will be *after* the completion of the sacrifice of both goats (the Lord’s goat and the scapegoat) that Jesus’ blood will be paid over to Justice for the world. During the interval of time between the death of the Church and the paying of the blood over to Justice, many events will occur.

“The blood of sprinkling” speaks “better things than that of Abel.” By reintroducing Abel, Paul kept in mind the lesson of Hebrews 11:4. Even though he went into various excursions of thinking—very deep, wonderful truths—he retained the thread of the theme of the previous lesson. We usually think of Abel’s blood from a *negative* standpoint—that his blood is crying out for vengeance. But here Paul considered Abel’s blood from a *positive* standpoint.

In offering an animal sacrifice, which required the *letting of blood*, Abel recognized that somehow or other God was pleased with a sacrificial animal offering. For example, he learned this lesson by reflecting on how God covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve after they had sinned. To use skins meant that the shed blood of an animal pleased God. (Paul was not speaking about the personal shed blood of Abel when Cain murdered him but about the animal sacrifice Abel offered.) Here Paul was saying that even though Abel’s offering was more commendable than Cain’s vegetable offering, it is not to be compared with the blood of

Jesus and the higher Tabernacle sacrifice offerings of the Gospel Age.

Comment: The sin offering has a greater significance to God than Abel's offering.

Reply: Yes. However, Abel's sacrifice pleased God because anyone who obeys and tries to do things His way is showing the spirit of devotion, even if the reason for the procedure is not understood.

The Jews had some knowledge and recognition, but they did not see the significance of animal sacrifices as clearly as it is possible to understand them in the Christian Age. In fact, the Jews were so accustomed to the natural shedding of animal blood that they had trouble realizing it was merely a picture of Jesus' blood and that of his followers. Paul was trying to get them to grasp this point. Abel's sacrifice was honorable, but Jesus' was *more* honorable and the *higher* sacrifice. Although not specially emphasized here, the Church's share in the sin offering is shown—and will be brought out more in the next chapter.

Heb. 12:25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

Heb. 12:26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

Heb. 12:27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Heb. 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

Heb. 12:29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Paul strongly warned again that we should be steadfast and not refuse "him [God] that speaketh from heaven." *All* Christians (Jew and Gentile) must stay close to Jesus, who is God's appointed representative. Throughout the Book of Hebrews, Paul repeatedly stressed the necessity of so doing and of assembling with others who have the same hope of being with Jesus, for if we do not have fellowship, the powers of evil will overcome us in due time.

"For if they [the Israelites] escaped not who refused him [Moses] that spake on earth [at Mount Sinai], much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him [God and His specially appointed representative, Jesus] that speaketh from heaven." As God spoke from heaven in connection with the inauguration of the Law Covenant at Sinai, so He has appointed Jesus as His representative in the Gospel Age. Christians must not be careless in their consecration, for it is not necessary to murder and do violence to go astray from the Lord. If we merely *relax and get lazy and careless*, we will go astray. We must be careful not to let the things we have heard slip. Although letting things "slip" is not a deliberate turning to evil, it is dangerous to the new creature. Paul warned not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25). Now he was giving another warning, telling Christians to keep these things in mind, and particularly with regard to Jesus in the day this epistle was written.

God spoke "from heaven" when He originally called us. We were *miraculously* called out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). If we forget and become indifferent and worldly, our very life is at stake. Paul said, "They [the Israelites] escaped not who refused him that spake on earth." They disobeyed repeatedly in the wilderness by worshipping idols,

murmuring, lacking faith, opposing Moses and Aaron, etc.—and they died (see Heb. 3:15-19).

In verses 25-29, Paul returned to the same theme he had used previously. Leaving the doctrinal illustrations of earlier chapters, he now digressed into moral advice. Just as God had appeared on Mount Sinai as fire from heaven, consuming the mountain, so He will do to the Christian—only in a *worse* and *stronger* sense—if that individual is not in harmony with His will; that is, the individual will go into Second Death.

Paul repeated lessons given earlier to the effect that Christians are “to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Heb. 2:1). Of course the Church will not be involved in the great Time of Trouble, but Paul used the principle here. If God appeared in such an *awesome* manner to natural Israel at Mount Sinai and gave such strict instructions that not even a beast could touch the mountain lest it be consumed with fire, then He will yet speak once more. At the end of the age, God will speak *with authority* in the great Time of Trouble, and He *will be heard*. What is the lesson for the Christian? The consuming fire at Mount Sinai was just a natural picture, for anyone who died back there will come forth from the grave, but the “consumption” of a Christian with “fire” would mean eternal death, extinction, Second Death. Since “our God is a consuming fire,” the Christian would have a “sorer punishment” (Heb. 10:29). Paul was putting fear in the hearts of the consecrated lest they be negligent.

An example of negligence would be the following, which can happen over time. After years of consecration and trials, some get weary and begin to reason that *maybe* God never really accepted their consecration. After entertaining this thought for a while, they then say to someone, “I *do not believe* God accepted my consecration.” Thus it is just a matter of time until they feel they are no longer consecrated. They think that being willingly ignorant is a blissful condition and that God will not punish them too much. However, Paul was saying that consecration is *bona fide* and should not be forsaken. To forsake the narrow way and go back into the world would result in eternal destruction. Forsaking Christ was a special trial in the early Church because the Jewish Christian was tempted to go back under the Law and just do good deeds and live a good life.

Verse 26 is a quote from Haggai 2:6,7, “For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come.” At Mount Sinai, God shook the literal earth, but a still more dramatic event is yet future pertaining to the inauguration of the Kingdom with *great* power and glory. The saints, who will be honored and admired in all, will be “glorified together,” not separately (Rom. 8:17). As far as the world is concerned, there will be one presentation, figuratively speaking; that is, the people will not see The Christ with literal eyesight, but some kind of demonstration or recognition will occur.

In reality, “earth” and “heaven” (the social and ecclesiastical arrangement, respectively) will be shaken in the *future* Time of Trouble, but Paul used these Scriptures in the *present* tense to point out a *principle* applicable in advance. For example, when Jesus drove the money changers out of the Temple, he said, “It is written, My house *is* the house of prayer for all nations” (Mark 11:17 paraphrase). However, this statement will not be fulfilled until the Kingdom. The *principle* applicable at that time was that the Temple should have been a house of prayer, but the scribes and Pharisees had made it a “den of thieves” (Luke 19:46). Here Paul used the *principle* that the future shaking of the earth and the heavens in the Time of Trouble will be more fearsome than the first shaking in Moses’ day. However, since the Church will be off the scene before the Time of Trouble, there is another lesson; namely, God controls our lives and destinies, so when He speaks, we should hearken. We should be diligent in trying to make our calling and election sure lest we be consumed in Second Death. It is dangerous now to turn away from or to refuse

to hear God's voice (verse 25).

Even the lesson here is related to the earlier lesson on *faith*. The spiritual things, which are *not seen*, are more real and more lasting than the visible things. Spiritual obedience and harmony with the Lord are more enduring and more concrete than the external and awesome things we see in nature. If our hearts are in harmony with the Lord, we will not be shaken. A paraphrase of verses 28 and 29 is the following: "Wherefore since we have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us *hold fast* so that we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire."

Heb. 13:1 Let brotherly love continue.

Why did Paul say, "Let brotherly love continue"? What do these words imply? When we first come into the truth, we greatly rejoice and gladly consider everyone our brother. We are so bubbling over with the truth that we are unaware of any disunity, especially if we come from an outside source. We are impressed, engulfed, and overwhelmed, but after a year or two, we begin to settle down and notice the differences in others. Also, there is the danger that the more rapid our progress, the more critical we can be of others for their "errant" views and teachings. (Of course depending on the issue, we may or may not have the correct view ourselves.) Many seem to have this experience, for as they grow in grace and knowledge, they can observe the lack of development in others. The tendency is for our enthusiasm toward others to taper off. Hence "brotherly love" has been a test for Christians throughout the Gospel Age but *especially* at the end of the age. Therefore, Paul issued this admonition because the tendency is for our brotherly love not to continue.

Heb. 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Verse 2 reminds us of Abraham and the three angels that he entertained "unawares" (Gen. 18:1,2). Not only were they messengers of God, but also the chief one may have been the Logos. Abraham received blessings from the angels: (1) He was told about Isaac's birth, and (2) he was given predictive understanding about the destruction of Sodom (Gen. 18:16-18). Thus, by entertaining "strangers," Abraham got great blessings of grace and knowledge.

Paul inserted this advice at the conclusion of the Book of Hebrews because some Jewish Christians were reluctant to entertain *Gentile* Christians ("strangers"). By extending hospitality to brethren they did not know very well, the Jewish Christians would be showing their love for Jesus. Paul was not encouraging hospitality to worldly strangers, for then we would begin to imbibe their ideas and customs, and they would monopolize the conversation. However, there are exceptions to the general rule, for occasionally such hospitality is proper and is even the duty of a Christian.

Paul's advice was to be hospitable to brethren we do not know much about. In good faith, we accept them. (An exception would be spongers who overstay for weeks or months and refuse to work physically and/or spiritually.) Today we should be careful not to favor or exclude brethren because of nationality, for example.

The implication is that the "angels" might be special representatives of God; they might be Christians whom God *highly* esteems and honors. If we unknowingly entertain them on good faith, a blessing *will be given* either in this life or in the next life. Even a cup of cold water given to the least of God's little ones will be rewarded, and those who receive a prophet will get a prophet's reward (Matt. 10:41,42). If one happens to entertain a true "angel" of God, he will be blessed even more than if he entertained just a brother. In the New Testament, an "angel" can

be an elder, so that principle would apply here too (1 Cor. 11:10).

Heb. 13:3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

“Remember ... them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body [in the flesh].” Since we are in the flesh, we should have sympathy and compassion. We can appreciate and empathize with their situation. “When one member of the body suffers, we all suffer” is the principle (1 Cor. 12:26). We weep with those who weep, and we laugh with those who laugh (Rom. 12:15). These abrupt verses are almost like proverbs.

“Remember them that are in bonds [literally in prison], as bound with them.” Those suffering “adversity” would be those with physical sickness and infirmity or those undergoing persecution but not actually in prison.

Heb. 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Why did Paul insert advice about marriage and whoremongers? What was the problem? There was great purity of living and holiness of conduct in the early Church, and any gross immorality was exposed. After a while, therefore, some wondered if it was proper for a Christian to marry, thinking that the physical element in marriage might detract from spirituality. Here Paul warned those who took such a strict view of marriage. Although Paul recommended celibacy elsewhere, he assured the brethren, especially those who might have a troubled conscience, that “marriage is honorable *in all*.” For those who “burned,” it was better to marry (1 Cor. 7:8,9). Celibate Christians were not to condemn or look down on the married ones, for marriage in Christ is proper for all. In other words, we have to give the liberty of marriage to others, as long as it is done on a scriptural basis.

We know that Paul was addressing the *physical* or sexual aspect, for he said, “The [marriage] bed [is] undefiled.” In fact, the first part of verse 4 is *one* thought: “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled.” In marriage, physical intimacy is proper and is to be expected. However, the practice of *inordinate* desires and activity—the unnatural—both within and without marriage is wrong. Adultery and sexual immorality and looseness outside marriage, as well as the gratification of improper, unnatural desires within marriage, are wrong. Thus Paul answered both extremes and took a middle course, recommending neither excess nor austerity.

There are several reasons for marriage. Otherwise, a person would remain single and engage 100 percent in the Lord’s harvest work. However, many would encounter certain problems in the single state, for example, along the lines of personalities, leadership, opportunities of service, and the flesh.

Paul was careful in his choice of words. While he said the marriage bed was undefiled, he did not want to go on record as endorsing unlimited excess; hence he mentioned adulterers and whoremongers. The Christian is not to go to excess within the marriage relationship or have extracurricular activity outside the marriage relationship.

Heb. 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Heb. 13:6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

What does “covetousness” have to do with Jesus’ promise “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”?

Comment: “Covetousness” is a form of idolatry; it is allowing something to interfere with our affection for God. “Conversation” refers to conduct.

Reply: Yes, “conversation” would be conduct, and what we do is often preceded by or followed up with words, which reflect both our mood and our actions. Our conduct is a reflection on the Lord, for if we complain continually, we are really finding fault with God’s providence. If we are dissatisfied with our experiences, we are actually complaining against God. If we *really believe* the Lord is our helper and the supplier of our needs, we will not be covetous or complain about what His providence permits.

Verse 5 tells us to be content with the things we have, for the Lord will not leave or forsake us, and verse 6 tells us to *boldly* say, “I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” Not only can there be a dissatisfaction with our lot (our circumstances and surroundings), but also there can be a dissatisfaction that rebels against persecution and suffering for the cause of Christ. This latter form of complaining asks, “What has my consecration gotten me into?” This type of complaining is similar to what the Israelites did when they left Egypt, a land of plenty, and asked Moses, “Have you brought us out here in the wilderness to die? Why didn’t you leave us in Egypt with the leeks, garlic, and onions?” Specifically, the problem in verse 6 is FEAR—fear of man and fear of the future. Thus there can be dissatisfaction from the standpoint of fearing the future. We must have confidence that the Lord will supply our need, for He is our “helper.” Certainly Christians in the beginning of the age had persecuting experiences and problems with the civil authorities.

Heb. 13:7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God.” What kind of “rule” were the Hebrew Christians to remember? This rule was like a *shepherd’s guidance*; it was not a tyrant’s control.

The admonition was to be tolerant of those who first brought the message of truth (“the word of God”) to others. In the early Church, such brethren had the zeal to go out into barren areas away from home and family, suffering loss of reputation and enduring persecution, in order to establish classes. Paul was telling the Jewish Christians, “In view of their past labors as the Lord’s messengers to reach you with the truth, be tolerant and understanding of them.” The implication was that some who were faithful in the beginning might not have lived up to expectations. They were guides in bringing the message of truth to others, but as time went on, their zeal and/or knowledge waned somewhat so that the ones they brought into the gospel Church were losing respect for them. Paul counseled, “Remember the faith that is in them. They are still Christians trying to serve the Lord, even though you can see their lack of wisdom or experience or their error on some points. In view of their past conduct, the faith that motivated them, and how they helped bring you to the point of consecration, you should have a certain respect for them. However, you are also to observe the end of their conduct. That does not mean you are to give a blanket endorsement to their words and actions, but if you cannot have the same degree of respect, at least appreciate the fact that they are still serving the Lord.” Paul gave very mature advice here.

The thought was not to slavishly obey, contrary to conscience, the wrong things these individuals were inculcating, but to have patience and tolerance for what they did originally

and to ascribe good motives to them whenever possible, even if the way the motive was carried out was not respected. Again Paul was advising a middle course; he was avoiding either extreme of utter condemnation or abject servitude.

Heb. 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.

Verse 8 is related to verse 7 in that Jesus was faithful both in the beginning and in the end of his earthly course, as well as in the middle. He was doctrine-wise throughout. There is a constancy with Jesus that is not only expected but also proven. He finished his course without wavering, and he is now the same as he was previously. He can *always* be trusted for understanding, leadership, experience, etc., whereas messengers, angels, or guides we formerly appreciated may falter and become less reliable. The point is that we should *follow Jesus regardless* of what may happen to other Christians.

For several verses now, Paul was trying to give a rebuttal to the negative approach. For example, some were saying that marriage is not honorable, there was covetousness in conduct, and brotherly love had begun to deteriorate into bickering.

Heb. 13:9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

“It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats.” Paul was contrasting grace with “meats,” which, in this context, were Jewish ceremonies, ordinances, sacrifices, and dietary laws in the Talmud and the Mosaic Law. The Jews became great sticklers for all of the ordinances. As time went on, they had washings, cleansings, and ceremonial rituals, but even just the part that is in the Mosaic account does not apply to the Christian. We will consider some pertinent New Testament Scriptures.

Romans 14:16-23 reads:

“Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

“For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

“For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

“It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

“Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

“And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”

1 Corinthians 8:7-13 states:

“Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

“But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

“But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

“For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

“And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

“But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”

There are several angles to this subject, but we will cover only one aspect, as treated in the two readings. In the early Church, Jewish Christians had difficulty shedding the dietary restrictions of the Mosaic Law, and their conscience troubled them. Some made commendable progress in the beginning of their walk, seeing that the gospel was of faith and grace and not of works, but as time went on, the inbred training of the Law began to surface and trouble them. They felt compelled to honor certain Jewish holy days; hence Paul said that some honor one day above another (Rom. 14:5). On the other hand, Gentile Christians, who had never been under the Law, did not have this problem and, therefore, tended to be severely critical of the Jewish brethren, regarding them as weak. However, although the Jewish Christian was weak in knowledge in this area, if his heart was right, he might be more pleasing to the Lord than the Gentile Christian.

Paul was saying that Gentile Christians, never having been under the Law, did not have a troubled conscience in eating meat *previously* offered to an idol and then sold in the open marketplace. However, they should curtail their liberty and refrain from eating such meat in the presence of a Jewish Christian whose conscience was troubled. (Of course if a prayer was given in their presence, dedicating the meat to an idol, neither Jewish nor Gentile Christians should eat it.) It is important not to injure the conscience of another but to refrain out of love. An example would be that if a Christian, knowing about the dietary restrictions, invited a Jew to dine with him, he should not deliberately offend the other’s conscience. However, if a Christian was already eating dinner and a Jew came in unexpectedly, the Christian should not act ashamed about eating something prohibited to the other party. In other words, we are not to dissimulate and think we are guilty when we are not, but where we have control over the circumstances and we deliberately use our liberty to run roughshod over someone else’s conscience, we are destroying him with our “meat” and our liberty.

In Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8, Paul was addressing *Gentile* Christians and condemning them for using their liberty selfishly. In Hebrews 13, Paul addressed *Jewish* Christians on the same subject. Those Jewish Christians who were so meticulous about observing certain days and rituals were not to judge others by their own standards, that is, by their “divers and strange doctrines [habits and customs].” The danger was that they would spend hours and hours boning up on these customs and restrictions and, in the process, forget about the gospel of Christ. The heart is established with the doctrine of grace and faith in Jesus Christ, not by works and justification by the deeds of the flesh. Thus Paul was contrasting “meats” and the ordinances of the Law with grace.

Comment: Colossians 2:16 reads, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days [that is, of the doctrines of the Law].”

Reply: Yes, that text, which also emphasizes days, enunciates the same principle.

Heb. 13:10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

Heb. 13:11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

Heb. 13:12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

Heb. 13:13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Why did Paul bring in the fact that as Christians, “we have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the [literal] tabernacle”? He was contrasting the Old Testament type with regard to the Tabernacle and its services and sacrifices. Verse 10 is related to verse 9, for Paul continued to talk about eating but was now bringing in a different lesson. What was the occasion in the type when the priests could not eat at the altar? With the sin offering on the Day of Atonement, the high priest brought the blood of certain beasts into the Most Holy, and their bodies were burned without the camp. But why did Paul bring up this subject?

Leviticus 4:10-12, which also discusses a sin offering, reads as follows: “As it was taken off from the bullock of the sacrifice of peace offerings: and the priest shall burn them upon the altar of the burnt offering. And the skin of the bullock, and all his flesh, with his head, and with his legs, and his inwards, and his dung, Even the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn him on the wood with fire: where the ashes are poured out shall he be burnt.” This text pertains to a *subsequent day* offering, when an individual brought an animal for sin. The hide, flesh, dung, etc., were burned outside the camp just as they were in Leviticus 16 on the Day of Atonement. However, there was *one big difference* in the two types of sin offering. In Leviticus 4, the blood was *not* brought into the Most Holy, whereas in Leviticus 16, it was. Therefore, we know that Paul was talking only about the *Day of Atonement* sin offering in Hebrews 13 and that he was limiting the fulfillment of verses 10-13 to the *Gospel Age*. The sacrificial aspects of Leviticus 8, 9, and 16 all relate to the *Gospel Age*, whereas the sacrificial aspects of Leviticus 1-6 all pertain to the offerings of the people in the *Kingdom Age*. In both cases, the animal for the sin offering was burned without the camp, but in Leviticus 16, pertaining to the *Gospel Age*, the blood was brought into the Most Holy on the Day of Atonement and sprinkled on the Mercy Seat.

What happened to the hide of the sin offering? In Hebrews 13, Paul was speaking of the *Gospel Age* in the antitype and of the sacrifices that pertained to atonement. In the earlier chapters of Leviticus, the burning of the hide, etc., without the camp represented, in the antitype, the people’s appreciation of what Christ and the Church had done previously. It pictured their *remembrance* of, not their participation in, what The Christ had done on their behalf. Leviticus 16 shows the *participation* of Christ and the Church in the sin offering, in the burning. Those of the Little Flock are both *partakers of* and *partners in* the sin offering.

Leviticus 16

Blood was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat.
This represents participation in the sin

Leviticus 1-6

Blood was not sprinkled on the Mercy Seat.
This represents the people’s appreciation and

offering by Christ and the Church.

remembrance of what Christ and the Church did for them.

Paul was showing that Jewish Christians who were involved in “divers and strange doctrines” and practices under the Law were missing the point. The eating of meat is not important. In fact, in the type, the flesh of these beasts was not eaten but was burned without the camp. Paul was trying to bring the thinking to a higher level. Instead of *satisfying* the flesh, the Christian was to *sacrifice* the flesh, for the burning and going without the camp pictured the *destruction* of the flesh. To be faithful, therefore, we must suffer *as Jesus did*.

Bro. Russell gave verse 10 two different applications. The application in *Tabernacle Shadows* is the right thought, for the argument here pertains to the Church’s share in the sin offering. Verse 10 refers to the *Brazen Altar* in the Court, not to the Altar of Incense, where nothing was ever eaten.

On certain occasions, the priesthood partook of foods from the Brazen Altar, as Paul showed in 1 Corinthians 9:13, “Do ye not know that ... they which wait at the [Brazen] altar are partakers with the altar?” There he contrasted partaking of the altar in the good sense with partaking at the table of doctrines of demons in the wrong sense. But here in Hebrews 13, Paul narrowed down the sacrifice to the *sin offering of atonement*, which canceled sin on behalf of the people—showing in antitype the *participation* of Jesus and the Church in the sin offering.

Comment: On the Day of Atonement, life-producing organs were burned on the Brazen Altar.

Reply: Yes. In verse 10, Paul showed that the sin offering on the Day of Atonement was not eaten. The animals that were offered on the Brazen Altar for sin represent Christ first (the bullock) and the Church second (the Lord’s goat). The hides and flesh of these animals were burned outside the camp; nothing was eaten. Only the fat, liver, and caul were burned on the Brazen Altar, and these were not eaten either.

In this regard, Paul tied in verse 9 with verse 10: “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; [and] *not with meats*, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.” Because some Jewish Christians were so absorbed in what could and could not be eaten, Paul presented a picture of the sin offering to show that the Christian is not trying to preserve life. Today Bible Students do not have problems with the Jewish Law, but the counterpart danger is that we could get too absorbed in diets and health fads and trying to be “doctors” with our knowledge. Time would be wasted in reading books and trying to accumulate this knowledge. Instead we should spend our consecrated time on learning Bible doctrines, etc.

Thus Paul was contrasting being involved with literal meats, ceremonies, and practices versus our real mission of being involved with the gospel, which has nothing to do with eating. Our life is to be destroyed, *sacrificed*; our flesh is *not* to be preserved. But the human mind cleverly reasons, “I must have a healthy body in order to do good service.” The point is that we should use moderation and reasonableness and not get carried away to an extreme.

Q: Where Paul said in verse 10, “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle,” to whom does the pronoun “they” refer?

A: Paul was going back to the type where the priesthood that served the Tabernacle had no right to eat the sin offering on the Day of Atonement. The bringing of the blood into the Most Holy meant that the bullock and the Lord’s goat were destroyed. Thus Paul was contrasting destruction (verse 10) with preservation (verse 9).

This lesson is simple—that being absorbed in meats, dietary laws, and what and how we should and should not eat is mundane. In the type, the sin offering emphasized *destruction*, not the partaking of benefits. It pictured the giving out of life rather than the preservation of life. The priesthood back there *burned* the bodies of the bullock and the goat; therefore, let us go out as the goat and be burned without the camp and be destroyed just as Christ, the bullock, went out before us and was burned. “Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach” (Heb. 13:13). Our experience in the *flesh* is pictured by the *destruction* that happened to the *animal* (the Lord’s goat). But our experience as a *new creature* is pictured by the *priest*. The picture is one of growth and *life unto life*; the new man is renewed.

Therefore, when Paul said, “We have an altar,” he was emphasizing that the animals which were offered for sin were burned without the camp. Consequently, we, like the bullock that represented Jesus, should go outside the camp and also be burned, or destroyed. Thus the *animal* was being emphasized, not the altar. Paul was emphasizing the *flesh*, not the new creature. The flesh is to be laid down, expended, and sacrificed, not preserved. Jesus expended himself physically when he healed people; he got weary and did not try to preserve himself, for his flesh was to be consumed.

Paul was contrasting the Tabernacle services with the eating of meats, but God overruled this practical lesson to the Jewish Christian to bring in the doctrine of the sin offering and the *Church’s participation in it* as the concluding message of the Book of Hebrews. Preceding chapters establish that Jesus was not of the Aaronic priesthood. To have earlier pictured the Church in the animal sacrifices would have been so shocking to the Jewish Christians that they would not have listened to the message. Here, at the very end of the book, Paul gave the Christian Jews something to think about: the Church’s share in the sin offering.

Q: Would the sense be clearer with a tense change? “We have an altar, whereof they *had* no right to eat which *served* the tabernacle.”

A: For us today, the past tense would help, but in Paul’s day, the Temple was still standing and sacrifices were being performed, so the present tense was correct.

Heb. 13:14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

In other words, we should not look for a longer life in the flesh, for we have “no continuing city” here. Whether or not we realize it, if we cater inordinately to the flesh, we are looking for a longer life.

Heb. 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

Heb. 13:16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Paul had just talked about the bodies of beasts being burned outside the camp. Now he was talking about another sacrifice—the “sacrifice of praise,” which is “the fruit of our lips.” Why did Paul insert the thought in this epistle that we should “offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually”? Some nationalities praise God for everything, and after a while, the repetition renders the words meaningless, so how far should this praise go? We are to “praise” Him by obedience, witnessing (confession as well as profession), suffering for our faith, and sacrificing.

Probably Paul was telling the Hebrew Christians the following. Rather than to become

faultfinders, “let brotherly love continue” (Heb. 13:1). Rather than to become involved in meats, “divers and strange doctrines,” diet, marriage and social issues, etc., whereby we would find fault with the brethren, we should be *continually* occupied with the truth. These other issues can distract from our main purpose in life. Instead of using our mouths to talk excessively about sex, diet, meat, drink, etc., we are to communicate properly on the truth and to do good (obey). Although Paul himself took time to cover these issues, he kept their discussion to a *minimum*. For example, “marriage is honourable in all” (Heb. 13:4).

Heb. 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

“Obey them that have the rule over you” is similar to the admonition of verse 7: “Remember them which have the rule over you.” Paul added, “Submit yourselves.” In other words, we are to consider those who are trying to do good. Their motivation and concern for us may not be busybodying but may be genuine concern because they “must give [an] account.” Instead of resenting their concern, we should give them *respect*. They may seem a little hard at times, but the family relationship is a good analogy. As the child grows up and gets older and older, he wants to increasingly use his wings. And so one who comes into the Lord’s family wants to be developed on his own. Although that attitude is to be expected, there should also be respect for those who show proper concern.

Heb. 13:18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

“Pray for us.” Paul needed and wanted prayers. “We trust we have a good conscience.” Even the Apostle Paul scrutinized his thoughts and words and doings. He was not *absolutely* sure that his conscience was undefiled, but he “trusted” that it was. If our consciences are very tender, we can sometimes criticize ourselves too severely; however, usually that is not the case. We should try to have a good conscience and to “live honestly” in all matters.

Heb. 13:19 But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

The expression “But I beseech you the rather to do this” is one of the strong evidences that the Apostle Paul wrote the Book of Hebrews. Variations of this characteristic expression appear frequently in his writings. Examples of this key phrase are “I beseech you therefore, brethren” (Rom. 12:1) and “Now I beseech you, brethren” (Rom. 15:30). See also Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:10; 4:16; 16:15; 2 Cor. 2:8; 6:1; 10:1,2; Gal. 4:12; Eph. 4:1; 1 Thess. 4:1; 5:12; 2 Thess. 2:1; and Philem. 9.

Comment: Paul was asking the brethren to pray for him so that he would be able to return to them sooner.

Heb. 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Paul referred to the “blood of the covenant” in Hebrews 10:29.

Heb. 13:21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Heb. 13:22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.

See the comments under verse 19. Paul was urging the brethren to “suffer” his words of exhortation, for he had written a letter to them in just a “few words.” After writing such a *lengthy* epistle, Paul humbly called it a “few words” and asked the brethren to accept his advice and counsel. His personality is apparent in the end of this letter.

Heb. 13:23 Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

Heb. 13:24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

Paul repeated the thought of those “that have the rule over you.” Evidently, there was a tendency toward schism, and he was trying to stabilize the condition.

Heb. 13:25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

“Grace be with you all.” The theme of grace and peace ended almost all of Paul’s epistles.

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 2000)

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

In time past, God spoke “in divers manners”; that is, His counsel or statement of instruction was communicated in various forms. Two dramatic examples were the burning bush of Moses and the ass speaking to Balaam. Moreover, God spoke “at sundry [many] times ... unto the fathers by the prophets.” With the Bible being the Word of God, a “thus saith the LORD” is prolifically stated in the Old Testament.

Heb. 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

There is no question that God “hath appointed [Jesus] heir of all things,” for abundant Scriptures so state, but what about the statement “by whom also he [God] made the worlds”? First, the prepositional phrase “by whom” should be “on account of whom.” Second, the Greek word *aion*, which is translated “worlds,” should be “ages.” In other words, it was God’s prerogative to *design the ages* with Jesus in mind as being the principal heir of all things.

The usual statement is that *restitution* is spoken of “by the mouth of all his [God’s] holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21). However, many years ago it was said that the *Ransom* is taught from Genesis to Revelation, and that is true. Christ’s death, his blood, and redemption are also portrayed throughout the Scriptures. Restitution is merely the benefit that will result from Jesus’ death. Thus the “scarlet thread” is the theme of the ages as progress continues toward the coming Messiah and restitution. However, it takes time for this truth to be revealed to mankind, as stated in 1 Timothy 2:5,6, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified *in due time*.” In other words, God has a schedule for His plan, and events unfold in a chronological line in their proper order and time.

“On account of whom God made the ages.” Certainly the plan of God is not the plan of Christ. In the King James, Ephesians 3:11 reads, “According to the eternal purpose which he [God] purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” For the first part of that verse, the *Diaglott* has, “According to a plan of the ages,” that is, according to God’s *divine* plan of the ages.

Why did Paul use the terminology “[God] hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son”? In ancient times, God spoke *by* and *to* the prophets, and the prophets also spoke. But now Paul was saying, “In these latter times [that is, ever since Pentecost], God first speaks to us through His Son.” Jesus said, “No man cometh unto the Father, *but by me*” (John 14:6). Here is proof that the Father has spoken to *each* of the consecrated through Jesus.

Thus the contrast in verses 1 and 2 is between God’s speaking “unto the fathers by the prophets” in time past and His speaking “unto us by his Son” in the Gospel Age. What a vast difference! Incidentally, the consecrated of the Gospel Age are the “sons [or daughters] of God” (John 1:12; Rom. 8:14; 1 John 3:1,2).

Heb. 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

The Book of Hebrews starts with *superlatives*: the brightness of God’s glory, Jesus’ being the express image of the Father’s person, and God’s method of speaking to us through His Son. Paul was emphasizing that Jesus is cognizant of *each one of us*. He was trying to show that a *radical* change had taken place—not only with regard to Jesus before and after his consecration but also with us. We are considered as *new creatures*, and not according to the flesh. As new creatures, we are *different*, having come out of darkness into marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). In short, instead of ending his epistle with the climax, Paul *started* with the climax.

From a visual standpoint, what thought is conveyed by the expression “Who [Jesus] being the brightness of his [God’s] glory”?

Comment: Paul was blinded by the “brightness” of Jesus’ glory at the time of his conversion on the way to Damascus.

Reply: Paul saw Jesus “as of one born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8). God told Moses, “There shall no man see me, and live” (Exod. 33:20). The Apostle John said, “No man hath seen God at any time” (John 1:18; 1 John 4:12). In other words, no man can actually see God in His glory. Of course there is a difference between God and Jesus even in glory, but the brightness of the similitude of Jesus was so great that it blinded Paul and caused him to have weak eyesight for the remainder of his life. Artists in the past often drew angels with a halo around the head, but the brightness of God’s glory seems to emanate from all over His body, not just on the head.

What is the thought of Jesus’ being “the *express* image of his [God’s] person”? The reference is to God’s body or form. Since the angels are called “sons of God” and man was made in God’s “image,” we can reasonably conclude, based on many Scriptures, that God has hands, legs, ears, eyes, etc. (Gen. 1:26,27; Job 38:7). But the term “*express* image” has a little more emphasis, so what is the thought? With the Lord’s glory and image, there is another feature in regard to the body, namely, the similitude of what we call “flesh.” The form, or “image,” is one thing, but “*express* image” indicates that every detail of the *surface* of Jesus is like that of the Father. Man does not shine at all, but the angels do—and God does more so. But the term “*express* image” seems to suggest a further peculiarity with regard to skin tone. And so, some have tried to make it metallic. However, we are not trying to narrow down what the distinction is because we cannot do so, but we would suggest that something with the surface texture or color is different from that of the archangels. One proof is that when Jesus was an archangel, he was not described as the “*express* image” of the Father.

Comment: Man is made of the dust of the earth, so Jesus, as a spirit being, would be made of the same composition as the Father.

Reply: We know “God is a Spirit,” so His body and flesh would also be “Spirit” (John 4:24).

Thus far we have discussed Jesus’ having the “glory” and the “*express* image” of the Father’s person, so what happened to Paul on the road to Damascus is not surprising. However, Paul did not die, even though he saw Jesus as one born out of due time. The Apostle John said that if we are faithful unto death, “we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

We know angels can appear in the presence of God and live because Jesus said that our guardian angels always have access to the Heavenly Father with regard to our status and need (Matt. 18:10). The guardian angels have a responsibility, and every one of the consecrated has at least two or three guardian angels so that we will be protected down here while one guardian angel is up before the Father. In fact, that is one way we can prove that Jesus is not God. While he was down here *on earth*, he prayed, “Our Father which art *in heaven*.” Likewise,

when a guardian angel appears before the Heavenly Father, he cannot be down here at the same time. Therefore, at least one other angel would have to be guarding us and probably two angels. The principle is the same with relief workers who cover for a person who is ill. Jesus had “twelve legions of angels” guarding him in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:53).

We can now see that the glory and honor of Jesus in heaven since his ascension are so great, even in comparison with the angels and his former position as an archangel, that he is “*far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named*” (Eph. 1:21). When Paul wrote this message, he was *convinced* that Jesus is the Messiah and that he had seen Jesus. He wanted to impress upon the hearer the *greatness* of Jesus, the one who was crucified and humiliated down here, and that in these last days, God has “spoken unto us by His Son” (verse 2).

Not only is Jesus the “brightness” of the Father’s glory and the “express image” of His person, but also he is “upholding all things by the word of his power, [for] when he had by himself purged our sins, [he] sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Just like a king, Jesus does not sit on the throne every day, but he sits there whenever he wants to make a special pronouncement or give a certain order or direction. He is there for important congregations in heaven and for public appearances to the angels for a particular purpose. Such activities would constitute sitting down “on the right hand” of God’s power or majesty.

There are still things to be done when the wedding of Jesus and his Bride takes place. For example, Paul wrote *after* Pentecost, which was *after* Jesus’ ascension to heaven, that *only God* has immortality at the present time (1 Tim. 6:16). Another profound truth is that God is the *sole* Creator. Having been “caught up to the third heaven,” Paul saw these truths clearly (2 Cor. 12:2). Although it was “unlawful” for him to utter what he had seen in vision, the experience affected his choice of words so that certain truths providentially came out in his epistles.

Q: Does the statement in James 1:17 that God is the “Father of lights” give some indication of the glory Jesus now has?

A: Yes. There are different degrees of glory. Even with regard to the Church in the present life, Paul said, “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image [going] *from glory to glory*, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). As “one star differeth from another star in glory,” so beyond the veil, the members of the Little Flock will differ in their Kingdom glory (1 Cor. 15:41).

Comment: If the Church will shine as the sun, then how much more Jesus and the Heavenly Father excel in glory!

Q: Does 1 John 1:5, which tells that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all,” indicate God’s glory and brightness?

A: Yes, that is true. However, here in the beginning of this epistle, Paul was particularly emphasizing the glory and brightness *of person*, and not of the intellect, for example.

Jesus “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Majesty is something one feels. If one is truly noble, the quality exudes from his person. We have known only one person who, we felt, had true nobility, and that was John Read—in his thinking, idealism, conversation, standard, etc. In addition, Pastor Russell is said to have had nobility. Strangers passing him on the sidewalk turned to see who had just walked by because they were so impressed by his stature and movement. Many people put on a front, but that is not the same as true nobility, which comes in a very natural way.

Heb. 1:4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Since his ascension, Jesus has inherited something that he did not have before, even as an archangel. His glory now excels what he had at that time. Previously the other spirit beings listened to Jesus because, as the Logos, he was God's mouthpiece. Perhaps some listened only in a perfunctory fashion, for due respect, attention, and obedience were required, but through his ignominious death on the Cross and the attendant suffering and humiliation, Jesus showed his sterling character. Now he does not just receive duty love while the holy angels stand at attention. Rather, they honor him out of true respect. And that is the kind of love and honor God wants all of His creatures to have for Him and His Son. With their *whole* heart, they are to worship God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23,24). All will be tried from that standpoint—the consecrated in this age and mankind in the Kingdom Age—to find out if, of their own volition, they prefer to love and serve God and Jesus rather than Satan. Unfortunately, many will serve Satan because he appeals to them along other lines.

Today people are more easily taken advantage of because of fallen flesh, but as mankind obey in the Kingdom Age, the fall of Adam in their members will change. They will be rewarded with life and vitality, yet some will sin. Sin is more excusable in this age because the flesh is weak, and with the Adversary and the fallen angels operating, the current is against mankind. However, in the Kingdom Age, with added benefits, the bottom line for each individual will be, Whom do you want to serve? Joshua was a good example when he said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh. 24:15). In the present age, God is looking for those who so appreciate His standards, thinking, methods, and promises that in spite of their weaknesses and struggles, they want to be like Him and like Jesus and to live and reign with their Lord. That is a difficult thing to do, yet even in the next age, when all of the stumbling stones are removed and no lion is there, many will fall (Isa. 35:9). The reason many will succumb even in the Kingdom Age is that they prefer honor, power, greed, prestige, etc., and they will want to return to the conditions of the present age.

The fairness of God's dealing in the Kingdom Age will be seen, for the flesh will become perfect, whole, and clean, and then the people will be judged. If they do not follow the Lord at that time, after being given ample opportunity, the justice or merit of their being rewarded with Second Death will be evident. Mankind will be without excuse, for "there shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days" (Isa. 65:20). That same principle applies now to us, the consecrated. The only problem is that we are not perfect, for we have fallen flesh and tendencies, poor memories, etc. Therefore, God is looking at our intent, the secret of our heart's desire.

Heb. 1:5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

"For unto which of the angels said he [God] at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And ... I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?" The language here is simple but full of meaning. Verse 5 took place after Jesus's resurrection—specifically, when he was raised from death and ascended after 40 days. We can imagine how the Father reacted in the presence of all the holy angels; He must have given some evidence of His affection for Jesus and then said, "You *truly* are my Son." All of the holy angels are sons of God, but the announcement to Jesus "Thou art my Son" was especially laudatory. It was as though the Heavenly Father gave Jesus a pat on the back and said, "You *really* are my Son because you have *overcome* and are the *victor*." How happy the Father was to make this announcement in the presence of the holy angels! And in the near future, He will joyfully welcome those of us

who are faithful to the high degree of attaining the Little Flock.

The thought is, “This day have I *brought thee forth*.” The Father had been looking forward to this day—the day when Jesus ascended on high after being faithful to death on the Cross. Now He could honor Jesus above all other angels for his sterling character.

“I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son.” During Jesus’ earthly ministry, the disciples had asked that he teach them to pray. Jesus responded, “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our *Father* which art in heaven” (Matt. 6:9). Although God is the Father of all the consecrated, the Father-Son relationship with Jesus is laudatory. The Father is proud of His Son and his wonderful obedience. Even though Jesus was honored as the Logos and at the First Advent with the words “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” he received *summa cum laude* praise at his ascension (Matt. 3:17; 17:5).

In asking these questions in verse 5, Paul was trying to show how wonderful Jesus is. He so loved Jesus that he was willing to confess him before others and to die for him.

Heb. 1:6 And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

When will God bring Jesus, “the first begotten,” into the world and say, “Let all the angels ... worship him”? This will occur in the future when the Kingdom is set up. All beings, whether in heaven or on earth, will have to come to the realization that Jesus is *indeed* the Messiah. The world will see Jesus’ Messiahship *as a fact*. Paul said, “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together,” waiting “for the manifestation of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:19,22). In addition to the manifestation of the Little Flock, there is also the manifestation of *the Son* (singular). Paul was particularly speaking to the Hebrews about the time when Jesus will come in glory at the Second Advent and the world will be apprised accordingly.

We know verse 6 will be true with regard to the world of mankind, but it also says, “Let all the *angels* of God worship him.” How interesting! It is true that the angels honored Jesus when he ascended after the 40 days and was given an abundant entrance into *heaven*, but this honoring will occur when God brings “the first begotten into the *world*.” Hence it will take place in the Kingdom.

We need to read slowly to catch the fine points and distinctions. When Jesus ascended on high, the cry went forth, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev. 5:12). The Father highly commended Jesus and put His arm around him, as it were, saying, “This truly is my Son,” but in verse 6, Paul was speaking of an event *yet future*, namely, the recognition by the world and especially by *natural Israel*. Paul could have spoken bluntly, but he was purposely being tactful at the start of the letter.

Q: Was Paul bringing in the angels because the Hebrews had a better sense of the spirit realm?

A: If we had no New Testament and the only Scriptures available were the Old Testament, we would be reading that more and more astutely, and the Old Testament has a lot of information about angels. Therefore, the Jews were very conscious of the existence of angels, and they thought of them as coming from heaven.

Heb. 1:7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

The angels are glorious. God makes His angels “spirits” and his ministers “a flaming fire” (Psa. 104:4). For example, Daniel fell like a dead man when he saw the angel Gabriel and had to be lifted up. And the angel who appeared to Manoah went up in a flame of fire after touching the food and consuming it with a wand (Judg. 13:19,20).

Heb. 1:8 But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

Verse 8 is speaking of Jesus’ throne, but that throne is not in operation yet. Jesus is to sit and wait until God’s due time. Thus the quote from Psalm 45:6 is an *unconditional* promise: “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.” Jesus has already merited this promise, and God has “appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Christ Jesus]” (Acts 17:31). Jesus will be given a scepter, a government. In one sense, he already has the government, but its operation is *future*, when the kings and priests are all selected to live and reign with him. Jesus has *inherited* the government, but the activity of that government is future. He has the right to the government, but God told him, “Sit here and wait *until* I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Matt. 22:44 paraphrase). Jesus is sitting on the throne, but he will not exercise his right and power until the due time.

The Book of Hebrews is Paul’s masterpiece. He probably meditated on writing this book for his entire life, for it was to be a legacy to leave behind before he died. Notice that he talked about how God spoke and about what God did to Jesus. He was not speaking direct, as the prophets had spoken, but wrote a sort of historical account about Jesus—past, present, and future. This book is like a valedictorian speech that Paul left behind for the Jewish people.

When the Jews read the Book of Hebrews in the Kingdom, they will be embarrassed and ashamed. In the present life, they are thinking of money, property, influence, stocks, etc., but in time, they will realize what they turned down and that God has selected *nobodies* to comprise the Little Flock. Jesus said, “I thank thee, O Father, ... because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto *babes*” (Matt. 11:25). The wisdom of the wise will be made foolish, for all the wealth of the world is as nothing. The desire and hunger for the things of this life are one of our trials. Even though we are consecrated and see the difference, secret desires and ambitions can pop up from time to time, but when the treasures of heaven are compared with the treasures of earth, the latter are trash. God is not obligated to reward one according to his looks, strength, works, etc. He is looking for those who yearn to be like Him—free from all imperfections—and to have His Spirit, so that they can truly worship Him in spirit and in truth without any inhibitions (John 4:23). For those who are faithful unto death, present inhibitions will be removed. We long for the redemption not *of* the literal body but *from* the body of imperfect flesh.

Heb. 1:9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Again God is speaking. These quotations from the Old Testament are all declarations by God, some in a prophetic sense and others as an accomplished fact, of the honor given to Jesus because of his faithfulness. The love of righteousness and the hatred of iniquity are cardinal attributes that God looks for in His specially chosen ones, who are called to fulfill a very, very high office in the future.

Here Paul was quoting Psalm 45:7, “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” With verses 8 and 9 both being quotes from Psalm 45, we can see the importance of that Psalm. In fact, many different truths seem to be anchored in that Psalm.

Comment: Contrary to the doctrine of the Trinity, God and Jesus cannot be coequal if Jehovah, the *God over Jesus*, anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

Reply: Yes, there is a big differentiation between the Father and the Son.

Comment: Also, Jesus did not receive this anointing until after the fulfillment of his commission here on earth. The reward was reserved until he had proved his faithfulness.

Reply: Jesus was previously above his fellows but not anointed per se. When he was the Logos, he and Lucifer appeared to be relatively coequal in honor and authority, and perhaps Lucifer, because of his liberties, erroneously thought he was the superior of the two. However, Jesus was the firstborn and had the honored role of being spokesman for the Father. Very often a spokesman cannot express his own personality too much because in doing so, he would damage the very office he is in. Commandments were channeled through the Logos to others. Of course those conditions occurred prior to the Gospel Age, and the anointing of verse 9 took place after Jesus' ascension.

What are some other thoughts about the statement "Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows"?

Q: Was this anointing part of Jesus' being given the divine nature?

A: No, for the oil represents "gladness." Jesus had two separate anointings. In Leviticus 8:12, Moses anointed Aaron with oil to sanctify him. The gold plate that was put on Aaron's head suggests a combined office of priest and king, although the emphasis of Leviticus 8 is on the priesthood aspect. The kingly aspect is brought in only subtly, suggesting the potentiality of the Aaronic priesthood when it eventually merges into the new Melchisedec priesthood.

Among other things, the gold plate ("Holiness to Jehovah") emphasizes Jesus' dedication and his role as High Priest during the Gospel Age. All of the activity of Leviticus 8 was done on the first day of the consecration of the priesthood. Antotypically, 6 1/2 days follow before the Kingdom Age or, as stated in Leviticus 9:1, before the eighth day, which pictures the Kingdom Age. Thus the emphasis of the anointing in Leviticus 8 has to do with the honor conferred on Jesus at the beginning of the Gospel Age—after his ascension but before Pentecost.

In regard to Jesus' two separate anointings, the first anointing occurred at the time of his baptism in Jordan, as pictured by the dove, which represented the Holy Spirit. Although there was no visible oil, it was, nevertheless, an anointing but not necessarily an anointing of gladness except in the sense of Jesus' sentiment "[As] in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Psa. 40:7,8). He considered his consecration to do the Father's will a privilege, even though he knew what it would ultimately lead to. Near the end of his ministry, he became the "man of sorrows" (Isa. 53:3). In contrast, the anointing that took place at his ascension indicated no more sadness, for he was then anointed with the "oil of [an enduring] gladness." He had the satisfaction of having pleased God and having done His will. There were no more threatenings down the road for the everlasting future. We hope for the same gladness. If we make our calling and election sure and Jesus says, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord," we will very much feel that we, too, have been anointed with the oil of gladness at our ascension (Matt. 25:21).

Comment: Isaiah 61:1,2a reads, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that

are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”

Reply: Jesus quoted that text at Nazareth when he spoke in the synagogue. Then he said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:16-21). What he meant was that this text was beginning to be fulfilled, for the “good tidings” first come in the Gospel Age. (The word “gospel” means “good news.”) Restitution will be good tidings to the world *later*, for Jesus’ sermons during his First Advent were addressed to his followers and were about the high calling, the good news *now*. He did not preach of the Kingdom Age. The good news is that if one is faithful in the present age, he will participate in the future preaching of good tidings to the world. The prison is opened during the Gospel Age in the sense that many of us were in a dark, deep dungeon of sin when God called us into His marvelous light.

Thus Jesus’ anointing with the “oil of gladness” above his fellows took place at his ascension. This was *his* particular honor.

If we were Jews living in Old Testament times and we were interested in God’s Word, we would wonder who the mysterious “thee” is in Psalm 45:7, “Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed *thee* with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” Also, a marriage and two “kings” are mentioned in that Psalm, one King being Jehovah. We would sense that God was purposing something. Another puzzling statement would have been verse 9: “Kings’ daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.” We would have asked, Who is the “queen,” and what does verse 16 mean, “Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth”? How exciting these verses were for the Jews back there! Today when we read Psalm 45, we realize that the mysterious “God” of verse 6 is Jesus, who will reign in righteousness. And Paul was trying to call that fact to the attention of his fellow citizens, the Hebrews. Probably in earlier years, before becoming a Christian, Paul had realized that Psalm 45 was talking about the Messiah, but he did not know the identity of that Messiah until his conversion on the road to Damascus.

Comment: In the *Diaglott* interlinear, the “oil of gladness” is rendered the “oil of extreme joy.” Also, the Father *personally* anointed Jesus with this oil.

Reply: Yes, as Moses anointed Aaron in the type (Lev. 8:10,12).

The first thing that each member of the faithful Little Flock hears is Jesus’ saying, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” When the Church is complete in earth’s atmosphere, the saints will all be introduced to the Father in the throne room of heaven. As Jesus reads and the Father accepts the name of each of the 144,000, there will be joyous shouting and singing. The Father will hand out the “diplomas.”

The joy Jesus personally experienced at his ascension was the opposite of what he felt in the Garden of Gethsemane when he said, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). Proof that he was very troubled is the statement that he “was heard in that he feared” death (Heb. 5:7). He even said, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Matt. 26:38). And on the Cross, he cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). When Jesus was resurrected, he knew that indeed he had passed the test, but he looked forward to being reunited with his Father and receiving official recognition.

Heb. 1:10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

The word “And” at the beginning of verse 10 introduces a thought that is *completely separate*

from verse 9. Trinitarians especially like three texts in the New Testament, and verse 10 is one of them. Another is in Colossians, and the third is in the Gospel of John. Some of the other texts they use are either spurious or refer to something else, as is the case with verse 10. The human mind tends to connect verses 9 and 10, erroneously concluding that “Lord” in verse 10 refers to Jesus; that is, Trinitarians say that God is speaking about Jesus in both verses, telling, first, that Jesus was anointed above his fellows and, then, that Jesus “laid the foundation of the earth.”

Comment: The original Psalm is needed to straighten out the context. Psalm 102:25-27 reads, “Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.” The designation “LORD” in all capital letters in verses 21 and 22, as well as “God” in verse 24, clearly shows that David was speaking of Jehovah.

Reply: Yes, the original Psalm is the proof.

Generally speaking, almost all Christians, not only in the nominal Church but also in present-truth and other independent movements, think “Lord” in verse 10 refers to Jesus. In this separate thought, “And, Thou, *Lord*” refers to Jehovah—it is He who formed the earth and the heavens, as proven abundantly in perhaps 50 or 60 Old Testament Scriptures. In fact, those who are familiar with the Old Testament do not find any exception.

Heb. 1:11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

Heb. 1:12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

“They [the earth and the heavens] shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.” There is no question that the reference here is to Jehovah, who laid the heavens and the foundation of the earth and will change them as a garment.

Many people think that verses 11 and 12 are authorized hyperbole, particularly the earth (singular) and the heavens (plural), but that is not the case. Incidentally, context determines whether “heavens” (plural) means the firmament, the atmosphere, or the stars that we see like our sun. The planets, which do not have light in themselves, are not suns, for they can only reflect light. In other words, just as the moon reflects sunlight, so do the planets in our solar system. The sun, moon, and planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune) are the “heavens” of our solar system.

How do we harmonize the statement in Ecclesiastes 1:4 that “the earth abideth for ever” and Paul’s point here that the earth and the heavens “shall perish” and “wax old as doth a garment”? Earth as a planet will abide forever but not the *surface* of the earth as we know it. For example, rivers bring silt down from the mountains into the valleys by gravity. Therefore, a million or a billion years from now, all the mountains will be leveled just through erosion. Other Scriptures that we will not consider at this time also support this thought. To wait for a million or a billion years is a mighty long time from a pragmatic standpoint, but verses 11 and 12 are a very subtle, slight hint that interplanetary travel will be feasible one day and that people will move from one “house” to another. Just as people change from one garment to another garment, so they will move from one house to a house in another location. That is why the universe is illimitable and innumerable from *our* standpoint, but from *God’s* standpoint, it is finite and fixed, for He knows the number of the stars and has a name for each

one (Psa. 147:4). In other words, God has a particular destiny in mind for all of the stars.

We are prone to be a *literalist* as regards God—we think that is the proper attitude—until we are forced to give a spiritual application. Of course some Scriptures are both literal and spiritual, and other Scriptures are either only literal or only spiritual.

Q: Did Paul possibly take the Old Testament statement that *God* created the heavens and the earth and apply just the *principle* to Jesus here in the first chapter of Hebrews? Then the waxing old would refer to the ecclesiastical heavens and the society of earth waxing old as the Apostle Peter said in 2 Peter 3:10, “The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

A: No, what Peter said was symbolic and figurative; what Paul said here is literal. At the present time, we see the tremors, but the “earthquake,” the social explosion, is future. The work of God’s hands and fingers was literal. Paul was quoting not only Psalm 102 but also Isaiah. We are not saying that Paul understood all of these things. Yes, he understood more than any of the other apostles, but there was a limit to his understanding back there. His being taken to the “third heaven” is mind-boggling—he saw society as it exists today and as it will exist in the near future and in the Kingdom Age (2 Cor. 12:2). In addition, he actually saw the degradation of man in vision.

Comment: Paul quoted from the Old Testament in verses 5-12, and then in verse 13, he said, “But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?” Therefore, he was just quoting and did not understand all of these points in depth.

Reply: That is true. His emphasis was, “Jesus is the *Messiah* that you Hebrews have been looking for. He was right here, and you *crucified* him.” Bro. Alex Muir once said the following about prophecy: “If we, as Christians, get tired of standing and sit down on the curb to wait for prophecy to come, it could go right on by us while we continue to sit and wait.” The point is that if we do not know what we are looking for, the fulfillment can pass by without our noticing it. Therefore, when the texts Paul used were laid out on the table, the Jews should have asked, “Who is this mysterious individual?” Paul showed that he was a Son and a mighty one. As the epistle continues, he gave overwhelming evidence that Jesus *is truly the Messiah*.

Q: Why can’t verses 10-12 be spiritual like Isaiah 34:4? “And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.”

A: Psalm 102, which Paul quoted, rules out that interpretation. The clauses “thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail” refer to Jesus. In verse 24, Jesus said to his Father, “O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations.” Jesus said this during his earthly ministry when he was very much concerned about his imminent death. In other words, a squib of prophecy about Jesus was implanted in Psalm 102, and this picture within a picture has nothing to do with what was subsequently said in verses 25 and 26. Being familiar with Psalm 102 and having almost a photographic memory, Paul felt that verse 24 stood out as if it were italicized.

To repeat, Jesus knew that he was going to die. The Son of man came to give his life a ransom, but the stark reality of the experience of being crucified was now staring him in the face. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he said to his disciples, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,” and three times he pleaded with his Father that, if possible, the cup would be removed from him (Matt. 26:38,39,42,44). We believe the “cup” was a particular aspect of the shame that

came with crucifixion, but in regard to Jesus' prayer, Paul added a factor; namely, in addition to the shame that is attached to crucifixion, Jesus wondered if he had fulfilled his Father's will perfectly. Had he done everything right? If not, when he died, he would remain dead; there would be no resurrection. In regard to this thinking in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed earnestly and "was heard in that he feared" (Heb. 5:7).

We will read verse 24 again from Psalm 102. Jesus said, "O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days." Jesus was crucified as a perfect man at age 33 1/2; he was cut off in the *prime* of life. Next Jesus talked about God: "Thy years are throughout all generations." Jehovah is the eternal God; He is the only One who can be trusted in the sense of *always* existing throughout *all* ages. When Paul said that Jesus was "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever," he meant from the standpoint of character, sympathy, constancy, loyalty, etc. (Heb. 13:8). With God, that was also true, but from the standpoint of *time*, He is "*from everlasting to everlasting*"—He was here in the past, He is here in the present, and He will be here in the future (Psa. 90:2).

Realizing that God is immortal, that He has eternal youth, and that He does not change, Jesus said, "I believe there is no danger that you, Father, will ever waver in any sense, for you live throughout all years, but I am concerned about myself. Your years are throughout *all* generations. Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They shall perish, but you shall endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shall you change them, and they shall be changed" (Psa. 102:24-26 paraphrase). The tendency of the reader would be to continue right on with the next verse, but there is a *change of thought*.

There should be a period at the end of verse 26, for verse 27 is talking *about Jesus*: "But thou [Jesus] art the same, and thy years shall have no end [after you are crucified]." God was saying to Jesus, "I am telling you now that you will be faithful, and when you die and are changed, you will be like me. From that time—after your death and ascension—your years will be like my years. You will live forever." That assurance is what Jesus needed and earnestly prayed for—he wanted some evidence, some crumb of faith.

Clearly Paul quoted from Psalm 102. Jesus said of his Father, "Your years are everlasting." The Father then turned around and said to Jesus, "Son, your years are going to be the same." There was no question in Jesus' mind that he had to die. His concern was life after death. The Father said to him, "You have my assurance that you will be faithful. You will then be with me forever." From this standpoint, Paul's previous comments about the "oil of gladness" harmonize beautifully.

Comment: Psalm 102:26 says, "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed," but elsewhere in the Old Testament, God showed His faithfulness with the unchangeableness of His nature. For example, Jeremiah 31:36,37 reads, "If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD."

Reply: That is true. However, we are saying that planet Earth will remain but not as we know it. Genesis 1:1 states, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and six seven-thousand-year Days of Creation followed to make the planet habitable for man. When, way down the road in time, the earth waxes old like a garment, it will no longer be habitable; nevertheless, the planet will remain, and the orbit will still be the same.

Q: What about the “heavens” (plural)?

A: Although the word is frequently rendered in the plural, it can be either singular or plural in meaning depending on context.

Q: In what way will the earth eventually become uninhabitable?

A: The *surface* of the earth will become uninhabitable. Before this planet was made habitable, it was covered with water. There was no land, and darkness was over the water. As God began to order the surface for man, the earth heaved up with earthquakes. The earth beneath the water buckled, and continents pushed up. The Vailian theory is a feasible explanation that harmonizes with Scripture. Imagine the changes that took place over a period of 42,000 years before the earth was habitable and man was created!

Along this line, we believe that the Flood of Noah’s day was not universal, for otherwise, the changes would have been too dramatic for ice as high as the Grand Canyon to melt in one year so that Noah could step out of the Ark and have vineyards. Rather, a pocket of the earth very slowly sank and then very slowly raised, shedding off the water.

Comment: When a garment gets old and has served its purpose, it is folded up and put aside. With so many other heavenly bodies in the universe, there will be a place for the inhabitants of earth.

Reply: Yes, and interplanetary travel will take place. What limits going to other solar systems at the present time is that man has not yet harnessed nuclear energy to provide a sufficiency of fuel to last long enough for such travel in a small vehicle. Once man gets out of our solar system, he will be able to travel faster than the speed of light. Certainly angels travel faster than light, for otherwise, we would have a real problem getting answers to our prayers. In fact, prayers travel as fast as thought, which is *much faster than light*. The *nearest* solar system to earth is 3 1/2 light-years away, which is a distance of trillions of miles. What about where God resides in the heaven of heavens when He sends His angels? This realm of thinking reminds us of Psalm 12:6, for when God speaks, His word is like silver refined seven times. We may be able to go down to the second or third layer, but we are not capable of getting to the seventh.

Thus in verse 12, the Father interrupted Jesus’ prayer and said, “But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.” In other words, “You are going to be like me. Continue what you have been called to do, and you will end up like me.” Just as the Father endures with no age factor, so the Son is now the same.

Comment: It would be interesting to know what David thought when he wrote these words under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Reply: Faith can believe but does not necessarily understand. We should *believe* God’s Word. For instance, some do not believe God has ears and eyes, but the Bible tells us that He does.

Heb. 1:13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

Verses 10-12a are a separate thought. Then verses 12b and 13 are another separate thought. The Father said to Jesus, “But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail [they shall have no end].” Then Paul asked (with regard to that former statement), “But to which of the angels said he [God] at any time [what He said to Jesus], Sit on my right hand, until I make thine

enemies thy footstool?" In verse 13, Paul was quoting Psalm 110:1, in which David said, "The LORD [Jehovah] said unto my Lord [Jesus], Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

Q: Would David have understood what he was writing?

Comment: Although the Holy Spirit overruled this verse, David believed that Messiah was coming, so he knew there was a distinction between Jehovah and Messiah.

Reply: There are different "Lords" in heaven. The term "God" is used with judges and mighty ones, and the term "Lord" has different ramifications. A startling fact recorded in the Book of Exodus is that an angel spoke as Jehovah. The "angel of the LORD" said to Moses, "I am ... the God [Jehovah] of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exod. 3:1-6). In other words, the angel was the *mouthpiece* of God.

We think certain individuals in Old Testament times observed the fact that God had a mouthpiece. They realized that there was some other great one, and they knew that God had many sons, for the angels are called "sons." The Old Testament spoke about a mysterious special Son, and they would have said, "That is the Messiah." They did not know much, but they made that distinction. Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day ... and was glad" (John 8:56). We are not given the particulars, but Abraham knew something.

Comment: Ephesians 1:19-21 shows the preeminence of Jesus. God "wrought [His mighty power] in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Jesus is far above the angels.

Reply: Yes, that text explains Psalm 110:1.

Heb. 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

Next Paul quoted Psalm 104:4, "Who [God] maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire."

Comment: Verse 14 refers back to the word "angels" in verse 13.

Reply: Yes. As the agent of God, Jesus has *all* of the holy angels under his commission to perfect the Church during the Gospel Age. For that reason, he does not need the saints who were raised in 1878 to help him perfect the Church down here. The risen saints are doing another work. God has given this authority to the Son. The whole host of holy angels are not only spectators but also doers; they participate in the perfecting of the Church depending on what lessons are needed.

After studying this first chapter of Hebrews, we can see the loftiness of Paul's thinking. We believe this epistle was the product of his thinking over many years. He very much wanted to write this letter to his people. Peter was initially the apostle to the circumcision (the Jews), and Paul went to the Gentiles. Nevertheless, Paul wanted to fulfill his double commission, for Jesus had said to him on the way to Damascus that he was a chosen vessel to preach the gospel to "Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

Heb. 2:1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have

heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

Why did Paul use the word “therefore”?

Comment: He was tying in the previous chapter, which ended with the statement that all of the holy angels minister to the “heirs of salvation.” Because the calling of the Church is so high and so important, special care is provided for the consecrated, who should give earnest heed and not let what they have learned slip.

Chapter 1 emphasized the primacy of Jesus. Then the last verse made the comprehensive statement that all of the holy angels of heaven have been given a guardianship over those who are called into the truth and respond. “Are they [the holy angels] not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them [the Church class] who shall be heirs of salvation?” Therefore, the consecrated “ought to give the more earnest heed to the things” they have heard lest at any time they “should let them slip.”

When things “slip,” the transgression is slight at first, but one thing gradually leads to another and another. In other words, we can succumb to evil the way one is overcome by an odorless, invisible gas. Unless we are vigilant, the evil will sneak up on us, little by little. Therefore, diligent effort is involved in making sure that we conform ourselves in obedience to doing God’s will.

Heb. 2:2 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;

The word spoken *through* the holy angels was steadfast (see *Diaglott*). Usually it is a spiritual angel who “communicates” with an earthly “angel” (messenger, Greek *aggelos*), so “the word” comes in sequence from God, Jesus, a guardian angel, and then through an earthly minister.

When did “every transgression and disobedience” receive “a just recompense [or penalty] of reward”?

Comment: That happened under the Law of Moses. Acts 7:53 states that the Israelites “received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.”

Reply: The word “angels,” which is plural, includes Moses, an earthly “angel.” In addition, there was a period of time before the Flood, of which we know little. During that time, the holy angels had the power, that is, until the unholy angels succumbed when they looked upon the daughters of men and saw that they were fair (Gen. 6:1,2). God allowed the first dispensation—the dispensation before the Flood—to be under the charge of the holy angels, and mankind was no match whatever for them. In time, however, some of the holy angels fell and became demons. Evidently, so many of the angels fell that the earlier effect and more rigidly controlled atmosphere became null and void. The point is that the statement of verse 2 applies in principle both before and after the Flood.

Another point is that under the Law of Moses, there were all kinds of offenses, and generally speaking, the Scriptures give the harsher penalties. For instance, if an Israelite worshipped another god, he was stoned to death. If he sinned *willingly* against a direct command of God, the penalty was death, but that was the ideal situation. After Moses and Joshua died, the Law was disobeyed for over a thousand years, and nobody specially died except in very unusual cases. When God first established the Law in purity, it was effectively carried out, but once Moses and Joshua were off the scene, conditions changed radically. In Jeremiah’s day, for instance, the great majority of the people were disobedient.

Of course those Israelites who were alive at the time judgment came on the Temple and the city of Jerusalem suffered accordingly. But immediate retribution did not occur as had happened when Moses was on the scene and, evidently, before the Flood until the unholy angels came into the picture. Take New York City, for example. A police force of, say, 50,000 controls millions of people, and thousands of individuals are imprisoned every year. But if there were a million criminals annually, the police force would be made null and void. Therefore, when a large segment of the population changes its behavior and the proportion of disobedience and waywardness increases significantly, the Law becomes less and less effective. In time after the Flood, a great majority, including kings, princes, priests, prophets, and common people, disobeyed.

The Law of Moses shows what God likes and dislikes; it reveals His thinking, which is very helpful in developing us while we are in earthen vessels. Without Jesus' righteousness to cover our sins and shortcomings, the situation would be hopeless if we disobeyed in even one little offense. However, if we *willfully* depart from the way, there is no hope. Paul used the argument that under the Law, such died "without mercy" (Heb. 10:28).

In the Kingdom Age, people will be given the ability to withstand evil. Every time a person does something right, he will get a little stronger—just as our muscles develop when we exercise regularly. From that standpoint, moral laws are the same as physical laws.

Heb. 2:3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

The nominal Church teaches that one who does not accept Jesus neglects the great salvation, and there is no hope for him. With Scriptures like verse 3, we can see how easy it is to not understand the Bible, for without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to *really* discern the things of God. However, verse 3 is talking about *instructed* people.

Comment: The "great salvation" is the special privilege of consecration during the Gospel Age.

Reply: Yes, it is the hope of the divine nature and the invitation to the marriage of the Lamb. When one who consecrates subsequently departs from the way, he is neglecting that "great salvation" through a lack of appreciation.

Comment: The *Diaglott* says, "Having *disregarded* so great a salvation." Verse 3 is a strong text to refute the statement that a person's consecration was not accepted. For one to turn away from a profession of consecration is to disregard it.

Reply: Yes, we must be very careful not to acquiesce to such a statement said in our presence.

Comment: Verse 3 certainly disproves the doctrine of "once in grace, always in grace."

Reply: The nominal system is confusion. Various teachings directly contradict scriptural laws.

The "great salvation ... at the first began to be spoken by the Lord [Jesus], and was confirmed unto us by them [the other apostles] that heard him." We get a little insight here that one of the first things Paul did after he consecrated was to go to Jerusalem to see Peter and James of Alphaeus to get a lot of information about the birth of Jesus and his childhood (Gal. 1:18,19). That way Luke, the amanuensis of Paul, could write these details in his Gospel. Paul wanted to learn everything he could about Jesus from both the Old Testament prophecies and the circumstances of his earlier years and earthly ministry.

Heb. 2:4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

The supplied word “them” should be omitted. “God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit”; that is, in addition to Jesus’ preaching, God bore witness with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts done through the apostles (compare verse 3). The signs, wonders, etc., were needed for the survival of the early Church, for otherwise, Jesus would have been regarded as simply a great teacher and leader, and not as the Son of God, who came down here bearing witness to his Father’s truth.

The early Church got various mechanical gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as healing, discerning of spirits, tongues, interpreting tongues, prophecy, and the word of knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8-10). That same principle operates today but in a much subtler way. The miraculous gifts brought the early Christians together. Paul had more gifts than anyone else, including the other apostles, but he did not use the gift of healing on either himself or Timothy (1 Tim. 5:23). Of course he would not have been averse to God doing the healing, for he asked three times to have his poor eyesight healed. When the answer was no, he accepted the Father’s will. We, too, can ask and would probably do so a dozen times before recognizing a negative response. Paul was told, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect [manifested] in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).

“According to his [God’s] own will.” Although there is a distinction between a talent and a miraculous gift, sometimes the Holy Spirit merges with a talent, giving a “talent gift,” as it were, and sometimes it is completely separate.

Heb. 2:5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

Verse 5 suggests that the first dispensation, the “world” prior to the Flood, was put in subjection unto the holy angels. However, God will not put in subjection to the holy angels the “world to come” because the “world” before the Flood was a failure. Back there many of the holy angels became unholy, for instead of coming to earth and acting on their instructions, they became enamored of the women and left their first estate (heaven), preferring to stay down here in human form (Jude 6). There are many things about spirit nature that we do not know, but it is certain that the angels have tremendous capabilities which are not possible with human beings. Humans are very limited in comparison. For instance, angels can travel with the speed of thought. But in regard to reason and the ability to worship God, there is an equality. How remarkable that man—this little creature down here—can worship God and obey His principles when so many of these great spirit beings, who could even see God, failed to get the lesson! What an indictment of those angels, for *even with Jehovah*, “familiarity breeds contempt”! Therefore, in order to know and love God, we have to know how He thinks and what He loves and hates. We read earlier that Jesus was anointed “with the oil of gladness” above his fellows because he “loved righteousness, and hated iniquity” (Heb. 1:9). How can we love righteousness and hate iniquity unless we are steeped in thinking about these principles and their disruption and abuse in the history of the human race?

How marvelous that mankind down here, with all the limitations of the flesh and a puny brain, is enabled by the Holy Spirit to think on the things of God! The *great Jehovah* has condescended to come down to *our* level! Paul wrote to the Corinthians (paraphrased), “Who has the mind of God?” Then he answered his own question: “We [the consecrated] have the mind of God because He has revealed Himself and His thinking to us.” Hence we are in a better position than those of mankind who are natural-minded and can only understand “carnal” (physical,

practical) things.

In the next age, God will put the world in subjection to Jesus, the “man whom he [God] hath ordained” to “judge the world in righteousness,” and the Church, who are called to be “kings and priests” (Acts 17:31; Rev. 5:10). The Christ will have more power than the holy angels of the past, and they will exercise that extreme power in a harnessed situation. Jesus and the Church will be merciful, but when one does not make progress, at least outwardly, a penalty will have to be paid—immediately for the very willful, at the 100-year trial, and finally in the trial of the Little Season at the end of the Kingdom (Acts 3:23; Isa. 65:20; Rev. 20:3).

Heb. 2:6 But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

Paul again began to quote from the Old Testament. The text is usually explained another way, but we can ascertain the true intent by going back to the Eighth Psalm. “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psa. 8:4). The usual explanation is as follows: “What is man [Adam], that thou [God] art mindful of him? or the son of man [Jesus], that thou visitest him?” However, the Eighth Psalm is talking about Adam and *his children*, not about Jesus. Adam sinned, and the human race was condemned through him on this tiny planet, which is like dust on the balances of God (Isa. 40:12). In fact, the universe is so insignificant to the Creator that He blows it like dust off the scales. To us, however, the universe is mind-boggling—as is even our own little sun when we think of its size in relationship to the earth in our own little galaxy.

Notice that Paul did not mention David but just said, “One in a certain place testified.” Paul was speaking emotionally but with great thought. For him to stop to mention the Psalm specifically would have been distracting. Moreover, the Hebrews should have known that he was quoting from the Eighth Psalm, for from youth up, they had been instructed in the Scriptures.

The entire Psalm reads as follows:

“O LORD our Lord, how excellent is *thy* name in all the earth! who hast set *thy* glory above the heavens.

“Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast *thou* ordained strength because of thine enemies, that *thou* mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

“When I consider *thy* heavens, the work of *thy* fingers, the moon and the stars, which *thou* hast ordained;

“What is man, that *thou* art mindful of him? and the son of man, that *thou* visitest him?

“For *thou* hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

“*Thou* madest him to have dominion over the works of *thy* hands; *thou* hast put all things under his feet:

“All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;

“The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

“O LORD our Lord, how excellent is *thy* name in all the earth!” (Psalm 8)

In the first and last verses, David was talking about Jehovah, whose name is excellent in all the earth. “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings,” He has “ordained strength [perfected praise—Matt. 21:16].” In quoting this verse, Paul and our Lord himself concentrated more on the explanation in order to shame the wise, the proud, and the strong of mankind, who think Christians are bibliolaters, worshippers of the Bible. When faithful Christians are elevated to prominence in the next age and their true merit is understood, the worldly-wise will be ashamed. It will then be apparent how God viewed those who were properly exercised by His providences and leadings.

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” The “visiting” is usually explained as pertaining to Jesus because he used the title “the Son of [the] man [Adam]” and “the Son of God” (Matt. 8:20; John 5:25). There is nothing wrong or disrespectful with that interpretation, but David was originally a shepherd. When he watched the sheep, he usually slept in the field at night, and before going off to sleep, he observed the heavens. Accordingly, he said, “When I consider the heavens.” By day, he considered the sun, and by night, he considered the moon and the stars.

God condescended to visit man. When God created Adam, He crowned him with glory, honor, and beauty and made him lord of the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea. Only recently, through the news media, do we see people playing with whales and dolphins and even sharks, and some individuals seem to be gifted in taming birds. But originally Adam was lord of the animal kingdom.

In time, Adam sinned and fell, so now “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy,” condescends to come down to visit fallen mankind; that is, He speaks to those who are lowly and contrite of heart (Isa. 57:15). Even after Adam fell from that crowning position and his progeny were also fallen, God’s mercy began to manifest itself in such ways as clothing Adam and Eve with animal skins to cover their nakedness, providing for different sacrifices, and giving the Law to Moses. Thus there was a means of getting forgiveness for sins by going through a procedure that had a typical significance and provided typical justification. (Of course substantive justification comes only by the exercise of faith, Abraham being an example. We thank God for Jesus and his robe of righteousness, which we so sorely need.)

Heb. 2:7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

Several years ago we suggested that this verse should read, “Thou madest him [man] little, lower than the angels.” When the holy angels witnessed the creation of man and how *small* he was, they sang for joy (Job 38:7). It is startling how the mind of God can filter through into the mind of these tiny beings so that they can worship Him. Hence we can be happy while the whole world dreads the future, not knowing what will happen. So many questions are answered for us through the Word, yet that Word has been the most published book in existence over the past 400 years or so.

Comment: David was in awe of the *greatness* of creation, and the angels were in awe of the *smallness* of creation here on planet Earth.

Reply: Yes, that is what was so startling.

Comment: The inhabitants of earth are compared to “grasshoppers” in size (Isa. 40:22).

Reply: Actually, man is even smaller than the grasshopper in comparison to Almighty God.

The reality is that man is tiny, yet he was originally crowned with glory and honor and given dominion over the beasts, fowl, and fish, which were obedient and playful. Adam even gave them all names, but he not only lost control of himself in keeping the standard of God but also lost dominion over the soil, which subsequently brought forth thorns and thistles. David first thought of Adam, and then he thought, “Here I am down here. I can enjoy and marvel at the heavens as created by God.” David truly appreciated how the heavens declare the *glory* of God. He felt that he was being visited by God as he viewed the heavens—even though he was a sinner and not perfect like Adam before the fall.

Comment: One problem seems to be that the translators could not follow the line of David’s reasoning. In verse 5, Paul wrote, “For unto the *angels* hath he [God] not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.” Since the translators did not know how to translate verse 7 appropriately, they added the word “a” in “a little lower than the angels” with a marginal alternate translation of “a little while inferior to.” Paul was trying to show the *size and greatness* of the angels, but in the future, God will take the *little* man and put “all things in subjection under his feet” (verse 8).

Years ago Bro. Krebs said that if a miner digs coal for many hours of the day and then comes up out of the mine before nightfall, he is blinded by the brilliance of the light. He likened that situation to the fact that we, as Christians, have been translated from a world of darkness into marvelous light. With the whole globe being the dark continent of sin, when we come into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, the contrast is like the miner who comes up out of the mine in daylight hours and finds the light overwhelmingly powerful and glaring.

Heb. 2:8 **Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.**

“Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.... But now we see not yet all things put under him.” Verse 8 is a prophecy of the future, for at present, we do not see this subjection, which was lost when Adam sinned. This lordship will be restored in due time as one feature of the “restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21). That due time will be the age beyond the Kingdom. First, man has much work to do inwardly. Not only will those who are “accounted worthy” not die anymore, but also they will become kings when they enter the portal of the age beyond the Millennium (Luke 20:35,36).

The question some would ask is, Does the putting of all things “under his feet” refer to Jesus or to mankind? Both interpretations are profitable thoughts, but to understand verse 8, we will have to return to the Eighth Psalm, the original prophecy, which provides certain clues. Of course in being a perfect man, Jesus was a representation of the potential for humans who, when they are perfect, will be endowed with several capabilities. Those who believe verse 8 refers to Jesus would be thinking of the New Testament text “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:25). However, in Psalm 8:6, the “all things” put under the feet are *not* enemies: “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.” The “all things” are the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea (Psa. 8:7,8).

We differed many years ago on the interpretation of verse 8 here in Hebrews, even though we felt the thought of Jesus was profitable, for he was crowned with glory and honor in the perfection of manhood, growing in wisdom and stature from a babe up to an adult. The

nearest incident we can see in the ministry of Christ about animals being put under his feet was when he rode into Jerusalem on an unbroken colt, the foal of an ass. Before a spirited horse can be ridden, it has to be broken in and trained to obey man, but our Lord calmly rode on a colt that had not previously carried a human rider. This dominion was like a microcosm of what mankind will have, and we believe the Eighth Psalm is saying that ultimately all mankind will become kings. Interestingly, that time corresponds to the time after Jesus has put all enemies under his feet, the last enemy being death (1 Cor. 15:25,26). At that time, mankind will have been tried and proven faithful and will have the perfection of manhood. Having passed the test of obedience in the Little Season, they will enter into the ages beyond the Kingdom, when the animals, birds, and fish will be very friendly. For example, the wolf and the lamb will lie down together, and nothing will hurt or destroy in all God's "holy mountain" (Isa. 11:6,9). Many such prophecies will be fulfilled in the age *beyond* the Kingdom, but we have been so accustomed to thinking of the times of restitution that we tend to believe everything will take place when the Kingdom Age opens. That is not the case in several pictures.

Not only is Jesus the best example to Christians in the Gospel Age, but also he is the example of what the world will inherit as perfect men in the future.

Comment: Jesus will be the instrument for achieving that goal at the end of the Kingdom Age.

Reply: Yes, he is a leader in every respect; he is both a Savior and an exemplar of what to aspire to. Jesus is *the* example of the potential for mankind.

Incidentally, when God said that Adam needed a helpmate, that helpmate could just as well have been a man as a woman. Like the holy angels, they would have been friends and associates. However, God created a woman because He knew that ultimately man would sin and that the permission of evil would be a good object lesson for all future creations.

Heb. 2:9 **But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.**

The fact that Jesus tasted death for "every man" suggests two things. Not only will mankind be redeemed from sin, but also the obedient will be raised to the glorious liberty of sons of God on the human plane in the fullness of perfect human beings.

Again we will correct the translation and read the first part of verse 9 as follows: "*But we see Jesus, who was made little, lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.*" In a comparison of size, man is *little*.

Q: With regard to this change, what words are actually in the original Greek text in verses 7 and 9?

A: The word "lower" is omitted. Although Jesus was made man, he was crowned with glory and honor. With the mind, there is sort of an equality between angels and men, but in size and in capabilities of traveling through space, man is small and limited. To state the matter another way, when Jesus was in the flesh, he was far superior to any of the angels—in honor, character, etc. Even though he was limited down here in the flesh and was little, he was greater.

Comment: The thought, starting in verse 7, is that man was made *little*, but he was perfect. Then he sinned. Jesus subsequently came, and he was made *little* and perfect to take Adam's place. So the comparison would be the *miniaturization*.

Reply: Yes. Even though Jesus was on the human plane, he was higher in rank than the angels in heaven. Therefore, verse 9 is saying that Jesus was made *little*.

Verse 9 says that Jesus tasted death by *God's grace*. In other words, the *Father* sacrificed in the sending of His Son. Throughout the New Testament, Paul consistently showed that the Father was vastly superior to Jesus, yet the tendency has been for Christians in hymns, prayers, and conversation to emphasize Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, and to say very little about God. The emphasis should be the other way around. As imperfect humans, we lack a sensibility in our thinking. Speaking from the natural standpoint of our flesh, we are dead; our senses are blunted. We do not know what the sensitive nature of a perfect man would be because we view everything from our imperfect state. Paul presented Jesus' death from the standpoint that *God's grace* and mercy brought our salvation. It was *God*, who "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," but we say, "The *Son* died on the Cross" (John 3:16). Our brains need to be adjusted to *God's* thinking, for we tend to be emotional. God has a *serenity* and a *nobility*; He is a God of *all patience*. People want things to be done quickly, but the Scriptures tell us not to be too hasty, especially in talking. It is easy to talk—even a fool tells all he knows—but we should honor those who think before they speak (Prov. 29:11).

The Father does not mind that great emphasis is placed on Jesus, for He is so pleased with His Son's character and obedience that the honor given is a pleasure for Him. However, as Emperor of the universe, God will never give His glory to another being (Isa. 42:8; 48:11).

We do not think that those who are called in the Gospel Age but decline to consecrate will be given preferential honor in the Kingdom Age, no matter what kind of life they live, for they turned down the privilege of suffering. Jesus did not turn down that privilege. When the Father explained the plan to him, showing that a corresponding price was needed to release mankind from death, Jesus saw the matter in the proper light—that it was a *privilege* to die. In contrast, the tendency of humans is to feel that *they* are noble and that *they* do the sacrificing and the suffering. They do not see the distinction of honor of being on the right hand of God and having the divine nature—they do not see that all of the promises are a *privilege*.

The holy angels admired Jesus because in their honesty of heart, they could see that he was noble and that he had the right priorities. Jesus felt honored to have the privilege of dying for Adam and paying the ransom price. Crucifixion is a terrible death, and no doubt when Jesus came nearer and nearer to that date, he trembled. But that is the way he was humbled under the mighty hand of God, and so those of the Little Flock must also be humbled if they are to be like Jesus in a *very small* sense (1 Pet. 5:6). Of course Jesus is the "chiefest of ten thousand," and he overwhelms his brethren in stature and height (Song 5:10). But such humbling is a necessity for the Little Flock. To our understanding, not every Christian will be tested that way, for we are not tested above what we are able. Those who are of Great Company caliber could not stand the test of a true Little Flock member, and God does not want to bruise a reed to crush it and snuff out a life. The Little Flock is tested severely in one way or another—if not according to the flesh, then according to the mind—and mental suffering can be very, very intense and trying, an example being decision making.

As a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). When we, as humans in the flesh, are trying to serve God, we get thoughts according to the flesh because we are in an earthen vessel, but the new creature breaks out of that vessel by crucifying the old man. That is the good fight of faith. As one grows in character, he should be more successful in the mind because that is where everything starts.

"That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." When we appreciate this expression fully, we will see that it was grace on the Father's part—not only grace for us, who

are sinners, but also grace for Jesus, who was already perfect as an archangel. It was grace that Jesus had that opportunity.

Addendum on Hebrews 2:7,9 and “Little”

We do not want to belabor the point on verses 7 and 9, but the word “little” is the Greek *brachu ti*, used two other places in Scripture. The second word, *ti*, intensifies the previous word, and Young’s *Analytical Concordance* puts the two words together and gives the definition “short” or “small.” John 6:7 reads, “Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little [*brachu ti*, inferring quantity].” Acts 27:28 states, “And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little [*brachu ti*] further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.” In other words, *brachu ti* means “little” whether it refers to time, distance, quantity, or something else. Therefore, the added word that follows “little” is whatever fits to make the context clear. However, in verses 7 and 9, it is not necessary to clarify the meaning. Only when *brachu ti* is used in places where “short” and “small” do not fit in the normal sense does a word need to be supplied. The *Diaglott* interlinear has the expression “a little while,” but the basic meaning is just “short” and “small.” The problem with verses 7 and 9 is that the concept Paul presented is so foreign to the thinking of Bible scholars that they did not insert a word to convey what we think was truly being said.

The *Diaglott* shows that the Greek verb *elattoo* is used for “decrease” where John the Baptist said, “He [Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). In verses 7 and 9, that same verb is used in the sense of “to make less,” that is, “to shrink.” Hence the thought of verse 7 is, “Thou [God] madest [did make to shrink, or decrease] him a little [that is, a little man].” Verse 9 means, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little [who was made to shrink little].”

We have given only one line of reasoning, but there are perhaps six different reasons why the thought in verses 7 and 9 is *not* “a short time” or “a little while,” both of which are foreign to the text and do not fit the meaning of the quoted Psalm. When we go back to Psalm 8, we find several related verses rather than the sentence that is quoted in Hebrews and then repeated, the first time pertaining to man and the second time applying to Jesus. In summary, the evidence of “little” meaning “little in size” is overwhelming in verses 7 and 9.

Incidentally, Job, Moses, and David had great minds that were much different than all of the other prophets. They were very deep thinkers. We skim over their unusual writings without giving proper thought. The writings are sacred and holy and fraught with meaning, but we just read through them quickly.

Heb. 2:10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

“For it became him [God], for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons [the Church] unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation [Jesus] perfect through sufferings.” What is the thought of “perfect” in this context? Jesus was already perfect and without sin. Just as the Passover lamb had to be perfect and without blemish, so did the antitypical Lamb of God. Therefore, “perfect” in verse 10 means to be *qualified for office*, to be not only the Captain of a brotherhood but also the High Priest among other priests. To be born morally perfect and sinless was not enough because if God so desired, He could make any one of us a perfect and sinless robot, but He does not tamper with our will, our freedom of choice. Our free moral agency is like sacred ground. God wants those who worship Him to do so in spirit and in truth *of their own initiative*, as a freewill offering; He wants the worship to be

spontaneous, wholehearted, and cheerful, rather than to be done through pressure (John 4:24).

In the past, some who were familiar with Bro. Russell at the Bethel supper table said that he was very serious on these issues. On one occasion, he asked, “Will any of us match up to this wonderful honor?” When we think from a human standpoint, we begin to quail. The Father’s relationship becomes very important, as we read in the first chapter. “Unto which of the angels said he [God] at any time, This is my Son,” putting His arm around Jesus’ shoulder (Heb. 1:5 paraphrase). This statement was not made to any other angel or being—even though they are sons of God. To say, “This is *my* Son,” is quite different than just being a son of God.

Heb. 2:11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

“He [Jesus] that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one [brotherhood]: for which cause he [Jesus] is not ashamed to call them brethren.” When Jesus came down here, he grew in wisdom and stature from his perfection in childhood to an adult. At 12 years of age, he was so advanced in his thinking that he astonished the Jewish doctors of the Law at the Temple in Jerusalem. It would have been very easy for Jesus to regard the religious leaders as slow, ignorant inferiors, but instead he always had the proper character structure. He condemned sin but not the sinner. Although he strongly criticized the scribes and Pharisees, calling them whited sepulchers and vipers, he spoke of them as a class and did not single out one individual. To a certain extent on certain occasions, we can do similarly depending on the circumstances.

For Paul to write that Jesus and his followers are all “one” reminds us of his prayer en route to the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed “that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:21). And he said, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God” (John 17:3). There are two ways of knowing God. (1) It would take an eternity to know God, for the knowing is an ever-learning process. God is so great that He is illimitable and unfathomable from a human standpoint, just like His universe. As the ages go on, spirit beings will learn more and more about God, but they will not know Him fully. Since eternity never ends, they will never be able to say, “I know the Father perfectly in everything.” (2) Now let us turn the reasoning around. Those who know, love, appreciate, and serve God with their *whole heart, mind, soul, and strength* are guaranteed eternal life. They will truly worship Him “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23,24).

Heb. 2:12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

Heb. 2:13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

The words of Jesus in verse 12 were prophetically recorded by David in Psalm 22:22.

Comment: This Scripture would have come to Jesus’ mind on the Cross, strengthening him and assuring him he would be faithful.

Reply: Yes, and other verses of that Psalm would have helped too.

Some Christians get a glorious moment of assurance before they die. However, others may *think* they have attained the Little Flock when they have not. Just saying and thinking we have been faithful does not make it so, for we might overestimate our own being and think of ourselves too highly.

“Children” (verse 13) are contrasted with “brethren” (verse 12). We are brethren of Christ and children of God. When did or will Jesus say, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren”? During his earthly ministry, Jesus said that he had come to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel, so he came to his own, to fellow Jews. From the Day of Pentecost until the conversion of Cornelius in AD 36, which took place 3 1/2 years later, only Jews became Christians. However, Jesus was looking for the pearl of great price, the entire Church class, as his brethren (Matt. 13:46).

Q: Then is the declaration of verse 12 future, when the Church is complete and Jesus is with them in heaven, singing praises to God in the midst of his brethren?

A: The declaration is past, present, and future, starting with Jesus’ earthly ministry at the First Advent.

Comment: The word “church” is “congregation” in the *Diaglott* and also in Psalm 22:22.

“I [Jesus] will put my trust in him [God].” Again Jesus quoted Scripture. We notice, too, how frequently he quoted from the Psalms. The only Scriptures that he quoted more often during his earthly ministry seem to be from Moses.

Q: The marginal reference for verse 13 is Isaiah 8:17, “And I will wait upon the LORD.” Is “wait” the same as “trust”?

A: Yes, waiting is synonymous with trust. Patience is trust too: “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19). Two of the devil’s tools are discouragement and fear. Trust, the opposite, is an anchor. A large ingredient of hope is faith. It is as if trust in God grows to the status of hope, and hope, if obeyed faithfully, leads to love. In other words, love, which has faith and hope in it, is like stairs, for the three are related. There are different degrees, but love is more embracing in that it includes faith and hope, and love endures until it becomes a part of the being for eternity.

“Behold I and the children which God hath given me.” Here Jesus quoted part of Isaiah 8:18, “Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.” In quoting only parts of Scripture, Jesus assumed his Jewish hearers were familiar with the text. The Jews are very intense in their study as far as the *letter* of the Word is concerned. The *meaning* of the Word is another matter. Real understanding is not possible except with the endowment of the Holy Spirit. One who has a wonderful memory plus the Holy Spirit has a marvelous opportunity to serve the Lord.

How can one believe in the Trinity with this Scripture? “Behold I [Jesus] and the children which God hath given me.” Moreover, Jesus calls the Church “brethren.” Truly Satan has blinded the minds of men lest they should see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4). He is very successful, and one does not really get out from under his control until the step of consecration is taken. And even then, he is always there, ready, willing, and able to see the downfall of any of the Lord’s saints.

Heb. 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

Comment: Satan has the power of death. Both Satan and death will be destroyed at the end of the Kingdom Age. They seem to be intertwined.

Reply: With mankind being fallen in mind, flesh, and morals, Satan sinks his fangs into their weaknesses to control them. He caters to the flesh, and people become so enamored of this reward that they do not see living a life of sin as being so terrible. Satan successfully takes advantage of desires such as power, influence, fame, or pleasure of all kinds. Adam, in his perfection, knew when he had sinned, whereas Eve, in her innocence and guilelessness, did not see through the strategy of Satan. We believe the Pastor was correct in saying that Adam felt he could not live without Eve, so he more or less committed suicide, as it were, in eating of the fruit of the tree. Paul had insight into this matter.

Incidentally, some of the things Paul had insight into, he must have received in his visions. He had visions more than any of the others and conversations, which informed him on some of these points. As he grew in the ministry and was more and more faithful to the Lord, he increased in wisdom and stature as a new creature.

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he [Jesus] also himself likewise took part of the same.” Jesus needed the experience of contact not only with fallen humanity but also with those whom God called, who were imperfect according to the flesh but justified through his robe of righteousness according to the spirit. As a result, Jesus grew to be a sympathetic High Priest for us; that is, he is *our* High Priest now. After the Gospel Age is over, he will become the *world’s* High Priest.

Jesus partook of flesh and blood so “that through [sacrificial] death [the death of the Cross] he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Just as a blind person can be steered the wrong way without his knowing it, so Satan has blinded the minds of men, and he is taking them down a dangerous path of death. The disobedience of Adam and the subsequent fall have crippled mankind so that everything—their eyesight, hearing, taste, etc.—is defiled, and Satan takes advantage of the situation. We believe that Satan, according to his nature, is still perfect. In other words, he still has uncanny wisdom like a serpent and great power. If he can be the “god of this world” from his imprisonment in *tartaroo*, we get an inkling of the power he had as an archangel when he was free to roam. As the Logos, Jesus also had great power, and now he has power more abundantly because he was raised far above the level of archangel (Eph. 1:20,21).

Not only has the God of peace promised the Church that Satan will be bruised, or put to death, under their feet, but also Jesus is mentioned here (Rom. 16:20). Therefore, Satan’s bruising will occur under the feet of The Christ, Head and body members. Jesus alone will bind Satan, but the Church will share in the destruction.

Comment: Satan’s demise at the hands of The Christ proves that the Little Season will take place before the eighth day.

Heb. 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Verse 15 applies to the Great Company. Paul had just talked about “brethren” and “children” in connection with the calling of the Church. Therefore, he was now speaking of a consecrated class “who through fear of [sacrificial] death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” This trait is shown by the scapegoat class of Leviticus 16:21. The scapegoat was taken *live* into the wilderness to die, whereas the Lord’s goat, the one chosen to be a sin offering, was put to *death* and sacrificed on the altar. The fear of death is a wobbly part of the character of the Great Company class, but eventually they will be saved. Jesus will deliver not only mankind, who are under the power of the Adversary, but also those of the consecrated who do not make the

grade of the Little Flock because of this holding back. The interesting thing is that all of us originally consecrated wholeheartedly. Bro. Magnuson said, “The Lord put a scroll in front of us, and He unfurled it and said, ‘Sign here.’” In the curled-up section is God’s will, but we must have faith that consecration is a privilege and sign our name. Then, as we live our life of consecration, the scroll starts to unroll with the words “This is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3).

Heb. 2:16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

Without the supplied italicized words, verse 16 reads, “For verily he took not on angels; but he took on the seed of Abraham.” Because the Hebrew language is relatively limited in vocabulary, many Jews gesticulate a great deal when they speak. They make motions, or gestures, that help to bring out what they are saying, and to another Jew, who has been under the same culture, there is no problem. Similarly, as natives of the United States, we are familiar with English and English slang. In verse 16, the supplied words make sense, for Jesus took not upon him the nature of angels but (by inference) the nature of man. Perhaps 90 percent or more of the italicized words in the King James Version are helpful, but nevertheless, we should always have a little reserve until we make sure they are the correct thought.

Comment: Jesus took on the “seed of Abraham,” a *specific* seed, for in Abraham and his seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Jesus took on (1) the size, (2) the nature, and (3) the seed of man. As stated earlier, there are about six different ways of approaching this subject. Jesus was made little, but he was not made a little angel—he was made a *little human* of *Abrahamic* stock. He had to be both a Jew and a child of Abraham because the seed is in Isaac. (Ishmael was also of the seed of Abraham, but he was not a Jew.) To state the matter more fully, Jesus had to be a Jew of Isaac and of Abraham, as well as of Shem, who was both Arabic and Jewish, for they are the Semitic races. Paul tackled this subject from an emotional, a mathematical, a scriptural, and a common-sense standpoint.

Heb. 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

“Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren.” This statement is true as long as it is not carried to the extent of saying he was a sinner, a fallen man. Jesus had to take on the seed of Abraham and be *perfect*; otherwise, he could not have redeemed the human race. A proof text is Psalm 49:7, “None of them [that is, no one of the fallen human race] can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.” A perfect *outsider* had to come and take on the human nature in order to redeem man.

The purpose of Jesus’ being “made like unto his brethren” was “that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.” In other words, not only did Jesus have to be perfect and like Adam before he sinned, but God had other motives in mind, one of which was that Jesus might be “a merciful and faithful high priest.” This purpose had nothing to do with Jesus’ paying the Ransom, in being a corresponding price. Rather, through his experience and association with imperfect mankind, he became a merciful and faithful High Priest and would not be too strict. Still another reason was that when God would elevate Jesus to His own right hand, the other angels would see the sterling merit of Jesus in having volunteered to come down here to be crucified on a Cross and die for the human race. The angelic cry would be, “Worthy is the Lamb ... to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev. 5:12). No doubt God had additional reasons as well. A

lot of thought was involved in Jesus' coming down here.

Comment: Prior to the Flood, the angels had made an attempt to recover fallen man and failed. Therefore, the holy angels were firsthand viewers of the angels who deflected by coming down here, materializing, and taking human wives.

Reply: Yes, sin is highly contagious. One of the reasons Moses is an Ancient Worthy is that he was not interested in the "pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25).

Jesus made "reconciliation [atonement] for the sins of the people." "At-one-ment" means not only expiation of sin but also bringing two disparate parties back into harmony. When expiation takes place, the two can be one in spirit and thinking. When atonement takes place, the obedient of the world of mankind will become "sons" of God. The prefix "re" in "reconciliation" means restitution and being back in agreement as conditions were when Adam was perfect. Adam was created perfect, he fell, and he will be redeemed and brought back to perfection. Thus the little prefix "re" contains three thoughts: (1) once in good standing, (2) not now in good standing, and (3) hopefully in good standing in the future. The translators got the gist of the thought by using the word "*re-conciliation*."

Heb. 2:18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Hebrews 4:15 is related: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." If the words "yet without sin" were not in this later text, one could misread both verses. In a question meeting in the past, a sister stated publicly that Christians who commit suicide can make their calling and election sure because they need that experience so that in the Kingdom Age, they will be able to deal with people who took their own life in the present age. But such reasoning does not make sense because in committing suicide, a Christian is taking his sacrifice off the altar.

Jesus was tempted in all points *without sinning*. Bro. Russell expressed that Jesus' being without sin was from the standpoint of the new creature and that unlike mankind, he was not tempted with any impure thoughts. However, we think Jesus needed that experience *without sinning, without yielding* to impure thoughts. For instance, the angels were all holy and in harmony with God before some of them sinned. When those angels saw the daughters of men, thoughts came into their minds. Surely the holy angels, who did not succumb and leave their first estate, were also tempted. However, they knew that human females were off-limits, and they wanted to obey God. Therefore, in spite of the attractiveness of the daughters of men, the holy angels were faithful; they carried out their mission down here but *did not leave* their first estate. In other words, they adhered strictly to their instructions and did not allow the things to occur that went through their minds.

Now we will consider Jesus, the perfect one. Didn't Satan enter his mind and, for example, tempt him to cast himself off a pinnacle of the Temple? But Jesus did not yield when he was tempted according to the deceitfulness of sin. Popularity is a subtle temptation. Moreover, Satan said, "Just kneel down and recognize me as your lord, and I will give you all the kingdoms of this world. You will not have to suffer and die on the Cross." Wasn't that another temptation along a fleshly desire? God temporarily allowed Satan to thus tempt Jesus.

Along another line, Jesus rebuked Satan in regard to the body of Moses. Satan wanted to show mankind where Moses was buried. This incident shows that the angels know the location—and wouldn't the Jews love to have that information! If Moses' rod with the serpent was held as a

holy relic for a couple hundred years, how much more they would have venerated his body!

When Jesus was tempted to do something different from God's way, he could have regarded the situation as providential. To receive the kingdoms of this world so easily would seem like a shortcut, but Jesus *firmly* resisted. Thus we can see how obedient he was to his Father.

A third temptation was hunger, or appetite, when Jesus was starving at the end of his 40 days in the wilderness. Satan suggested that Jesus turn stones into bread—a power Jesus had—but again he resisted. What happens, too, is that a little step of disobedience leads to a greater step. If a foot is put in the open door, that little bit of intrusion makes it harder to close the door.

Thus Jesus went through three major temptations plus the braggadocio type of temptation when he was dying on the Cross. When those who passed by reviled and sneered at him, saying, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross," the sarcastic implication was that then they would worship him (Matt. 27:40). Satan put that thought into their minds. As fallen beings with weaknesses, we fight the good fight of faith against illegitimate desires, words, and deeds.

Comment: After Jesus successfully resisted the three temptations, Satan left him, and "angels came and ministered unto him" (Matt. 4:11).

Reply: God has promised to provide bread and water for His little ones (Isa. 33:16).

Comment: When the devil departed from Jesus after the three temptations, Luke 4:13 says he departed "*for a season.*" The wording indicates that Satan came back at a later time for more temptations.

When, prior to the Flood, the angels came down here to see what they could do to uplift fallen man, there is no indication that the Logos came too. The angels commiserated with man's fallen state. Upon seeing man's wonderful creation, they had sung with joy. Subsequently, when they saw sin and disease afflict the human race, they probably asked for permission to come down here to try to help mankind. God granted the permission but set parameters as to what they could do; i.e., they were given some generalized instruction as to the confinements of their ministry. However, many of the angels went out of bounds, and in addition, they preferred to live down here instead of returning home to heaven. They left their first estate not just in the sense of sinning but also in liking to remain here, for living on earth was a new experience for them. And that is another point: the desire for novelty, for something new, can be dangerous. No matter what the problem, one can want more and more. For example, a miser wants more and more money, and those who sin want more and more delights along whatever line they are pursuing. Because it is very hard for the Christian to live the straight and narrow way, God appreciates those of His people who fight the good fight of faith. If they are fighting to the best of their ability, praying for forgiveness and trying to overcome, He sees the battle and determines who are of the Little Flock and who are of the Great Company. Of course those who are disloyal and go out of the truth are lost.

Being a faithful High Priest, Jesus "is able to succour them that are tempted." How wonderful God's foreknowledge is! He foresaw that in spite of all the credentials Jesus had before he came down here, he might have been too severe without first having this experience with man. Thus a few souls would have been lost that might have been saved. Stated another way, mercy will save more people than if judgment were done too severely and without compassion, sympathy, and empathy for the individual who is struggling. Accordingly, we, as Christians, are not measured strictly by the deed, even though the Apostle James said that the deed is the proof of the struggle, for the *sincere intent* in back of the struggle is the new creature.

Comment: The principle is that those who become eunuchs “for the kingdom of heaven’s sake” and are faithful are rewarded more highly (Matt. 19:12).

Heb. 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

The term “Apostle” means “one sent forth.” Jesus was an apostle because he was sent forth by God. In turn, the 12 apostles were sent forth by Jesus.

Comment: Jesus was *the* Apostle and *the* High Priest.

Reply: Jesus is the High Priest during the Gospel Age but “after the order of Melchisedec,” whereas he was an Aaronic High Priest for the 3 1/2 years of his earthly ministry (Heb. 5:6). Aaron was dressed in garments of glory and beauty while he was with the underpriesthood during the seven days of consecration. Therefore, while he himself is after the order of Melchisedec, he started with the Aaronic priesthood, and we are still in that priesthood down here. When we think of the priesthood as a class, the Aaronic priesthood covers the entire Gospel Age. Stated another way, the underpriesthood down here is after the order of Aaron and, hopefully, will be made a high priesthood after the order of Melchisedec in the future, when all 144,000 have proven faithful.

Heb. 3:2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

Jesus “was faithful to him [God] that *appointed* him.” We are reminded of Hebrews 5:4, “And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is *called [appointed] of God*, as was Aaron.” Jesus was faithful “as also Moses was faithful in all his house.” Many think that Moses was unfaithful because he struck the rock later in his ministry, saying, “Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” (Num. 20:10). However, that was only *one act* out of his whole life, and he was punished for that act. Neither Moses nor Paul was perfect, but both are *reckoned* perfect. In other words, when Moses’ ministry is summed up, he is commended as being a faithful servant of God. How nice to hear this assurance about Moses!

Heb. 3:3 For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.

“For this man [Jesus] was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath *builded* the house hath more honour than the *house*.” Paul used common-sense reasoning. The builder of a house is more important than the house itself. Moreover, “house” is in the singular here, and by extension, if Jesus built *one* house, he can build *other* houses. A house cannot replicate itself, but the builder can build additional houses. An architect is more important than the structure itself. Of course this house is the “house of sons.”

Comment: Moses and Jesus both had a “house.” Moses was the head of a house of *servants*, and Jesus was the head of a house of *sons*.

Reply: The house of servants was a picture, a type, of the house of sons, the reality being more important than the shadow. As we continue, Paul’s reasoning will show that the *spiritual* house of sons is more important than the *natural* house of servants. Very high and lofty thoughts are being expressed. In the final analysis, there will be both a natural house and a spiritual house. If we read slowly and analyze what we are reading, the words will “sink down” deep into our ears and heart (Luke 9:44). Not only does the sinking down take time, but it is described as

chewing the cud (Lev. 11:2,3). Rightly dividing the word of truth is only half of the process, for eating clean food is not only understanding spiritual food perfectly and rightly dividing it, but also chewing the cud. These two component parts are absolutely essential for one to make his calling and election sure. To think and meditate on and try to absorb spiritual food is chewing the cud. When we study the clean and unclean animals, fowl, fish, and insects in Leviticus, we see that those which have only one of the two qualities are considered unclean. For example, some animals chew the cud but do not part the hoof. Thus God exhibits in nature the meaning of clean and unclean for the Christian.

Q: How does the comparison between Jesus and Moses apply with the clause “inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house”?

A: Moses’ wisdom was natural wisdom based on the Law of God and the instruction that was given to him. For instance, the Tabernacle plans were given to him in vision, but it was *God* who provided the architecture and the vision and instructed him in every detail for 40 days. Therefore, *God* built the Tabernacle. But in regard to building the spiritual house of sons, Jesus was successful because he had prehuman knowledge of God; he was given instructions before coming down here; the Holy Spirit opened the window of his mind at Jordan, enlightening him and granting him a full understanding of his previous nature as the Logos; and he understood human nature at 30 years of age.

The difference between Jesus and Moses is that the spiritual house is more important. The “house” of Moses is the whole setup of the Tabernacle, the Temple, and the nation of Israel, but God is now looking for the spiritual “house,” which is identified with Jesus. From another standpoint, the builder is different from the architect. God is the contractor, and Jesus is the agent. While Jesus is our Advocate and High Priest, he is not the Author. *God* calls us, and *God* rejects us depending on obedience. Therefore, if we view the building of the spiritual house from a contractual standpoint, God builds the real house.

Paul was trying to show that there are two houses. The house of Moses is a type, or shadow, whereas the spiritual house is the reality. Jesus is more important than Moses in that God is specially honoring the house of sons, and Jesus is identified with the building of that house—but not with the authorship or the architecture.

Heb. 3:4 For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

Heb. 3:5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

Paul soared very high with his lofty thoughts. The three builders are God, Jesus, and Moses, and credit is given where credit is due. God did all of the building from the standpoint that the divine plan was in His mind, and He carries it out in His own way. If we build a house, we employ other people. First, architectural drawings are needed, and savvy or know-how is necessary to convert the plans into reality. God has supplied all the laborers in building the spiritual house that is in His mind. Jesus is like the general contractor, the one who oversees that the plans are implemented and followed. He goes on the job site to make sure that the building is done correctly, but the one (God) who sends the general contractor is over all and gets the most credit.

Paul mentioned twice the fact that Moses was *faithful* in all his house. He was faithful “as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after.” His “testimony” of the Law is a *shadow* of “good things to come” (Heb. 10:1). Moreover, Moses personally was a type of Jesus. As he said to Israel, “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the

midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken” (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22). God said He would put *His* words in Moses’ mouth (Deut. 18:18).

How were “those things ... spoken after”? Primarily they were spoken (and understood) in the Gospel Age, but from another standpoint, the light in both the Old and the New Testaments is *progressive*. In regard to the word “testimony,” the Church is “beheaded” for the testimony, or “witness,” of Jesus Christ and the Word of God (Rev. 20:4). The testimony is the gospel, which is very embracive, starting with Moses and progressing onward. Therefore, when Jesus said that Moses had spoken of him, Moses became a picture of the entire Old Testament. While the writings and deeds of Moses were strictly just the Pentateuch, he is also mentioned in the Psalms, for instance. Basically speaking, it was the difference between the type (the shadow) and the antitype (the reality).

Heb. 3:6 But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Comment: The implication is that some were not “hold[ing] fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

Reply: Yes, the consecration vow is to be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). One of the last tests of the Christian is patient endurance. To be faithful, we must be confident in the promises and rejoice in the hope of the high calling unto the end of our course.

Comment: There is a difference in the prepositions of verses 5 and 6. Moses was faithful “*in* all his house,” whereas Christ was faithful “*over* his own house.”

Heb. 3:7 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice,

Comment: The parenthesis begins in verse 7 and ends with verse 11. Thus the “Wherefore” picks up with verse 12: “Wherefore take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

Reply: Yes, the parenthetical statement is long.

The parenthetical statement is a quote from Psalm 95:7-11. “For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.” Why did Paul quote these verses almost verbatim?

Comment: He was bringing this thought up to date, for the rest of God applies today as well.

Reply: In other words, the “today” was operative after the 40 years in the wilderness. The very fact David, Israel’s second king, wrote these words and Paul quoted them in the New Testament means (1) that after the 40 years up to the time of David, the “today ... harden not your heart ... [and] enter into my rest” still applied and (2) that it continued to be operative from David’s day up to the time Paul wrote the Book of Hebrews. Of course this entering into God’s rest is operative even now—and has been all down the Gospel Age.

This rest Paul was speaking about is a rest of faith, as shown by the context. The Israelites should have had faith and trust in God instead of murmuring and complaining with regard to

His providences, but there is another side to this issue of entering God's rest that is not clearly understood. The rest of God that is spoken of in the Old Testament began with the start of the seventh Creative Day. But what happened? Ever since the beginning of the seventh Creative Day, God has done anything but rest as far as what He is speaking about. The rest He entered was a cessation from creating physical, material universes, but He has been concentrating on a different type of work, namely, the work of the New Creation. While physical materials respond to God's will, they cannot worship Him. If the lower animals are incapable of worshipping God and there is a big gulf between them and the human creation, then certainly the physical, inanimate creation is even lower as far as flesh and blood are concerned.

Therefore, the rest that Christians enter is work, but it is the work of the New Creation. For example, a person who is truly consecrated tries to cease, as far as possible, from obtaining a career or going to school. The Bible does say to provide things decent and honest in the sight of all men, but many with good intentions who first went to college and/or pursued a career never consecrated. To plan to attain a certain career or income level usually derails any thoughts of consecration. Therefore, the rest of God would be ceasing from ambitions and keeping a main focus on just providing things decent and honest and concentrating on the work of the New Creation, which is an invisible, spiritual work of faith. In that sense, God is still Emperor of the universe, but the creation of new physical things is on hold. We have no idea what God will do in the future, in addition to what He has already done, but at least the Scriptures say that He ceased from the work of the first six Creative Days. When we examine those six days, we see the nature of the work God temporarily ceased from, and as Christians, we endeavor to count all things as loss and dross for the excellency of the hope of the high calling (Phil. 3:8). Of course earthly mortgages such as elderly parents, a marital relationship, children, etc., would be exceptions.

Comment: Even in the midst of trials, we can have rest, as Psalm 107:28-30 states, "Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." Through the faith of the individual, God turns that troublous wave condition of the mind into a quiet peace.

Q: What is the meaning of the expression "Wherefore ... as the Holy Ghost saith"? Is the thought that the Holy Spirit originally spoke through the pen of David?

A: The Holy Spirit is in both the Old and the New Testaments, as shown in the vision of oil coming from the *two* olive trees to the candlestick (Zech. 4:1-3). Therefore, Paul was referring to the Holy Spirit back in David's day.

Back there under the Law, God rewarded obedience with material blessings such as health, productivity, peace, and contentment, but actually two things were going on. When the Israelites cried to God out of their distress after having provoked Him, they saw only one side of the coin—to obey the *letter* of the Law. But in the giving of the Law, God had said, "If you will understand the *spirit* of my Law, I will make you priests and kings." Thus the opportunity of the high calling was presented back there, but God knew the Israelites would not see that particular aspect of the call—and of course it could not become operative until Christ came to open up a new and living way (Heb. 10:20). The point is that the nation could have inherited the promise so that not only would the word of the Lord go forth from Jerusalem in the natural sense in the Kingdom, but also the nation of Israel would comprise the Law going from Zion. Had the Jews been faithful, both the natural and the spiritual promises would have been fulfilled in that nation. The spiritual promises were in the Old Testament with a tiny bit of information here and there. However, because of the Israelites' lack of faith, the spiritual calling went over their heads except for a few individuals both before and during the Law. For

example, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day ... and was glad” (John 8:56). He looked for a heavenly Kingdom and inheritance (Heb. 11:10,16). We are not given the specifics in the Old Testament, but the implication is that Abraham was given some information. Moses, who was the agent used in connection with the Law Covenant, looked forward to the Messiah. Abraham and Moses are examples of the class God was looking for, but the promises went over the heads of the vast majority of His professed people.

Therefore, it becomes important to set our hopes and aims as high as possible and not to think too much of the flesh. Otherwise, we will tremble, and our thoughts and hopes will not be able to surmount the flesh. Few have responded to the calling of faith in both the Old and the New Testament times. Of course the New Testament calling is much grander in the sense of being a calling to sonship, which is what Paul was speaking about—that is, Moses’ house of servants versus a mysterious house of sons. Paul was tying in the fact that the Israelites failed in the wilderness wanderings because they lacked faith, which consists of trust, confidence, hope, obedience, patience, etc. Faith is like a seed kernel of hope. The buried grain dies and then begins to fructify and spring out of the earth; the leaf that grows is like hope. Faith and hope, if continued unto death, lead to love and the likeness of Jesus.

Heb. 3:8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

Comment: As Christians, we are given certain trials to move us forward, to help us progress in the narrow way. The test is whether we are willing to accept the trial for our growth or whether we will harden our heart.

Reply: Yes, how we respond is one aspect of our Christian walk. Paul said, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are [rightly] exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11). We will benefit spiritually from an experience if we are rightly exercised by it.

Heb. 3:9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

Q: What were God’s “works”?

A: Examples of His “works” are the plagues on Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea in the Exodus. The Israelites forgot the *ten* plagues and instead committed *ten* remarkable acts of disobedience in the wilderness in the face of *ten* temptations. They should have thought about how God delivered them. As Christians, we may get discouraged, and if not watchful, we could gradually slip back into the world. With each slip comes a little more cooling off, until eventually we do not miss not being with the brethren.

The parting of the Red Sea was so remarkable that Nehemiah, Jeremiah, David, and others remembered the account in their writings hundreds of years later. They never participated in the experience yet exulted about the miracle, whereas those who actually benefited from the act and looked down and saw the Red Sea cover Pharaoh and his host *forgot*. Psalm 78:11 says they “forgot his [God’s] works”!

Another of the miraculous works in the wilderness was the manna that came from heaven to feed the Israelites daily. A shade umbrella cloud protected them from heat, rain, and sandstorm by day, and that same shining cloud provided light by night, assisting them especially when they traveled, and acting like a thermal blanket (Isa. 4:5,6). Also, water miraculously sprang forth from the rock. Along another line, Moses descended Mount Sinai with a shining face after communing with God.

At times for encouragement, we need to take a spiritual inventory. It is helpful to look back to what we were prior to consecration and then to reflect on what God has done in changing us—our life, thinking, and hopes—and in giving us a knowledge of His Word. Such meditations are faith-strengthening to us as new creatures. The Israelites' hopes, aims, and ambitions were more earthly, whereas ours are more spiritual.

The Israelites also “proved” God by complaining about His provisions. For instance, they got tired of eating manna, so He gave them quail waist-high.

Heb. 3:10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

The Israelites “have not known my ways.” In other words, they did not meditate upon and observe what great things God had done for them. That neglect cost them something.

Heb. 3:11 So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

Heb. 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

Unbelief is equated with “departing from the living God,” for unbelief gives the Devil a foothold to push one back. Unbelief is a lack of faith. People in the world believe in God, but they do not believe what He says in His Word. Thus a belief in Scripture is faith, which should be followed by a belief *into* Christ and *into* God with a full consecration.

There are different degrees of lack of faith, and commensurate with these degrees of lack of belief are different degrees of departing from the faith. The more a person departs, the less he feels the need to return, unless something extraordinary happens whereby God, in His mercy, provides a providence to wake him up. In the parable, Jesus retrieved the lost sheep that strayed from the fold (Matt. 18:12).

What are some of the ways that spiritual sheep depart from the flock? One problem is that they listen to false shepherds, who lead them astray. It is not that the sheep want to go astray, but they do not listen for the Master's voice. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, ... and they follow me” (John 10:27). We are to follow human teachers only to the extent that they follow Jesus. As Paul said, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). We are to look for guidance and providences but also for danger.

Distractions can also lead one away from the Lord. The problem with the Great Company class is that they are overcharged with the cares of this life. For example, they may want a better job and a higher salary to such an extent that they do not balance that desire by remaining faithful to the truth and the Lord's service. The cares of this life draw them away. At least the Great Company is faithful to the Lord in their heart, but they fail to attain the Little Flock because of not living the principle of “this one thing I do” (Phil. 3:13). They are double-minded (James 1:8).

Along another line, a person may get so absorbed in some work or truth that everything else is sacrificed with regard to spiritual things in general. Incidentally, literal sheep are spoken of as being dumb in the sense that they need leadership.

In the Book of Hebrews, Paul gave advice to the consecrated. As spiritual Jews, Gentiles can benefit greatly from this advice. There is much helpful information to warn us of the dangers that follow those who are in the narrow way.

The lack of belief can also be thought of as “an evil heart.” Unbelief is indifference and a lack of attention, which dishonor God. An Old Testament example of an evil heart of unbelief is the ten spies who were sent out and returned with an unfavorable report. Only Joshua and Caleb gave a favorable report based on faith. The ten spies described the people of the Promised Land as giants like the Anakim with cities walled up to heaven (Num. 13:32,33; Deut. 1:28). In regard to the entering and conquering of the land under Joshua, the Lord said in principle, “For every step of obedience that you take, I will respond by giving you increased faith and victory” (Josh. 1:3 paraphrase).

Q: Is “evil” in the expression “an evil heart” a poor translation of the Hebrew?

A: The word “evil” can be understood two ways. From one standpoint, the circumstance is so grotesque that we can see it, but from God’s standpoint, a lack of attention and obedience to His instructions is disobedience. Satan said to the woman through the serpent, “You will not surely die.” That statement was outwardly blasphemous, although Eve did not understand it at the time. When Satan’s statement is understood in hindsight, we see that it was very grotesque. Satan was a devil and a liar from the beginning, but there are other lesser evils that God considers “an evil heart” of unbelief. Thus there are degrees of lack of belief and disobedience, and there are degrees of obedience, resulting in overcomers and more-than-overcomers.

In this letter to the Hebrews, Paul was trying to show the subtlety of sin. Throughout the epistle, he brought in different pictures to show how sneaky, infectious, and subtle sin is. Sin is not just stark black against a white page, for there are different degrees of grayness.

Why did Paul use the term “living God”? “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the *living* God.” Jehovah is *alive*, and He is *watching*. We sometimes do things without having the consciousness that Jesus and the angels are observing our conduct. As fallen beings, we do not win every battle by any means, but we should keep in mind that the *living* God is observing us and that He discerns any disbelief or lack of faith. He notes our failures as well as our successes.

Heb. 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

“Exhort one another daily, while it is called Today.” In other words, “*now* is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). There are two salvations, one in this age and one in the next age. Generally they are confused as both occurring now. The usual thought is that if one does not believe now, he is doomed. It is still “Today.” It was “Today” back there in the wilderness, it was “Today” up until David’s time, it was “Today” from David’s day until Paul’s time, and it is “Today” from Paul’s time up to the current day. Now is the time of the special salvation or calling. Prior to the Gospel Age, the few who responded faithfully are the Ancient Worthies, who were called as “servants” and will be rewarded accordingly. Had the Jews accepted Christ as a nation, great things would have happened to them. When they realize not only what they did to Jesus but also what they lost, they will mourn for him as for an only Son (Zech. 12:10).

Since Satan is the god of this world, those who do not give their heart to the Lord are still under the Prince of darkness, even though their hearts may not be fully in tune with the Adversary. For example, many of us who come into the truth were searching for God, wanting to know Him. Hence we were not enemies of God per se, but we were enemies through works, for none are “righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). God calls the class who are looking, searching, thirsting, and hungering to know Him, and they are rewarded.

Heb. 3:14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;

Heb. 3:15 While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

“Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.” Paul brought up this same thought again, for much can be learned by reading about the experiences of the Israelites in the Old Testament, especially during the 40 years in the wilderness.

Heb. 3:16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

The older generation provoked God—those who were at least 20 years of age. (To be eligible for service in the priesthood, one had to be 30 years old.) The older generation should have noticed the miracles much more poignantly than the younger Israelites. All of the older generation—almost 2 million people—perished in the wilderness wanderings except Joshua and Caleb.

We live in a nation that is professedly God-fearing. The early settlers fled to this country to escape religious persecution. Of the 250 million or so people living in the United States today, how many have given their heart to the Lord? And of those who take the step of consecration, how many make their calling and election sure? Proportionately speaking, perhaps only one in a million of God’s professed people attains the Little Flock. A common expression for one who is esteemed in character and example is, “He is one in a million.” Although used figuratively, that expression is quite literal.

“For some, when they had heard, did provoke.” Some provoked in a very observable manner, but all of the older generation died, so there were different degrees of provocation and unbelief. Had the Israelites been obedient, they would have lived to enter the Promised Land and thus would have attained the natural or figurative rest.

Heb. 3:17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

That the “some” of verse 16 were the *many* is proven by this verse. With regard to the many who sinned, their “carcasses fell in the wilderness.”

Heb. 3:18 And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

The Israelites could not enter into God’s rest because of unbelief. “To them that believed not” is a study in itself. Over the years, Bro. Anton Frey provided many helpful lessons on the failings and shortcomings of natural Israel in the desert by giving them spiritual connotations.

Heb. 3:19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

With many of these verses, Paul was speaking to the Christian of entering into a *spiritual* rest. He continued to give lessons from the experiences of the Israelites as admonitions to the Christian.

The older generation of Israelites did not enter the Land of Promise because of unbelief. It is true that the ten spies gave an unfavorable report, but the people were also at fault because

they believed that report to a greater or lesser extent—and this incident occurred in the *beginning*, that is, only two years into the wilderness wanderings (Deut. 2:14). Thus for 38 years, the unfavorable report and commensurate experiences the Israelites had in connection with weariness, thirst, etc., gradually whittled down the whole lot, yet the younger generation entered the land eventually, for as far as we know, they did not die. The younger generation prospered and multiplied in the wilderness so that while 2 million Israelites lost out, 2 million others entered the land.

But what inspired the younger generation to faithfulness? We feel that Joshua was a very inspirational leader. God chose him, and no doubt Moses could see special qualities in that relatively younger man. For instance, when Moses went up into Mount Sinai and stayed there for a while, the elders also went up and saw a vision of God in the sense of a platform with a throne. However, Joshua must have been a burning example, of which the Scriptures are silent, because only he stayed up in the mountain as long as Moses did—even though he could not go up into the cloud. God rewarded Joshua's zeal.

It is harder for a considerably older person to see greatness in the younger generation. In fact, that is why many of the Israelites disregarded Jesus when he began his ministry at age 30. He did not have the education, background, age, and maturity of the other religious leaders. (They did not realize that Jesus had had a preexistence.) In looking at him, they felt that he was immature in his judgment and reasoning and that he was not orthodox.

Therefore, we think Joshua was a burning example, for certainly when the Israelites entered the Promised Land 40 years later, they all obeyed him when he said in regard to the circlings of Jericho, "Do not speak until the seventh day when I give the command to shout. While you are circling the city, you are not to have any private conversations" (Josh. 6:10). (Of course when the people returned to camp at the end of each day, they could speak to one another.) The point is that the Israelites respected Joshua at the beginning of his ministry. As instructed by God, Moses had conferred on Joshua the role of leadership, and the people recognized his role. They had an appreciable understanding of Joshua and saw him as exemplary. We believe this respect started way back in the wilderness wanderings, even though the Scriptures are silent until the entering of the land when Joshua had the robe of leadership.

Comment: A large factor in the respect of the younger generation for Joshua was that the punishment of wandering in the wilderness for 38 more years was clearly a result of the unfavorable report of the ten spies.

Reply: The older generation was frightened by the unfavorable report, but what happened subsequently shows an odd quirk of human nature. When, as a judgment, God said the Israelites could not enter the land, they tried to enter anyway. Sometimes a group can misread the Lord's providence and then do presumptuous acts that are not legitimate in His sight. As with the Israelites, the thinking of the majority can be wrong, and many died at the time of the unauthorized attempt to enter the Promised Land.

Endurance is the test of God's people: "Be thou faithful *unto death*" (Rev. 2:10). In almost all cases, Christians are in a *long marathon* race. The exception is a burning light like Stephen, who was much like the Apostle Paul in wisdom but did not have the same training. When Jesus came down here, he had wisdom but not the training. He became a faithful High Priest by the things that he suffered; that is, there were things he still had to learn in spite of all his wisdom and obedience. Moses had unusual qualifications such as being learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, having a tremendous memory, and possessing stature and leadership abilities. Paul lacked stature and was considered mean and contemptible by the Greeks, who honored man's wisdom in the form of Greek philosophy, but Paul had the *real* wisdom—truth.

Heb. 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

The previous verse said that the Israelites “could not enter in because of unbelief.” Now Paul continued, “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it [because of unbelief].” What about “unbelief”?

Comment: On the one hand, once we trust in the blood of Jesus, there is nothing we cannot do, but on the other hand, we need to strive for perfection, so a balance needs to be achieved. We cannot be slack in trying to perfect our characters.

Reply: Yes, as stated earlier by Paul, we are not to let things slip and gradually glide away (Heb. 2:1). To onlookers, a departure from the faith may seem sudden but not to the individual, for the Scriptures suggest there is a precondition.

Comment: We need to have an *abiding* faith and trust in order to enter into God’s rest.

Reply: We are to “hold fast ... [our] confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (Heb. 3:6). Paul also said to “hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Heb. 3:14). Other factors can also cause a departure from the faith, for example, yielding to temptation according to the flesh, disputation, the introduction of doctrinal error that leads away from the faith, and allowing a root of bitterness to spring up in our heart (Heb. 12:15). Thus far in this epistle, we have been reading about the subtlety of sin and the necessity to give all diligence to making our calling and election sure. If we understand the matter correctly, the Book of Hebrews addresses both the Little Flock and the Great Company. *All* of the consecrated have to keep their hopes high unto the end in order to secure life.

Sometimes we have to review the past and take inventory on what we were prior to consecration and what we have become. God has done great things with each of us. Great changes have been made, and the fact that we have cooperated with the Heavenly Father and Jesus in making that progress should be an encouragement to us not to give up hope. Especially for one who has been relatively long in the truth and has been attaining love, which is the main objective, the text “Let patience have her perfect [or perfecting] work” is applicable (James 1:4). “Having done all, ... stand” shows resistance and strength, but we are also to keep going and not give up (Eph. 6:13). In a marathon, the last 300 or 400 yards are the hardest of the entire race, even if that race is 26 miles long. The runner gets a feeling that is almost like dying, yet he must persevere if he is to finish the race, and those who persevere best win the race. The hope of life is not giving up at all, no matter what progress we make. We must never let go of our anchor, which is in the Most Holy. If we let go of that hope beyond the veil, we might go into perdition (destruction) and thus lose all life.

This epistle is one of Paul’s last works, and his primary concern was for brethren to make their calling and election sure—something like the writings of the Apostle John. John especially emphasized the importance of getting everlasting life and how wonderful that would be. Paul, generally speaking throughout his ministry, kept the objective so high that he repeatedly emphasized the hope of the high calling, but now, toward the end of his Christian walk, he was becoming more reflective and philosophical and was trying to help the entire brotherhood. Therefore, the emphasis here is to *hang on and finish* the race. He began the Book of Hebrews with the thought of Jesus’ being the starter and the finisher of the race. Since Jesus endured such sufferings and severe tests unto the end, he will help us in a particular period of dire need.

The bottom line is to trust in our *invisible but very much alive* Savior to tide us over so that we

will be faithful unto death for any hope of life. Although earlier Paul always held up winning the race by making such statements as, “Let us run the race as if there is only one prize,” we do not get that feel in the Book of Hebrews (1 Cor. 9:24 paraphrase). If we are correct, he sounded very much like the Apostle John at this point. Of course John was quite old even when he wrote his Gospel, let alone his epistles. Therefore, his Gospel is very different from the other Gospels, which are general narrations of the life of Jesus.

Q: What is the thought of “fear” in verse 1?

A: It means, “Do not fall asleep as far as running the race is concerned. Never give up; fear to lose.”

At any rate, the Book of Hebrews is quite different from Paul’s other epistles. In addition, he had other motivations for the Hebrews, which are woven into the epistle, and Jewish Christians were the majority of the early Christian Church. However, Paul opened the door of hope to the Gentiles, and John and others followed after.

Q: Why did Paul say, “Let us therefore fear, lest ... any of you should *seem to* come short of it,” rather than to omit “seem to” and just say, “Let us therefore fear, lest ... any of you should come short of it”?

A: Paul used that wording because by nature, some people are overconfident, and some are just the opposite. God calls two types of individuals, and the ones who are more serious and not that confident need encouragement. What happens when Christians consider the obstacles in the way? Why did the unfaithful spies give an unfavorable report? They were considering the difficulties in the future—the men of stature, the walls being great, etc.—and from a natural standpoint, they were correct. However, they did not add the necessary ingredient, namely, to have confidence in the *unseen* God. Another illustration is David, who came to the battle scene and heard the giant Goliath challenging the whole nation of Israel and cursing God. King Saul, a warrior who was taller than anyone else in Israel, did not act. The attitude of David, who could not understand why no one would fight Goliath, was, “Do you mean to say you let him talk like that?” David then went out with a slingshot in the strength of the Lord. Imagine! The giant was covered with armor from head to foot, and David thought he could slay that giant with a stone! But he went with the confidence of knowing that it would be right to fight that man, who was slandering God, and that God would help him to enter into combat. David won because in laughing, the giant tipped his head back, and the protective visor slipped off his forehead. In that little chink, the stone from David’s sling found its mark, sinking into the giant’s forehead. The stone was one of five, and we can be sure that one element in David’s success was faith that *God* would direct the issue.

The promise is left—it remains behind—for us to enter into God’s rest. The subject started in earlier verses with the mysterious “Today.” God had said to the Israelites at the time of the Exodus, “If you do certain things today, I will do such and such for you,” but what happened? The Israelites failed because of *unbelief*. With regard to the Christian, Paul reasoned, “Even though we are now a couple of thousand years past that incident, the promise of that ‘Today’ is still valid. It still exists for those who have the *faith* to take hold of the promise of entering into the Promised Land.” If we concentrate on our own weaknesses too much, we will become discouraged. People who are basically honest see their shortcomings, but that does not mean they overcome them. However, seeing the shortcomings can be discouraging. A person’s seriousness and honesty of heart, coupled with measuring his progress and problems, can be a discouraging factor. Not only did the Lord begin and end his own race successfully, but also he will help us to do likewise. And that is where prayer becomes an important element. The “fear” of coming short should induce prayer because that is exactly when we need it. Undoubtedly

David silently prayed to God before going out to fight Goliath. Prayer helps to overcome fear.

It is dangerous for unbelief to enter in. In fact, it is so dangerous that if unbelief is allowed to prosper, it will have a deadening effect. To our understanding, the type of those who did not enter the Promised Land, which was half of the Israelites, represents that half of the people will not get life. We may be wrong, but that is our understanding based on certain types.

Therefore, in this epistle, Paul was broadening the issue to say, “Hold on to that anchor of faith!” Hebrews 6:19,20 gives the theme of this epistle: “Which hope [the Abrahamic promise] we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.” Paul wanted to leave behind good advice for all of the consecrated. In addition, he felt a responsibility to his own nation. For almost all of his ministry, he spoke basically to the Gentiles. It is true that when he went to a city, he first went to the synagogue. If given an opportunity, he preached there, but invariably he was expelled. Then the Lord opened the door for individual Jews, apart from the synagogue, and Gentiles to join his ministry. Basically, the nucleus of a Gentile Church was developed under his ministry. He went from one city to another, and the converts he left behind had only a letter from him to study, for there was no New Testament at that time. What his ministry did, therefore, was to open the door, and not until the second and third centuries were his letters collated, the Gospel of Matthew being the exception.

Paul was trying to be encouraging, and although his method, or technique, was a little different from that of the Apostle John, there was a similarity. As an older person, he was trying to leave behind a legacy of hope and encouragement with as broad an effect as possible, rather than to be too strict and limit his advice to the few.

John’s message was different from the other three Gospels in that it was more universal. Mark was written for the Roman soldiers, Matthew was directed to the Jews, and Paul’s ministry was primarily to the Gentiles. John’s ministry embraced different classes because he wrote later, when a large group of Gentiles were in the Church, as well as Jews. In manner of speech and direction, the appeal of his message was quite different than Paul’s. However, there was a similarity between John’s epistles and the Book of Hebrews. Because of its style, some feel that Paul did not write this letter to the Hebrews, but subtle internal clues prove otherwise. The difference in style can be attributed to the fact that this epistle was Paul’s swan song.

In verse 1, Paul used “fear” in a constructive sense. It is good to have a barking dog as long as it does not bark constantly. A properly trained watchdog is very helpful. As we continue, we will find the Book of Hebrews to be very encouraging.

Heb. 4:2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

The gospel was preached “unto them [the Israelites]: but the word preached did not profit them, [because it was] not ... mixed with faith in them that heard it.”

Heb. 4:3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

Verse 3 is a quote from Psalm 95:10,11, “Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.” God dealt with natural Israel for 40 years in the wilderness, and what did they do? Ten times they grievously lacked

faith and complained about God's leading, and their questioning of Moses was really a questioning of God's character, for Moses was only a mouthpiece. As the Israelites continued to disobey, God remonstrated more severely. For example, suppose that as a parent, we had a child who repeatedly disobeyed. At first, we would reason and plead with him and try to be merciful, but as time went on, we would become more and more frustrated. Accordingly, God swore in His wrath as if to say, "Do you not hear what I am saying?" but the Israelites did not pay attention. Therefore, wrath was mixed in with the promise and the encouragement to enter into God's rest. In the final analysis, only two entered that rest—Joshua and Caleb.

"Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." Here Paul was saying that the "rest" of "Today" actually started with the ending of the sixth Creative Day. Although not much instruction was given at that time, God did tell Adam, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof dying thou shalt die" (Gen. 2:17; compare KJV margin). The implication was that as long as Adam obeyed, he would live. As time went on, the instructions and the admonitions increased.

Heb. 4:4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

Heb. 4:5 And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

Heb. 4:6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

The ability to enter into God's rest existed in Old Testament times, and it still exists in New Testament times. The wording of verse 6 does not mean that none entered into God's rest. For example, Moses was faithful in all his house, and the "sure mercies" were extended to David because he paid for his sins in the present life before he died (Heb. 3:2; Isa. 55:3). A study of David's life shows the retribution he received so that God could honestly reward him on the basis of what he did faithfully.

The Ancient Worthies entered God's rest and, for want of a better term, so did the Great Company class prior to the Gospel Age. That selection was made because of their obedience and faith. We, too, enter into God's rest by exercising the same faith, but since we are living after Christ's death and resurrection, we get life on a higher plane if faithful unto death. God wanted Jesus to be the first to experience honor and resurrection in the real sense of the word.

Heb. 4:7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Heb. 4:8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

"Jesus" should be "Joshua" here, both words being the same in the Hebrew. "For if Joshua had given them [the Israelites] rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day."

Heb. 4:9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

Verse 9 suggests the difference between faith and works. Faith justifies, not works, but God is looking for works that are a product of faith (James 2:20,26). Works that are the result of an obedient faith in Christ are acceptable to God. In fact, one cannot have a real faith and then do nothing, for a *living* faith will produce works of some kind.

Comment: A marginal note for “rest” is “keeping of a sabbath.”

Reply: The reference is to the seventh Creative Day sabbath. The sabbatical rest of God was His rest from the physical creative works He had done on the previous six Creative Days—planets, suns, moons, animals, fish, etc., and finally Adam and Eve. And so, for Christians to enter into God’s rest means they would not be seeking and centering their hopes on a career, for example, since one cannot make his calling and election sure while pursuing a career. For marital and family purposes, the Christian works to provide things decent and honest in the sight of men, but that should not be his vocation. The Christian’s vocation is making his calling and election sure, and his avocation is earning an honest living.

From another standpoint, entering into God’s rest is not inactivity, for we are to work out our own salvation (Phil. 2:12). We are engaged in a spiritual work of *faith*, and we have *spiritual* hopes, aims, and ambitions. To mix spiritual and worldly hopes, aims, and ambitions results in a double-minded man (James 1:8).

Heb. 4:10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

“For he [the believer] that is entered into his [God’s] rest ... hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his [previous works].” Jesus’ refusal to kneel down and pay homage to Satan, who offered him all the kingdoms of this world, was his rest of faith. Jesus thus manifested his confidence and belief in God. The human mind is treacherous, and the heart is “desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). The human mind can reason on subjects and philosophize and imagine things in a way that is contrary to God’s way, yet the thinking will seem very reasonable, as did Satan’s argument with Jesus. Had Jesus succumbed, he would have bypassed the Cross. Therefore, the “rest” is very meaningful; it is a rest from doing things *our* way and trying to do them *God’s* way.

Heb. 4:11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest” suggests diligence, effort, circumspection, and noting whether we are making any progress.

Comment: To the natural mind, it would sound contradictory to say that we *labor* to enter into *rest*. Such statements can only be spiritually discerned.

Reply: On the one hand, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ... because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). On the other hand, as Christians, we have the advantage of knowing the human mind, which we had before consecration, so we know the works of the flesh *from experience*. Now, as new creatures, we are getting an education along another line. Therefore, we can see and judge the deeds of the natural man, but the natural man cannot judge us. What he may consider to be inconsistencies in us may or may not be, but even then, God does the judging based on our heart intent and effort to please Him.

Comment: We should not be too lenient in examining self.

Reply: In judging our thoughts, words, and deeds, we need honesty, humility, hunger, and hope—the hope of making our calling and election sure. We must finish the course with faith.

Heb. 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow,

and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The Holy Spirit is everything that is mentioned here. When we examine our thoughts and find that some are impure, we should obey the corrections of the Holy Spirit.

“The word of God is ... piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.” What is the difference between “soul” and “spirit”? The soul is what we are—the real “us”—and the spirit is what we should be or what we should be trying to do. The Word of God is like a mirror. When we look in the mirror of the Word, we see ourself, and then on the side, we see the perfect example exemplified in Jesus. Of course we see our imperfections in the comparison, and we should try to make progress in overcoming them. Prayer, fasting, repeated efforts, and diligence in striving are all needed. God looks at the effort we make to conform to Christ’s image, and the real effort being made is the will—*our* will to do *God’s* will.

The Holy Spirit is a very sharp sword. In Revelation 1:16, the Word of God is called “a sharp twoedged sword.” It shows up not only the faults of others but also our own faults. Being two-edged, it works two ways—against others and against self. We can judge the deeds of others, but we cannot judge the outcome of an individual who does not overcome in a certain area, for that would be judging a destiny. Each one of us gets a report card at the end of our course. Some seem to go abruptly out of the truth, but actually the departure starts with a small beginning of lack of obedience. Faith and obedience are like two brothers.

Heb. 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

In this context, “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes” of Jesus, the High Priest. In him, we have a companion, a leader, a Savior, a helper, and a lawyer. To keep in mind the thought that Jesus knows everything we do is helpful.

Heb. 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

Jesus, the great High Priest, is with us now; that is, he is the High Priest for the Church in the Gospel Age. He will be the world’s High Priest in the Kingdom Age. He is dealing with us on behalf of his Father; therefore, “let us hold fast our profession.”

Heb. 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Jesus “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” This embrasive statement was discussed earlier.

Heb. 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

How do we “come boldly unto the throne of grace”? We do this in prayer, trusting that we are being heard. We pray to “obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” In prayer, we are to be like the importunate widow who kept petitioning the judge. Finally, because of her persistency, he granted the petition (Luke 18:1-6).

Thus in chapter 4, Paul brought in prayer, faith, trust, and obedience to instruction.

Heb. 5:1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things

pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men.” What is the thought here?

Comment: In Old Testament times, the high priest was ordained to perform sacrifices through the seven-day ceremony of the consecration of the priesthood, as set forth in Leviticus 8.

Reply: The Levites knew in advance who the high priest would be; that is, his selection had to be determined prior to the ceremony. Not only did the high priest have to be a son of Aaron, but also he had to pass the test of being blameless and without blemish (Lev. 21:17-21). The oldest living son of Aaron was probably examined first, and if he passed the test, the ceremony was started whereby he was ordained into office. If he did not pass the test, the next oldest son was examined, and on down the line if necessary.

Q: Is the thought continuing from verses 14-16 of the previous chapter? Paul had explained that Jesus was the High Priest, and he talked about heavenly things. Now he was comparing the high priest in the type, who was ordained of men and did things in an earthly manner.

A: Yes. Paul spoke of Jesus as High Priest back in chapter 3: “Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.” Now he was considering the high priest from the standpoint of the Aaronic priesthood, not the Melchisedec priesthood. Instead of discussing the present *spiritual* situation, Paul went back to how a high priest was selected from among *natural* men, thus indicating that Jesus would have to be identified with the human race before he could be ordained by God for the office for which the priesthood is to be exercised. Jesus is now our (the Church’s) High Priest. He was High Priest during his earthly ministry, but after his death, resurrection, and ascension, there was a change to the Melchisedec priesthood. From that point (and throughout the Gospel Age), he has reigned as King and Priest *over his Church*, being the only one of the order of Melchisedec. Paul was going back to the historical aspect of the introduction of Christ on the scene.

The high priest in the type was ordained for the purpose of offering “gifts [freewill offerings] and [mandatory] sacrifices for sins.” An example of a “gift” was to offer the firstfruits of one’s land or a thank offering. In other words, a gift was voluntary, and a sacrifice was involuntary. Generally speaking, the sacrifices of the Book of Leviticus were for sins of ignorance, the principle being that when a person became apprised of the fact that he had done wrong, he was required to offer a sacrifice to atone for his sin. Thus there was a difference between (1) the annual sacrifice on the Day of Atonement for *national* sin, for the sin of the nation, picturing Adamic sin, and (2) offerings for *individual* sins on other days of the year when a person became aware of his sin.

Heb. 5:2 **Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.**

As High Priest, Jesus has “compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.” This new thought is *God’s* thinking, for when we read the cold letter of the Law, we do not necessarily see the compassion aspect. Paul was saying that Jesus is a *sympathetic* High Priest because his experiences will enable him, when he is set in office, to have compassion for those in need of instruction and on those who had erred in their walk in life. The Book of Hebrews beautifully brings out this facet of Jesus’ character.

“For that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.” Speaking from the *natural* standpoint, all of Aaron’s successors, being of Adamic stock, were in need of forgiveness of sin. Therefore,

not only were they compassionate toward others, but also they wanted compassion to be exercised on their own behalf. Paul would go on to show that in no sense was Jesus afflicted with any infirmity having to do with sin. From his standpoint then, this verse means that he was surrounded with sinners. “For that he himself also is compassed *about* with infirmity.” Thus when we think of Jesus personally, we read verse 2 as meaning that he was surrounded with infirmity—that his environment was infirmity. When we think of the natural succession of the high priest, we think from the other standpoint, namely, that he was in need of atonement as well.

When Jesus finished his earthly ministry, he entered a different situation as the *risen* Lord. His earthly ministry, the Aaronic priesthood, was designed of God so that he would be sympathetic to the problems of fallen humanity and not be too severe with or too critical of those he judges in the Kingdom Age. Here Paul seemed to be emphasizing the necessity for Jesus to experience being identified with the *Aaronic* priesthood, yet now, as the risen Lord, he is of the *Melchisedec* priesthood as an individual. Certainly if the perfect Jesus had to go through suffering experiences in order to be sympathetic, then it is logical that those of fallen mankind who are called to be identified with Christ are already afflicted with problems. The purpose of a priest is to help the infirm and the ignorant, whereas a king, who has a different type of role, demands obedience. We sometimes call Jesus our Prophet, Priest, and King, and each of these roles has a distinct characteristic that is reflected in a strong way. A prophet is a teacher, a priest forgives sin, and a king expects obedience. Jesus occupies these three roles during the Gospel Age, and then, in the Kingdom Age, these same three roles will be resumed on behalf of the remainder of mankind, who were not called in this age.

We are reading about the selection of the high priest, his qualifications, and having compassion. A blind man is dealt with differently than a person who has clear eyesight. If one has a broken leg, he is not expected to run as swiftly as a person with a whole leg. Accordingly, the High Priest is to have compassion on the sinner commensurate with the problems or difficulties that encompass him in his effort to serve God.

Heb. 5:3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

“And by reason hereof he [the high priest in the type] ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.” Leviticus 4:3-12 deals with the priest who sinned. Paul was still giving introductory information on the Aaronic priesthood, his intention being to lead to the Melchisedec priesthood. Later he showed emphatically that Jesus was not contaminated with sin. Here Paul was giving the ABC’s of the qualifications for a high priest under the Law. When it came to Jesus, Paul would go to a higher level.

Heb. 5:4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

Heb. 5:5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.

Aaron, the first high priest, did not presume to take that office. Rather, *God* ordained the office. Being “called of God,” Aaron was the beginner of the natural priesthood, and Jesus, the antitype of Aaron, is the first of the spiritual priesthood. Just as Aaron and his sons after him were selected by God for the office, so Jesus is the High Priest.

“Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest,” for God said to him, “Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.” The “today” of this statement was after Jesus’ resurrection

and ascension. The statement “Thou art my Son” is a lot different than Jesus’ creation as the Logos. He was invited to be the High Priest, but his *actual selection* was not confirmed until he had *successfully passed* the test.

The picture would now switch from the Aaronic priesthood to the Melchisedec priesthood. That change could not take place in the antitype until after Jesus’ ascension, for to get the crown and be installed as a King, he first had to suffer. In other words, when Christ was resurrected, indicating approval, and ascended on high, the new Melchisedec priesthood began.

The question then becomes, What about the risen saints? The Christ has to be *complete* before the installation of the Melchisedec priesthood. Even though *many* have already made their calling and election sure and the resurrection of the sleeping saints took place in 1878, the risen saints are not in the Melchisedec priesthood, for the remaining body parts underneath the Head have to be in the priesthood before that cognition is given.

Later in the Book of Hebrews, Paul told about Abraham’s meeting one whom he respected so highly that he did homage to him. Although purposely unnamed in the account to preserve the type, this mysterious personage was Shem. Since Abraham revered him, that individual had to be someone greater than Abraham. And only two individuals were greater than Abraham at that time: Noah and Shem. Noah was not on the scene very long.

Heb. 5:6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

In addition to saying of Jesus, “Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee,” God also said, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” Both declarations were made at the same time—that is, when Jesus ascended to the Father after his resurrection. Just as there was an installation service with the Aaronic priesthood, so when Jesus ascended on high, there was a formal declaration of some kind. The declaration may have been only a short and sweet statement, as recorded. Possibly it was made just before Pentecost and after the ten days of adulation: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev. 5:12). No doubt the statement was made publicly to the angels in heaven.

Heb. 5:7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus “offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears” to his Father, who was able to save him from Second Death. Jesus “was heard in that he feared.” His Gethsemane experience was very sobering. At that time, he searched his heart and reviewed his ministry to see if anything had been done amiss that had to be accounted for. His being “heard” indicates that he was given an assurance in some fashion, that his prayers were answered. He received some kind of acknowledgment that up to that point, he had fit the role perfectly, but he still had to die.

Jesus first had to qualify for the *Aaronic* priesthood, that is, before he could become “a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” He first had to agree to the conditions that the Father suggested to him—he had to come down here, be made flesh, begin his ministry at age 30, and die faithfully 3 1/2 years later. Just as Aaron was called of God earlier, so Jesus was also called. His agreeing to the conditions set forth by the Father constituted his initial call. Being the High Priest of the Melchisedec priesthood is Jesus’ reward for having been the faithful High Priest in the Aaronic priesthood. Little is said about Melchisedec in the Old Testament except for a brief

statement about how Abraham paid tithes to this mysterious person (Gen. 14:18-20). The name Melchisedec (spelled Melchizedek in the Old Testament) is significant because it is composed of two words, “melchi” (meaning “king”) and “zedek” (meaning “priest”). The gold plate on the linen turban that was on the forehead of the high priest in the Aaronic priesthood provided a nebulous suggestion of the possibility of being a future king, but the kingship was not crystallized with the Melchisedec priesthood until Jesus’ ascension, when the full stamp of approval was placed on him in the sight of angels. In addition to the mention of Melchisedec in Genesis, Psalm 110:4 prophesied of Jesus, “The LORD [Jehovah] hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Heb. 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

As the Logos in heaven, Jesus was always obedient in everything he did, but no suffering was involved. In the honorable office of Logos, he always pleased the Father, but God was looking for *obedience under suffering*, which is quite different. The basic difference in the calling of the Kingdom Age, when the people will walk up the highway of holiness, is that they will be given every help. The obstructions will be removed, and assistance will be given. Moreover, no one will be ignorant; there will be no excuse for not being informed. However, obedience under suffering is quite different from obedience that is rewarded right away. Paul gave one clue earlier as to the reason for Jesus’ suffering—that he might become a sympathetic High Priest—but there are additional reasons.

Heb. 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

Jesus was “made perfect” after he successfully passed the test of his earthly ministry. Not until he said, “It is finished,” did he seal his course and reward. Thus the word “perfect” sometimes indicates a form of *completion*, which is more than just maturity. The completion occurred when Jesus died on the Cross, and the approval came when God raised him out of death. Paul was saying that the forgiveness of sins was predicated not only on the death but also on the resurrection of Jesus. In other words, in connection with the forgiveness of sin and salvation, his resurrection was just as vital as his death on the Cross. Jesus did all he could, and then a silence followed while he was in the tomb.

Imagine being an angel in heaven and seeing Jesus’ suffering and death! The angels knew that death was the cessation of life and that Jesus had been the great Logos, yet now there was a silence. However, *silence and waiting* are important in order to impress lessons more deeply. Going too fast causes one to lose a lot, whereas time allows lessons to sink down into the heart and mind. We can imagine the expectation with regard to Jesus. The disciples were deeply concerned to see the one they had followed for 3 1/2 years being crucified and buried—and then there was silence. Although they were given some clues with the earthquake and the dark day, the fact that there was no immediate resurrection was a problem. It was one thing for God to be disturbed and to show signs in nature, but then, presumably, nothing happened. However, as soon as Jesus arose from the grave, the disciples were *delirious* with joy and happiness. If they were overjoyed with the *resuscitation of Lazarus*, we can understand how they would have felt with regard to the *resurrection of the Master*. (Jesus received a *true resurrection*, not just an awakening from death.)

Jesus “became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” Jesus is the “author of eternal salvation” during the Gospel Age, and he will be the “author of eternal salvation” in the Kingdom Age and beyond (the details of which we are not given). But first, he had to be raised from death, ascend on high, and be given approval to indicate that he had successfully completed his course. Then, at that point, he was in a different role as the Lord Jesus Christ, our

Savior.

Q: If the word “author” is improper and should be “beginner” in Hebrews 12:2, “Looking unto Jesus the author [*beginner*] and finisher of our faith,” should the same change be made here?

A: Yes. God is the Author of eternal salvation, and Jesus is the beginner of eternal salvation. Jesus was the manifestation of salvation in that salvation was first made known in a recognized sense with his resurrection from death. The chapter in the *Second Volume* entitled “The Manner of Our Lord’s Return and Appearing” gives a solid basis for faith; its simplicity and beauty honor God and Jesus and furnish a blessed assurance of the reality. Thus Jesus is the beginner; he is the “firstfruits of them that slept,” that is, of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20).

The emphasis of verse 9 is on the Gospel Age calling, even though it also applies to the Kingdom Age. Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of *our* profession.

Heb. 5:10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Verse 10 reiterates the declaration of verse 6: “As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” When Jesus ascended on high, God ordained him in this office, the Melchisedec order being in contradistinction to the Aaronic order.

Heb. 5:11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

Paul had many things to say that were “hard to be uttered” because the Jews were “dull of hearing.” However, he then started to tell some of those things.

Comment: The *Diaglott* renders part of this verse, “We have much to say, and of difficult interpretation, since you *have become* sluggish hearers.” In view of the reprimand Paul gave, it seems that there had been a slipping back, rather than that the Jews were so dull of hearing to begin with. These were Jewish Christians; hence they were already consecrated.

Reply: That thought would probably be more accurate because this epistle was written at the end of Paul’s ministry. He said to the Galatians, who had slipped back in understanding, “I am not responsible for what has happened to you. In trying to obey the Law and the gospel at the same time, you are mixing works with the gospel of faith.” That same serious error applied to many others. The proselytizing Jews were responsible, and those who were influenced by them became ardent advocates of the false doctrine that the Christian has to obey the Law.

Heb. 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

The Christianized Jews who were being hindered in various ways were slipping and sliding in their belief, and Paul wanted to correct the situation. For the length of time many had been Christians, they should have been teachers of *correct* doctrine. This same admonition is good today for making progress.

Comment: The Apostle Peter wrote, “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:15,16).

Reply: The word “destruction” shows the seriousness of not following through and the necessity of being faithful to the Word. The Christian walk is a fight of faith and of *maintaining* the integrity of the faith.

Paul was describing a rather pitiful condition, for to say that some needed to be taught again “the first principles of the oracles of God” was a strong condemnation. They had “become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.” Of course the “milk” stage is very important. Newborn babes should “desire the sincere milk of the word” so that they will grow (1 Pet. 2:2). The babe’s longing to get milk from the mother’s breast is a part of growing, but the object is to progress in development from a babe up to manhood. To go backwards in understanding is unfavorable.

Sadly, some who have been in present truth and were quite deep in understanding have deteriorated, whereby the light that formerly was in them darkened in various stages. (We are not talking about those who deteriorate with a disease such as Alzheimer’s.) The quicker the deterioration is nipped in the bud through obedience, the greater the possibility of being reclaimed. However, there can come a point of no return in the slipping.

Heb. 5:13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

“For every one that useth milk [only] is unskilful in the word of righteousness.” In many places in the Greek, the word “only” should be inserted for the proper thought. Although not actually in the Greek, “only” is implied by the context.

The danger with the continual use of milk seems to be more prevalent among those who are evangelistic by nature. For their entire life, they place a disproportionate importance on such things as the number of people we witness to or how many books we sell. Consequently, they go no deeper in understanding. In the professed Church, their message is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.” Instead of presenting a skimpy gospel of salvation, they should urge others to hunger to know more so that they can serve God more acceptably.

Comment: Isaiah 28:9 expresses the principle: “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.”

Reply: To be “weaned from the milk” means to be separated from that baby stage. A time period is involved. In ancient times, the weaning sometimes took seven years. Under present circumstances, the time period is much shorter, but the babe should become a child, the child should become a youth, and the youth should become an adult. If we dwell and feed on the same simplified message, we will remain a spiritual dwarf. Paul’s reasoning is very logical.

Heb. 5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Although “strong meat” belongs to those who are of “full age,” the meat can be cut into little pieces. If a steak is given to a babe, the babe will choke to death, but as the babe develops from the milk and goes through the weaning process, the meat is puréed so that it is more digestible. Then comes more substantial food. Thus strong meat belongs to those who are of fuller age and to “those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” If one does not feed on more developed, adult-like foods, he will suffer not only doctrinally but also morally. And so it is rather pitiful to remain as a babe.

Since this admonition was not addressed to any particular individual, no one should have been offended. Paul spoke strong words but to the Hebrews (plural). Therefore, one's natural pride or self-opinion was minimized.

Q: Is the thought that the stronger the meat, the more one should be able to discern between good and evil, and that the understanding should be reflected in his actions and reactions?

A: Yes. Strong meat should be desired, eaten, and used in the Christian walk. Paul said that the Bereans were “more noble than those in Thessalonica” because “they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily” to see whether the things preached to them were really true (Acts 17:11). The exercise of diligently familiarizing ourselves with God's Word and instruction helps us not only to mentally discern but also, more importantly, to discern the necessity for change in the inner man. But the inner man has to feed on the right type of doctrine.

Q: Is the understanding of prophecy equated with eating strong meat?

A: Not in this context. Of course since prophecy is gradually understood throughout the Gospel Age, more understanding is required at the end of the age, and we should make use of what is available. However, here Paul was talking about discerning between good and evil.

One may be developed in *knowledge* but not in the *exercise of discerning between good and evil*. It would be like opening a chest, looking at all the nice silverware, and *continually polishing the silverware* rather than *using* it. The “senses” (plural) are to be exercised, both in the mental sense and in the sense of *using* the understanding in conduct. Seeing what is required and making the effort to conform to the commandment makes us stronger—and thereby we profit and are able to help someone else make more progress. A maturity has to be involved.

With a babe, the change from milk to meat is gradual. Solid foods are slowly introduced. The doctrine of baptism is one of the first things a person learns—that the baptism (or burying) of our will into Christ's will signifies a way of sacrifice and death. But in going from milk to strong meat, a person needs puréed food in the interim. An individual may be using puréed meat, but for strong meat, he has to be an adult. God is looking for the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus, so it is not enough for the Christian to dwell on just the basic doctrines.

Stephen, who was martyred shortly after Jesus' death, was like a meteor. Consider the fearless witness he gave before established, exalted peers in the religious world. Another example is Martin Luther. Some of the descriptions of the setting when he gave his confession before the Diet at Worms tell about such things as the number of individuals and the way they looked, their clothing, and the chairs they sat on. In such a climate, a feeling of inadequacy can easily creep in, so great courage is required, and courage can be obtained only through prayer and previous faithfulness. Evidently, Stephen developed very quickly, but the Lord chose Paul, perhaps because Paul was a step further in his background and training.

The design of the truth is for a brother to develop to eldership. To aspire to be an elder is a good motive—that is, if one develops properly and sufficiently, with humility, to be able to help not only himself but also others to make their calling and election sure. It must be difficult for sisters who are developed in knowledge to be quiet and submissive in connection with their service. Fortunately, sisters can speak quite boldly and have a good deal of liberty in their private conversations with others, but they can certainly experience frustrations if they are under teachers who do not have much understanding and should not have been elected to that office in the first place.

Paul was saying that if one does not understand about the Melchisedec priesthood, he is a babe in intellectual understanding—although not necessarily in experience. We need two things: understanding and experience. Obtaining both will result in wisdom, the final product being to have *God's* thinking and principles instilled in our minds. Therefore, we are to desire to grow in the understanding of God's Word, not just the understanding of the *Volumes*, much of which are self-explanatory. With the Bible, it is here a little and there a little, and discretion has to be used to piece things together (Isa. 28:10). Explanations given in the *Volumes* are already pieced together for us. Therefore, to understand the Word of God itself is a lot different than reading a book *about* the Word of God. There is no substitute for the Bible.

Heb. 6:1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

Heb. 6:2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.” The “perfection” is continual progress “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). We are to run the race as if there is only one winner.

The doctrinal steps that Paul listed in verses 1 and 2 are like the divine plan in a nutshell. We will consider each step.

- 1 and 2. “Repentance from *dead works*” and “faith toward God” are believing God and then making a consecration to do His will. In other words, the step is from “repentance from dead works” to “faith toward God,” which is consecration. God was saying in effect, “My strength will be sufficient. If you do your part, I will do my part to help you make your calling and election sure.”
3. “Baptisms” refers to water immersion and the significance underlying that baptism. Jesus said to John the Baptist, “You may not understand why I want to be baptized, but suffer it to be so because baptism is fitting.” If Jesus set the example as the beginner of the race, we should follow in his footsteps and be immersed, thus making a public confession.

Water baptism represents being baptized into Jesus' death (Rom. 6:3). Water pictures the tomb, so when a candidate is pushed below the water, it is like being buried. Being brought up out of the water represents walking in newness of life. This is the beginning of the race; it is being at the start line. Many of us were baptized a long time ago in the nominal Church, so it is up to each one of us to determine whether it is necessary to go through a literal immersion again. To make this decision, we need to think back on our state of mind at the time. Certainly sprinkling the head with a few drops of water or infant baptism is not acceptable as a beginning.

4. “Laying on of hands.” In the early Church, this doctrine meant receiving a mechanical gift. Today a talent (or talents) would be developed gradually in each of the consecrated under the power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, in apostolic days, a more visible miraculous gift was imparted immediately after one was immersed. Such startling gifts included speaking in tongues, the ability to quote Scripture, and healing. The gifts were a great assurance because early Christians did not have the written Word. The most one might have was one or two letters from the apostles Paul or Peter, for example.

Consider the experience of the Ethiopian eunuch, who was reading Isaiah in his chariot (Acts 8:26-40). When Philip seemingly came out of the blue, ran up to him, and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” the eunuch responded honestly, “I do not know unless someone teaches me.” Although the eunuch was the representative of the queen in Africa and the occupant of a very important office, he had inherent humility, as evidenced by his desire to understand. In explaining the passage in Isaiah (probably chapter 53), Philip apparently explained about baptism. Then the eunuch said, “A brook is here. What hinders me to get baptized right away?” Philip agreed, but after the immersion, he providentially disappeared, allowing the eunuch to think that an angel from heaven had spoken with him. When he returned to Ethiopia, that experience sustained him for the rest of his life in holding to what he had learned about Jesus.

Today the instantaneous nature of the gifts has ceased. Because gifts are imparted in a much more subtle and gradual manner, they are much less discernible. However, today we have the written Word—not only the Holy Spirit but also the Holy Spirit in God’s Word of instruction.

5. “Resurrection of the dead.” “Resurrection” in this context refers to both the heavenly resurrection of this age and the earthly resurrection of mankind in the next age.
6. “Eternal [age-lasting] judgment.” God has “appointed a day [the Kingdom Age], in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Christ Jesus] whom he hath ordained” (Acts 17:31).

Heb. 6:3 And this will we do, if God permit.

Heb. 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

Heb. 6:5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

Heb. 6:6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

Starting with chapter 2, this theme of guarding against letting the truth slip seems to be one of the burdens of the early portion of the Book of Hebrews, for a person’s retrieval becomes more and more difficult the longer the slippage takes place. Paul had just mentioned the basic doctrines of baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and age-lasting judgment, but he said that the Christian should go on and progress into deeper truths. Paul seems to be suggesting that those who are familiar with these doctrines and have consecrated, thus having “tasted” of these good things to come, have a great responsibility. Sometimes years pass before a departure takes place, but how dangerous it is!

Q: Is it “impossible” to renew such individuals unto repentance?

A: Yes, because they were once made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and truth is a miraculous understanding. Some who are in a family of truth can, to a certain extent, parrot or mimic doctrines, but having “tasted the good word of God” suggests that recovery is impossible for one who has had an appreciation of these things and then falls away. Of course this falling away is not just backsliding or going apart from the brotherhood for a little while, as the Apostle Paul did when Barnabas had to search him out to bring him back. The point is that Paul never went out of the truth; he just separated himself. However, there are those who separate

and then begin to rescind some of the simple doctrines they once knew.

Comment: This condition is beyond the point where a person “shall be saved; yet so as by fire” (1 Cor. 3:15).

Reply: Yes, as proven by verse 8, which speaks of briars and thorns. This would be “a sin unto death” (1 John 5:16). The Apostle John said that we should not pray for such individuals. Those who have been in the truth for some time are probably aware of one or two individuals in this category. For example, returning all of the *Volumes* or the *Reprints* is an unfavorable sign.

Renewal unto repentance has to do with conscience. A hardened conscience is impossible to renew because, being no longer tender or responsive, it does not awaken the individual. The conscience, then, is a very important part of our life to awaken us to a sense of guilt, loss, or shame and thus help us to realize we are going in the wrong direction. To recognize the need for recovery is the first step.

While Paul addressed this book to the Hebrews, he was very fearful of the proselytizing Jews, the Judaizing Christians, who accepted Christ and then later on had second thoughts with regard to the Law. They began to think that Christians had to be faithful to the Law of Moses—that they had to be justified by the works of the Law—as well as to believe in Jesus. But as time went on, their believing in Jesus was sliding away, and they were back to just the Law of Moses. They were discarding one fundamental doctrine after another.

To reach maturity, a Christian needs the fundamental doctrines *plus* deeper truth. Paul had just criticized those who kept going over and over the same basic doctrines. “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ [the fundamentals], let us go on unto perfection” (Heb. 6:1). The ABC’s of doctrine were needed in order to communicate one with another.

It is impossible to renew again unto repentance those who “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame,” for they do “despite unto the Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10:29). In other words, the expression “they crucify ... the Son of God afresh” is a way of expressing the impossibility of recovery. Such individuals put Jesus “to an open shame”; that is, like Judas, they put the cause of truth to shame. With Peter, the retrieval occurred very quickly. In fact, it happened even before Jesus died, being a matter of perhaps only an hour or two when Peter “went out, and wept bitterly” (Matt. 26:75). Once a duration of time passes without recovery, the conscience gets hard; it shrivels and dries up and is no longer responsive. “How is the gold become dim!” is the principle (Lam. 4:1). Gold does not tarnish, but one’s eyesight, his appreciation of divine truth, can dim.

Q: In this context, was the sin more related to Judaizing Christians?

A: Yes, because Paul was writing to the Hebrews. However, there were other kinds of sin. Paul was speaking of those who were enlightened with truth and had consecrated and received the Holy Spirit. In the early Church, the receipt of a gift was an evidence that one was Spirit-begotten. Today the “gifts” are given in ways that are not obvious. When someone departs from the truth and we review his life, we marvel how at one time he was so zealous. We think about what he did on this occasion or on that occasion, and now he is not at all interested. In such cases, we know that the individual has “tasted of the heavenly gift” and been a partaker of the Holy Spirit, and thus there is a more valid reason for not inordinately wasting time trying to recover one who is in an unsavable condition.

We have to be careful, however, for some go into isolation but do not disobey. It is difficult to judge, for in most cases, we do not see them in this period of separation. As unbelievable as it

may seem, there was an individual who, after years of consecration and obedience to the truth, proclaimed that Christ was a false Messiah. As the Apostle Peter said, “But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire [of sin]” (2 Pet. 2:22). A few who have known the truth have returned to believing in hellfire or the Trinity, and they even write articles or preach on their “new” beliefs.

Heb. 6:7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

Heb. 6:8 But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

One class brings forth herbs that are meet for food and blessing. The rain is the truth, which comes down upon the soul of a consecrated being, but if that person later has no fruit or wholesomeness and if everything is negative, he is a thorn. And what does a “thorn” do? It hurts everyone. There are times when we need to be prodded and goaded, but that should not be the habitual character of a person.

At first, a briar has leaves, but when it is developed, there are no green leaves to speak of; it is nothing but thorns. That is what happened to the Judaizing Christians, and those who were influenced by them turned around and acted like the very ones who had originally caused the damage.

Comment: If we get too close to briars and thorns, they will stick to us, so it is better to keep our distance.

Reply: One who bears thorns and briars is rejected and “is nigh unto cursing.” In the natural world, if someone steps on a thorn, he usually curses. Therefore, not only can one be a thorn but also those who are afflicted are sometimes inordinately damaged. The “end” of one who bears thorns and briars is “burning,” that is, Second Death.

Comment: A crown of *thorns* was put on Jesus’ head. The thorns were a contradiction of his being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners (Heb. 7:26).

Reply: Yes, it was like saying he was a curse not only to himself but also to others. Of course the thorns go back to the Garden of Eden, for Jesus had to be a curse like Adam. Jesus needed to have inherent life rights, but he also had to bear the penalty of sin for the sinner. There is a big difference between being a *sin*-bearer and a *life*-bearer. Thus the Ransom had two aspects: (1) the necessity for Jesus to be a perfect man and to render perfect obedience and (2) the necessity for him to be cursed in order to experience the affliction of Adam. Adam was the head of the human race, and Jesus was crucified with the sign over his head “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” What irony and sarcasm! The sign, the crown of thorns, the nakedness, and being hung on a tree as a curse were all essential for Jesus to take Adam’s place. The curse ended at death, and Jesus was raised as the *life*-bearer. Thus one chapter ended and another began, and what would seem to be an irreconcilable conflict is actually harmonized. Jesus was put to death in the flesh for more than one reason but was raised spirit.

Heb. 6:9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

Here is another example of the Apostle Paul’s faithfulness, for he spoke the *whole* truth (Acts 20:27). On the one hand, there has been a tendency of some evangelicals to preach sermon

after sermon on hellfire, judgment, penalties, and the justice of God. On the other hand, there are those who preach that God forgives practically everything. Both are distortions of the truth; the truth is a balance in between the two extremes. We see Paul's faithfulness in declaring the whole counsel of God.

Paul talked here as though he was familiar with these individuals. Not only was he thoroughly familiar with the problems of Judaism, but also he knew some of these people, both for good and for evil.

Heb. 6:10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shown toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Paul's general familiarity with these individuals came about in two ways: (1) through his training, upbringing, and knowing the other side of the situation; and (2) by his travels throughout the whole civilized world. He traveled worldwide, as it were, so he knew the situation, not only intellectually and doctrinally but also by going first to the Jews on his missionary journeys. When he was cast out of the synagogue, he turned to the Gentiles.

Comment: Verse 10 shows that Paul was addressing a class who had not sinned unto Second Death because otherwise, he would have used wording like that in Ezekiel 18:24, "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."

Reply: That Ezekiel text shows three stages of development, ending in Second Death.

Heb. 6:11 And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

Paul desired that *every one* of the Hebrews would have a "full assurance of hope unto the end." Patient endurance is a very important factor in the Christian walk. Jesus said, "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19). If one loses his soul, that is Second Death. Unfortunately, over a period of time of discouragement, some commit spiritual suicide, and a few even commit literal suicide because their expectations are shattered. But Paul was saying, "Keep this hope. Hold on to it. Have a full assurance of hope unto the end of your course." Patient endurance prevents the shattering of hope by holding it together. A *Manna* text states that patient endurance is the last test; it is the crystallizing factor of character. What is done to a vase? After being beautifully ornamented and decorated, it is put into a furnace and given a glaze to make it more permanent and lasting. This is the full assurance unto the end—"Let patience have her perfect[ing] work" (James 1:4). The vase has to stay in the furnace for a while, and when it is removed, if it has not been damaged, it is much more desirable. The Christian walk is similar with its trials. "The trial [the *proof*] of your faith," after testing, is "much more precious than of gold that perisheth" (1 Pet. 1:7).

Heb. 6:12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Now Paul was bringing out the relationship between faith and patience. All of us started the marathon race with faith; otherwise, we would not be in the race for the high calling, for without faith it is *impossible* to please God (Heb. 11:6). We had the faith that justified us, we consecrated, and from that point forward, we have been trying to be "faith-full" until death, which is a process. Starting too fast in this endurance race could lead to a spiritual burnout.

While we need faith and patience throughout the marathon, the odd part is that, as a general principle, the more extreme testing of faith occurs in the last lap of the race. (Of course Stephen was an exception, but there are very few “Stephens.”) In the past, for example, some whom we believed to be wonderful saints were put aside in the latter part of life, not even being elected elder, even though they had served faithfully for many years. Knowing their past and what they had done—and that they were the same when rejected in elderly years—we felt their not showing any bitterness was a very favorable sign. Some of those we respected most had this trial, but they remained faithful right to the end of their course.

“That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” We get help not only from Jesus, the beginner and the finisher of the race, but also from fellow runners in the race. Very often in times of stillness after the death of outstanding individuals, we look back and think about them with fond and tenderizing memories. Thus the example of others can be very encouraging, especially if we feel that they probably made their calling and election sure.

Heb. 6:13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,

Heb. 6:14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

Heb. 6:15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

Next Paul gave Abraham as an example. The Scriptures tell us much about the life of faithful Abraham with all of the testings, especially the long wait before the promise was fulfilled that he would have a son. His ultimate test was the command from God to slay Isaac, the child of promise. Abraham lived to age 175 (Gen. 25:7).

Another disappointment was that Abraham did not actually get the land. “After he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise,” but in what sense? He died *faithfully*. Although God promised the land to Abraham, not only did he not receive it, but he had to purchase a little plot to bury his wife Sarah. However, he inherited, or secured, the promise; it was sealed in faithfulness.

Comment: After Abraham obeyed the command to offer up Isaac, God swore by Himself, saying, “Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.”

Reply: Yes, Abraham received the promise but did not get the land.

If someone is faithful enough to offer up his own son, as Abraham did, would his devotion to God ever change? No. In fact, even earlier God said, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?” (Gen. 18:17,18). In other words, “Shall I not reveal to Abraham the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, for I know he will be faithful and thus inherit the promise?” The sealing process can reach a point where it becomes finished, secured, even in the present life. For example, the holy angels, who did not sin at the time of the Flood, will not die anymore because they sealed their faithfulness in obedience to God under a very severe test. In the future, it will be interesting to see visually some of the details of the nature of that test. The holy angels did not leave their first estate except to do what God instructed, and after discharging the responsibility, they returned immediately to heaven. For the disobedient angels to leave their first estate is the same principle as leaving the truth. The fallen angels enjoyed their activity down here more than what they previously had. And so, when one returns to the world after having the truth, it is like swine that go back to the mud

and relish it. In his epistle, Jude used the example of the angels who left their first estate to show the enormity of incorrigible sin. Peter wrote similarly in his second epistle.

Imagine dying and hearing Jesus say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” The weight of sin would immediately lift off our back. We would know we had been faithful and would never die henceforth. There would be no need for further trials and testings. What a wonderful time it will be when sin shall be no more! But now Satan is the god of this world, and we are in a vessel of clay.

Heb. 6:16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

Heb. 6:17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

To show the “immutability of his counsel,” God “confirmed it by an oath.” Although Paul did not take the time to go into detail, he used Abraham and Abraham’s faithfulness as an example. Paul was coming to the subject of Melchisedec, who was met by Abraham. Therefore, Paul’s thinking was changing from the subject of faith and Abraham to Melchisedec. The apostle was writing with emotion, but because of his many years of discipline, suffering, and endurance, he did not allow emotionalism to affect his thinking. In other words, whatever he said with great emotion was strictly true and meaningful.

Heb. 6:18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Paul said that it is “*impossible* for God to lie,” yet Jesus said, “With God *all things are possible*” (Matt. 19:26). There is no contradiction between the two statements. God cannot lie because His character is such that He *will not lie*, but technically, He is a free moral agent who can do what He wants. Like those He has created, He has the ability to choose to do or not to do. Thus, although it is technically possible for God to lie, it is morally *impossible*, for His character would not allow Him to lie. Therefore, the technicality does not mean much.

Comment: God does change His mind at times.

Reply: Yes, but many of God’s promises are *conditional*: “If you do such and such, I will do so-and-so.”

Heb. 6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

“We ... lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast.” Hope, a progression of faith, is different from wishful thinking. Scriptural hope is something substantial; it is sort of a crystallization of faith. Faith is like having muscles and strength after doing exercise. Hope is the intermediate step. The hope Paul was speaking of does not get disappointed; it becomes the reality in obtaining the character that God is looking for, the image of Jesus as far as is possible in our fallen state and vessel. That is love, which encompasses many different ingredients.

Comment: Romans 5:3-5 reads, “We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

Reply: Yes, Paul was speaking about a real hope.

Hope is the substance of faith. Earlier in his Christian walk—and in spite of all his experiences, persecutions, and sufferings—Paul said, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended [the crown, the prize of the high calling]” (Phil. 3:13). But at the end of his life, he said, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7,8). Thus hope, which is “sure and stedfast,” becomes important. God wants to instill this hope in us, but there are modifying factors. If we obey Him, He will keep His promise.

Heb. 6:20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

In calling Jesus the “forerunner,” Paul used the analogy of a race. Jesus is our example. He is on the other end of the anchor, which is within the veil. We trust in him as our Savior; we have followed this truth, which “maketh not ashamed” (Rom. 5:5). If we hold fast to the hope, it will bring its reward.

Jesus was “made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” In other words, Jesus entered beyond the veil of death. The First Veil, the veil to the Holy of the Tabernacle, is the veil of the human mind, consecration, the death of the human will, where we give up earthly hopes, etc., but the Second Veil, the veil to the Most Holy, is the veil of actual death. When Jesus went under that veil and came up in the Most Holy, he was assured of victory. He had won the race; he had attained the prize.

Sometimes the winner of a race does not get the prize right away. The prize is given at a ceremony, which comes later. But meanwhile, the runner knows he has won the race unless, of course, he is disqualified for doing something wrong. If we go beyond the veil and are raised to life, we will *know* we have won.

Accordingly, Abraham died with the assurance that he was faithful, and when he comes back to life in the Kingdom Age, he will attain the reward of perfect human life. Then, at the end of the Kingdom, he will get a heavenly reward. Stated another way, Abraham will first enter the “holy city” that comes down from God out of heaven, and then, when the Kingdom Age ends, the “holy city” will become an elevator that pulls him up beyond the veil (Rev. 21:2). Earlier Paul said, “I would like to talk on the subject of Melchisedec, but you are dull of understanding and are again in need of milk so that you will be built up” (Heb. 5:10-12 paraphrase).

Heb. 7:1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

Melchisedec, the king of Salem and a priest of the “most high God,” met Abraham, who was returning from the “slaughter of the kings,” and blessed him. The term “slaughter of the kings” pertains to the rescue of Lot, who had been kidnapped by a confederacy of kings (Gen. 14:1-16). Abraham went out on a rescue mission with 318 people against the four kings and their armies and won the battle. This incident took place about 500 years after the Flood. Since only eight people (Noah and family) survived the Flood, the population of Abraham’s day was not too great. Nevertheless, the force over which Abraham was victorious, was relatively large compared to his own men.

Heb. 7:2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King

of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

The name Melchisedec signifies “King of righteousness” and “King of peace.” (Melchisedec was the king of Jerusalem, and *Salem* means “peace.”) With *Salem* being an abbreviation of Jerusalem, the city name was probably a corruption of “Jebu,” for the Jebusites occupied Jerusalem after Shem (whom we believe was Melchisedec) disappeared from the scene. According to tradition and other accounts, Shem moved around and did not stay too long in any one place. He was eventually succeeded by the Jebusites. *Melchisedec* was a title similar to Caesar.

Heb. 7:3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

Melchisedec was “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life.” It is impossible to take this statement literally because even Jesus, the firstborn of all creation, had a Father, and the angels are called “sons of God.” Therefore, God is the Father, or the Creator, of all other beings—from the Logos down to the human race. A mother is also necessary. Thus it was from the historic standpoint that the father and mother of Melchisedec were unknown. If his real name and lineage had been known, that would have changed the type. If the account said “Shem,” then right away Noah’s name would come to mind. The point is that Melchisedec was a fresh type of a new priesthood.

“Without descent” means without record, without a recorded lineage. For Melchisedec to literally have “neither beginning of days, nor end of life,” he would have to be God Himself, for only His existence is “from everlasting to everlasting” (Psa. 90:2). Therefore, Melchisedec had to be a created being but without record of descent. Moreover, Melchisedec was not Jesus, for Jesus stated, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore” (Rev. 1:18). Clearly then, these phrases have to be taken in an idiomatic or somewhat symbolic sense. To try to make them literal would contradict at least one of these terms.

Melchisedec was “made like unto the Son of God.” The first part of this quotation can be turned around to say, “The Son of God was made like unto Melchisedec.” The statement works both ways because Melchisedec pictures a priesthood, and Jesus was like Melchisedec in the sense that God declared him to be a “King” at the time of his ascension. “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Psa. 110:1). “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion” (Psa. 2:6).

Although Melchisedec was “made like unto the Son of God,” the Son of God came later, but Paul was viewing the matter from *after* our Lord’s resurrection and ascension and the day of Pentecost. Melchisedec was a type of the *office*.

Comment: Hebrews 6:20 says, “Where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, entered, having become a High-priest for the age, according to the order of Melchizedek” (*Diaglott* translation). Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchisedec, so obviously he was not Melchisedec himself.

Comment: The implication seems to be that the Jews never even considered the subject of Melchisedec.

Reply: Possibly some individual thinkers considered Melchisedec but certainly not the recognized priesthood or the Israelites as a people.

Melchisedec “abideth a priest continually.” What about the word “continually”? Certainly Jesus will not be a High Priest after the Kingdom Age in the ages of ages, in the “world without

end,” for one of the functions of a priest is to atone for sin (Eph. 3:21). Therefore, just as with Melchisedec’s descent and background, we have to think of the word “continually” in a limited sense; that is, “continually” in this context means “enduring for a period of time.” Similarly, the word “forever,” whether in the Hebrew (*olam*) of the Old Testament or the Greek (*aion*) of the New Testament, literally means “for a lasting time.”

Comment: The *Diaglott* interlinear says “remains a priest for the continuance.”

Reply: The Hebrew *olam* means “for a long, indefinite period of time,” and if the thought is “for a very, very, very long time,” *olam olam* (“forever forever”) is used, but even that is qualified in rare instances. Usually, however, “forever forever” (*olam olam*) means “everlastingly” as opposed to “age-lasting” (*olam*). In the Greek, the term *aionian* is used for “age-lasting.”

Heb. 7:4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

“Now consider how great this man [Melchisedec] was,” for “even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils” to him. As unusual as Abraham was, Melchisedec was superior. In fact, Abraham did deference to him. Not only did he pay tithes, but he genuflected in recognition of Melchisedec’s rank. We are getting into the area of conjecture and speculation, but who might the mysterious Melchisedec have been? It is not too unreasonable to accept what John and Morton Edgar and some others have suggested, namely, that Melchisedec was Shem.

Under the Mosaic Law, tithes were given to the priest. Tithes were part of the income of the priesthood for the necessities of life as well as for incense, oil, and other items that were needed for the services. However, Melchisedec lived before Moses’ time and the Tabernacle and the Law, so a priesthood existed back there of which we know nothing except for two Scriptures, verse 4 being one of them. Before Moses, there was another “tabernacle,” which is mentioned only once. This thought is supported not only by a text in Exodus but also by tradition, for before Moses’ day, there was a sanctuary with an ark in Egypt. That ark was not given God’s blessing because there was confusion between two tabernacles, a true tabernacle of which we know little and a false tabernacle that was identified with the supposed god of the dead. The idea of a tabernacle originated at the time of Noah’s Ark, and from a very holy standpoint, Noah’s Ark is primarily symbolized by the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy. The point is that the Hebrews did not get their information from Egypt. Rather, both Egypt and the Jews got their information back in Noah’s day.

Another thing that was commonly done and is mentioned in the Book of Hebrews is that the sabbath was observed prior to Moses but not, of course, with all of the details that were given later in the Law. One of the Ten Commandments was to keep the sabbath day holy, but other requirements were included (Exod. 20:8). God gave Moses the instructions and the pattern for the Tabernacle when he was up in Mount Sinai for 40 days. Again the point is that a custom existed even before Abraham.

Who, then, was Melchisedec? Even though Shem was not the firstborn, he was more important than Noah’s other two sons, Japheth and Ham. Noah lived 350 years after the Flood, and Shem, being younger, also lived after the Flood and was much older than Abraham (Gen. 9:28). Therefore, it was natural for Abraham to honor Shem, the principle being “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD” (Lev. 19:32; see also Prov. 16:31). The parent was to be honored in a religious sense, especially in old age.

Heb. 7:5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

The Jews could accept the fact that when Levi and Moses appeared on the scene and a priesthood was inaugurated under the Law, a commandment was given about a tithe that was new in the sense of being in a new framework. In other words, the *old* Law Covenant was a *new* covenant as regards the previous period of time.

Nahor was living back in Abraham's day, and a blessing was given to both genealogical lines. It was said, "The *God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us*" (Gen. 31:53). Both were sons of Terah, but they separated. The Levitical priesthood came "out of the loins of Abraham." The Islamic religion is a late religion, starting around AD 600, but the Muslim/Arab lineage goes back to Abraham. Hence they consider Abraham to be their father, and they claim that the blessing of all the families of the earth will take place in Ishmael's seed. Of course that is not true, but God did bless Ishmael in giving him 12 sons (Gen. 17:20).

Heb. 7:6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

Comment: It is interesting that Melchisedec recognized the promises would come through Abraham, and he blessed Abraham for that reason.

Reply: Yes, and the promises were both natural and spiritual. Even from a natural standpoint, Jews will go back to Israel, the navel of the earth, in the resurrection. They will return to a most precious land spot, the nation of three continents, a land where Jerusalem will be the capital of the world and the holy Third Temple will be built. Although the Jews will have a more favored position, the favor will be so abundant that all will be satisfied. Eventually, there will be no jealousy, for all of the right-hearted will say, "The Father knows best."

Heb. 7:7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

"The less [Abraham] is blessed of the better [Melchisedec]." In other words, what seemed to be a contradiction was not. The very *fact* that the blessing was conferred on Abraham by this mysterious personage makes the mysterious person superior to the one who was blessed.

Heb. 7:8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

We will consider verse 8 backwards. Melchisedec is being referred to in the clause "of whom it is witnessed that he liveth." Two priesthoods were being discussed. The Aaronic priesthood is the lesser of the two, and so is Abraham in this picture. Paul was saying (1) that Melchisedec is superior to both Abraham and Levi, for both paid tithes to Melchisedec, and (2) that the Melchisedec priesthood is superior to the Aaronic priesthood, which is represented in Levi. In many different ways, Paul was trying to teach the lesson that the Mosaic Law is passé and that the greatest privilege is the higher blessing and plane. If the Jews would only hearken, they would be weaned from the Law to Christ. Later Paul mentioned that the Jews will get a blessing anyway, but here was their golden opportunity, which they should not waste. This is only one of a dozen arguments he used to try to teach the same lesson.

Q: What is the thought of the expression "it is witnessed that he liveth"? Did Paul say this because there is no record of Melchisedec's dying?

A: That is one reason, but in addition, the Melchisedec priesthood succeeds the Aaronic priesthood. The Law ceases—it becomes dead—to Jews who accept Christ and consecrate. The Law was already dead to Gentiles because they were never under it, but the Jews were twice dead—they were dead under Adam and dead under the Law—so when Christ came, they were freed from two types of death.

The Melchisedec priesthood will abide continually until the end of the Kingdom Age. Anyone who sins after that will die immediately with no possibility of a resurrection. Why? Because those who pass the test in the Little Season will have *full light*. To repeat: the human race will have fullness of light and opportunity and a period of development, so sin will not be tolerated henceforth. That does not mean, however, that in the billions of years in the future, someone might not sin. In a general sense, there will be no more death, but God will always have the prerogative of Second Death. Never again will sin be tolerated for any length of time. If a person sins, he will be extinguished. That way the human race will remain perfect forever.

The angelic host had the same experience. Adam was created perfect, he sinned, and his race suffered. The angels were created perfect, but some sinned. However, the angels existed without sinning for many years—we do not know how long. No angel had ever died, and there was no sickness that we know of. Death and disease first occurred down here, for when angels sinned, they were imprisoned, not put to death. The holy angels stood their test, and so did the patriarchs, who will not die. Even though the Ancient Worthies will be under the New Covenant in the Kingdom Age, they will not sin because their faith is crystallized.

The point is that beyond the Kingdom Age, there will be no excuse for sin. Future generations who will be created beyond the Kingdom Age will know all about what happened down here during the permission of evil—how Jesus Christ died on the Cross, what the Ancient Worthies and the saints did, how the human race was given an opportunity for life during the Kingdom Age, etc. Therefore, no other beings on any planet will have to resist sin from the standpoint of experience. Experience was the test of the angels; they actually went through a test, but those who failed did not have previous information. Therefore, there is some hope for the fallen angels—just as there is hope for the human race.

Q: Then for the fallen angels, who are presently confined in *tartaroo*, is the experience similar to what the human race experiences in going into the tomb?

A: Yes. The fallen angels do not die in *tartaroo*, but they have the same experience.

For sentient beings beyond the Kingdom Age, the teacher will not be experience but *observation*. For Christians now, their “observation” is the *study* of Scripture. In the future, study will not be necessary, for God’s requirements will be as plain as the nose on one’s face. All beings throughout the universe will see earth’s history replayed—the Inquisition, the horrors of violence and war, etc. In other words, they will vicariously experience earth’s history by observation. Sin has served its purpose and henceforth, throughout eternity, will not be allowed to exist for any duration of time. The permission of evil is a lesson forever.

Now we can understand how the “smoke of her burning” will rise up forever and ever (Rev. 18:9,10; 19:3). The *memory* of the permission of evil will be *perpetual* and have a salutary effect on all who properly observe it. God’s thinking and motive in allowing the permission of evil are to bless as many as possible with everlasting life.

Comment: Since God is the One who calls us, He will probably be the happiest if we make our calling and election sure.

Reply: He will be the happiest in the sense that the divine family will be the most pleasing to Him. In a spiritual sense, the Little Flock are called “a royal diadem in the hand of thy God” (Isa. 62:3).

Q: Today the mind-set of Orthodox Jews is on preparing the instruments of the Third Temple, but will we have the same type of problem that Paul had in trying to get through to them, for they do not even understand Melchisedec?

A: Yes. They stick to Abraham, Moses, and the Aaronic priesthood.

Q: Who or what witnesses that Melchisedec “liveth”?

A: Melchisedec’s living is witnessed in both type and antitype. The type does not tell about Melchisedec’s dying. In regard to the antitype, Paul said that the service of the Melchisedec priesthood will not die. The New Covenant will be a New (Law) Covenant.

The account does not spell out that when the Kingdom Age ends, there will be no more Temple services, sacrifices, etc. On the one hand, the account is just silent. On the other hand, when the one who mediates steps out, ending a covenant, the two parties come together. Therefore, by indirect reasoning, we can see some things fairly logically.

Heb. 7:9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.

Ironically, the paying of tithes worked both ways. Levi received tithes, from his generation on, through the Levitical priesthood, but the Levitical priesthood paid tithes to Melchisedec “in Abraham.” Paul prefaced his reasoning with the statement (in verse 7) that what seems to be a contradiction is not a contradiction. He used sanctified common sense.

Heb. 7:10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

Verse 10 shows the importance of the genetic factor. Some good lessons can be learned through genealogy, but like the stars, for example, we must not give it undue time and attention as a study (1 Tim. 1:4). It is true that the stars have lessons, but we are not to make astronomy our study. Our focus should be as Paul said, “This one thing I do”; that is, he ran for the prize of the high calling (Phil. 3:13).

Heb. 7:11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

Paul continued to use sanctified common-sense reasoning. If he talked about the Melchisedec priesthood as being superior to the Levitical priesthood, wouldn’t we want to know more about it? Much earlier Paul said to the Hebrews, “I would like to tell you about Melchisedec, but you are dull of hearing and need the milk of the Word. You must get beyond baptisms, restitution, etc.—the ABC’s—for the main objective is to become part of this Melchisedec priesthood.” Other apostles spoke of this priesthood as the calling of kings and priests (1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10).

“What further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec,” especially if the Melchisedec priesthood is an *abiding* priesthood that is not meant to have a successor? What it pictures is superior to Levi and anything that Levi represents. Therefore, there is a death sentence on the old Mosaic Law.

When the eyes of the Jews, who have been trained under the Law, are opened in the Kingdom, they will have a sense of guilt that all of these promises were left to them, yet they crucified the Messiah. What did Jesus say of the woman who came and washed his feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair as a towel? “Greater love is commensurate with the degree of a feeling of guilt over past sins” (Luke 7:44-47 paraphrase). Jesus stated this principle to the Laodicean church: “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth” (Rev. 3:15,16). When the Jews see what they have done, they will become superhot compared to others who have been living as regular people and will get life but not any special reward. On the natural plane, the Jews will have a more natural honor, for it is “to the Jew first,” and then the Gentiles will have to become Israelites in some sort of service (Rom. 1:16). We are baptized into Christ in this age, and there may be some kind of baptism in the Kingdom Age. At any rate, greater honor will go to the Jews, but they will also experience greater shame and humiliation, which will serve a very good purpose. If they have been so hard-nosed the other way, then when they are changed, they will be hard-nosed for righteousness. As we have tried to say in the past, a wild horse that is broken is more obedient than an animal that is docile to begin with. Thus when the Jews are doctrinally informed and instructed, they will be more stalwart in righteousness than the ordinary Gentile.

Q: Is verse 11 saying that because perfection does not come by the Levitical priesthood, we need the Melchisedec priesthood?

A: That is or is not true depending on the perspective. Perfection did come from the Levitical priesthood as far as Christ, an individual, was concerned. We have to read Paul’s reasoning with understanding because there are exceptions. Very often Christians of all backgrounds go by the majority rule, but is the majority really righteous? No. The Levitical priesthood served a purpose, but as far as the nation was concerned, it did not grant the reward of life. However, it did grant the *opportunity* because God said to Israel, “If you obey my Law with your *whole* heart, I will make you a kingdom of priests.” The “kingdom” would be the Melchisedec priesthood. Thus the Jews were given the opportunity of the high calling. In fact, that is why Jesus initially came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel at his First Advent and later went to the Samaritans, who were half-breeds and hence better than the Gentiles. He preached first to the Israelites, then to the Samaritans, and finally to the Gentiles.

Heb. 7:12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

Verse 12 is self-explanatory in view of what has already been explained. The Law becomes passé when we think of the new order, which had a start when Jesus, the leader, was on the scene.

Heb. 7:13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

“For he [Melchisedec] of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe [than Levi], of which no man gave attendance at the altar.” Verses 11 and 12 said, “Another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron ... For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.” Melchisedec would have to be of another tribe because he came on the scene before either Levi or Aaron was born. Therefore, he preceded the selection of the Levitical priesthood.

Heb. 7:14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

Moses spoke nothing about the priesthood with regard to Jesus. In the past, we suggested the faint possibility that Jesus might have a Levitical (or Aaronic) strain, but that would be through the maternal line, whereas for the Aaronic priesthood, one had to be a *son* of Levi in a more direct sense.

Q: Does the statement “Thou art a priest for ever after the *order* of Melchisedec” refer to the *office* rather than to a particular priestly line?

A: In the final analysis, Melchisedec refers to a *priesthood* rather than to a single person.

Comment: The Revised Standard reads, “For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.”

Reply: “Moses spake nothing” about Jesus in connection with the priesthood of the Mosaic Law. Therefore, the Jews felt that the priesthood would have to trace their lineage back strictly to Aaron. Paul brought Levi into the account because he wanted to show that Levi was in the loins of Abraham when tithes were paid to Melchisedec.

Comment: Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec while the 12 tribes were still in his loins.

Reply: Yes. No matter how the subject is reasoned, Melchisedec *preceded* (and hence was *superior to*) Abraham, Levi, and Aaron, the first high priest in the Mosaic arrangement.

Heb. 7:15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

The thought is, “After the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest[hood].” Jesus was not the antitypical Melchisedec until he again became a spirit being. From then on, his followers were after the *order* of Melchisedec. In other words, Melchisedec typified a new and different priesthood. Paul’s arguments were *powerful* but simple, yet since the Jews had been indoctrinated over centuries of time, it was almost impossible to convince them. It seems that unless the Lord first softens up an individual, he will not start to listen. Paul himself was an example. He was a very zealous, eager, consecrated, and knowledgeable Jew, but he did not have the proper understanding until he was knocked down.

Q: Did the Jews think that Messiah had to come from their Aaronic priestly ranks?

A: Yes, because they did not give credence to Melchisedec. The Hebrews equated the whole Old Testament with Moses, just as we equate the New Testament with Jesus and the gospel, which is predicated on the foundation truth that Jesus Christ “taste[d] death for every man,” having given his life “a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9). With their schooling, the Jews overlooked the significance of this mysterious person, Melchisedec. Earlier Paul said, “I would like to speak more about Melchisedec, but you are dull of hearing” (Heb. 5:10,11). Then in chapters 6 and 7, he tried to give the Jews the ABC’s of understanding. He used a simple type of logic based solely on the Old Testament and the Tabernacle and its services and priesthood, which were a shadow of things to come that were superior to the Aaronic priesthood.

First, Paul used reasoning to start the Jews thinking, and the clincher came when he actually quoted from the Old Testament. Psalm 110:4, which says, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek,” definitely speaks of a different and superior priesthood to which Jesus attained. Devout Jews, who recognized Aaron and the priesthood, should have wanted to hear more about this superior priest who was on the scene before Aaron. The Scripture about

Messiah's being appointed after the order of Melchisedec would then have been a shocker. Paul led up to this Scripture in another "ABC" method of simple reasoning.

Heb. 7:16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

Comment: Jesus, the Messiah, was "not after" Aaron in the flesh.

Reply: Yes. Jesus' coming on the scene had nothing to do with a "carnal commandment." He had no father or mother and no beginning, as it were; he just appeared on the scene, whereas in the Law, Aaron was called of God. (Although in one sense, Jesus was called in a similar manner, his calling was in a typical sense and not after the order of the Aaronic priesthood.)

The carnal commandment was merely a *shadow* of things to come, so even though the high priest in the Aaronic priesthood sometimes pictures Jesus in glory, the antitype was inserted later. For instance, in Leviticus 16, it was *after* the blood of the Lord's goat was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy that Aaron changed into garments of glory and beauty. Therefore, although Aaron in his garments of glory and beauty did picture Christ, *it was not in the carnal way of a literal lineage but in a typical sense.* From that perspective, the Law is not the reality but a shadow, type, or picture of another arrangement. Nevertheless, there was a similarity in principle and even in time sequence.

Comment: It is interesting that the Aaronic priesthood will not officiate in the Kingdom Age.

Reply: Aaron will feel this keenly from one standpoint, but he will be honored from another standpoint.

Jesus is made "after the power of an endless life." Now that Jesus has been raised, he will not die anymore. Not only did he qualify because of his obedience, but he was endowed with the receipt of office when he was told that he was "after the order of Melchisedec."

Paul was saying that in the *literal* picture, there was a *literal* Tabernacle and a *literal* Aaronic priesthood, and the high priest died. Then a son was made high priest; when he died, the cycle continued over and over. In regard to cancellation of sin, the atonement had to be repeated every year. Paul used multiple lines of reasoning that were almost like sanctified common sense. Once understood, the reasoning is very plain. However, the priesthood back there was so engrossed in their own position that they did not give attention to the *authority* for the priesthood, which is in the Old Testament. If the priests had desired to fulfill the office perfectly in doing God's will, they would have gone back and studied the Scriptures more carefully. Jesus said several times, "You mean to say that you are a priest [or a doctor of the law, etc.] and you do not know the Scriptures?" Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin, was an exception, for he listened and appreciated Jesus' reasoning. In Paul's day, Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and all his house were an exception (Acts 18:8). Jesus said, "A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:23). One can be "rich" with power or influence as well as with money.

Heb. 7:17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Verse 17 is a quote from Psalm 110:4, "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." David prophesied that the Messiah to come would have a personal endorsement from Jehovah. God would proclaim him to be a priest after the order of Melchisedec for a period of time (Hebrew *olam*). Although the time period was expressed for the moment in an indefinite fashion, the use of *olam* did not preclude a

definite beginning and a definite ending. Sometimes the Hebrew word has a more elastic meaning depending on context. Once atonement is fully reached at the end of the Kingdom Age and all sinners have been purged, there will be no more need for a priesthood. From that time forward, anyone who sins will receive immediate judgment. The statement that there will be no more death is a *general* condition, for common sense would say that with free moral agency, a few individuals throughout eternity will sin. However, the likelihood is that prudence will make intelligent sentient beings accept the training and that the training will eventually bring common sense, especially when they see *visually* what the permission of evil did in past history down here. The lessons will be awesome. God willing, to be favored to see future history, as well as past history as it actually occurred, will bring not only wonder and beauty with regard to the good but also an everlasting smoke, or stench, with regard to the evil, so that one will want to dwell only on the good parts.

Comment: The *Diaglott* has, “Thou art a priest for the age.”

Heb. 7:18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

The “weakness” is that the Law did not bring the results hoped for—eternal life and perfection of character. In addition, the fact that another (Melchisedec) priesthood would come on the scene meant that a change was coming. Paul showed it is impossible for the conscientious believer to obey the Law and its principles perfectly, yet some Christians think that once they accept Christ, it is possible to keep the Law perfectly and, therefore, to receive the justification of the Law. They think justification comes by both the deeds of the Law and Jesus Christ, but such thinking radically contradicts both the Grace Covenant for the consecrated now and the New Covenant for the world in the Kingdom. The change from the old Law arrangement is essential if one is to get life.

The Law is “unprofitable” from the standpoint of gaining the reward of everlasting life. Only Jesus was able to so obey. However, the Law is profitable for making one realize he is a sinner in need of a Savior; it is a schoolmaster to bring the Jews to Christ (Gal. 3:24). Moreover, its *principles*, which are *God’s* thinking, are profitable for *all* to study.

Heb. 7:19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

What is the thought of “the bringing in of a better hope”?

Comment: The “better hope” is grace, the spirit of the Law, and life, as well as the Melchisedec priesthood.

Reply: Jews were required to obey the *letter* of the Law, whereas the Grace Covenant is the *spirit* of the Law. God looks for *willingness of the heart* to obey. Faith is the justifying factor, but faith has a lot of ingredients. *Natural* faith is believing that there is a God and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him, but *spiritual* faith is more embracing (Heb. 11:6). Faith is not credulity; it is based on *substance*, on something mathematical and specifically stated, that is, on *God’s Word*, both the Old and New Testaments. Real faith produces works.

“The law made nothing perfect,” but it did make Jesus perfect. Therefore, Paul’s *entire* letter to the Hebrews is needed in order to get the mood. He was saying that the Law did not produce the hopes that were generated in the nation of Israel when God said, “If you obey my Law, you will get everlasting life.” Therefore, from the standpoint of Jesus’ being the only one who benefited from the Law versus the disobedience of billions of people, Paul could say in a

common-sense way, “The law made nothing perfect.”

Not only was Jesus born perfect, but he had to *remain* perfect. For all the rest, who were not born perfect, no matter how hard they tried, they could not fulfill the deeds of the Law. We are reminded of the rich, young ruler who came to Jesus. To take the extra step of faith in Jesus’ ministry was a little too much for him. Jesus said, “If you will be perfect, just do one little thing. Go and sell all that you have, and give the proceeds to the poor; then you will have treasure in heaven. Come and follow *me*” (Matt. 19:21 paraphrase). Jesus’ new ministry was to follow *him*; it was not a ministry of charity to the poor.

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins is fraught with meaning (Matt. 25:1-13). Much is to be learned by going over it again and again, for in reality, the parable indicates that even the wisest of the virgins are still asleep as far as what is being taught. A *Reprint* article on the enthusiasm of the church of Thessalonica, written by someone other than Bro. Russell, is very uplifting. It caught perfectly the mood of the Thessalonians at that time. They waited *literally* from day to day for Jesus to return, but what about us? The attitude is that the Lord returned in 1874, so since he is already here, why look for his coming? The doctrine of the Second Presence, true as it is—and we believe it wholeheartedly—has led to a diminution of wanting to die and be with the Lord. How many of us are eager to die *now*? Of course we probably feel that we need more time to make ourselves ready, but the Thessalonians were *eagerly looking forward* to the coming of Jesus to take his Bride home. That hope should be our hope, but what do we do? We build homes, marry, have children, etc., etc. If we *really believed and hoped* that Jesus might come for his Bride *tomorrow*, there are a lot of things we would not do. We are all asleep, but those who accumulate an understanding of prophecy are storing oil in their vessels so that upon awakening, they will at least be informed as to what to do. The parable states that “*all slumbered and slept,*” and it concludes just before the marriage. Prophecy has an important place in the Christian life.

It is very convenient to say that Christ’s return was an awakening instead of a sleep, and it is easy to confuse “sleep” with *inactivity*. However, that is not the lesson of the parable. The parable is emphasizing the *acute sensitivity and desire* of the wise virgins for their change *as soon as possible to be with the Lord Jesus*. If we search our hearts, we find there is a lack, which is understandable because we live in the Laodicean atmosphere. As far as *this subject* is concerned, we are living in a smoke-filled room of indoctrinated understanding that lulls us to sleep. We are not speaking of activity and love for God and Jesus—we are not questioning the sincerity of any Christian who has consecrated and left the world—for both the Heavenly Father and Jesus recognize the marvelous step of a newborn child. The point is to eagerly anticipate and be ready for our change.

The Book of Hebrews brought in the better hope of the gospel of faith. Abraham was justified because he believed God. By faith, he left Ur of the Chaldees and went on a long and difficult journey to an unknown land. Even when he got to that land—and as a result of an entire life of faith—all he had was a burial plot. Justifying faith is very comforting, for from a pragmatic standpoint, we recognize that corruption and sin from Adam are in our body members. While God deals with us as new creatures, we have problems intellectually, morally, and physically because we are in an earthen vessel. But we have this better hope of being justified by faith, and we know that the Lord is teaching us and that there are stages of growth. The Christian walk is a *process* of development from a baby to a child, to a teenager, to manhood, and to great maturity, and we make allowances accordingly.

Jesus opened up “a new and living way” (Heb. 10:20). The “old way” is a history of death, for as we look out on the human scene, we see that everyone is dying. Incidentally, here again there is an exception, for Enoch and Elijah did not die. However, we are to go by the thinking

of Scripture as stated from a pragmatic standpoint. Problems will develop if we get too technical. In fact, it is a problem to be either too liberal or too strict.

Heb. 7:20 And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest:

Heb. 7:21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

While there were various high priests in Israel, they became high priest without an oath or a special affirmation from God, for the Law did not specify that they had to take an oath. It would be interesting to know how the different high priests came into office. For instance, according to the Law, not only did they have to be 30 years of age, but also they had to be without infirmity, but who did the inspecting? Who examined them bodily? In the Aaronic priesthood, a high priest had, say, four or five sons. Which one of those sons would become the succeeding high priest? Logically, the firstborn son would be selected, but he was disqualified if he did not meet the requirements. The Law did not state that when a priest succeeded to the office of high priest, he had to take an oath, but even if some individuals decided to take an oath anyway, what mattered was *God's* requirement.

With the Melchisedec priesthood, there was the double blessing that *God*, with an *oath*, confirmed Jesus as being of the order of this superior priesthood. Jesus was made a priest forever with an oath. The Father's speaking *firmly and strongly* constituted the oath: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." God confirmed the Melchisedec priesthood with an oath, but He did not confirm the Aaronic priesthood (Aaron's successors) with an oath.

Heb. 7:22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

Jesus was "made a surety of a better testament [or covenant, that is, the Grace Covenant]" for the consecrated in the Gospel Age. The promise was made to Abraham of both a spiritual and a natural seed. That picture was confirmed with an oath *after* Abraham had obeyed by going to the land God had promised. By entering that land, Abraham secured the promise, and that which had previously been conditional now became unconditional. But even the unconditional covenant was confirmed with an oath when Abraham offered up Isaac, his son. Elsewhere Paul showed that Isaac is a picture of The Christ class, the antitypical priesthood (Gal. 4:28).

Heb. 7:23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

Again Paul used common-sense reasoning to show the frailty of the Law Covenant, for there was a problem in its perpetuity. The "many priests ... were not suffered to continue by reason of death."

Heb. 7:24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

In contrast, the Melchisedec priesthood is "unchangeable."

Heb. 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Jesus "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Jesus had to suffer and die to provide the Ransom for man, but he also had to become familiar with the weaknesses of the human race in order to be

perfected for the office of priesthood. The experience of coming down here enabled him to be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb. 4:15).

Verse 25 demands an understanding of the call of Christ. In the four Gospels, plus the apostolic epistles, which tell about the gospel of Christ, we get a fullness of the realization that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost. In addition to the Book of Hebrews, Paul used several types of common-sense reasoning on this subject in his other epistles. Jesus is a sympathetic High Priest because he knows our experiences. Therefore, for us to be truly sympathetic to the trials of others, we have to be touched with similar experiences. For instance, when a mother bears a child, only another mother can fully appreciate the accompanying pains and anxieties. While a dutiful husband can empathetically enter into that experience, it is nothing like the reality. Thus Jesus’ suffering on the Cross, plus the experience of man’s inhumanity being inflicted on him, was very tenderizing. At that time, Jesus was under the heavy hand of the Father, who pressed him almost to the breaking point. Iron that is heated to an extreme temperature and suddenly chilled is hardened into steel with the addition of antimony. The same process both hardens (or crystallizes) a person in the intellectual sense and tenderizes him in the emotional sense so that he has one mind, one goal. In a way, the heart is separate with its bowels of mercy.

Jesus is able to save “to the uttermost” all who come to God through him—the Little Flock, the Great Company, and the world of mankind—because “he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Of course not until the Christian dies is his course sealed, whether favorable or unfavorable. But of all those who are saved, of whatever class, they will be saved *completely* after going through a test (see *Diaglott*). As a sympathetic High Priest, Jesus is able to offer advice, encouragement, and admonitions that are invaluable; a price cannot be put on his assistance, which has a healing effect on the soul.

Heb. 7:26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

How dramatically verse 26 is worded! Paul said the same thing four different ways; namely, Jesus, our High Priest, is “holy, harmless, undefiled, [and] separate from sinners.” Moreover, he is “made higher than the heavens.”

Heb. 7:27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

The Law required almost vain repetition yet was not successful in doing what Jesus accomplished by dying *once*. The Day of Atonement occurred annually, whereas Jesus’ death, which occurred once, is *ever efficacious*; it is a *continuing* healing and cleansing.

Q: What “daily” sacrifices was Paul referring to in the clause “Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice”?

A: The word “daily” can mean “annual” as in an *annual* sacrifice, hence the Day of Atonement. Thus “daily” has the thought of “repetitive”; sacrifices were offered in a *repetitive* fashion. From another standpoint, a high priest was always available so that not only on the Day of Atonement but also on subsequent days, on a daily basis, the people could come into the Court and offer a sin offering or a trespass offering. Jesus does not need to offer such sacrifices, for he cleansed sin with the *one* sacrifice of *himself*.

Paul’s reasoning with regard to the high priest’s offering up “sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s” is definitely a reference to the Day of Atonement. In addition to the Day of Atonement, if a high priest sinned, he offered a sacrifice for himself, or if the whole

nation sinned, a sacrifice was offered for the people's sin.

Heb. 7:28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

The "oath, which was since [after] the law," is "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." There was another oath *before* the Law, namely, the oath to Abraham, but the oath after the Law pertains to the "Son, who is consecrated for evermore."

Comment: In the *Diaglott*, "who is consecrated for evermore" is rendered "who has been perfected for the age."

Reply: The word rendered "evermore" is the Greek *aion*, meaning "age." Although *aion* has a variety of applications, it is a continuum of indefinite length. However, that *indefinite* length is sometimes determined as a *definite* length in the context where it is found. Thus the word has an elastic interpretation of endurance, but the use made of that word determines whether it means "everlasting perpetuity" or "lasting for an age."

Heb. 8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

Heb. 8:2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

This summation has to do with Jesus' role as High Priest "after the order of Melchisedec," not Aaron (Heb. 5:6,10; 6:20; 7:11,17,21). In contradistinction to Jesus, who is "alive for evermore," the high priest under the Mosaic order died and had to be frequently replaced down through history (Rev. 1:18). Jesus is an *abiding and enduring* High Priest of the Melchisedec order. Even the Melchisedec priesthood itself is far more effective than the Aaronic priesthood. The apostles Peter and John confirmed the Melchisedec priesthood by saying that Christians are called to be kings and priests (1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). Where is the Tabernacle of Moses? It is gone. Where is Solomon's Temple? It is gone. Therefore, even the institution has decayed. In fact, the Dome of the Rock sits on the land reserved for the future Temple.

With regard to the time period, God said He would make a New Covenant with the house of Judah and the house of Israel, which covenant they broke (Jer. 31:31-33). Paul reasoned that once there was a new priest "after the order of Melchisedec," there was also a new covenant, the Grace Covenant, which makes the Law Covenant archaic. Although not completely dead yet, the old Law Covenant is dying. To get out of that covenant, the Jew has to die to self-will, to the Law, and become alive to Christ. In that way, the old Law Covenant no longer has a hold on him. For the unconverted Jew, the Law is still binding, but its days are numbered, for it waxes old. Paul used powerful, simple, wonderful logic, and one does not have to be a college graduate in order to understand it.

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest [not like Aaron], who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." When we read verses 1 and 2, there appears to be a contradiction at first glance, but that is not the case. For instance, when Paul said, "The Lord *pitched* [the true tabernacle], and not man," he was not speaking of the measurements or pattern of the Mosaic Tabernacle because the pattern of that *typical* Tabernacle was as much from God as is the new *spiritual* tabernacle. Both are of God, but the *making* of the Tabernacle in the wilderness was by *man*, for Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the measurements and superintended the building of a *literal* structure,

and Bezaleel, Aholiab, and others were involved. But that literal structure did not endure.

Heb. 8:3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

Paul was talking about the Day of Atonement. The high priest offered the sacrifices of the people, but “this man” Jesus had “somewhat also to offer,” that is, himself and the merit of his sacrifice. In other words, Jesus had to do two things. He had to obtain the prize of the Law, which was everlasting human life through perfect obedience. Jesus cannot come back to earth as a human because he gave that right to life for the Christian’s justification in the Gospel Age and the Ransom of mankind in the next age. He turned over to God his right to human life, and God gave him a different life, a new life, to replace that human life. As a spirit being in heaven, Jesus is out of the Mosaic arrangement and has real life, real merit, to give.

Comment: A good marginal reference for “somewhat also to offer” is Ephesians 5:2, “Christ ... hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”

Reply: Yes. Jesus gave his life once and for all, but that merit *lasts*. Like money in the bank, his merit is imputed, or loaned, to the consecrated to justify them in the present life. In the next age, Jesus’ merit will be turned over to the human race; having been given for Adam, it will be paid in a legalistic fashion. In ransoming Adam, Jesus will be ransoming Adam’s children, who never had a right to life but were condemned through Adam’s sin.

Heb. 8:4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

If Jesus “were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are [Aaronic] priests that offer gifts according to the law.” At the time of the writing of the Book of Hebrews, there was a Temple in Jerusalem with a functioning priesthood. Not only was that priesthood not canceled, but also the Jew was obligated to follow the Law to the best of his ability, which included offering sacrifices. Even when the Temple was destroyed in AD 69-70, unconverted Jews were still under the Law. Therefore, if Jesus were on earth, he would have interfered with an already existing priesthood, which was God’s arrangement. Although the Aaronic priesthood was not canceled immediately per se for Jews who remained under the Law, there was a different circumstance for Jews who did not remain under the Law, and Paul would proceed to talk about those Jews who had accepted Christ. His point was that Jesus, the High Priest of the new arrangement, had to be in heaven so that he could offer his life as a ransom. Had Jesus *remained* down here and *not died on the Cross*, he would have had nothing to offer to cover sin except in a typical fashion, and typical sacrifices, being ceremonial, did not have any real merit. But since Jesus had died on the Cross, been raised, and ascended to heaven as a High Priest, he now had his ransom sacrifice to offer, and that sacrifice, which did not have to be repeated, became the basis for *real* salvation.

The subject of the Melchisedec priesthood was very difficult for Jews living back there. Paul tried to reason effectively with people who had been indoctrinated under the Law for generations. He wanted them to see that they could be released from the bondage of the Law and find freedom because Jesus had “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”—a *new way* (2 Tim. 1:10).

Heb. 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mount.

The priests under the Aaronic priesthood “serve[d] unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle.” When Moses was up on Mount Sinai for 40 days, he was told to “make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mount.” Not only did Moses see the Tabernacle in vision for that length of time—with the right proportions and materials—but also the Holy Spirit impressed the details on his mind. Certainly the exceedingly long sermon that Moses gave to the nation of Israel at the end of his life, as recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy, showed the excellence of even his natural mind and memory. Moses was providentially born to be a mediator of the old Law Covenant, but as wonderful as he was, he could not produce life, even though he had the power to condemn and many died. But when Moses passed off the scene, how long did obedience last? When Jesus passed off the scene, a little group of followers survived, even though Satan tried to stamp them out. He started by crucifying Jesus, the Head of the Church, but he failed in other respects, for both the Jew and the true Christian Church have maintained their identity. Paul’s arguments were wonderful, but if one does not have a hearing ear, even the tongue of Jesus would not penetrate a heart that is not in the proper condition.

Heb. 8:6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

Jesus obtained a “more excellent ministry” than Aaron, and he will be “the mediator of a better covenant [the New Covenant]” in the Kingdom Age. The New Covenant will have a better Mediator and “better promises,” that is, promises of *real life* to those who obey and maintain obedience through the testing of the Kingdom Age. The gospel Church has a covenant of faith, whereas the world will have a covenant of works or deeds. As long as the people diligently apply themselves to obey, they will get health as a reward, and that health, leading to perfection, will enable them to keep the New (Law) Covenant, which will have principles similar to those of the old Law Covenant. The New Covenant, to be made with the nation of Israel, will take time, and to get life under the terms of that covenant, the Gentiles will have to become proselyte Jews.

Heb. 8:7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

What simple logic! If the first Law Covenant had been “faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second [Law Covenant].” The very fact that God, who made the old covenant, will make a new covenant proves that the old one was not effectual as far as bringing salvation to the Jews—whether as a nation or as individuals.

Heb. 8:8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

“For finding fault with them [the Jews under the old Law Covenant], he [the Lord] saith, Behold, the days come ... when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” Verse 8 is self-explanatory.

Heb. 8:9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

Verse 9 brings in some new details. The Israelites “continued not in my [old Law] covenant.” At first, they obeyed, for they observed the Passover and left Egypt. Having seen God’s judgments—the ten plagues and the opening of the Red Sea—they were obedient at the very beginning of the Exodus, but it took only three or four days of being in Sinai for problems to

begin. Proof of their initial obedience is the fact that there is no mention in Holy Writ of any Jew dying in the departure from Egypt. The last seven plagues affected only the Egyptians, so we know that the Jews were inviolate after the first three plagues. And even though the Jews suffered in the first three plagues, the account does not state that any died. Real deaths occurred under the tenth plague to those who did not have blood on their doorposts; the firstborn of the Egyptians died throughout the land.

“Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.” Paul was saying that the Law Covenant began not at Mount Sinai but when it was proposed to the Israelites in Egypt, prior to the start of the plagues. When God appeared to the Israelites at Mount Sinai on the third day, He talked to them in solitude. Some had already died, such as in the battle with the Amalekites. God had promised Moses earlier at the burning bush that He would see the Israelites at Mount Sinai, thus giving a visual confirmation of His dealing with His people (Exod. 3:12).

The point is that after crossing the Red Sea and going a three-day journey into Sinai (seven days from the time they had left Rameses), the Israelites began to murmur and disobey. In fact, ten noteworthy disobedient acts were committed by the nation as a whole.

Heb. 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

Paul indicated earlier that the Law was not completely terminated but would abide for a while and then eventually fade out of existence in due time. Accordingly, “after those days” would be the days subsequent to the Gospel Age. During the Gospel Age, the Jews were scattered. In the Diaspora, they had no Temple, just local synagogues which they built as houses of worship and congregation to serve the Lord as best they could, and this spirit was proper. But here Paul was saying that God would put His laws and name into the minds and hearts of the Jews so that He would be their God and they would be His people. To date, this has not happened in a real sense because during the Gospel Age, God turned His back to the Jews. Only recently in history, since 1878, can we begin to see a turnabout, a change of direction, where the Jews are regathering to Israel. Beginning in 1878, the first signs of a measure of favor were seen in a very real way to those who willingly sacrificed and went back to the homeland.

“I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” Before a law can be written accurately in the heart, it has to enter the mind. The heart is the seat of emotions, but it also responds to the instruction of the mind as best it can. When will this writing in mind and heart, in word and deed, begin? It will start after Jacob’s Trouble, when Israel becomes a recognized nation under God.

Comment: Proof that this “writing” is progressive is Revelation 21:7, “He that *overcometh* shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” The progress one makes will not be finalized until after the Little Season.

Heb. 8:11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

When Jacob is delivered, will there be any need to tell the Jews that their God is God and that they are His people? Certainly the Jewish survivors in Israel and in other lands—the living generation—will know. For those in the tomb, who will be raised in waves, this instruction will take most of the Kingdom Age. The governmental, educational, religious, and civil systems will all operate under a holy influence. Even a fool will know the way (Isa. 35:8). The eyes and

minds of the people will be opened to receive instruction. We think that some children among the Holy Remnant will be delivered, probably due to their family relationship with the ones whose names are “written in the book” (Dan. 12:1; Isa. 4:3). The individuals whose names are written are *guaranteed* to survive Jacob’s Trouble, but that does not mean God cannot save others as well. Thus when the Kingdom is initially set up, the people will be of all ages: children, middle-aged, adults, and elderly. In other words, in addition to the Holy Remnant, whose names will be written in advance, subsidiary people will be saved, with some kind of screening being done from the spirit realm. Instruction will be complete and pure. What is written, said, done, and shown will be pure, not distorted as at present. As a result, the people will know the Lord almost immediately—perhaps in a couple of days from the time they are awakened from the tomb. All will know the Lord “from the least to the greatest.”

Heb. 8:12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

Heb. 8:13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

At that time, God will remember no more “their sins and their iniquities,” starting with the living generation. When others come forth from the tomb, they will be given an opportunity for life. Those who arise will know about their dying moments and preceding circumstances. Whether they have been asleep in death for thousands of years or for only a short time, to come forth under this new condition will be a traumatic experience. After the shock wears off, sanity will sort of become normalized where the people can then begin to understand this new situation. Family reunions will take place in reverse order, starting with those who most recently died and going back to Adam.

Heb. 9:1 Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

Heb. 9:2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary.

Now Paul went back to the original Tabernacle of Moses and spoke of the two compartments, the Holy (called the “sanctuary”) and the Most Holy. Why did he use the term “a worldly sanctuary”?

Comment: The Tabernacle was literal; it was natural.

In the description of the Holy, the “golden censer” is missing (see verse 4). However, the Vatican manuscript, which is as old as the Sinaitic manuscript but not quite as accurate, is superior in some places, and verse 2 is one of those places. Nevertheless, on the whole, the Sinaitic manuscript is superior. One reason is that it has the entire New Testament, whereas the Vaticanus 1209 cuts off in the Book of Hebrews around this chapter. However, just enough leaves are left in the ancient manuscript that verse 2 is included. The Vatican manuscript tells that the golden censer, called the “golden altar of incense” in the *Diaglott*, is in the Holy.

Heb. 9:3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

Paul styled the Most Holy “the Holiest of all.” When verses 2 and 3 are compared, we see that Paul called both the Holy and the Most Holy a “tabernacle.” In Exodus 40:19, we read that the Tabernacle (the Holy and the Most Holy) was under the tent. And in some cases, the “tabernacle” takes on the larger, broad-brush meaning to include the outside Court. In a

particular sense, the Tabernacle is the enclosure under the skins, under the tent of testimony.

In the Gospel Age, the Church is the “sanctuary.” Paul said that we “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6). Therefore, during the present age, the Holy has been a holy sanctuary as well as a peaceful, restful place. There are no storms in the Holy for the new creature. Light is supplied from a candlestick, and a prayer altar and shewbread are there. No matter how turbulent conditions are outside, the Holy condition is a dwelling place of rest, peace, and quiet for the new creature. However, the flesh is outside in the Court, where, under certain circumstances, there can be a measure of flack.

Heb. 9:4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

As already stated, the first part of verse 4 pertaining to the golden censer should be in verse 2. Even though the Sinaitic and the Vatican are the oldest manuscripts available and scholars as a whole admit that they are contemporaneous, they are not the originals. These are the most ancient copies that we have, one being of the New Testament in its entirety and the other being up through part of the Book of Hebrews. The Alexandrian manuscript followed, and then came a big time gap. As time went on, and particularly with the invention of the Gutenberg press, a serious concerted effort was made to have a complete manuscript with one of two principles. (1) We usually give priority and attention to the *most ancient* manuscripts, whereas (2) the general Christian world goes by the *abundance* of testimony. However, the latter method is not advisable because human error crept in, especially erroneous doctrinal beliefs. For example, the Roman Catholic Church tried to influence doctrine, for they feel that the church doctrine is superior to apostolic doctrine. As justification, they say that the apostles had a conference in Paul’s day to decide how to handle certain issues (Acts 15:13-21). As successive councils were held down through the Gospel Age, each council felt that its decisions were superior to those of the preceding council.

In the Most Holy were the “ark of the covenant ... [in which were] the golden pot that had manna, ... Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the [Law] covenant.” Of the three articles in the Ark of the Covenant, two of them disappeared: the golden pot of manna and Aaron’s rod. When we read Kings and Chronicles, only the tables of the Law remained. The absence of the two articles is really proper, for the New Covenant will be made with the natural house of Israel. The rod that budded pertains to the selection of the spiritual priesthood, and the uncorruptible manna in the golden pot is the food of the Church. Just as the Jewish Mosaic Law faded out and was replaced with the Christian sanctuary, spiritually speaking, so as time goes on, the Church will be complete and phase out while the New Covenant with Jesus as the Mediator phases in down here.

Paul was describing the Mosaic Tabernacle, and now he would start the story all over again but add a few other thoughts. In Ezekiel’s Temple, even the Ark of the Covenant will be missing, and instead of the tables of the Law—instead of the Bible itself per se being the instructor—there will be a *living* Bible, the spiritual Church, the Law going forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord through the Ancient Worthies from Jerusalem. The news media in the Kingdom will not be reading the Bible. The Bible will be an interesting historical book, but specific instructions will be given that are necessary for that period of time. The old Law Covenant will become archaic because new circumstances will arise in the Kingdom Age when Jesus is reigning. Just as Paul said that we are living epistles now, so the Ancient Worthies will be living epistles down here in the Kingdom Age (2 Cor. 3:2,3).

Heb. 9:5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot

now speak particularly.

“Cherubims of glory” shadowed the Mercy Seat. Paul did not “speak particularly” (go into detail) about the articles of furniture. He merely showed that the first covenant had a literal physical structure that contained furniture. He was setting the stage for an analogy and comparison.

Heb. 9:6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

“The priests went always into the first tabernacle [the Holy], accomplishing the service of God.” Paul was talking about the old arrangement, for which we use the broad term “the sacrifices subsequent to the Day of Atonement.” These were *daily* sacrifices of the people, for which the priests went into the Holy, whereas on the annual Day of Atonement, the high priest went into the Holy and the Most Holy. The priests went into the Holy every day to trim the wicks of the candlestick and supply the oil, and every seven days, they put new bread on the Table of Shewbread. Also, individual offerings were made, and unusual circumstances occurred on certain days other than the Day of Atonement if a priest, a ruler, or the congregation sinned. In other words, there was activity in the Holy every single day, but the Day of Atonement was so superior that there were only a limited number of sacrifices, one of which was the daily offering of two lambs, one at 9 a.m. and the other at 3 p.m. Of course a bullock and the Lord’s goat were offered on the Day of Atonement. Paul would expound upon this subject, but for now he was saying it was unusual that on the Day of Atonement, the high priest went alone into the Holy and the Most Holy. Because that day was very holy and solemn, business was not carried on as usual. Paul would go into detail and try to educate the Hebrews on the sacrifices that the priests performed without knowing the significance.

Heb. 9:7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

The high priest went into the Most Holy alone once each year with, first, the blood of the bullock, which he offered for himself, and, second, the blood of the Lord’s goat, which he offered for the sins of the people. As Bro. Anton Frey said, the blood of a bullock was infused into the goat to make the goat acceptable as an offering for the errors of the people as *national* atonement. In subsequent verses, Paul focused on the meaning of the Day of Atonement services.

Comment: For “errors of the people,” the *Diaglott* interlinear has “ignorances of the people.” Clearly the sins were not willful.

Reply: All the services of Leviticus were for sins of ignorance. Stripes were needed to expiate willful sin. In addition, there was a price to pay, and finally there was an offering.

Heb. 9:8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

The way into the Most Holy (“the holiest of all”) was made manifest when Jesus died.

Heb. 9:9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

Those who had a guilt complex and were honest-hearted back there would admit that when such a service was performed, it was hard to feel the sin was entirely washed away.

Heb. 9:10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

Now Paul was going into sacrifices other than those on the Day of Atonement, even though that seemed to be foremost in his mind, generally speaking. “Carnal ordinances” were earthly ordinances. (“Carnal” is based on a Greek word meaning “flesh.”) Since these ordinances were ordained of God, they could in no way be sinful. We should not cast aspersions on the Law, for God instituted it. The Law was perfect, but we are not justified by the deeds of the Law.

The Law was imposed on the Jews “until the time of reformation,” that is, until the change to the gospel dispensation, when Christ opened up a new and living way, bringing life and immortality to light. The old Tabernacle was supplanted by a new tabernacle, which, in reality, is spiritual. The three tabernacles, listed in chronological sequence, are (1) the archaic tabernacle, (2) the Mosaic Tabernacle, and (3) the antitypical (or spiritual) tabernacle.

Heb. 9:11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

Christ became a high priest “by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building [not of the material Tabernacle of Moses].”

Heb. 9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Christ “by his own blood ... entered in *once* into the holy place [the Most Holy], having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Paul was again focusing on the Day of Atonement, when the high priest went into the Most Holy. He did not go into the Most Holy on the other days of the year unless an emergency arose that would affect the nation. But Paul was talking about that which was authorized on a regular annual basis.

The term “eternal redemption” is tied in with the thought of Jesus’ sacrifice being “once” for all. The “once” is eternal; it is lasting. Paul was trying to show that while the type was *repeated annually*, the antitype *occurred only once*.

Heb. 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

Verse 13 refers to another type of offering that was not annual, namely, the “ashes of an heifer.” The ashes were used for various cleansing rituals. The “blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer ... sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh.” In other words, the ceremonial cleansing was superficial, for it did not purify the heart or salve the conscience of the honest-hearted. However, the many—those who stifled the conscience—felt the ritual was satisfactory. That is true today with the Roman Catholic religion.

The offerings in the early chapters of Leviticus were for sins of *ignorance*; that is, once a person became aware of his sin, he had to make up for his past sins of ignorance. The sacrifices in chapters 1-7 were not for willful sins, generally speaking, although there were a few exceptions. Incidentally, it is dangerous for Christians to be willingly ignorant, thinking that the less they know, the less they are responsible for. Those with this attitude do not want to search too deeply into God’s Word, for in doing so, they would have a sense of guilt and would then have to do or change something.

Heb. 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

How did Christ “through the eternal Spirit” offer himself to God? Because of the *abiding* nature of Jesus’ sin-atonement blood, we can apply for forgiveness by asking God, in the spirit of prayer, in Jesus’ name. Jesus’ blood, offered once for sin, is a *continual* offering. The “eternal [age-lasting, Greek *aionian*] Spirit” is applicable to Christians for the duration of the Gospel Age. Sometimes the best prayers are those offered in agony, remorse, and bitterness of spirit, where the Holy Spirit interprets the words that are not grammatical, intelligible, or sequential. In other words, the Holy Spirit interprets our groanings in times of great distress (Rom. 8:26).

After the Kingdom Age, there will be no further need for sin atonement because sin will no longer exist. With regard to the Church and the Great Company in the Gospel Age, once one dies, his course is finished. What one does before death is significant, for we are told, “Be thou faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10).

Paul was giving principles to show that we have a *living* Savior, who died once. The doctrine of the Mass is an abomination, for it claims to sacrifice Jesus over and over, continually. Supposedly Jesus is crucified afresh each time the Mass is said. It is taught that the symbols represent the actual body and blood of Christ, and these are offered on a repetitive basis—the very thing that Paul said is no longer necessary. Jesus’ sacrifice, once for all, is an *eternal, abiding* redemption. Satan has blinded the minds of the people.

The academic field did not flourish in the past. Since Latin was the mother tongue in the Roman Catholic Church, to be a priest was considered desirable. Priests with talents could be bishops, and perhaps a bishop could become a cardinal, and a cardinal might become pope. Thus the religious field was attractive. In the Old Testament, the people went to the priest, who was the center of attention. In the nominal church, clergy wore rich garments, and people kneeled before them—how flattering! To be in the priesthood itself was a pleasing profession according to the flesh, whereas to be merely a communicant was way down in rank. In fact, communicants were not considered part of the church; they were just beneficiaries of the church’s benevolence for a certain amount of money, burning candles, buying crucifixes, etc. Those with money could “atone” for their sins. In contrast, to be a priest in Moses’ day was a serious matter, for one was responsible for the sin of the nation and had to see that it was atoned for.

Heb. 9:15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

“For this cause he [Christ] is the mediator of the new testament.” The very fact God said, “Behold, the days come ... that I will make a new covenant” made archaic the old Law Covenant; that is, it was waxing old and was on its deathbed (Jer. 31:31). Down to the time of the inauguration of the Kingdom, the Law is binding on the natural Jew who does not accept Christ. Reason should say that the God who ordained the Law will make an allowance where it is impossible to obey, but otherwise, the Jews are obligated to obey. Generally speaking, the Hasidic or Orthodox Jews try to obey the letter of the Law. Some of the Conservative Jews, being right-hearted, are at least trying to enter into the spirit of obedience, whereas the Reform (or liberal) element of Jewry is way out.

Jesus “is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the

promise of eternal inheritance.” The death of the testator is taught under the Law Covenant. It is pictured on the Day of Atonement by the animal on the altar, which represents the death of the flesh of the priest or priesthood. Also, the high priest’s going under the Second Veil into the Most Holy pictures the death of the human body.

Why did Paul use the expression “eternal inheritance,” which is the hope of glory? He was still comparing the old versus the new. Under the old Law Covenant, perfect obedience brought everlasting life. Stated another way, one could inherit life by perfect obedience to the deeds of the Law, and that is what Jesus did. He obeyed the Law throughout his life, and when his life was taken from him in a violent fashion, he did not lose the right to life. Jesus will give his right to eternal human life to redeem Adam and the human race condemned in him.

“They which are called might receive the promise of *eternal* inheritance.” Paul was saying that the Law had shortcomings, for the cleansing was only ceremonial. There was a purifying of the flesh but not redemption. In contrast, the new way, the way of Christ, was *eternal* redemption, *real* redemption. Paul was trying to wean the Hebrews away from the thought that they could be justified by the deeds of the Law.

Heb. 9:16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

Heb. 9:17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

Next Paul talked about the “death of the testator.” Right away we think of a will, which does not go into effect until the one who made the will deceases. Even the power of attorney terminates with the death of the testator. In the antitype, therefore, Jesus had to die at least once so that other things could happen subsequently.

Jesus died willingly, and now God will fulfill His promise with regard to that death; that is, God will justify humanity. Not only was Jesus’ death necessary but also his resurrection. Paul tied both together in his First Epistle to the Corinthians to show that Jesus is a *living* Savior.

Heb. 9:18 Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.

Heb. 9:19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,

Heb. 9:20 Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

Paul mentioned another feature of the Law that merits consideration, namely, that death is pictured by blood. As long as blood is in the veins, it pictures life, but blood outside the veins pictures death. When Paul said, “Ye have not yet resisted unto *blood*, striving against sin,” he meant, “Ye have not yet resisted unto *death*” (Heb. 12:4).

Paul was referring to the inauguration of the old Law Covenant. After Moses came down from Mount Sinai, the Law was officially inaugurated in a very public fashion. The book of the Law was sprinkled with blood as well as the people and the altar, as recorded in Exodus 24:5-8. “And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood

of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.” Since Moses had to sprinkle a considerable number of people, he had quite a basin of blood. Also, it took time for him to sprinkle all of the Israelites. Probably the people paraded past him so that he could sprinkle all 2 million. Not only did Moses need a lot of blood, but in time, it would coagulate, so the blood was no doubt thinned with water. Only one bullock and one goat were technically needed for sin, but the blood was multiplied through the sacrifice of many animals to provide a sufficient quantity to bless the people. The “blood of calves and of goats [plural]” was not a repetitive service on different occasions but just this one occasion in which the Law Covenant was inaugurated. Dipping the wool in the blood solution made it scarlet.

Thus in the type, as the people walked by and Moses did the sprinkling, the nation came “under the blood.” In the antitype, we come “under the blood” when we make a full consecration and are immersed in water, picturing death.

The Law was strictly followed while Moses was on the scene. Some whose hearts were not right were jealous of Moses’ authority and recognition—in spite of such happenings as the shining of his face when he communed with God (Exod. 34:29,30). In fact, one who has the wrong spirit can become blind to sight, hearing, and reading, *no matter who the individual is*. All the eloquence in the world cannot remove that prejudice. Since Moses represented Christ primarily, we can see from the type how prejudice kept many from recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. Wasn’t jealousy a factor in Jesus’ crucifixion at the hands of the scribes and Pharisees? They resented the attention he received from the people, who followed him by the thousands.

Notice that Moses “took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and *all the people*” and said, “This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.” Moses *kept repeating* this statement as he sprinkled the people one by one.

The Bible was written low-key, but the necessary information is all there. The Scriptures are like silver refined (purified) seven times, and the more we think on them, the more we are benefited (Psa. 12:6). No matter how many years we study, we can never hit bottom because God’s thinking is so deep. Even after decades of consecration and study, “still some new, rich gem appears,” as the hymn states.

Heb. 9:21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

The main picture of the inauguration ceremony is Exodus chapter 40. The Book of Numbers provides a little more insight into what happened, and here Paul gave additional details to help us see the depth of the significance.

Heb. 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Jews say that *nowhere* in the Old Testament does a Scripture say that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. But to the contrary, that statement is *everywhere*. The Jews find fault because they do not see a statement with just that wording. However, verse after verse and chapter after chapter speak of animal sacrifices and the shedding of blood for the remission of sin. The Jews do not grasp this point because they are blinded (Rom. 11:7,25). For the same reason, not many rich, not many noble, and not many wise get the truth. The poor, the weak, and the relatively ignoble individuals of life are the ones who respond to the calling.

Comment: Leviticus 17:11 comes close to saying there has to be the shedding of blood. “For the

life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”

Reply: The Jews object to the word “without,” which has the thought of no exception: “*Without the shedding of blood is no remission.*” They give a wrong emphasis instead of reading the Scripture as stated. For instance, when a lawyer reads a sentence, he sometimes emphasizes a word that was not the original intent at all. A play on words is used to try to sway the jury to issue a decree favorable to one side. At any rate, Paul was using common sense in verse 22, but the Jews find fault with him.

Heb. 9:23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

“It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these [cardinal ordinances].”

Heb. 9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

“The holy places made with hands [the Holy and the Most Holy of the Tabernacle] ... are the figures of the true [spiritual tabernacle].”

Heb. 9:25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

In the type, the high priest entered the Most Holy *once each year*, but in the antitype, Jesus died *once for all*.

Heb. 9:26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches in effect that Jesus suffers every time the Mass is said. “But now *once* in the end of the world [at the end of the Jewish Age] hath he appeared [as a perfect man] to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself [to pay the ransom price for Adam].”

Heb. 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Heb. 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Jesus’ role as sin-bearer is past. He was crucified once for all, and now he is alive. What joy there was with regard to Lazarus, who was only resuscitated from the tomb, so when Jesus appeared after his resurrection and manifested himself with a body of flesh, the disciples were delirious with joy. Incidentally, blood (among other things) was not mentioned at that time, for Jesus was a *spirit* being after his resurrection. Similarly, when angels came down here, they were not humans. In materializing, they merely took on the form, or likeness, of man. Therefore, when Jesus manifested himself after his resurrection, he was not literally a human being of flesh and blood. To all appearances, he was a human at that time, but that was not the reality. After all, didn’t materialized angels also eat food? Jesus said, “I am not a phantom spirit or a mirage; I am he that was dead and am now alive” (Luke 24:37-43). Moreover, Jesus satisfied doubting Thomas, removing the obstacle from his head, for the apostle had said, “Unless I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe” (John 20:24-27 paraphrase). That is a rather gory thought—to put his finger through

the nail holes on the hand and to thrust his hand into the wound on Jesus' side—but, as with Thomas, the Lord sometimes caters to our lack of capability of understanding. Thomas wanted to believe, but he needed more concrete evidence. To his credit, Thomas is the one who said, “Let us go up to Jerusalem and die with him” (John 11:16). At times, the Lord humors us with our weaknesses and lack of faith and makes exceptions based on certain principles that we are just beginning to learn. Even though we have been consecrated for a long time, there is no guarantee, by any means, that we have fathomed the bottom of many subjects.

Comment: In his great prophecy, Jesus had cautioned against believing a literal manifestation of him subsequently, so perhaps Thomas recalled those words and thus wanted an assurance (Matt. 24:23-26).

Reply: That is a possibility. However, the principle was expressed by Jesus: “According to your faith be it unto you” (Matt. 9:29). Jesus knew the heart of Thomas.

Heb. 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

The Law is “a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image.” The Law “can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.” The word “continually” can be left as it is, or the thought can be changed, and both statements are equally true. In other words, (1) sacrifices “offered ... continually” did not make the Israelites perfect, and (2) the sacrifices “offered year by year [were not able to] continually make” the Israelites perfect. The Day of Atonement sacrifices were done continually on an annual basis, for according to the Law, the sinner needed a *repetitive* sacrifice.

Heb. 10:2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

Verse 2 shows the emphasis of Paul's reasoning in verse 1: “For then would they [the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement] not have ceased to be offered [annually]?” From one standpoint, there was no continual forgiveness of sins; the forgiveness was only *temporary*. From the other standpoint, the offerings were relatively superficial, for they *ceremonially* purged only the outside of the individual, comparable to washing dirt off the hands at the sink. In contrast, what Christ did was once for all—a big difference! The very fact the sacrifices under the Law were repeated showed that something was missing “because ... the worshippers once purged should have had no more *conscience* of sins.” To cleanse the conscience is a *powerful* forgiveness of sin. Paul said, “Now the *end* of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a *good [clear] conscience*, and of faith unfeigned” (1 Tim. 1:5).

Paul also said, “For if that first [Law] covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second [the New Covenant]. For finding fault with them [the Israelites], he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers [or forebears] in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they *continued not* in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord” (Heb. 8:7-9). In other words, the “fault” lay with the Israelites' *lack of obedience* to the old Law Covenant, for the Law itself was perfect. They started out with the right intention, saying, “All these things that God has spoken we will do” (Exod. 19:8 paraphrase). But as time went on, the Israelites broke commandment after commandment. The implication seems to be that *if they had tried to obey and had recognized their shortcomings*, the Lord would have made allowances for the weaknesses of the flesh. Moreover, the Law would truly have been a schoolmaster to lead

them to Christ, and the nation would have been converted at Jesus' First Advent. As a result, all of the Little Flock would have been Jews.

To clarify a previous statement we made, if the Israelites had continued to obey the Law as best they could with the weaknesses of the flesh, they would not have gotten justification to appear before the Father, but some other supplementary arrangement would have been made to help them as a people. For instance, didn't the Ancient Worthies who lived after the Law was in effect *try* to keep the Law? They were judged by a separate and distinct addendum, as it were. No doubt all of the Ancient Worthies subsequent to Moses tried to obey the Law to the best of their ability. Although they could not obey perfectly, they had the proper spirit, so their *faith* justified them in a typical sense. Not until Christ came was *full justification to sonship* available.

Heb. 10:3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

Verse 3 affirms that the Day of Atonement sacrifices were annual. The words supplied by the translators faithfully follow the context.

Heb. 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

While we respect the Law immensely as far as its value in being a teacher, a good schoolmaster, justification by faith is separate and distinct. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." The flesh could be purged outwardly, but sins were not really taken away under the typical sacrifices.

Comment: God arranged the sacrifices under the Law to make the Jew ceremonially clean only, until Christ came.

Reply: That was the Heavenly Father's thinking, but the Jews back there did not know His thinking. They were simply told what to do. Faithful Jews would have said, "I do not understand the reason for so much blood and why such detail was given for all of these sacrifices, but by faith, I trust that God has a reason. Look at the wonderful universe He created, and I am only a lump of clay. Although I do not understand, I will obey because He gave the instruction." Another example is God's command to Abraham to kill Isaac. Did Abraham question God? No, but first, it took a lifetime of obedience. God did not ask that sacrifice of Abraham until very late in life—after many other acts of obedience. Thus a mature test or challenge is given to a mature person.

Comment: All of the happenings under the Law were "a shadow of good things to come."

Reply: Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God allowed Paul to do the explaining. Of course Jesus had to die on the Cross and be raised first, before the Holy Spirit could come. Jesus said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when ... the Spirit of truth is come, it will guide you into all truth and even show you things to come" (John 16:12,13 paraphrase).

In reading verse 4, many Christians feel, "If it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins, the Law is passé. Therefore, the Law and its sacrifices might as well be removed from the Old Testament, for we will not be reading it. Besides, my eyesight is not the best, and the Law is tedious to read. If I concentrate on just the New Testament, I will remember it better." However, that excuse does not work because those individuals do not remember the New Testament either. The whole Bible is needed for a comprehensive understanding.

As we read these verses, we need to have the right heart attitude. God said in effect, "It is my

covenant which they broke.” It was not man’s covenant, even though a man had pronounced it and was the mediator.

Heb. 10:5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

Jesus said at his baptism at Jordan, “Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.” However, we need to analyze this statement. If the sentence had stopped after the first clause, “Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,” a wrong thought would have resulted. Weren’t the sacrifices and offerings *mandatory* for the Jews to perform back there? Yes. To ignore them would have been an act of disobedience. For instance, every male was required to go to Jerusalem annually to attend three feasts and perform the appropriate ritual. Therefore, Paul was saying that the sacrifices and offerings were *pictures*. In themselves, they did not produce the *real* cleansing from sin, just a typical cleansing, but as the Jews obeyed, they showed the Heavenly Father their desire to please Him. For example, when they chose an animal from the flock, they had to be careful not to select one that was diseased or injured. Thus the spirit of obedience could be discerned in those who offered a choice animal; it was one of the factors that indicated a person’s *goodwill* in doing something that seemed rather strange.

We have always appreciated the statement of Zola Levitt, a converted Jew, that God intended the sacrifices to be *bloody*. The typical animals were meant to be obnoxious because they represented Jesus Christ (what he suffered and his death on the Cross) and faithful Christians down through the Gospel Age, such as those who were tortured and put to death during the Inquisition. If we had seen these deaths, we would have been shocked beyond imagination, and that is what the typical animal sacrifices were meant to show. The stench outside the Camp affected those who thought they were true Israelites, and so the nominal Christian world, the false Church, has persecuted the true Christian Church in the antitype.

Heb. 10:6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

In what way did God have “no pleasure” in burnt offerings and sacrifices? They were not pleasurable happenings, but God commanded them, for it was absolutely essential that animal sacrifices and offerings picture what would happen in the antitype. If we knew what an animal represented, would we delight in its death? If we saw Jesus Christ being crucified, would we find pleasure in that event? NO! But Jesus’ enemies, who had a sadistic nature, delighted in his suffering and death. Thus the animal sacrifices were meant to be a stench. In the death camps in more recent times, the smell of blood extended for miles. Wouldn’t the stench have been similar on the Day of Atonement, when the blood, the smell of death, was all-pervasive in Jerusalem?

When these feasts are seen on film in the Kingdom Age as they actually happened back there, all will realize how appropriate and deep in meaning the sacrifices were. The very fact that the numerous sacrifices were performed suggests they were photographically recorded to impress on the people the reality of what happened. To see these things *visually and authentically* will demonstrate what was meant by those sacrifices. People will be appalled. They will be appalled to see Jesus as a worm on the Cross (Psa. 22:6). Isaiah wrote prophetically, “His [Jesus’] visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them *shall they see*; and that which they had not heard *shall they consider*” (Isa. 52:14,15). In other words, foreign to man’s thinking, the permission of evil is the best thing that could have happened. The very fact that evil has been permitted by God, who cannot countenance evil, is the best possible lesson (Hab. 1:13). The natural mind would never have conceived a plan for the human race that permitted evil, but when properly seen in retrospect, the permission of

evil will have a devastating effect in causing man to fall down prostrate before the awesome Creator of the universe and His dear Son. We have to keep these things fresh in our minds because as leaky vessels, we can easily forget. However, when the reality is seen, the lessons will be remembered forever.

To repeat, God did not have pleasure in seeing animals die, yet He ordained the sacrifices. Therefore, we have to think as He did—that it was the best thing that could have happened. We must have no reservations, for God thought out the plan well in advance of its implementation. Thank God, the permission of evil is *temporary!* When compared with eternity, it will be like a dream in the night, but its lessons will last forever.

Comment: Some of the Israelites offered lame animals but were willing to burn their children (Jer. 32:35).

Reply: Yes. In contrast, the Muslims worship respectfully in long services without complaining, wearing white garments and being orderly side by side as they prostrate themselves.

Heb. 10:7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

In reading these verses, we always have to keep in mind the other side of the coin. Failure to do so causes lack of respect and adoration for things that God has done in the past. For instance, Jesus' purpose in coming down here at his First Advent was to do God's will, as was written "in the volume of the book" in Psalm 40:7,8. Thus Jesus knew about the purpose before he came down here, but when he was born as a babe, he had no foreknowledge of his preexistence. Certainly even as an infant and a child, he did not remember his life as the Logos. He *grew* in wisdom and stature, so it wasn't until *after* his immersion in Jordan that the Holy Spirit became a spirit of remembrance to him (Luke 2:52). Written prophetically in David's day, the words "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" were Jesus' prayer, the sentiments of his heart, when he went to John the Baptist. As a perfect man with a perfect mind, he could grasp a lot from Scripture, but it was not until he came up out of the water that the foreknowledge of his preexistence flooded his mind, which is described as "the heavens were opened unto him" (Matt. 3:16). That foreknowledge, that sudden change, was so powerful that his new mind compelled him to go into the wilderness; that is, he had "found [himself] in fashion as a man" (Phil. 2:8). He realized that the Father had prepared a human body for him. After 40 days of prayer and meditation, he could then intelligently, accurately, and fastidiously perform God's will as required in the Word.

When we consecrated, the principle was very much the same. We gave our heart to the Lord, but we did not know all the things He would require. Had we known about all the trials and experiences in advance, the knowledge would have discouraged us. Jesus promised to be with us, and God said we would not be tried above that which we are able (Matt. 28:20; 1 Cor. 10:13). Moreover, there is forgiveness through the blood, and Jesus is our High Priest. Because he overcame the world down here, he can give us advice through experience (John 16:33).

Heb. 10:8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;

Heb. 10:9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

As a perfect man prior to his baptism, Jesus certainly had the Holy Spirit in the sense that the Ancient Worthies did. Also, having a perfect memory, he retained what he read of the Law and

was a very advanced student of the Scriptures *even before* the coming of the Holy Spirit to sonship at Jordan. He knew of the failures of the Israelites under the Law Covenant and had some judgment as to what the problem was. We believe that he saw the shortcomings of the Law from a *practical* standpoint. Therefore, he had done a lot of thinking on those subjects before he was immersed, but after his immersion, he had knowledge not only of his life as the Logos but also of his private conversations with the Heavenly Father before coming down here, when the Father proffered him the privilege of being the Redeemer. We question whether God would have made that offer without first seeing that Jesus was sympathetic. The Logos was one of those who sang for joy at the creation of man, and when he saw man dying and the apparent failure, he was very much concerned (Job 38:7). Because of his innate character, he welcomed the opportunity to pay the ransom price for Adam. The Heavenly Father would have given Jesus a lot of information before he came down here.

“He taketh away the first [the Law Covenant], that he may establish the second [the New Covenant].” Jesus set aside the typical sacrifices by fulfilling the antitype, the real sacrifice for sins.

Heb. 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

“We are sanctified through the offering of the *body* of Jesus Christ once for all.” Jesus alone paid the Ransom, offering his perfect human life for the life of Adam. However, Paul did bring in the Church, a little here and a little there, in the Book of Hebrews. In the full picture, the Messiah is more than one individual; it is a composite body with Jesus as the Head. But when did the offering for sin take place “once for all”?

Comment: Jesus, the Head, died first at the beginning of the Gospel Age. The body members die throughout the age, but their blood will be sprinkled at a date yet future when the Church is complete.

Reply: When the bullock was offered in the type, the high priest took the blood into the Most Holy and applied it to the Mercy Seat. If the high priest successfully passed the test, he lived and came out to the people. This was the first time the blood was sprinkled. Since “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment,” the high priest’s coming out from the Holy and the Most Holy pictured resurrection (Heb. 9:27). It is true that after the blood of the bullock was sprinkled, the body parts were offered and the blood similarly disposed of, but that was the *same* picture from another perspective. The two sprinklings of blood had to take place successively to explain the burning without the camp, etc., but they were different aspects of the *one offering* of Christ.

When the high priest came forth, the type shows that the blood was for the sin of (1) the body members and (2) Israel itself. The type states that the blood was offered for the high priest himself, but it was not applied until Pentecost. At Pentecost, Jesus did not appear to the disciples, for he had done that previously, during the 40 days prior to his ascension. In other words, he died, he rose on the third day, and then, during the 40-day period, he appeared off and on to his disciples, proving that he had risen, and also gave sermons to the fallen angels. But not until Pentecost, ten days later, did the Holy Spirit come down on the waiting disciples. The virtue of Jesus’ blood from the offering of a perfect life was presented for the sin of himself and for Israel (picturing the world). The first application justified the goat class. Then, when the goat class is finished, both sacrifices will be offered to cleanse the altar for the people. Thus there is a sequence. Jesus appeared the first time “to bear the sins of many,” and the second time he will appear “without sin unto salvation,” that is, as the Deliverer from sin for those who look unto him (Heb. 9:28).

Heb. 10:11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

The subject is changing to the *daily sacrifices subsequent to the national Day of Atonement annual ceremony*. People did not bring individual offerings until after the Day of Atonement. Therefore, Leviticus chapters 1-7 are pictures of the next age.

There were two goats, the Lord's goat, which was chosen for the sins of the people, and Satan's goat. The bullock, picturing Jesus, died first to justify himself, that is, his body members. The Lord's goat, picturing the Little Flock, died next, showing their participation in the sin offering for others, that is, for the world. The sequence shows that all of the consecrated comprise the "church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23). The separation into Little Flock and Great Company will not be seen until the future because we do not know our destiny in the present life. Ultimately there will be three distinctions, or classes, of the consecrated of the Gospel Age: Little Flock, Great Company, and Second Death. All of the consecrated are reckoned as of the priesthood in the present life, even if, in the final reality, only 144,000 comprise the Little Flock.

How wonderful it would be to find out we attained the Little Flock! When we look at the flesh, we tremble, so we have to keep our heart and mind *centered on Jesus and run for the prize of the high calling*. We are to do the best we can on a continual basis, and ultimately the results will be made manifest by the Lord.

As shown in the Passover type, the "church of the firstborn" includes the Great Company both down here and beyond the veil. The differences in the two classes are shown in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. In the type, a son of Aaron could not be priest if he had such abnormalities as a hunched back, an extra finger or toe, or a blind eye. Spiritually speaking, we are inspected and will only be of the royal priesthood if we are reckoned perfect in God's sight with the robe of Christ's righteousness. We must meet the criteria, for we could have the robe on but have a blind eye, a deaf ear, or a flat nose, for example.

Verse 11 states that "every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins," yet there are helpful lessons in the Law. The priest tended the lamps daily at both 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., trimming the wicks and replenishing the oil.

Q: Was incense offered continually at the Prayer Altar?

A: No. The time of prayer was 3 p.m., the close of the day. That is when the antitypical incense goes up, first of our Lord at the close of his ministry and then of the saints collectively at the end of the Gospel Age. In the present life, our prayers are mixed in with Jesus' incense. Our prayers are made acceptable to God through the sacrifice of Jesus, as shown by the first offering on the Day of Atonement when the high priest came in with the blood of the bullock and the incense. Our daily prayers to the Heavenly Father would not be acceptable without the merit of Jesus' sacrifice.

Heb. 10:12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

Verse 12 strongly refutes the doctrine of the Trinity. "But this *man* [Jesus Christ], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." The Adversary, from whom we are delivered, has tremendous blinding power. People with brilliant minds can be absolutely blind on this subject because Satan is able to confuse them. Spiritually speaking, smoke, colored glass, and other obstacles are used through willing human instruments down

here. To see the truth is a miracle. Accordingly, Jesus said to Peter, “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it [the truth that I am the Christ, the Son of the living God] unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 16:17).

Heb. 10:13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

Paul quoted from Psalm 110:1, “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” This process will start in the beginning of the Kingdom Age, when “enemies” in the tomb will come forth and have to bow the knee. When they bend the knee and confess that “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” they will cease to be enemies, at least temporarily (Phil. 2:10,11). This process will start with the inauguration of the Kingdom in power and authority and continue through the test of the Little Season.

Q: In Psalm 110:1, *God* said, “Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” In what sense will Jehovah do this?

A: He will give Jesus the authority in the Kingdom. We can be sure that a divine being, with the powers that will be inherent at the time the Kingdom is inaugurated, will have power almost like that of God Himself. Joseph was elevated to a high position in Egypt, so that only in the throne was the Pharaoh greater. Having been given advance warning of the seven years of famine, Joseph began to exercise power as soon as he could. For seven years prior to the famine, he laid up grain in store, just as Christians lay up “treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt” during the seven stages of the Gospel Age (Matt. 6:20). The same will be true in principle for mankind in the Kingdom Age. But to those who do not get life, wrath and judgment will be stored up both throughout the Kingdom Age and at the end.

Comment: Psalm 45:5 reads, “Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.” The people will fall in the Kingdom from one of two standpoints; some will submit and get life, and others will harden their hearts and remain enemies, reaping a destiny of Second Death.

Reply: When the sharp arrows of conviction of truth go forth in the Kingdom Age, the people will have to make a decision, and how one responds will depend on the heart condition. When an arrow is shot forth, a person will either (1) cease to be an enemy by becoming truly obedient, even if that obedience is only temporary until the Little Season, or (2) refuse to hear the voice of “that prophet” (Acts 3:23).

Q: How do we harmonize Psalm 110:1, “Sit thou [Jesus] at my right hand, until I [God] make thine enemies thy footstool,” with Acts 3:21, “Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began”? Does the word “receive” mean “retain”? How will Jesus sit on the Father’s right hand until his enemies become his footstool?

A: In the “times of restitution,” Jesus does different works. He comes sitting on a horse, knocking on a door, etc., but he will also be on the right hand of authority throughout the entire millennial Kingdom. However, it is one thing to “sit” and *wait*, and it is another thing to be told to go ahead and *act*. Having been faithful, Jesus has inherent or latent power.

In another picture, David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah for seven years, and subsequently he was king in Jerusalem over the entire nation, over both houses of Israel. Similarly, the blood was offered once for the sins of the goat class and once subsequently for the world, but in the final analysis, the blood was offered for both. Accordingly, Judah represents the obedient class of the Gospel Age, whereas the reign over the nation of Israel

pictures the reign over the world. But the Kingdom reign will be *Jehovah's* reign, for *God* will give the authority to Jesus.

Heb. 10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Jesus' "one offering" is in contradistinction to the doctrine of the Mass, or Transubstantiation, which is described as "the abomination that maketh desolate," for it "take[s] away the daily [continual] sacrifice" (Dan. 11:31; 12:11).

Jesus' "one offering ... perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Thus those of the consecrated, the church of the firstborn, who are faithful unto death—both the very elect and the Great Company—will secure everlasting life. Jesus' imputed robe of righteousness, which is a temporary, continual covering in the present life, is on loan. A lien justifies us now, and if faithful, we will become actually justified in the resurrection.

Heb. 10:15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,

Heb. 10:16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

Heb. 10:17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

The Holy Spirit is a witness to us in Jeremiah 31:31-34. The statement "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" refers to *past* sins due to Adamic weakness. In the present age, the Heavenly Father assures His people that such past sins are cast behind His back. However, willful sins cannot be forgiven but are compensated for with stripes. Under the New Covenant in the Kingdom Age, the teeth of those who eat the sour grape will be set on edge. Of course there will be stumblings.

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord [Jehovah]." In the Kingdom, Jesus will act in God's stead, somewhat like in the Old Testament when as the Logos, "the angel of the LORD," he spoke to Moses at the burning bush. "And the *angel of the LORD* appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed" (Exod. 3:2). Then, two verses later, referring to the angel, the account says that *God* called to Moses: "And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses" (Exod. 3:4). In other words, the "angel" was the Logos, the Word, the messenger, speaking in Jehovah's name. To some extent, Jesus' role will be similar in the Kingdom Age, which is called both the "day of Christ" and the "day of Jehovah," and also the "kingdom of Christ" and the "kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33; Eph. 5:5; Phil. 1:10; 2:16; 2 Pet. 3:12). Everything originated with *God*—He is the planner of salvation—but since the Son so accurately developed the same character and disposition after his experience down here, God can implicitly trust him in an even greater fashion. In fact, Jesus will be allowed some liberty to exercise judgment on his own because he is so skilled in the Heavenly Father's wisdom. During the Gospel Age, he sits at the right hand of the Father, so they are in frequent communication and probably talk things over in regard to what Jesus does with his Church. The Heavenly Father makes suggestions, and then Jesus is given liberty because of his previous great constancy and perfect obedience under extraordinary circumstances. During his earthly ministry, Jesus said, "The words that I speak are not mine, for I speak as my Father taught me" (John 8:28; 14:10 paraphrase).

The sins and iniquities that God remembers no more were pictured in the type of the Day of Atonement and also by the Passover lamb of God, which took away the sin of the world in

delivering the whole nation of Israel through the Red Sea. The deliverance of the nation pictures the obedient of mankind in the Kingdom Age, who will arise on the other side of the antitypical Red Sea to go into the ages of ages and will witness the destruction of Pharaoh (Satan) and his host. The same principles of character operate in both the Old and the New Testaments, in both the Gospel Age and the Kingdom Age, but with slightly modified or extenuating circumstances that might cause certain limitations or directions. By observing and meditating on the acts and deeds of the Heavenly Father (and as evidenced by His Son), we become familiar with His thinking.

Heb. 10:18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

To those who consecrate in the Gospel Age, verse 18 is true because Jesus died once, nailing the Law to the Cross. Jewish Christians thus escape the dominion of both the Law and Adamic sin, and Gentile Christians escape the latter. In other words, the Jew is under double condemnation, and the Gentile is condemned only in Adam.

Heb. 10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

One manifestation of the Christian's boldness (or confidence) to enter into the Most Holy by the blood of Jesus is to use the term "Our Father" in prayer. On the spur of the moment when asked, "Lord, teach us to pray," Jesus gave the ideal prayer, beginning with "*Our Father* which art in heaven" (Luke 11:1-4). The simplicity yet comprehensiveness of the prayer is remarkable. If we have legally and loyally made a full consecration to do the Father's will, then "now are we the sons of God" (1 John 3:2). We also have confidence in the Father's prophecies, promises, predictions, etc.

Some are very confident on their deathbed that they have won a crown, whereas others question whether they have been faithful enough. However, the emotions of the moment are not reliable indicators, for such confidence is no evidence whatever that a crown has been secured. The determining factor is whether *God* approves a person's Christian walk and gives a passing grade. Summa cum laude graduates will hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21). Therefore, one has to be very careful about being too confident. The Christian should not act like one who has put off the armor.

Comment: The *Diaglott* says, "Having, therefore, brethren, confidence respecting the entrance of the holies, by the blood of Jesus."

Reply: The reference is to prayer because the first entrance of the high priest going under the Second Veil is what Jesus did at the beginning of the Gospel Age when he finished his course. Since the second going of the high priest under the Second Veil will not occur until the blood of the Lord's goat class is complete, we have to view verse 19 from the perspective of the high priest having gone under the Second Veil the first time.

Comment: From the standpoint of our being seated in heavenly places in the Holy in the present life, all three pieces of furniture are a matter of prayer, for which we enter confidently into the Most Holy by the blood of Jesus. Whether we are praying for more enlightenment of the Holy Spirit from the Candlestick, feeding on the precious promises at the Table of Shewbread, or actually using the Incense Altar, prayer is involved.

Reply: That is true in principle from the *individual* standpoint. However, the Tabernacle is treated from the *collective* standpoint, so while we can benefit from the light of the Candlestick and the promises of the Table of Shewbread, the prayers of the saints ascend through the

Master, who offers them up with incense. Our prayers are offered through Jesus, so the *daily* ritual of the high priest is being pictured, rather than a particular service such as the Day of Atonement. The high priest trimmed the wicks *daily* and changed the shewbread weekly. Even when the Christian is praying, the incense of the high priest (the perfections of Jesus) lifts the prayers beyond the Veil. Possibly a second offering of incense is inferred. Revelation 8:4 pictures the high priest offering the prayers of all the saints when the Church is complete. Jesus is the Head of the high priest, and we are the prospective body in the present life, so we are in Christ, praying through the Head and using the words “in Jesus’ name.” Prayers rise up from the body through the Head to ascend on high with the incense cloud.

Comment: The confidence of the Christian is trusting in the blood of Jesus.

Reply: Yes, we have boldness in his merit.

By nature, many people suffer from an inferiority complex. Paul thinks of the Lord’s people as either introverts or extroverts. Extroverts act like leaders, but the Lord may not recognize them as such. In other words, they have the characteristic of a salesman in expounding the truth. Others are more prone to look at their own personal deficiencies. To study one’s weaknesses too closely has the effect of dulling witnessing efforts. Therefore, that tendency has to be overcome. Those who are too bold have to guard against being too forward. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we should try to be balanced and thus be in between the two extremes.

Comment: We are automatically in the Holy once we consecrate. While there, we have confidence to enter the Most Holy through prayer in the name of Jesus and the merit of his blood.

Reply: Yes. In antitype, we do not actually enter the Most Holy until we have proven faithful unto death and are awakened.

Comment: Our prayers ascend on the incense, the perfections of Christ, which penetrate into the presence of Jehovah.

Reply: While we are in the Holy, our voice in prayer is heard in the Most Holy. The Song of Solomon shows the reverse; namely, the Lord talks through the Veil to the consecrated in the present life.

Comment: Verse 19 correlates with Hebrews 4:16, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Reply: Yes. Verse 19 is a big subject. This epistle was addressed to the Hebrews, and their problem was the Law of Moses and the failure to understand grace. When conscientious Jews thought of their imperfections, they got discouraged because the Law brought the knowledge of sin and man’s inability to obey God’s Law perfectly. There are times when contrition and repentance are proper, but then we should ask for whatever is needed to bring us back into the Lord’s grace. Thus the need for “boldness” in prayer was particularly applicable to the Hebrews, but actually the whole book is invaluable to *all* Christians because of the *principles* that are taught. While we believe that an understanding of the literal is essential to see something clearly in the antitype, it is also true that in order to understand the writings of the Apostle Paul, we have to consider whom he was addressing—the Galatians, the Romans, or others. Each epistle is helpful along a different line. For example, Paul’s letters to the Corinthians assist us in the nitty-gritty of practical Christian living. To first think of conditions as though we were living when Paul wrote his epistles helps us to see some of the nuances of his thinking. Then if we study the epistles again from the standpoint of living today, the Holy

Spirit helps us with a greater fullness of understanding.

Heb. 10:20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

We boldly enter into the Most Holy by the blood of Jesus, “a new and living way,” which he “consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” The majority of Christians, who are not familiar with the Tabernacle, would take verse 20 as a statement of fact that going “through [or beyond] the veil” is going into a different realm, or dimension. But we have the benefit of an understanding of the Tabernacle, which shows, as the Pastor explained so simply and beautifully, that the high priest’s going under the Second Veil, the veil just before the Most Holy, represents the death of the flesh. (The First Veil pictures the death of the will.)

Bro. Russell gave the interpretation in *Tabernacle Shadows* that when the high priest stooped and went under the Veil on the Day of Atonement, he was under it for parts of three days in the antitype before he ascended on the other side. Jesus did not go to heaven immediately but was down here for 40 days. However, he was in the Most Holy condition in that he had made his calling and election sure to be the Savior. Jesus had to first save himself before he could save anyone else, so the Most Holy is a condition. In other words, in order to cover all circumstances of interpretation, the easiest way is to express the Most Holy as a *condition* rather than a place. Otherwise, we would have an anomaly, for Jesus was under the veil for parts of three days and then still down here for 40 days. During the 40 days, he witnessed to the fallen angels in *tartaroo* but did not ascend to the Father in heaven.

The Holy is also a condition. Aren’t we out working in the business world, taking care of home responsibilities, etc., during our consecrated life? Therefore, to avoid a contradiction, we call the Holy a *condition* and not a place. But in the type, the Holy and the Most Holy were places because it is good to have something definitive. If the picture is fuzzy, we are not as moved to act with confidence or assurance.

The “new and living way” is related to Jesus’ being “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). The “way” is entering the gate to the Court, seeing the Brazen Altar, and washing at the Laver. The “truth” is submission of the will and the entrance into the Holy, the consecrated condition in the present life. The “life” is the Most Holy, the resurrected condition beyond the Second Veil, which pictures the death of the body.

The Law was condemnatory; the gospel is a living way. The Law is instructive, for it helps us to see our faults so that we can make progress. Real joys of the truth are available depending on the depth of consecration of the individual.

Heb. 10:21 And having an high priest over the house of God;

Heb. 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

As High Priest, Jesus is a spiritual doctor who heals our infirmities and diseases and does a cleansing work. Performing a medicinal function, he cleans our wounds. In addition, he is our King, Teacher, Redeemer, etc.

Jesus is “over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” Right away we are reminded of 1 Peter 1:2, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and *sprinkling of the blood of Jesus*

Christ. Our hearts are sprinkled because of Jesus' continual offering. In connection with our daily prayer at the end of the day, we ask forgiveness for our sins and shortcomings, wanting to keep our robes clean and unwrinkled. To have "our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" requires faith.

Comment: Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience harkens back to the Passover, when the lintels and doorposts were sprinkled with the blood of the lamb.

"Having ... our bodies washed with pure water" means that we do not teach, as some do, "once in grace, always in grace." Jesus' one offering is eternal and lasting, but responsibilities are attached to consecration and the truth. With each one of us, the moment we gave our heart to the Lord was very precious. Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints," can be viewed two ways—(1) as the death of the human will (passing under the First Veil) and (2) as proving faithful unto death (passing under the Second Veil).

Heb. 10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

One evidence of this wavering in the human mind would be to ask, "Did the Lord accept my consecration?" Many, having made a commitment of consecration, foolishly think later that maybe God did not accept it. As they think along that line, they convince themselves that He did not. In one case, we were surprised that two other sisters consoled a sister who made such a statement. Not wanting to be responsible for encouraging her to think that her consecration was not accepted, I asked her in front of the two sisters, "When you originally made the commitment, did you at that time think you were consecrated?" She replied, "Yes." I said, "Then your consecration has been accepted, and do not think otherwise."

Such specific tests do not occur often, but years ago after a prominent brother committed suicide, an article in one of the truth magazines stated that he had entered into his reward. Some brethren agreed because they were thinking of the good deeds the brother had done in the past. However, to even think along that line is very dangerous, for it can lead others to conclude they can commit suicide and still make their calling and election sure.

Comment: The Pastor left such issues undecided. He said the only hope of life if one commits suicide is that perchance the Lord did not accept his consecration. Therefore, the Pastor felt we should let the matter drop, for once a person is dead, his destiny is up to the Lord.

Reply: Although it is not our prerogative to assign destiny, we must be careful not to encourage suicide, or we will become responsible. That principle is stated in the Law of the Old Testament, namely, that one who gives false testimony is as guilty as the person who commits the crime. Many do not want to study too deeply, for they think it brings responsibility, but we believe a number will not get life at all because they are not interested. The truth is more than a social club. Paul said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," and "If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons" (2 Tim. 3:12; Heb. 12:8). To be legitimate sons of God, we must suffer tribulation in some manner in standing for the truth and in decision making. Incidentally, that does not mean one was not originally a son of God; rather, the thought is that one can later become an illegitimate child from a spiritual standpoint. The King James glosses over many strong statements in the Old Testament that sounded coarse in the Hebrew. We need to glean the power of Scripture.

Heb. 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

"Provoke" means to "prod" in the sense of to "encourage," "stir up," or "stimulate."

Comment: It is necessary to “consider one another” in order to do this. We are to consider one another’s strengths, particularly with those who have been on the sidelines or who are newly consecrated. Then we can encourage a strength that we see.

Reply: Yes, this is an individual responsibility of the Christian. Verse 25 shows where the danger is.

Comment: The word “love” can be misunderstood. The Book of Jude urges a balance of justice with the love of righteousness, for today many Christians go overboard in their mercy and forgiveness. Here Paul was exhorting and encouraging brethren to take a proper stand.

Reply: Yes, the question is, What kind of love is being provoked? What is love? Down through the Gospel Age, dreadful persecutions occurred for, say, a thousand years. A Christian(?) church wrongly persecuted professed groups of Christian believers. At times in history, such as during the Colonial days of our country, a puritanical type of reasoning prevailed, a dogmatic holier-than-thou attitude, where people thought they were obeying God by rigidly demanding strict obedience along certain lines. In addition, there were periods of emotionalism, as when John Wesley was on the scene. He brought in a new aspect of love and grace that was much needed, but in time, people got carried away. Love and justice need to be balanced so that they are harmonious with each other.

In other words, true love does not compromise justice, truth, or righteousness, but of course true love can make allowances for those who repent. It can then exercise mercy and forgiveness. Jesus said, “If thy brother trespass against thee, *rebuke him*” (Luke 17:3). If he then asks for forgiveness and repents, we are to forgive him. We are to love the individual who has taken the needed steps for forgiveness and recovery. In effect, that almost logically happens when one who has fallen manifests true contrition and takes the proper steps. Our feeling of appreciation for that individual is renewed because he took that stand.

Forgiveness is not *carte blanche* but is predicated on taking certain steps. For instance, part of the Lord’s Prayer is, “Forgive us our debts [trespasses], as we forgive our debtors [those who trespass against us]” (Matt. 6:12). Yet Jesus said, “If thy brother trespass against thee, *rebuke him*.” If we look up articles on love in the *Reprints*, they speak about grace, but if we look up articles on forgiveness, the commentary is quite different. In fact, the Pastor sounds like a different person. On one occasion, we gave a sermon on forgiveness, reading quote after quote from the Pastor, yet we got all kinds of flack afterward. The reaction was astounding.

From another standpoint, we cannot forgive one who sins against others—that is, not unless we see him make amends to the wronged party. If the wronged party extends forgiveness, then for us not to do likewise would be inappropriate. We have to be careful because the old man can get stirred up very easily. Most people prefer that smooth things be preached all the time so that there will be no ripples, just calm. However, calmness can also be death. When one is dead, there is not a flicker. As a brother said at one time, two artists were told to paint a picture of joy and happiness. One showed a beautiful, serene lake with the sky and the foliage all so peaceful. The other artist, who won the prize, painted a fierce storm with trees blowing in the wind and a little bird singing joyously on the end of a limb. Joy in the midst of tribulation was true peace.

There are so many different perspectives that we have to keep our thoughts immersed in the Word, for our own judgments are wobbly and distorted. If we go by our own thinking, we are sure to stumble.

Heb. 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

We are not to forsake “the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is,” but are to exhort “one another: and so much the more, as ... [we] see the day approaching.” Is “the day” drawing near? Yes, so the advice is especially appropriate at this time.

Comment: The clause “as the manner of some is” shows that some do forsake assembling with others of like precious faith.

Reply: Yes. The forsaking can be little by little until finally there is no assembling. To “exhort” one another is more or less a synonym for the word “provoke” in verse 24.

Comment: In a previous study, the following comment was made. “Iniquity will abound more and more as the trouble approaches, so we need to keep assembling for self-preservation and for the buttressing of one another. As the testings get more severe, we will need more encouragement. More understanding will be provided along certain lines to help us stand. In fact, additional understanding will be essential to counteract the increasing trials, persecutions, discouragements, and experiences of the future.” The light will shine more and more unto the perfect day, and as the trials get harder, the Lord will give corresponding clarification of details from His Word. We will not get that clarification if we stay by ourselves.

Reply: Every member supplies the body, one in one way and another in another way. In assembling together, therefore, we get essential lessons.

Heb. 10:26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

If one forsakes the assembling and goes out into the world, we know there will be no edification in that situation. The longer an individual stays in the world, the more impossible it is for him to be retrieved. And if one rejects the Lord, his destiny is sealed. In rare cases where this is done, the person should be treated accordingly as anathema, like a contagion.

Heb. 10:27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

One who sins willfully by forsaking the assembling becomes an adversary. One may be dissatisfied with a group because of the personality of the one who is leading the studies or is teaching. Or a member of the class may become so disruptive that the spirit of the meetings is adversely affected. In such cases, there is nothing wrong if a person leaves the class but fellowships in the truth somewhere else. If we feel we can get more spiritual benefit in another place, we should leave our current fellowship and meet under that circumstance. We are to stand fast “in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Gal. 5:1). Sometimes both groups may be all right, basically speaking, but some brethren just grate so much that it is better for them to go where they get peace. We cannot live comfortably with brambles in the bed, so to speak. Constructive, upbuilding information is needed.

Heb. 10:28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

Heb. 10:29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Heb. 10:30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

Heb. 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Verses 28-31 are probably the sternest passage in the Book of Hebrews. Earlier Paul warned about not letting “the things which we have heard” glide away (Heb. 2:1). But here he was speaking about the Second Death fate of those who forsake the truth.

The Greek word rendered “despised” has the thought of “disregarded.” One who does not heed God’s instruction and turns a deaf ear “disregards” it, but to disregard God and His Word is to *despise* them, for that is a completely different level—the level of *Almighty God*.

Q: Would an example in the type of despising Moses’ law be where Phinehas speared the Israelite man and the Midianite woman who were committing fornication in the sight of the congregation of the children of Israel (Num. 25:5-9)?

A: Yes, that was a blatant example. With the consecrated too, there have been some blatant examples of sinning against the truth where it is obvious the individuals have gone into Second Death. In such cases, disregarding is really despising God’s instruction. For individuals to subsequently wander off after having been familiar with the holy God, His love, and what Jesus did for them is despising the spirit of grace and truth.

Q: What is the thought of the “two or three witnesses”?

A: Under the Mosaic Law, if two or three witnesses said that a fourth party did such and such, for which the penalty was death, that person was put to death. However, if any one of the witnesses gave false testimony, that witness died the same type of death himself. That feature of the Mosaic Law was practical and much more just than our laws today where perjury leads to only a prison term.

Comment: Deuteronomy 17:6,7 reads, “At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.”

Reply: Today one witness plus a motive would be sufficient to convict someone even if other evidence(s) created a doubt, but that was not true under the Law.

Heb. 10:32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

Heb. 10:33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

Paul was speaking to Christian Jews, who had been “illuminated” with the new and living way. Some had “endured a great fight of afflictions,” being made “a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions,” and others (mostly women) “became companions” of those who had suffered such experiences. These women suffered by standing up for their persecuted husbands, fathers, brothers, etc. By their spirit, they showed their courage. As companions, they endured the odium that was attached to being an innocent Christian.

Heb. 10:34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your

goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

In times past, the cost of being a Christian could cause one to lose everything—not just employment but also possessions, land, property, and house. To date, there has not been much suffering of this type during the Laodicean period. Hitler’s rise to power was an exception, when many brethren in Europe suffered the loss of their goods.

Incidentally, those who know about Christ in the present age and live principled lives but do not consecrate will not be given special honor at the beginning of the Kingdom Age. They may be more obedient and progress faster up the highway of holiness and be honored later, for things can change, but they will not be honored initially. The character one builds in the present life will certainly stand him in much better stead than that of a reprobate. Both will get an opportunity for life in the Kingdom, but the one who tried to do right in this life will be more successful. What a person sows, he will reap as a character. If a person sows good thoughts and deeds in the present life, he will benefit in the next age. What about wealthy people who liberally dispense their riches for educational and scientific purposes? If they have noble thoughts and live a relatively simple life, they are building a good character now. Having the character helps one, but the test will come at the end of the Kingdom Age. None of mankind will enter into the ages of ages without passing the last test.

Those who disobey the test in the Little Season will be healthy specimens at that time. To live through the Kingdom Age up to that point, people will have been resuscitated, educated, developed, and outwardly obedient, so they will be healthy mentally and physically and will be very advanced, but that final test will be crucial.

The test for the Christian in the Gospel Age is to be faithful *unto death*. One cannot rest in his previous faithfulness and then wander off into grievous sin yet expect to get life. We are living in the age of faith now, but faith will also be required in the next age—plus perfect works of obedience as one develops. A character-building *process* will be in effect.

“For ye [Jewish Christians] had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing ... that ye have *in heaven* a better and an enduring substance.” These individuals were illuminated with the truth; they were candles, as it were, having the Holy Spirit. The receiving of God’s Spirit is the candle, the light, the illumination, the spirit of adoption as sons of God.

Heb. 10:35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

Paul admonished the Jewish Christians not to cast away their confidence, for if they did, they would go into Second Death. The danger was that they would let things slip little by little and thus depart from the truth.

Heb. 10:36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

Jesus said, “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19). Those who do not have that type of patience will lose their soul instead of possessing it. Paul was talking not about an impatient act but about an attitude such as “Maybe the Lord did not accept my consecration.” The natural heart is wily and almost like the Adversary himself; it is deceitfully and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). Sin is like leaven; it is like a cancer, and Satan is very tenacious.

We need to have patient endurance so that after we have done the will of God, we might

“receive the promise” of the high calling. We are to *maintain* the doing of God’s will until death.

Heb. 10:37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

While the Gospel Age has continued for almost 2,000 years and the Kingdom has not yet been ushered in, each person’s lifetime is like a dream in the night. One can be in the truth for years, yet it seems like “a little while.” Even if one lives to be 100 years old, that is a very short time compared with eternity. Paul was acutely aware that when he died, he would not get an immediate resurrection, so he calculated that he would be more useful if alive and preaching the gospel. When he took the matter to the Lord in prayer, his attitude was, “I would like to welcome death right away, but I know I will be asleep in the tomb and not be with the Lord for a long time. At least if I am kept alive, I can benefit others and help them win their crowns.”

Comment: The *Diaglott* is emphatic: “For yet a very little while indeed.”

Reply: Especially if viewed by a spirit being, human life is short, but it can seem long if one is suffering.

Heb. 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

Invariably, if the drawing back is not checked quickly and radically, it will gradually lead unto perdition, Second Death. A sign of drawing back is a lack of interest and enthusiasm. For example, infrequent attendance at meetings can lead to not going to any meetings and then to not having any fellowship. The individual thinks he can be a loner and survive. The Scriptures state the opposite; namely, when we see the day approaching, we are not to forsake “the assembling of ourselves together” (Heb. 10:25). There is a danger in staying alone, for we need fellowship and communion.

Heb. 10:39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Comment: Verse 39 is a good Scripture to support the thought that the soul is a separate entity, for the flesh is not saved.

Reply: Yes, God clothes the soul with a new body.

Heb. 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Now we are coming to the good news. Paul expended time, patience, and effort to teach that weariness, a lack of endurance, and drawing back can be overcome by observing the lives of the Old Testament faithful.

“Faith is the substance [the basis or foundation] of things hoped for.” Something can be spiritual or ethereal, yet to the individual, it is very real. For instance, hope, if it is strong, is like seeing that which is invisible. What did Jesus require of those who desired to be healed of their physical infirmities? He required faith, the principle being “according to your faith be it unto you” (Matt. 9:29). However, of those he healed, very few became disciples. Of the ten lepers, only one returned to thank him.

In another incident, when Jesus went through Jericho and saw two blind men, the crowd tried to quiet them, but the two cried out, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David” (Matt. 20:29-34). It was unusual that after Jesus healed them, they followed him. Several women also

manifested faith by following Jesus. He went ahead, being in front, and the women followed behind with the disciples.

Faith is what God is looking for, because “without faith, it is *impossible* to please him” (Heb. 11:6). After consecration, “the just shall [henceforth] *live* by faith” (Rom. 1:17). They will *continue* to walk in faith. “Be thou faithful *unto death*” (Rev. 2:10). Christians are to *maintain* their faith when they add virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (2 Pet. 1:5-7,10,11). Those who do “these things” will get an abundant entrance into the heavenly Kingdom. Paul gave invaluable information to the Lord’s people according to their hunger, desire, and capability.

Heb. 11:2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

The “elders” are the Ancient Worthies.

Heb. 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Paul was defining faith. Incidentally, he provided different definitions of faith depending on which epistle we are studying, and other apostles also gave their opinions about faith. Verse 3 brings in two basic components of faith.

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.” To think of the “worlds” as the *physical* realm is only the surface reading. It is true that God framed other universes, but the real faith He is looking for is different. The Greek word *aionian*, translated “worlds,” means “ages” (plural).

The ages “were framed by the word of God.” What is “the word of God” in this context? The reference is not to the Logos because Paul said that the ages were made *for* Christ, not by Christ. The thought that the Logos was God’s agent in creation has been indoctrinated in Christian minds for centuries. Regarding the physical realm, for example, Genesis 1:1,2 reads, “In the beginning ... the earth was,” but in making earth’s surface habitable for man, God said on the first Creative Day, “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3,5). Note that *God* spoke these words, not the Logos, and He spoke on the other Creative Days as well. Thus the reference in verse 3 is to God’s *spoken* “word,” which is very powerful not only in the material universe but also here in regard to the ages.

Comment: Psalm 33:6 reads, “By the *word* of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the *breath* of his mouth.”

Reply: Yes. Many think Jesus is the co-Creator because of the expression “word,” and it is true that Jesus was the Logos, the mouthpiece of God, *but not in creation*. God *alone* is the Creator, and He created not only the planets but also man, Adam, and the animals.

Comment: The *Diaglott* interlinear makes this distinction clear by saying the ages were adjusted “by a word of God.” Right away we realize that God’s “word” was the spoken command. The Christian world has been so indoctrinated that they misconstrue God’s role in creation.

Comment: Verse 3 seems to be speaking of the Chart of the Ages, and the ages were prepared by “the word of God.” Through faith, we believe not only that Noah existed *in the past*, that 1,656 years separated Adam and the Flood, etc., but also that the Kingdom will be established *in the future*.

Reply: The balance of chapter 11 proves what Paul specifically had in mind, but when verse 3 is considered by itself, it is saying that the ages were framed by the spoken word of God.

Now let us talk about faith. When Jesus said to those who desired to be healed, “According to your faith be it unto you,” their faith was pleasing to God and Jesus, but that was *natural* faith. *Spiritual* faith can only be exercised by those who consecrate, as we will try to demonstrate. Thus there are two kinds of faith: (1) natural faith as a *gift* and (2) spiritual faith as a *fruit* of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of faith, which opens up into another realm, comes *after* the Holy Spirit works on the individual.

Paul said that not all men have natural faith (2 Thess. 3:2). He was not saying that all those without faith are wicked but simply that some people do not have the quality of natural faith. Prior to consecration, we knew there was a God by the evidence of things we saw, such as the heavens. Seeing order in the universe, quietness, beauty, flowers with delicate fragrances, various fruits and vegetables, a variety of domesticated animals and how they can be helpful servants to man, we said, “We know there is a God.” However, many see the same things yet have no faith. With their lack of faith, they conclude that the various aspects of nature came by chance and evolution, that different molecules and genes just happened to hit one another and mate and develop, that man evolved from some gorilla in the past which finally stood erect and walked in an upright state, etc. To say these things came from an amoeba or some molecule shows a lack of faith. Most scientists are probably in the category of infidels, in that they believe there is a God but do not believe in a *revealed* God. They feel that God is too great to be interested in man personally. But in witnessing the beautiful things in nature, *natural* faith says there is an intelligent Creator and considers man blessed to be one of His creations.

God is pleased with natural faith, for He can work on it. Not all have this gift, for it has something to do with genetics and family background. If those with natural faith obey God’s drawing to Jesus and respond favorably, then each step taken toward the Tabernacle Court with its Brazen Altar, Laver, and First Veil is pleasing to God, and He can work on that base.

The change to *spiritual* faith is a fruit. After a person consecrates, he still has natural faith and appreciates nature, but now he goes into another realm. The Pastor pointed out that there are three large dispensations: the world before the Flood, the present evil world, and the world to come. *Natural* faith can see the world before the Flood and the present evil world, but *spiritual* faith sees the future. Every example Paul gave in this chapter of Hebrews was of individuals who looked into the *future*. God created the larger ages and also the smaller ones (the Patriarchal, Jewish, Gospel, and Kingdom ages), but the *future* dispensation now becomes very important. *Spiritual* faith, a *fruit* of the Holy Spirit, is based on our obedience; that is, it *grows*. The first act of obedience is when we repent, confess our sins, try to make restitution as much as possible for past sins, and consecrate. Henceforth, for each step of obedience to God’s instructions as given through Jesus, the apostles, and the prophets, we are rewarded with increased *spiritual* faith. The big distinction is that *natural* faith is based on *things seen*, whereas *spiritual* faith is based on *things not seen*. Thus there are two contrasting faiths, or perspectives.

Chapter 11 begins to show us *unseen* things. With regard to the Old Testament, it takes *spiritual* faith to believe that God ordered the surface of the earth to make it habitable for man from the condition of darkness, emptiness, and a covering of water. *Spiritual* faith is required because God’s work during the six Creative Days is not seen with the natural eye. Stated another way, only those who are *spiritual* believe the Genesis account of creation. When we get that understanding, we are at a midpoint. As we obey and consecrate, the Genesis account of creation opens up, as well as God’s purposes in the different dispensations and ages, but what do we especially look for? We look for the *unseen* things that are *yet future*. Faith in the future is especially rewarded. It takes faith to understand that the ages were framed by the

word of God, for faith comes with the illumination of the Holy Spirit after consecration. From that time forward, we are interested in the heavenly call and in running a race for the future.

In summary, verse 3 goes deeper than just the Creative Days. In trying to reason with us, Paul started at the beginning. Before consecration, we saw the heavens and believed by natural faith that there is a God, but we did not understand the Genesis account of creation. As we proceed with chapter 11, we will see the deeper intent, which was Paul's real focus. He called attention again to verse 3 but in another way. Chapter 11 will be very rewarding because it helps us to see what progress we have made and what still needs to be done in developing a Christlike character and attaining our future prospects.

Heb. 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

How did Abel, by faith, offer “unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain”? Abel noticed that a sacrifice required the death of a lamb in order to be satisfactory. To see that the shedding of blood was necessary helps to begin a definition of faith. There are a number of different definitions of faith in the Bible, but we are concentrating on Paul's definition here in chapter 11.

Q: What preceded this incident to develop Abel's faith? Did Adam offer animals in sacrifice?

A: Not much information is given about Adam. However, we do know that when he and Eve transgressed, they sensed their nakedness, whereas previously they did not have a feeling of guilt. God provided the skins of lambs to cover their nakedness.

One definition of faith is obedience—obedience to the Word of God. To be an acceptable worshipper of God, a person looks in the Scriptures for ways to please Him. Of course the Scriptures were not available in Abel's day, but he would have been told about the experience of his parents. If we extrapolate from the little information that is furnished, we can reasonably understand how Abel's “excellent sacrifice” might have come about.

The first point to consider is why Abel offered a sacrifice on that occasion. Apparently, it was customary to do so—and probably on an annual basis. No doubt Adam established a calendar of dates and events. Cain was the firstborn son of Adam and Eve, and certainly Abel was older than a teenager at the time of the “excellent sacrifice.”

We believe that the sacrifice was an annual custom to commemorate the act of forgiveness on God's part when He clothed Adam and Eve. The penalty for the transgression was death, but from the outward appearance, they did not die instantly.

Comment: By the works of their own hands, Adam and Eve tried to put fig leaves together to cover their nakedness, but God intervened with more appropriate clothing.

Reply: The fig leaves were not a sufficient covering, for in size, they were like a loin cloth, whereas the skins provided more coverage. The skins were probably put over one shoulder and held together with a “belt.” When worn in this fashion, they covered the torso.

As individuals try to worship God in the best way they know how based on His Word, that effort brings a measure of appreciation on God's part. He is pleased with sincere efforts of obedience according to the understanding that is available. In verse 4, Paul simply stated that “by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent [acceptable] sacrifice.” However, in that simple statement, there is a sermon as to what faith is.

Comment: To be a tiller of the soil required a lot of effort on Cain's part. In speaking of loving one another, the Apostle John referred to Cain when he said, "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:12). Both Paul and John seemed to know more about Cain than the Scriptures tell us.

Reply: The recorded information is brief, but we can reason on what happened.

Adam and Eve probably witnessed how the animal was slain, how it was flayed, and how the garments were made. As already suggested, they would have compared the resulting garments with the fig-leaf garments they had made. And of course there are other lessons as well. For instance, the fig leaf (representative of the fig tree) represents justification by the Law.

Abel's offering of a lamb could be called a burnt offering. Of course the animal was wholly burnt without the details of how to distribute the organs, etc., that were given much later under the Mosaic Law. Adam and Eve and their sons must have been left alone to use their own reasoning and not told too specifically what to do. A lot of labor was involved on Cain's part in growing produce, fruit of the ground, especially since the ground was cursed as a result of Adam's transgression. Therefore, he was miffed to see that Abel's offering, which was relatively simple, was more acceptable than his own offering when such industry and effort had been involved.

Comment: Abel's sacrifice was not the product of his own hands, as was Cain's. The birth of a lamb is from God in that He perpetuates the offspring without man's effort. Even though a seed is also from God, man's efforts are required to bring forth a crop.

Reply: Yes. Abel was a herder of sheep, and Cain was a tiller of the ground. Cain's efforts represented that justification under the Law is by works. Both individuals offered a sacrifice, but a lamb was a sacrifice in more ways than one. For instance, for a person who is very sensitive and responsive to the animals to then put one to death would require faith that God, in providing skins through the death of an animal, was showing what should be done. Adam and Eve felt they should do likewise in order to please God. Today we recognize annual dates such as birthdays and anniversaries. Adam and Eve and their children did likewise in commemorating annually with a singular "sacrifice" what God had done for them.

Q: Why is the word "gifts" in the plural? God testified of Abel's "gifts."

A: The burnt "offering" was just *one* offering. Although we have been discussing an annual commemoration for a particular purpose, the burnt offering was used on other occasions for different purposes such as a thank offering, a vow offering, or a heave offering. Abel put more thought into his offering than did Cain; he looked for God's actions and movements in history.

The point is that in chapter 11, the initial practice of offering a slain animal is called an exercise of "faith" on Abel's part. Even though Cain also wanted to please God, his offering pictured not only justification by the works of the Law but also doing things in his *own* way and according to his *own* imagination, rather than in *God's* way. Cain should have been looking for what would please God the most. The sacrifice of a lamb was a very simple offering, but it cost something emotionally and entailed the loss of an animal. God was pleased.

It is interesting to know that Abel's sacrifice of a lamb was an example of faith. As we read about the individuals who are named in this chapter, all of whom exercised *faith*, we want to understand what they did that was so remarkable in God's sight. The *thinking behind the act*,

rather than the act itself, was what God especially appreciated. Probably Cain reasoned that he did more work than Abel, yet Abel got the credit.

Comment: Instead of asking God for the reason, Cain was jealous of his brother.

Q: If this particular offering was annual, was the commemoration in the fall of each year because that is when Adam transgressed?

A: Yes.

No doubt Abel offered animals as a practice. Therefore, we cannot use human reasoning by itself—how we measure effort—because if we measured the effort, it would seem that Cain did more. So it is not our human reasoning—what we think—that is pleasing to God but the thinking behind the offering. The same principle operates when a prayer from the *heart* is more valuable than a prayer from the lips because the latter can be relatively superficial, whereas a prayer from the heart, which is emotional and even wrenching sometimes, is far more meaningful, as in the case of penitence, for example.

From the *human* standpoint, a comparison of the *works* would seem to be more logical and proper but not from *God's* standpoint. This principle applies to the Christian life. Therefore, we have to be careful in our judgment and try to do things in a better way if possible. The *spirit* and the *thinking* of Abel in offering the lamb were far more important than anything Cain did.

Comment: The heart condition of the two was very important. Abel's heart was good, and Cain's was evil.

Reply: That is true on this occasion, but we cannot establish a law about the heart being most important because people act emotionally. *Both head and heart* must be right before the Lord. Of course with a repentant sinner, emotion is extremely important—tears, contrition, and humiliation—but not on other occasions. For example, emotionalism may be along the lines of family preference instead of principle and preference for God. Therefore, we must be careful with regard to both the heart and the head.

Living the Christian life is a balancing act. Chronology is important, but if we are not careful with our knowledge, we will begin to judge ourselves in comparison to someone else. We do not know our own standing with God, let alone someone else's. Another person's standing may be superior to ours because we may be judging the great works that are being done. As Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:21-23). Each occasion has to be judged in a proper light, and usually we, as humans, do not judge that way. We react more or less automatically—almost like a reflex action—whereas Jesus in his earthly ministry seemed to sense the right thing to do on every single occasion. He knew just what to say and what to do. We marvel at him, for with us, fatigue and stress warp our judgment and thinking. In summary, the heart is more important on some occasions, and the head is more important on other occasions. It seems that Abel had a little of both. Not only did he have a spirit of reverential awe, but also he gave thought to what God had done.

How do we know that Abel's offering was more acceptable to God? A miraculous fire probably came down and devoured the lamb. On several occasions in the Old Testament, God showed Himself to be a "God that answereth by fire," for example, in Elijah's contest with the

false prophets of Baal and also in the acceptance of Gideon's cakes (1 Kings 18:24; Judg. 6:21).

We are inclined to think that Adam made a calendar. Having been created direct by God, he was superior in intelligence, so he probably started the calendar, which Noah carried over in the Ark. The genealogy records of Genesis are remarkable in that they list the birth of an individual, his age when a child was born, and how many years he lived subsequently. When the two specific time periods are added together, we know, for example, how old Adam was when Seth was born and how long he lived afterward. Adam lived for a total of 930 years.

Comment: Even after Adam sinned, there was communication between God and man, for God (through the Logos) said to Cain, "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door" (Gen. 4:6,7).

Reply: Obviously, many things happened that are not recorded. The fact the account states, "Enoch walked with God," indicates communication and conversing back and forth (Gen. 5:22). And God communicated with Noah. However, very little information is specifically given. We would like to know more about certain individuals in the lineage, but that is impossible at the present time.

Comment: Genesis 4:3,4 reads, "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel ... brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering." For the term "in process of time," the King James margin has "at the end of days."

Reply: The "end of days" signifies an annual observance, the time when an event was commemorated yearly.

Comment: That would make sense, for a particular kind of produce or fruitage comes forth from the ground at a certain time of the year.

Reply: There are two kinds of fruitage. Grains (barley, wheat, rye, etc.) are the earlier harvest, and fruit from trees (peaches, apples, grapes, etc.) comes later. The reference is usually to what comes from the trees, especially since Adam died in the fall.

Comment: The Apostle John called Cain's works "evil," indicating he was responsible for his unacceptable offering (1 John 3:12). Cain "was of that wicked one [Satan]."

Reply: He exercised his *own* thinking, and Christians do this too, usually by taking a liberal view to make an exception in moral behavior, or conduct. In any event, Abel pleased God. There was some manifestation of God's acceptance of his offering in contradistinction to Cain's offering. Incidentally, the word "evil," which is a big subject, has different connotations. For instance, even storms are called "evil." God told Israel, "If you do such and such, the ground will be like iron, and the heavens will be like brass. The sun will be hot, and nothing of verdure will grow." But that was not moral evil.

Thus Cain acted in what *he* thought was a superior way. Great deeds have been done down through history, and we marvel at certain sacrifices, but they are not what God is looking for. Obedience is based on *knowledge*.

"By which he [Abel] obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." How did Abel obtain this "witness"? His sacrifice was miraculously consumed. The plural "gifts" suggests that other events had occurred prior to the lamb offering; that is, Abel's righteousness

was not one act but a *habit* of doing that which was right and good.

“And by it he being dead yet speaketh.” What is the thought here?

Comment: Jesus referred to the righteous blood of Abel in Luke 11:51. “From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, ... verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.” Thus there was an awareness that righteous blood had been spilled down through history.

Reply: Yes, Jesus’ words imply a certain degree of understanding.

Comment: Although Abel is dead, his offering of a proper sacrifice continues to “speak” through the written record, showing the importance of animal sacrifice.

Reply: Even some Christians misunderstand the purpose of animal sacrifice, but what is done according to God’s will is true, right, and good. Therefore, man has to adjust his thinking to God’s frame of thinking.

Verse 3 defines faith as “things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Earlier we tried to show that there are two dimensions to that text. The more obvious explanation is that we see suns, planets, and galaxies, but faith gives credit to *God* as having made them. As individuals, we have faith, even though we did not actually see God creating them. In advocating the Big Bang theory, scientists try to go back so many light-years with the Hubble telescope, but even if that theory were correct, what happened before the Big Bang?

We believe that the things we see in the heavens and in nature came into being by the “word of God” because He tells us multiple times in Scripture that He made them. When Paul wrote the Book of Hebrews, the entire Old Testament was available to him, so he had much understanding of what had happened in the past. Very often in the Hebrew, it is difficult to distinguish past tense from future tense. Sometimes both are meant.

Heb. 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

What was so wonderful about Enoch’s having faith by being translated?

Comment: God must have offered to translate Enoch, and by faith, he agreed to go to an unknown location, much as Abraham did many years later when he left Ur of the Chaldees.

Reply: Yes. When God proposed going to a new place, Enoch knew he would be separated from his former situation. In other words, he knew that a cost was involved in obeying, for he would be leaving behind friendships and family relationships. He trusted that wherever he would go would be best because *God* had initiated the instruction. To obey required *much faith* on Enoch’s part. Verse 5 ties in the *act of translation* with his faith.

Q: Noah was “perfect in his generations,” and he came through Enoch’s lineage (Gen. 6:9). Were Enoch, Lamech, Methuselah, etc., all perfect?

A: They were “perfect” in the sense that they were justified by faith to friendship with God. However, some individuals were more outstanding than others, namely, Abel, Enoch, and Noah. In addition, Methuselah seems to have been outstanding because the Flood was held off until the *moment* he died. It was as though God specially recognized him. Methuselah was the longest living person, for he died at the age of 969.

The statement “Enoch was translated” means that he was taken from one place and transferred to another place and situation. The clause “that he should not see death” is usually misunderstood. We can be reasonably sure that Enoch saw death with his eyes, for he came quite far down the stream of time—roughly a thousand years—from the creation of Adam. When we list the ages as recorded in Genesis, those living at that time would certainly have known about contemporaneous events. Moreover, they all lived in a relatively small area. Of course Cain was pushed out to another district, but the others were more or less in a favored habitat. Therefore, we feel that Enoch saw people die; that is, he saw the effects of death. Notice that humans were not specified in verse 5, and certainly he saw the death of animals. The correct thought is that Enoch saw death but *did not experience* it himself. The word “see” has several meanings. For instance, a blind man who hears something may say, “I see,” meaning “I understand.” Thus there is seeing with *visual* sight, seeing in the sense of *understanding* and *mentally perceiving*, and seeing from the standpoint of *experience*.

Verse 5 ties in beautifully with the thought of the preservation of the Garden of Eden because Enoch was translated to a place where he could live indefinitely. The Scriptures state that man was expelled from the garden *lest he partake of the tree of life and live in spite of the death penalty*, all other things remaining the same (Gen. 3:22,23). In other words, if a person had access to the Garden of Eden, he could live indefinitely as long as he ate of the fruit of the tree of life. This information opens up other subjects, for example, genetics and the fact that there is a death gene. A relationship exists between diet and genetics, and God alone has the key to that relationship. Not only is there a key to life in the genes, but also the death gene can be shut down like a computer. The death gene is working all the time in the present life, and it is just a matter of time until the Grim Reaper acts on an individual, figuratively speaking.

The tree of life is a grove, and evidently, a mixture of different kinds of fruit grows in that grove. Stated another way, the grove consists of a combination of trees. It is interesting that God made the herbs for food, as well as the trees, and that man did not eat meat until after the Flood. Thus man had a vegetarian diet for more than 1,600 years. Adam and Eve did not remove any seeds or shoots from those trees when they left the Garden of Eden. If transplants from those trees were taken outside the garden, then theoretically man could live forever apart from Eden. But the grove of life is locked inside the garden until the due time, for “Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, ... keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen. 3:24).

Hence it is logical to conclude that the Garden of Eden was preserved because God foreknew that Enoch would be translated to that location. Angels were stationed at the entrance to keep man away indefinitely until the proper time in the future.

Q: Will cuttings from that grove be planted by the Third Temple?

A: We have suggested that possibility.

Comment: It is possible that the trees drop seeds in the Garden of Eden, and those seeds could be brought forth after the Little Season when God so indicates.

Reply: Yes. Until that time, the trees will be off-limits for the human race except for the Ancient Worthies. We are in the realm of speculation, but the thoughts seem reasonable.

“Enoch was translated that he should not see death.” The fact he “was not found” shows he had a *bodily* translation, much as Elijah *bodily* “went up by a whirlwind into heaven” (2 Kings 2:11). Since their bodies were not found, Pastor Russell reasoned that Elijah is now alive with Enoch on another planet. We would make the amendment that they are alive in the Garden of

Eden. Philip was also bodily translated (Acts 8:39,40). After he witnessed to and baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, “the Spirit of the Lord caught [him] away,” and he was “found at Azotus.”

“For before his translation he [Enoch] had this testimony, that he pleased God.” No doubt Abel also had a testimony that he pleased God but in connection with a particular sacrifice, an act. Incidentally, in addition to his translation, Enoch was a preacher of righteousness like Noah, for he prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 14,15).

Heb. 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

An earlier definition of faith was “understand[ing] that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (verse 3). Believing that both physical creation and the ages were framed by the “word of God” is an exercise of faith for us as Christians. Abel and Enoch were also definitions of faith, but before listing additional individuals, Paul gave another dimension of faith in verse 6.

Of course we believe in an intelligent Creator, and it is interesting that an early chapter in the *First Volume* is entitled “The Existence of an Intelligent Creator.” The belief that God exists is *natural* faith, but natural faith is not enough to please God. For example, the United States is considered the most religious country in the world because about 95 percent of the population believes there is a God, but how many are true Christians? Verse 3 specifies that what we see in the heavens proves the existence of an intelligent Creator, yet many astronomers, who look at the heavens daily, are infidels.

Comment: Astronomers are 100 percent dependent upon the order of the universe. They cannot calculate anything without believing in its order.

Reply: Yes, but they claim that the order came from chaos, that chaos produced the order. However, it was *God’s* Spirit and power, the aurora borealis, an electrical influence, that fluttered over chaos and made the earth habitable.

The new dimension of faith in verse 6 is that not only do we have to believe God exists, but the next step is to believe that He is the “rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” James was talking about this subject when he said that a *living* faith does works (James 2:17-22). However, he was not saying that we are justified by works—works are merely a *proof* of our faith. But even that is not the faith which most pleases God. Works are an evidence of belief, so many sincere Christians do a lot of good things and work hard in trying to obey the royal law of God—they help the poor and the homeless, etc.—but that is not what God is looking for.

Paul’s saying that God is “a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” gives a new slant on the faith of Abel and Enoch. Their faith *acted* on their belief and brought obedience. Thus sandwiched in between Abel and Enoch, the first two examples, and other Ancient Worthies who are subsequently singled out is the statement of verse 6 that “without faith,” it is impossible to please God because we are to believe not only “that he is” but also “that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”—as Abel, Enoch, and the others did. There is a big difference between just believing there is a God (or believing that Jesus died on the Cross) and *faith*. To please God, we must consecrate, which is *believing into* God and *believing into* Jesus Christ; this *diligent seeking* is *spiritual* faith.

Comment: The following is from a former study: “Verse 6 was inserted after two Ancient Worthies (Abel and Enoch) had already been named. The insertion indicates that up to that time, not many had such faith. In other words, verse 6 was inserted to show the paucity of faith that existed. As time went on, the deeds of God and His workings among men began to instill more and more faith from a historical standpoint.” It is startling to think that so close to the perfection of man, there was such little faith. Even though earth’s population was very small in comparison to today, we would expect more individuals to have spiritual faith at that time.

Reply: There have been a lot of believers in the Gospel Age, but to *act on belief* is to *submit the heart to God with a contract*. Sometime in our life, we kneel down and confess to God not only that we are a sinner, that we recognize our undone condition, and that we have committed sins in the past, but also that we have been moved by the knowledge of Jesus Christ to accept him as our personal Savior. The love of Jesus constrains us to become obedient to want to do the Lord’s will. That confession may be done privately or publicly, but usually it is best to do both with the symbol of water baptism being a public demonstration, or evidence, of what has taken place in the heart. Therefore, to believe that God exists is *natural* faith, but to make a consecration is *spiritual* faith. Consecration manifests the desire to serve God by committing our life to Him so that our life is no longer our own. God measures us by how well we live up to that desire—just as He measured the Ancient Worthies of past ages.

Heb. 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things [plural] not seen as yet.” What “things [were] not seen as yet”? It had never rained, there had never been a flood, and never before had all drowned except eight people. With regard to the future Flood, Noah was “moved with fear.”

Comment: According to the *Diaglott*, Noah was “piously afraid,” so the “fear” was *reverence*.

Reply: Yes, it was “reverential fear [or awe].” Fear has its place as a warning, but we do not want the watchdog to bark every minute of the day. Noah had approximately 100 years of opportunity to witness before the Flood came. However, we do not think he spent hours witnessing each day because he had such a monumental task to accomplish. Considering the amount of trees to be cut and beams to be prepared, the size of the Ark, the labor that was required, and how few participated in the work, Noah did not have much time to preach righteousness except when others came to him. When others made fun of him while he was busily engaged in building the Ark, he was forced to retaliate in the sense of responding as to what the danger really was and their lack of faith and obedience.

Comment: Not only were his sons not old enough to help him when he first received the command to build the Ark, but they had not even been born.

Reply: No doubt God gave the plans for the Ark to Noah, just as He later gave the plans for the Tabernacle to Moses, the plans for the Temple to David, and the plans for the future Temple to Ezekiel. It seems reasonable to assume that Noah had to study the plans and think of where to get source materials, how to transport the building materials, what place would be most convenient for constructing the Ark, etc. Because of the task at hand, Noah must have been a large, strong, tall man very much like Moses.

“By faith Noah ... prepared an ark to the saving of his house.” Noah’s children were a comfort to him because they believed him and participated in his faith. For the three sons to take on this all-absorbing task, which engaged a great deal of their time, we know that faith was instilled in

them. Their wives, too, would have been busy preparing food. Thus the entire family was involved in the project, and it took a number of years and much work gathering and preparing the materials before they could fully participate in the actual construction of the Ark. Notice that the account says Noah “prepared an ark,” rather than “built an ark,” because a lot of thought was behind the building.

Q: Would others such as Lamech, Noah’s father, have helped?

A: Undoubtedly others would have helped, at least in the earlier period when the sons were not available. Lamech and Methuselah would have been participants.

Another point is that the ancients had a knowledge of leverage, which is not known today. Similarly, Italians seem to be gifted in masonry, for example, in the laying of stone walls. When they pick up a stone, they know by feel where the center of gravity is, and thus they can place it in a wall without mortar so that it will last and permit the drainage of water. At any rate, the ancients seemed to possess the gift of leverage, as in the construction of Baalbek in Lebanon, for example.

“By faith Noah ... prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world.” It would be interesting to see how Noah and his family reacted, as well as to see the shame of the others, when the Flood was imminent and it started to rain. If the people tried to get in the Ark, we can imagine the scene and the panic as they encountered the covering of bitumen, a slimy tar.

“By faith Noah ... prepared an ark ... by the which he ... became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” When we read about Abel, Enoch, and Noah, we can see a pattern developing, even though the circumstances of each looked quite different. A similarity in actions gives us a wonderful definition of a *living faith*—a faith that is *acted upon*.

Heb. 11:8 **By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.**

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed.” Abel, Enoch, and Noah obeyed, and now Abraham also obeyed. Abraham was in Ur of the Chaldees when God called him to leave and go to an unknown place of promise (Gen. 11:28,31). Abraham “went out, not knowing whither he went.”

We can afford the luxury of thinking on some of the omitted details. The identification Ur “of the Chaldees” tells us that there was another Ur. The original message to Abraham was not specifically explained. When he arrived in Haran with his father Terah, his nephew Lot, and Sarah, the account tells us that God had *previously* called him. “They came unto Haran, and dwelt there.... Now the LORD *had said* unto Abraham [back in Ur of the Chaldees], Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee” (Gen. 11:31; 12:1). Abraham did not know where he was going. He simply obeyed the command to get out of his father’s house and go to an unknown land God would show him.

Similarly, when we made a consecration to God through Jesus, we did not know many of the details at first, so we, like Abraham, went out by faith. We did know that God has a plan, that there is a heavenly calling, etc., but as the years have gone by, we have been rewarded with a little more detail concerning the promise. It is encouraging to consider that in a world of unbelief, we took the remarkable step of consecration and began to walk in the narrow way.

When we reflect on Abraham’s life, certainly one of the wonderful things he did was to sever

his ties back in Ur. In those days, it was dangerous for people to travel with their goods. On the limited roads, travelers were sitting ducks for banditry, especially if they did not know about notorious places for ambush. Therefore, daily Abraham manifested faith, as well as the drive to continue on, not knowing where he was going. It was an exercise of faith to trust God, the One who had called him, that somehow things would work out. Incidentally, on a tour to the Middle East, we visited Haran, and on a very old stone building, of which only ruins remain, we saw the word “Charan,” which was the proper spelling in that particular locale.

Heb. 11:9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

“By faith he [Abraham] sojourned [tabernacled in tents] in the land of promise.” He lived a nomadic existence, traveling from place to place and even going down to Egypt. Although Abraham died without receiving the promise, he secured it by faithfulness and will inherit the land in reality in the Kingdom.

Abraham “sojourned ... as in a strange country.” Not only did Abraham need to have a strong faith, but that faith had to be *continually* exercised because events that happened seemed to be preventing the promise from taking place. Just as Abraham’s faith grew as time went on, so our faith should grow with more understanding. A strong faith tells us that “with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26). God does not tell us all of the details concerning our future. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” is the principle (Matt. 6:34). As the hymn “He Knows” so beautifully expresses, “So on I go not knowing, I would not if I might; I’d rather walk in the dark with God than go alone in the light.” Abraham, one of the leading exemplars, was the father of the faithful (Rom. 4:12,16).

Comment: Christians, too, sojourn “in a strange country.”

Abraham dwelled “in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob.” Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were contemporaries for a while. Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old, and Jacob was born when Isaac was 60 years old (Gen. 21:5; 25:26). Abraham lived until age 175, and he was 160 when Jacob was born (Gen. 25:7).

Isaac and Jacob were “the heirs with him [Abraham] of the same promise.” When this promise was reiterated to Isaac, Abraham was mentioned: “I am the God of Abraham thy father” (Gen. 26:3,4,24). When the promise was repeated to Jacob, both Isaac and Abraham were mentioned: “I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac” (Gen. 28:13,14).

Comment: The *Diaglott* inserts “the” before “promise”: By faith, Abraham “sojourned in the land of *the* promise.”

Reply: The bottom line is that in spite of all the problems, Abraham was willing to go wherever God would lead. In time, as disclosed by the Apostle Paul, God’s message to Abraham was, “You did not get the land down here, but I have something better for you.” Thus long before Abraham died, he knew about his heavenly inheritance at the end of the Kingdom Age.

Heb. 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Abraham “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”; that is, he felt that the environment around him in Ur had no foundation. There is a lot in mythology about the land and society he came out of. Abraham’s experience was somewhat like that of a

Christian. When, before consecration, we realized the sin that was in us and saw the environment around us and our own undone, deplorable condition, we subconsciously wanted to be lifted up, and we hoped for something better. We searched for God if haply we might find Him (Acts 17:27).

Comment: Another similarity between Abraham and the consecrated of the Gospel Age is the hope of ultimately obtaining a spiritual resurrection.

Reply: No doubt, as time went on, Abraham realized he was due for a future inheritance, but he did not have that information when he left Ur, anymore than we know everything at the time of our consecration. As we progress in the truth over the years, we begin to see things more clearly. God's Word is like silver refined seven times, and we are dumbfounded to see details we had not noticed before. Similarly, when God spoke in Genesis 17:8,19, we do not think Abraham realized the depth of meaning in the phrase "and to thy seed after thee." His initial response was, "I will go wherever God leads me." Originally Abraham was thinking along earthly lines, but later he was informed of a heavenly reward ultimately.

What is the difference between God's being a "builder" and a "maker"? The sequence indicates that it is one thing to *start* to build, and it is another thing to *finish successfully* what was started. Thus the term "maker" means to complete the construction process. We pray that this will be our experience as Christians, for we are being built now in the present life, and hopefully, we will finish our course in the proper mode.

Heb. 11:11 Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

Q: Is the implication that if Sarah had not had the faith to really grab hold of the promise, she would not have had Isaac? She "received strength to conceive seed" through her faith. Of course God, knowing the end from the beginning, realized she would have that faith, but nevertheless, her faith was important in order to have that promise fulfilled in her.

A: Since Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born, Sarah would have been 90. On the surface, it was more of a miracle for a woman that old to have a child than for a man to be a father at 100. However, the implication is that Abraham became impotent after the birth of Ishmael, which occurred when he was 86 years old (Gen. 16:16). Between age 86 and 100, Abraham evidently found out he was impotent. Therefore, he was almost convinced that Ishmael was the heir of promise. Having realized a radical change in his virility, he had to exercise faith that he could have another child. In addition, he needed great faith to believe Sarah would have a child. He exercised that faith and obeyed, and in due time, Isaac was born.

We can imagine how happy Abraham was at the time of Isaac's birth, and he never dreamed that later he would be asked to slay Isaac. We can see how great Abraham was, and had he lived during the Gospel Age, he would have been part of the Little Flock. However, God knows what He is doing. His dealings with any of us are not a matter of justice, but having promised us a crown if we are faithful unto death, He will fulfill that promise.

Comment: Romans 4:19 nicely expresses the faith of Abraham: "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb."

Reply: Not only did Abraham not consider "his own body [which was] now dead [impotent]," but he exercised faith with regard to Sarah. He realized he was past his prime for fathering a

child, so for his faith to be valid, a miracle had to occur. In other words, he had previously tried unsuccessfully to father a child. At first, since he had a son with Hagar, he may have thought the problem was with Sarah.

Abraham's quality of faith was remarkable. Faith is only one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, but it is one of the most important ingredients. The just "live by faith"; therefore, the exercise of faith is a *growing* condition (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). The seven or eight major fruits of the Spirit are boiled down to three: faith, hope, and love.

"Hope maketh not ashamed" (Rom. 5:5). Many confuse hope with overconfidence about being faithful unto death; that is, many who will not be in the Little Flock are very confident. True faith is based on understanding; it is not just credulity but is substantive. In our immaturity, we may think we have developed remarkable faith when, in fact, that is not the case. Consider Paul, who said he would not be like one who puts off the armor. He admonished others to be careful along that line, yet at the end of his course, he could say, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. 4:8). That type of hope, which came at the end of his life, will not make ashamed. Hope was exercised in Jesus' own life, as manifested in certain statements, yet there was a time of doubt and trial in the Garden of Gethsemane and also on the Cross. But these experiences were necessary, particularly the one on the Cross ("My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"), because he had to take Adam's place. Although the latter experience was of short duration, Jesus died of a broken heart, yet his final cry ("It is finished") was one of confidence, triumph, and victory. Accordingly, Christians experience ups and downs, but generally speaking, we can see, where recorded, the development and growth that took place in the Lord's children of the past.

Jesus' Gethsemane experience was of longer duration. He agonized for at least an hour and perhaps for two hours. Agonizing and importuning are important factors in our growth, for crystallization of character comes about through tumultuous experiences from time to time.

"Sarah ... was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised." When she overheard the angel telling Abraham that in a year, a child would be born, she laughed, but that reaction was just *temporary*. Therefore, we cannot judge by one's emotions. The moment of initial incredulity quickly changed to *faith*. God could read her heart.

Comment: In embarrassment, Sarah denied that she had laughed.

Reply: Sarah was in the tent when she laughed inwardly, but the Logos knew what had happened (Gen. 18:12). Therefore, when he, speaking for God, asked Sarah why she had laughed, that question may have been the little spark that changed her incredulity into faith. Sometimes a word in season can have a remarkable effect for good.

Comment: When we first look at matters from the *natural* standpoint, they seem impossible, and that is why Sarah laughed. She felt she was too old, but when she realized that God would perform a miracle on her behalf, faith took over.

Heb. 11:12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

We are spoiled to a certain extent because, living way down in history, we have a vast understanding of things that have happened since Abraham's day. Today about 6 billion people live on this planet, but in the time of Abraham, there may have been only 50,000 people. In fact, when he fought the five kings, he had an army of only 300 or so men, yet he defeated the others and rescued Lot. The number of people who have lived subsequent to

Abraham's day far exceeds 6 billion. Of course not too many lived prior to the Flood, even though that event occurred 1,656 years after Adam. The point is that billions may be of the lineage of Abraham. All who live today are of both Adam and Noah, but from the standpoint of Abraham's children, there could be billions—an "innumerable" multitude, as it were.

The expression "stars of heaven" sometimes has a spiritual connotation, but in other instances, the term means "innumerable" (Gen. 26:4). But in regard to the promise to Abraham, we see that there is more to this term than first meets the eye.

Comment: The Great Company is described as "a great multitude, which no man could number" (Rev. 7:9).

Reply: Under the symbol of Rebekah, the Church will generate future life (Gen. 24:60). Although the Bible does not go into detail, it likens Jesus to the Second Adam and the Church to the Second Eve. The procreation of the race in the Kingdom Age will be a regeneration. The race that previously existed will be resuscitated, but what about future beings on other planets in the universe? Since few details are recorded in Scripture, we would be getting into a realm that is beyond our comprehension at present.

Heb. 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

The statement "these all died in faith" is sometimes used to disprove the thought of Enoch's still being alive. However, verse 13 does not mention Enoch, and verse 5 specifically said, "Enoch was translated that he should not see death." Thus Enoch was listed as an exception. In other words, if the one who is talking makes an exception and then sums up his argument with the statement "these all died in faith," that would mean *except for what was previously stated*.

Verse 13 is also saying that Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah, who died "in faith," did not receive the promises but saw "them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Applying this principle to the Christian, one is not to be a silent believer. Christians are to confess the promises to fellow brethren, as well as to others as opportunity arises.

Comment: If verse 13 ended with the words "and embraced them," we could say that the Ancient Worthies were seeing the earthly promises afar off. The added clause "and confessed that they were *strangers and pilgrims on the earth*" indicates that their real (or ultimate) hope was heavenly.

Reply: The hymn with the words "I'm a pilgrim and I'm a stranger" expresses the hope of laying up "treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt" (Matt. 6:20).

Heb. 11:14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

These Ancient Worthies "declare[d] plainly that they seek a [heavenly] country."

Q: Would Abel have had a heavenly hope?

A: Yes, he probably did. Although many things are not recorded, we can reasonably infer that the Ancient Worthies knew more than the Bible states. There are other ways of proving this thought, for more was stated about some of the Ancient Worthies, and clues are in the Psalms and in some of the later books of the Old Testament.

Comment: Not only is Enoch excepted from the statement “these all died in faith,” but in addition, Elijah is not mentioned in chapter 11. Therefore, we are left with the statement that Elijah “went up by a whirlwind into heaven” (2 Kings 2:11).

Reply: Nowhere do the Scriptures say Elijah died, so we conclude that he, too, was translated and is still alive.

Heb. 11:15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

Paul now reasoned from a *human* standpoint. When a person is born and reared in a certain country, he often wants to go back and renew contacts and find his roots in old age—and even to be buried there. From another standpoint, a person may become homesick when parted from a loved one. However, Paul was referring to something else when he mentioned that if the Ancient Worthies had been mindful of the country whence they came, they would have had opportunity to return. Paul was writing from both a pragmatic and a spiritual standpoint, and how different the two are!

Comment: The older generation of Israelites in the wilderness proved unfaithful because they looked back to the leeks and garlic in Egypt and wanted to return to the land in which they were born (Num. 11:5; 21:5).

Reply: Yes. Those who had the proper spirit were satisfied to be pilgrims and strangers on the earth and did not want to return to Egypt. In other words, faithful *individuals* had a *spiritual* hope and longed for a better resurrection, but the nation as a whole did not have this desire.

Heb. 11:16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Verse 16 explains what was just mentioned. The Ancient Worthies were indeed strangers and pilgrims who desired “a better country,” that is, “an heavenly [country].” “Wherefore God ... hath prepared for them a city.” Normally, a city represents a government, and in ancient times, it was a place with order and security. The principle of human nature seems to be that there is safety in numbers. Not only were cities walled, but also they were usually built in strategic locations that were convenient for both commerce and defense. Thus a city was a symbol of a “government,” but that term was rather broad. Accordingly, in the spiritual change of the Ancient Worthies, there may be some distribution beyond one specific location.

“God is not ashamed to be called their God,” nor is He ashamed of them. His feeling toward His human servants, the Ancient Worthies, is similar to the feeling Jesus has for his followers. As the Scripture states, Jesus “is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb. 2:11).

Heb. 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

The illustration of Abraham’s faith that was discussed earlier in the chapter pertained to his obedience to God’s call to leave Ur of the Chaldees. He willingly pulled up stakes and left familiar surroundings to venture forth to an unknown land. Now verse 17 is referring to a separate and later landmark of faith in his life. When Abraham offered up Isaac, his son was at least 25 years old, but by inference, it seems likely that he was 30 because he pictured Jesus.

Here Isaac is called Abraham’s “only begotten son.” In later life, we have felt that this term

needs some modification, namely, his “dearly loved son” or his “darling son.” The same is true of Jesus, who is not the “only begotten son” of God in the sense of being His only direct creation, for God directly created other beings as well. Without going into a multitude of proofs at this time, we will just say that Lucifer is specifically mentioned. In addition, Christians are begotten of the Father, and the New Creation is just as real an entity as any natural creation.

Heb. 11:18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

Abraham obediently set forth on a journey to what he believed would ultimately result in the slaying of not only the son he dearly loved but also the one in whom the promise was made. The trying of Abraham’s faith was intense, and his natural (or parental) feelings were involved as well. We do not usually dwell too much on the depth of other people’s feelings unless they are very close to us, in which case we have more and more empathy, but we can see the tremendous test that Abraham successfully passed. He was truly a crystallized character. Could there be any test more trying than what Abraham was asked to do?

Abraham’s faith was established even above the natural emotional standpoint of sacrificing a son because he first had the promise of a better land, and then he showed his faith. He proved beyond question that the promise meant more to him than *anything else* in life. If Abraham had been called in the Gospel Age, he would have been a brilliant star in the spiritual Church.

Heb. 11:19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Abraham had faith in the promise that God would raise Isaac from death. In his willingness to slay Isaac, Abraham reasoned not from his own standpoint but from the standpoint of *his confidence in God*. What God told him to do, he would do. Abraham got up early in the morning and went on the journey (Gen. 22:3).

Comment: Like Jesus, Isaac willingly submitted to his father.

Reply: That is true, although Abraham hid the matter from Isaac until near the time for the sacrifice.

Comment: In the type, God provided a ram, so Isaac pictured the Lamb of God. Also, the ram represented a burnt offering, and because of Isaac’s willingness, God accepted him as if he had actually been offered. And if we go a step higher, Abraham, who had the knife, represented God, who “killeth, and maketh alive” (1 Sam. 2:6).

Reply: With regard to those who are truly obedient to the Lord to the extent of their ability, the more He tries them and they are faithful, the higher the reward and the greater the love and esteem of the Father. God wants the best for the consecrated, but sometimes the best for an individual is a very severe or bitter experience. The desire is that one will faithfully respond to the experience in a scriptural manner.

“From whence also he [Abraham] received him [Isaac] in a figure.” As has been mentioned, when the two thoughts are combined—the sudden appearance of a ram in a thicket and the fact that a ram was frequently used as a burnt offering—the ram was substituted for Isaac (a type of Jesus, the Lamb of God) to become the burnt offering.

Heb. 11:20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

God blessed not only Jacob but also Esau. In other words, “by faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come,” and God recognized that blessing. It is true that Esau forfeited his birthright for a mess of pottage and that the momentary satisfying of his appetite was more important than the birthright, even though he later mourned its loss and beseeched Isaac upon seeing that his father had unknowingly bestowed the blessing of the firstborn on Jacob. Esau realized that he had lost the firstborn blessing. Along natural lines, the inheritance of the firstborn was a double portion, and Esau sensed that loss keenly because he was of a natural mind. Isaac then conferred a blessing on Esau, which God recognized. The blessing included “the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above” (Gen. 27:39).

Years later, when Jacob returned with a bountiful gift, fearing that Esau would still have a root of bitterness and that he would start a conflict, Esau declined the gift because he was satisfied with his temporal possessions. However, Jacob insisted that Esau accept the gift. God answered Jacob’s prayer for peace (Gen. 32:9-12).

Comment: Even though deception was involved, God honored the giving of the firstborn blessing to Jacob, yet retribution came later.

Reply: Yes. As we understand the matter, necessary retribution for wrongdoing was carried out in the present life for the Ancient Worthies in past ages, and it is carried out in the present life for Christians in the Gospel Age. This principle is illustrated in the life of Jacob. He experienced a lot of disappointments, and the same was true of David. As God sees the need, matters are squared in the present life, especially in the case of injuries to others.

We have seen people change and some of the most desirable individuals fail. An example is Lucifer, whom God approved personally as being perfect. In fact, God was not satisfied to say he was perfect in beauty but said he was like the *sum total* as far as being an ideal son in appearance and in temperament, yet he fell through pride. It is really very strange that when we have had a long Christian life, we see some fall by the wayside—almost like Samuel with regard to Saul. In the beginning, Saul, who stood head and shoulders above the other Israelites, was so humble and timid that he hid in a haystack, but he changed. A wrong environment changes a person. No matter how good he was, if he does not remove himself from a bad environment, he gets contaminated because of the exceedingly infectious quality of sin. Perhaps all of us in our Christian life came perilously close to going over that line, to being changed—until we got frightened. In our past life, we had a scary experience, but thank God, He puts fear in the heart so that we see the wrong, the inclination, or the danger and make a change. No matter how good and strong and courageous we are, we can be deceived. The deception can come about in a way that appears to be sudden, but usually the slipping away is gradual. It is possible to come to the point of no return.

When we analyze David’s and Jacob’s lives, there are a lot of things to think about. Jesus said, “Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out” (Luke 13:28). Therefore, in spite of some of the things Jacob did, he finally stood the test, and God could see what was due to Adamic weakness. However, we are not in a position to see the fine line between Adamic weakness and willful sin. Sometimes the two come very, very close, but we are not to cross over the line. That is why we say in the Lord’s Prayer, “Abandon us not in temptation, but deliver us from evil.” We think almost all of the Lord’s people have that experience sometime in their Christian life. The Scriptures contain both warnings and encouragements. The bottom line is that we have to hang in there and be faithful to the Lord and His promises and make straight paths for our feet.

The expression “concerning things to come” is significant. Of course Esau did get a blessing, but he is not to be considered as one of the Ancient Worthies. The one being commended was

Isaac. In other words, Esau was an exception to the blessing of faith that Isaac possessed.

Heb. 11:21 By faith Jacob, when he was a-dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

By faith, when Jacob was dying, he blessed both of Joseph's sons. (When Isaac was dying, he blessed both of his sons, Jacob and Esau.)

The Holy Spirit crossed Jacob's hands, so that he gave the chief blessing to Ephraim, Joseph's younger son. Joseph tried to change the hands back, but Jacob said, "I know it, my son, I know it" (Gen. 48:17-19). Joseph and Isaac each had a preference for one of their sons, but the question is, What was the *Lord's* preference? Both of Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, got a blessing from a natural standpoint, just as both Jacob and Esau got a blessing from a natural standpoint. Jacob and Esau each had many sons and a multitude of flocks.

In summary, we ask, Who shall stay God's hand? He will reward whom He thinks is proper. Some puzzling things come up in our study of the Word of God, but we are to go by *His* thinking. Then, lo and behold, the day comes when we can see the wisdom of something that has troubled us.

Comment: With both Jacob and Esau and then Ephraim and Manasseh, the younger son received the better blessing.

Q: What is the thought of the statement that "by faith Jacob ... blessed both the sons ... and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff"? The word "leaning" is supplied. The *Diaglott* has "bowed down also on the top of his staff." Why was this detail included?

A: The "staff" was important, for it was like a scepter of authority. It was not unusual for the chief bedouins to have a leading stick, or staff. With the Arabs, a scarf of a particular color put around the head indicated rank. Clans and tribes in Africa have symbols of headship.

Heb. 11:22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

How did Joseph know about the Exodus? In Genesis 15:13-16, Abraham was given information about 400 years of affliction. When Joseph died in Egypt, a number of years still had to be fulfilled before his bones could be taken to the Promised Land. Incidentally, based on clues in Scripture, we place Job in the time gap between Joseph and Moses. Also, based on principle, God has a representative, or witness, on the earth at all times.

"By faith Joseph ... made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones." During the entire 40 years of the Exodus, the Israelites were carrying Joseph's bones.

The Pastor succinctly and acutely observed the distinction between the Patriarchal Age (of individuals) and the Jewish Age (of the nation of Israel). In addition to those who are listed in this eleventh chapter as being Ancient Worthies, we know of perhaps just as many whose names were omitted. Paul purposely did not make the listing too long, but in the Patriarchal Age, the Ancient Worthies must have been very outstanding individuals, for example, Shem.

Heb. 11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

By faith, Amram and Jochebed, who were not fearful, hid Moses for three months following his birth and then put him in an ark. With strong faith, not only did they preserve Moses' life, even though there was a death sentence on all Hebrew male babies, but also they put him in an ark, which was like a raft, and sent him out into the unknown. Evidently, the circumstances were well thought out. For example, they had to figure out how the Nile current was flowing so that the ark would rest in the bulrushes, and of course the Lord overruled the matter.

Comment: Moses must have been an unusually beautiful baby (Acts 7:20), and although the details are not recorded in Scripture, Jesus as a perfect babe would have been extraordinary in appearance. Here was another similarity between the two individuals.

Reply: When Pharaoh's daughter, who was childless, saw this exceedingly fair male baby in the ark in the bulrushes, her heart melted. In addition, the Lord would have worked on her emotions. There were many similarities between Moses and Jesus, as prophesied by Moses. "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken [in the Kingdom Age]; ... I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Deut. 18:15,18). Even if the number is in the millions, it is surprising how relatively few Jews have believed in Jesus. Only a very small percentage have had faith. The Lord's people may be poor in many ways, but they are rich in natural faith at the start of their Christian walk, and the hope is that they will grow in spiritual faith.

Natural faith, a gift that some are born with, is solely the product of Providence; it is sometimes called a talent. The Apostle Paul said, "All men [the majority] have not [natural] faith" (2 Thess. 3:2). Spiritual faith, a fruit of the Holy Spirit, is developed over time.

Q: What is the thought of Moses' being "a proper child"?

A: As a babe, Moses was beautiful to look upon. In other words, his unusual appearance set him apart from other male babies.

Comment: For Moses to be successfully hidden for three months means he was a content and quiet baby.

Reply: Yes, he was probably well-behaved.

Comment: The hope of a Messiah was real to Jews who had faith. Therefore, when Amram and Jochebed saw the Hebrew male babies being killed, they may have prayed earnestly about the seed of woman, hoping that perhaps Jochebed would have the honor of bearing this baby. When Moses was born, his extraordinary appearance seemed providential, and they thought that he could be the promised Deliverer.

Reply: Yes. They did not know for sure, but they felt that he could be the Deliverer. Tradition indicates that Amram was an unusual individual.

Comment: Moses was profited by the faith of his parents.

Heb. 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Heb. 11:25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

When did Moses probably “come to years”? Certainly he was an adult, as justified by his conduct, when he slew the Egyptian overseer who was mistreating a Hebrew, and that would have been around age 40. “And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren” (Exod. 2:11). The fact that Moses’ sympathies were with his people, the Israelites, indicates parental guidance and influence to some extent, for although he was schooled in all the wisdom of Egypt, surely the Egyptian libraries did not have much information about Jews (Acts 7:22). Therefore, this information would have come primarily from his mother, showing that parental influence during the tender years can be very beneficial in the rearing of children.

The point is that Moses knew all the implications and dangers of revealing any affection or sympathy for the downtrodden Israelites, of which he was one. In what way did he refuse “to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter”? If he had wanted to be the next Pharaoh, he would have openly indicated, by words and deeds, his loyalty to the current Pharaoh and to Egypt. He declined to do that, but evidently, he had tact like Daniel, who was a foreigner yet occupied a high position. Some people are gifted in using tact and knowing how to say the right thing while, at the same time, having the wisdom not to tell lies. According to tradition, Moses became a general in the army of Upper Egypt, but he eventually chose to be identified with the Jewish race, as manifested in his intervention in the struggle between the Egyptian and the Hebrew. As a result, he had to flee for his life.

Thus Moses chose “to suffer affliction with the people of God [the Hebrews], [rather] than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” Jesus stated a principle that applies in any age: “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” (Mark 10:23). The Ancient Worthies of the Old Testament had tests similar to those of the Christian. Turning his back on the rich endowment of Egypt, Moses chose instead the downtrodden race of his own people and the promises of God.

Moses’ parents must have briefed him on Jewish history. In the past, people had not only longer lives but also better memories. Probably Moses was returned to Pharaoh’s daughter at 12 years of age, but by that time, he had learned much about God and his own race. Evidence of Moses’ outstanding memory is the Book of Deuteronomy, which he spoke in one day at the end of his life. As he discoursed for hours and hours, his words manifested his awesome understanding of the principles of God.

Heb. 11:26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

When Moses came of age, he esteemed “the reproach of [for] Christ [to be of] greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” Certainly Moses was consecrated. Perhaps his parents had told him that Joseph wanted his bones to be taken back to Israel because of his firm belief that the Israelites would be redeemed from Egypt.

Comment: The second part of verse 26, “For he had respect unto the recompence of the reward,” ties in with verse 6, “For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

Comment: The *Diaglott* has, “He looked off [away] toward the reward.” Moses definitely looked ahead to the reward of faith in the future.

Reply: He had faith in the promises of God. Similarly, the Christian trusts that if he is faithful

unto death, God will give him “a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). All of the promises to the seven periods of the Church down through the Gospel Age ended up with great encouragement. The true Christian Church has the “one hope” (Eph. 4:4).

Heb. 11:27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

Moses “forsook Egypt” by faith when he left at the time of the Exodus. He did not fear the wrath of Pharaoh, even though he spoke to him face to face. Moses “endured, as seeing him who is invisible.” No doubt when he spoke to Pharaoh, he had courage, confidence, and strength of spirit—plus a few miraculous signs to show him.

If a person shows a little trembling or timidity, he can become a victim. For example, a friend and coworker was threatened a couple of times in broad daylight right in front of City Hall because he was lame. People saw that they could rob him. Animals do the same thing in looking for the very young or the old as prey. Undoubtedly, Moses’ faith was evidenced when he spoke to Pharaoh. He had no fear at that time, yet earlier, when he was in the wilderness, his attitude was, “Pharaoh is such an awesome authority figure that I am not capable of speaking to him.” Although God appointed Aaron as Moses’ mouthpiece, there were times when Moses spoke. Incidentally, if Moses had been rewarded earlier, he might have ended up a failure, but his 40 years of experience in the desert wilderness were a marvelous schooling.

Comment: Moses had faith while in Egypt up to age 40. However, he did fear Pharaoh and had to flee for his life after slaying the Egyptian.

Reply: Jesus gave similar counsel to his disciples: “If your message is received unfavorably, leave that city and go elsewhere.”

Q: Did Paul specially choose the word “invisible” in verse 27 because the Egyptian religion was a religion of sight with three-dimensional objects to worship? He seemed to be contrasting Moses’ faith in the *invisible* God with that which was *visible*.

A: Yes. This exercise of faith on Moses’ part occurred before he went up on Mount Sinai and was given a symbolic vision of God. As a mature individual at age 40, he chose to suffer the reproach of the people of God. When he fled into the wilderness, the only recorded visual experience happened at the burning bush just before he returned to Egypt.

Comment: Paul continued to give examples of the definition that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Reply: Except for Abel (and we do not have enough information about him), the Ancient Worthies who are listed were looking for a city or a land. Enoch was translated far away. Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees to go to the Land of Promise. Joseph looked forward to his bones being taken back to Israel. We believe Abel also had this hope, but the Bible is silent. The Christian also hopes to go to a land, a *heavenly* land.

A common theme of the exercise of faith is that those who have made a consecration are on the right path. They are in the way, and they are to *keep* in the way and make straight paths for their feet, watching and praying with all diligence.

Heb. 11:28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

Where was Moses' faith specially manifested by his keeping the original Passover? All of the Israelites were made aware of the requirements to keep the Passover. If Moses' faith had not been strong, he could have feared that the information would get back to Pharaoh, and then the obedient Israelites would have been sitting ducks for the Egyptians. With *unwavering* faith, Moses kept the Passover as instructed by God. The firstborn in every house of the Egyptians died when the destroying angel went through the land, but the Israelites were spared (Exod. 12:12,23). Incidentally, the light of the full moon aided the Israelites to meet in Rameses, the rallying point for their escape from Egypt. At Succoth, the second stop on the route of the Exodus, God provided a cloud that shielded them from heat by day and was luminescent by night. That cloud stayed with the Israelites for the entire 40 years in the wilderness. The Lord helped them wonderfully.

The bottom line of faith is obedience and loyalty. We obey because that is what God's Word says, even if we do not understand the reason. What is foolishness to the world can be the wisdom of God to His people.

Heb. 11:29 **By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.**

Moses is included in the "faith" of verse 29, but now he blended in with the Israelites. "By faith *they* [Moses and the Israelites] passed through the Red sea as by dry land." When the Israelites were brought to the shore of the Red Sea, they were initially stopped by the water. Moreover, they were hemmed in by mountains on both sides, and on the hill behind them were Pharaoh and his 600 chosen chariots (Exod. 14:7-10). The Israelites did not have faith until Moses spoke to them in his wonderful statesmanship style, whereby he remained calm and used very plausible language; then he lifted up his rod, and the sea parted. Looking at Moses, hearing him, and seeing the sea open, the Israelites then exercised faith that the sea would not come back and swallow them up. In other words, at first, with the exception of Moses, the people manifested anything but faith, but once the sea opened, their faith was sufficient. Some remarkable things have been done in critical periods of history, and so the Bible says, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11). On this occasion, God marvelously helped His people in spite of their failings, and Moses' behavior instilled faith. When the Lord opened the sea, the Israelites became a changed people.

The Egyptians drowned when they tried to overtake the Israelites in the Red Sea. Seeing the Israelites crossing the Red Sea dry-shod, the Egyptians felt they could do the same. Without hesitation, they entered the sea with their chariots, but their bravado was based on a false confidence. Thus what became the salvation of the Israelites (and the few non-Israelite sympathizers who accompanied them) resulted in the demise of the Egyptians.

Q: There are a few instances in Scripture where people of faith went over a body of water on dry ground. In addition to the Israelites crossing the Red Sea under Moses, Elijah and Elisha went over the river Jordan after smiting the waters, and the Israelites crossed under Joshua with the Ark of the Covenant to enter the Promised Land. What does the dry ground represent in antitype? Each case was an instance of faith.

A: Crossing over dry-shod was a miracle just as when Jesus walked on the Sea of Galilee. In fact, even Jesus had to exercise faith in order for the water to become hard like cement so that he could walk on a "sidewalk," as it were, in the midst of a boisterous sea with wild waves and roaring wind. *With the exercise of faith comes a reward.* When the Israelites saw the Red Sea open, they exercised faith to follow Moses across the sea. God did His part in causing that which by nature would be anything but dry land. The seabed could not be too sandy, or the wheels on the Israelites' wagons would have dragged. Also, the crossing, which had to be completed by

dawn, took place at a wide part of the sea. No doubt a lot of the “dry land” came about through evaporation, but in addition, the waves froze like a wall. We need to read slowly to absorb the astounding happenings. The Israelites went from a state of fear and panic to a condition of faith. The God of the universe instilled faith in His people through an operation of mysterious forces.

However, incredible as it seems, the Israelites soon forgot this great miracle and murmured repeatedly in the wilderness, even expressing a desire to return to Egypt. The murmurings of the older generation showed a lack of faith. To the contrary, faith needs to be *enduring*—“be thou faithful *unto death*” (Rev. 2:10).

Heb. 11:30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

By the faith of Joshua and the Israelites, “the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.” For that period of time, there was unity. The people obeyed Joshua’s command to repeatedly circle Jericho in silence (Josh. 6:10). To have thousands of people go around the city without conversing, which took perhaps four to six hours each time, was remarkable. (Of course the Israelites resumed talking when back in camp each night.)

Despite the obedience on this occasion, dissembling occurred later. The word “dissemble” is interesting, for it is like the opposite of “assemble,” which would be a unity of faith.

For the seven days that the Israelites kept circling Jericho, they saw high, thick walls. The city appeared impregnable, yet the people knew they were going to attack it. Joshua would have informed the Israelites that after seven circuits on the seventh day, they were to shout and then go straight forward, striking for the center of the city. The people had faith that when they shouted, the walls would fall down and thus make it possible to confront the enemy in hand-to-hand combat.

Joshua must have been very similar to Moses. During the 40 years in the wilderness, he was being trained as Moses’ successor.

There is a mysterious power that is associated with faith. Jesus said, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matt. 17:20). The falling of the walls of Jericho is an example of a seemingly impossible act that was accomplished—almost like the removal of a mountain. However, as in this case, faith must have substance, and that substance is the authority of the Word of God.

To encompass a city for six days and then encircle it seven times on the seventh day is quite a long time. When the Israelites completed the seventh circuit on the last day, it would have been late in the day, near nightfall. An earthquake was timed to correspond with the shouting.

Heb. 11:31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

In connection with the fall of Jericho, “by faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not.” Rahab had a past of being a harlot, but was she a harlot after she consecrated? No! Of all the inhabitants of Jericho, only Rahab and her immediate family were spared. She was like a foreigner outside of Israel proper, yet she became a proselyte to the Jewish faith. She was rewarded with a place in the lineage of Messiah, being the wife of Salmon and the mother of Boaz (Matt. 1:5).

As an evidence of her faith, Rahab “received the [two Israelite] spies with peace” and later put a scarlet cord in the window (Josh. 2:1-22). When she reasoned with her family, they listened.

Unwavering faith is greatly to be desired. If faith starts to become wobbly, then prayer and fasting are necessary for restoration. Many Christians go through experiences where they are near the point of going astray, but the Lord gives providences to wake them up. If the providences are heeded, the individual is marvelously rescued. No doubt in some instances, the Lord will just ignore those experiences as far as recording the lives of those Christians. In other words, as we live our life, it is being recorded—the soul is a reality—but it is being edited.

In fact, that is how the saints can judge the world. In replaying the record of an individual’s life, those of the Little Flock will be able to fast forward the tape and then stop it repeatedly, including and deleting portions as the Lord instructs. In the Bible, we see the failings of some of the best people, for example, David. It is good to think on some of the failings and recoveries so that we do not get discouraged to the point of despondency and forsaking the narrow way. The Lord gives us all kinds of warnings. Jesus said, “Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Matt. 24:12). Paul warned against letting things slip (Heb. 2:1). He also pointed out the danger if we forsake “the assembling of ourselves together” (Heb. 10:25).

Heb. 11:32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

Gideon did several things by faith. The most startling incident involved the 300 (three bands of 100 each). The test for selecting them was the manner in which they drank water, lapping it up like a dog with eyes looking forward. The 300 did not just drink to satisfy their thirst (to get the truth in the antitype) but looked ahead for what they were supposed to do (wanting to know the message of the hour). Accordingly, the faith of Gideon and his men was their looking forward to the battle when there were only 300 against a large host of Midianites. God rewarded Gideon’s faith by allowing him to overhear one of the enemy tell of a dream in which a barley loaf came down and flattened a Midianite tent. The Midianite said, “That is the sword of Gideon, who will defeat the host of Midian” (Judg. 7:9-15).

Barak is listed but not Deborah, yet we know she was also an Ancient Worthy. Samuel’s whole life was dedicated to God. He walked to various places under different conditions, judging Israel righteously and uncompromisingly. Much of David’s life is recorded, but the highlights we usually think of are his slaying of Goliath and his refusal to slay the Lord’s anointed when he had two opportunities to kill King Saul.

A number of incidents in Samson’s life may seem puzzling, but he was very wise and had a strong sense of righteous indignation. Like the others, Samson is commended for his faith, which culminated in his death when he pulled down the pillars in the Temple of Dagon. Likewise, the faith of the feet members will result in their destruction.

In regard to Jephthah’s faith, we usually think of his unwise vow when his daughter came out to meet him and, consequently, had to remain unmarried and a virgin for life (Judg. 11:30-39). However, the Scriptures also mention Jephthah’s faith and courage.

Heb. 11:33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

Daniel “stopped the mouths of lions” when he was thrown into the lions’ den, yet when his enemies were cast into the den, their bones were crushed before they reached the bottom of

the pit. Since the lions were already hungry when the Lord's angel stopped them from hurting Daniel, they were exceedingly hungry when Daniel's enemies were cast into the den.

Deborah was one who "through faith subdued kingdoms," for in connection with her advice to Barak, she evidently noticed his unusual humility that needed encouragement. When pushed, he displayed remarkable qualities.

Verses 33-38 are not duplications of individuals already named. Paul was trying to show that in addition to those specifically listed, there were *many, many* other Ancient Worthies—especially if there are to be 144,000. Paul omitted a lot of names, for his purpose was to give just enough information to encourage us to live a life of faith and works in the present life.

Heb. 11:34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

The three Hebrew children "quenched the violence of fire." Since a number of individuals "escaped the edge of the sword," it is hard to particularize.

King Hezekiah was made strong "out of weakness." When Rab-shakeh, an Assyrian general, loudly taunted Israel and Israel's God, Hezekiah prayed for help, and Isaiah sent a message that strengthened him. Also, when King Hezekiah was dying and beseeched God, he was given 15 more years of life (2 Kings 20:1-11). Jeremiah, too, was made strong, for initially he had said, "Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child" (Jer. 1:6).

Jonathan "waxed valiant in fight" (1 Sam. 13:23-14:15). When there was a Philistine garrison up above, Jonathan and his armor bearer fought against great odds in the strength of the Lord.

King Jehoshaphat "turned to flight the armies of the aliens" when he appointed singers to go out before the army and the Lord fought the battle (2 Chron. 20:17-24).

Heb. 11:35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

The Bible tells of two "women [who] received their dead raised to life again." 1 Kings 17:17-24 tells of the widow of Zarephath, whose son Elijah resuscitated, and 2 Kings 4:32-37 relates the account of the Shunammite woman, whose son Elisha raised. The Elijah account states twice that the soul came into the child again; that is, the soul was put back into the body (1 Kings 17:21,22). Therefore, the soul is a *separate* entity.

When a person dies, the soul leaves. We do not think God is interested in a person's last breath, nor is He interested in the body, which decays. However, He is interested in the soul. This subject, which has been grossly misunderstood by millions of people, needs clarification.

"Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance." Here is another generalized description of unnamed individuals. Many types of suffering and persecution were endured so "that [through faith] they might obtain a better resurrection" as Ancient Worthies.

Heb. 11:36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

Heb. 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

Heb. 11:38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

Naboth was stoned in connection with the seizure of his vineyard for Ahab through Jezebel's manipulations. Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, was stoned for standing above the people and saying, "Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD...? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you" (2 Chron. 24:20,21).

According to tradition, Isaiah was "sawn asunder." Many Ancient Worthies were tempted and slain with the sword. John the Baptist and others "wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins." Still others "of whom the world was not worthy" were destitute, afflicted, and tormented for their faith. "They [plural] wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." If there were 144,000 Ancient Worthies, these verses have to be generalizations. Although we can sometimes insert a name, others suffered similar experiences.

Heb. 11:39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

Heb. 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Paul was giving an object lesson and making a comparison between the Ancient Worthies and the Christian. The Ancient Worthies, who were *exemplars of faith*, died without receiving the reward promised. If these faithful ones of the past, who had a *lesser* promise, were so faithful, there is something wrong with the Christian who does not appreciate the full significance of the high calling, which is a *better* promise, and bend every effort to run the race successfully.

Q: Why does verse 35 use the term "a better resurrection"? Is the thought that the Ancient Worthies endured afflictions, "not accepting deliverance," so that they would obtain a better resurrection?

A: Yes, they remained faithful unto death, knowing they would be rewarded. They realized that the more they accepted the persecutions which came their way, the higher their reward would be. The Old Testament hinted of a resurrection for the world of mankind, but that is a different resurrection than the "better resurrection" of the Ancient Worthies.

The implication, too, is that some of prior ages compromised their faith in some way but did not lose everything. Therefore, they will get life, although in a lesser capacity than the Ancient Worthies, who knew they would be rewarded for superlative faithfulness. As a Gospel Age example, an individual in Wycliffe's era caved in through persecution, but when he was later confronted with the same trial, he put out his arm to have it burned off in the flame. This time he did not manifest pain but showed resoluteness, having asked the Lord for forgiveness for his previous weakness. One lesson is that whatever failing a person has, he should not give up the hope of life. Another example is Peter, who denied the Lord three times prior to Pentecost but later became a bulwark in the Church. Sometimes what appears to be a fatal weakness can be changed. The instruction is to be faithful unto death, so if we have an experience of weakness, we still have time from that point forward until death to try to be faithful.

However, a caution is necessary. Although retrievals do occur, we must not rely on them as an excuse for not fighting a weakness, for such rationalization would probably make the sin more abhorrent in the Lord's sight. If we fail in a trial, we should ask for forgiveness and pray for strength to steel ourselves for any future experience.

Q: If we compare verse 39 with verse 13, using the *Diaglott*, what would be the reasoning? Verse 13 reads, “All these died in faith, not having received the promised blessings [plural].” Verse 39 states, “And all these having been attested by means of the faith, did not obtain the promised blessing [singular].” Does verse 39 also indicate that the Ancient Worthies did not receive the spiritual part of the Abrahamic promise, the chief blessing of the high calling?

A: Yes. In this eleventh chapter, Paul tried to shame the Christian. He was saying in effect, “Consider the faithfulness of the Ancient Worthies, yet they did not receive the promises.” (Many promises were given to the Ancient Worthies from a plural or collective standpoint, for even if each Ancient Worthy received only one promise, there would be 144,000 promises.) Making the promise singular in verse 39 is a form of irony, for if there were such faithful ones in the past, *we should at least be faithful unto death.*

“God having provided some better thing for us [the special promise of the high calling], that they [the Ancient Worthies] without us should not be made perfect.” It is astounding that the Ancient Worthies, apart from us, “should not be made perfect.” They did not receive their own promise at death, for everything will occur in the proper order, starting with “Christ the firstfruits” (1 Cor. 15:23). The Ancient Worthies must wait until the “church of the firstborn,” the Little Flock and the Great Company, no longer need the mortgaged blood of Jesus. Then the Ransom will be released for the world. Incidentally, resuscitation, which is different from resurrection, does not affect that mortgage, for the death penalty still exists with resuscitation.

Embedded in this chapter, which extols the faithfulness of the Ancient Worthies, are reflections on particular individuals we are to consider. Therefore, the purpose of chapter 11 is to help the Christian. Verse 2 of the next chapter crowns the thinking by urging the Christian to look “unto Jesus.” Paul’s point was, “Not only is the faith of the Ancient Worthies commendable, but *consider Jesus*, the favorite Son of God. Consider what he experienced, yet he was perfect.” Paul’s reasoning should shame us if the old man in us is trying to find a way out.

Heb. 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Heb. 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The climax of the lesson is that Jesus is *the* example to the Church. As the Head of the Church, he is *the* ideal for the Christian to run toward in the race for the prize of the high calling.

The clause “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses” suggests that this whole scenario is occurring in a stadium. Just as different athletes perform in a stadium, and spectators see their prowess, skill, strength, and endurance, so the lives of the Ancient Worthies are passing before the Christian. Then comes the awesome climax when Jesus enters the scene in a new era with a new hope. We are “witnesses” of Jesus when we look into the Word of God. In vision, the Apostle John “saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the *witness* of Jesus, and for the word of God” (Rev. 20:4). Under the fifth seal, John “saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the *testimony* which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Rev. 6:9,10). Jesus consoled them, saying in effect, “You have a white robe, and you have been faithful. Just wait patiently, for when the remainder of the brethren have been perfected, you will all be

presented before the Father as a whole.” In other words, those who were resurrected at the beginning of the Harvest period have not yet gone to heaven but are still in earth’s atmosphere with Jesus. They must wait until the feet members make their calling and election sure. Then they will all go before the Father in a singular event.

Q: What is the difference in verse 1 between a “weight” and the “besetting sin”? Is a “weight” anything external that would encumber or divert us, such as the cares of this world or doing works for the poor? From this standpoint, the weight would not be sinful in itself, but it would consume time and effort that should be directed to the Lord.

A: Yes. Of course Paul was using a stadium picture. Some runners put weights in their shoes so that they struggle with a handicap during practice. Upon removing the weights at race time, they feel almost airborne. Thus a weight is an encumbrance, a hindrance. Athletes remove (or “lay aside”) the weights at race time so that they will not be hindered. Christians who are very introspective tend to overjudge themselves, whereas others are overconfident. Here Paul was showing that Christian “athletes” are in a race. What they were prior to consecration is another matter. To be a better athlete, they have to start fresh and keep their focus. There may be 10,000 run-of-the-mill athletes, but the athlete who is most focused in purpose, having the attitude “this one thing I do,” will excel. Sincerity, honesty, daily endeavor, yearning in prayer, etc., lead to success.

In contradistinction to a weight, “the sin which doth so easily beset us” is a sin the Christian does not realize. Or the proper rendering could be, “Let us lay aside every weight, *even* [Greek *kai*] the sin which doth so easily beset us.” At any rate, it is good to have both thoughts. Faith is required to lay aside the sin, and the stronger one’s faith is, the more successful he will be. Jesus said, “According to your faith be it unto you” (Matt. 9:29). Therefore, the first thing to do is to earnestly pray for more faith. Probably an undreamed-of experience will follow to increase our faith, but that is how we develop. To pray for faith, hope, and love is certainly in order as an indication of our endeavor. Peter said, “Add to your faith virtue,” etc. (2 Pet. 1:5). The other qualities are additives, for faith has to be present and continue to grow. Faith grows into hope, which is real; it is not credulity or feeling that we have overcome.

If we want to be successful in this race and obtain the crown, we have to be constant. The fact “sin ... doth so easily beset us” means that we fail quite a few times, but we just keep plugging, for the flesh is weak.

Faith must have grounds, for credulity can use all kinds of imagination. Real faith is based on what *God* promises us, and we want those promises, so we keep pressing on. Then, when death comes, how wonderful is the change!

Comment: With regard to credulity, Muslim suicide bombers willingly kill themselves because they believe they will go to paradise and be with Allah.

Reply: Yes, they are convinced, but who gives that promise? Man? Muhammad? In contrast, our faith is based on *God’s* Word, on *His* authority—not on just a statement but on an understanding of the Word, which is a slow process that requires time and effort. With God’s grace and a tender conscience, we can realize our needs.

Q: Why is “sin” singular in “the sin which doth so easily beset us”?

A: More than one kind of sin can beset us. “Adamic sin” is a general term that covers multiple varieties of sin. Adamic weakness has many different manifestations. For example, the sin can be pride, jealousy, or despondency. Every Christian has at least one besetting sin—and

probably several. Whatever the problem, the Christian is *not to give up*. As we continue, the Book of Hebrews will zero in on this principle. Patient endurance is needed (Heb. 6:12; 10:36; 12:1). Jesus started the race, and even if it lasted only 3 1/2 years, it was an *endurance* race of being *wholly* in the Heavenly Father's service. He worked full-time, sometimes healing people far into the night. In fact, he labored so faithfully in word and deed that he sometimes had to withdraw and go to a mountain to pray in order to recoup his strength.

Not only did Jesus have a perfect body, but also God miraculously reinvigorated him. Even though we are imperfect, sleep helps to revive us, so we can imagine the restoration if we had perfect bodies.

Subsequent verses give advice on how to counteract the besetting sin. Meanwhile, Jesus is inspecting us in a very critical way to see how we are doing.

“Let us run with patience [patient, long-suffering endurance] the race that is set before us.” The thought here is not cheerful constancy, for the runner agonizes, especially as he gets near the goal. Death is the finish line for the Christian.

Comment: A good runner reserves some energy so that he can sprint at the end.

Reply: Patient endurance is *schooled* endurance. Unfortunately, some have run the race like meteors for a while, but then they burn out and lose the hope. One can be busy with works yet fail to develop a Christlike character.

Bro. Oscar Magnuson started the day carrying heavy books, with a stack tied with a cord in each hand. In fact, the inside of his hands was lumpy and distorted from carrying them. His duty for the day was to sell all of the books whether the time was short or long. In other words, he set a goal and did not continue on indefinitely, continuously getting new supplies of books. By the Lord's grace, he was very successful, but he used common sense and set a daily limit.

“Looking unto Jesus the author [beginner] and finisher of our faith.” We look to Jesus in different ways, for he is our example. Therefore, we study his life to see what he did, what he said, how he lived, and his type of ministry. However, in studying Jesus' life, we should know our limitations. For example, being married is a limitation, and physical, mental, or moral problems can limit the type of work one can do. Some write letters of encouragement to isolated brethren, some send tracts to obituary lists, some advertise, etc. We study how Jesus began his ministry and how he finished his ministry. The climax was the finishing—the last week, the last 36 hours, the last three hours.

While in a dispirited mood one night at the dinner table at Bethel, the Pastor is purported to have asked, “Is there anyone here who can make his calling and election sure?” The brother who was present and recounted the incident was so impressed with the seriousness of the occasion that it went in deep on him. Somewhere in his writings, the Pastor observed after many years in the Truth movement that very, very few were looking to meet Jesus. The objectives were to make one's calling and election sure, to meet someone who was respected or a family member, or something else, whereas the primary desire should be to see Jesus. If we run the race from the standpoint that Jesus finished his course and is on the other side of the death line, then the perspective is a little different than just looking at him as an example. We should long to hear him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” Imagine the emotions that we would experience!

The word “unto” in the expression “looking *unto* Jesus” conveys *progression* as well as keeping

him always in mind and then seeing him. It is difficult to see the Father, but the average Christian can study the Father's character more easily by looking at Jesus, who acted, spoke, and worked the same way God would have done had He come down here in the flesh. In Jesus, therefore, we have a concrete example.

Heb. 12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Comment: If the perfect Jesus endured so much and we are so imperfect, certainly his example should be a source of strength to us at all times.

Reply: When we consider the nobility of Jesus' background in coming from the courts of heaven down here, the contradiction of sinners against a being of such high character standards is much more meaningful than against the Christian with his own fallen body. Thus we should be encouraged in looking to Jesus.

As we examine the Book of Hebrews, we see more and more that it was addressed primarily to Jewish Christians. In early chapters, almost from the beginning, Paul warned how easy it is to go out of the truth by letting things slip or by forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. Now, near the end of the book, he reverted back to his concern for converted Jews and the problems in maintaining their faith and in resisting sin in others as well as in their own fallen nature. Our three enemies are categorized as the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Comment: The *Diaglott* has "souls" (Greek *psuche*) instead of "minds": "Lest ye be wearied and faint in your souls." That translation brings to mind Jesus' statement to "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). Therefore, verse 3 is a strong caution not to lose our spiritual life.

Reply: Paul was speaking of life itself. He was referring not to a momentary inconvenience or a single chastisement but to the danger of giving up spiritually. The Heavenly Father loves those whom He chastens; that is, He has a *concerned* love for them. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and God is the *Great Good Shepherd*.

Heb. 12:4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood [death], striving against sin [against sin itself or against sinners]."

Heb. 12:5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

Notice Paul's broad-stroke comment: "Ye have *forgotten* the exhortation." Paul was greatly concerned because the majority of Jewish converts, who had started out well, were beginning to fall away. It was probably this situation that prompted his desire to write this epistle to the Hebrews. He wanted to reinvigorate them in the faith and to instill in them the hope of recovery.

Comment: The consecrated are not to despise the chastenings of the Lord or to faint when they are rebuked. Chastening (discipline) is contrasted with being rebuked for wrongdoing.

Reply: Yes. Usually they occur together, discipline being with a rod and a rebuke being verbal.

Comment: Paul seemed to be saying, “When you made your covenant of consecration, you knew that you would be chastened out of the Father’s love, for He wants to bring you up to a higher level. Therefore, do not faint when these things happen. Be mature in your mind.”

Comment: Paul was quoting from Proverbs 3:11,12, “My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father [corrects] the son in whom he delighteth.”

Reply: The admonition is introduced by a term of endearment: “My son.” In the New Testament, the word “despise” sometimes carries more the connotation of “disregard”: “My son, disregard not thou the chastening of the Lord.” God guides His people not only by His Word but also by providences and experiences as a means of doing the chastening or the disciplining. Some people give up because they allow the Adversary to inject the thought, “You will never make your calling and election sure, so what is the use of trying further? If you go back into the world, you will get rid of your troubles.”

Comment: Paul was saying, “If God chastened Jesus, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, to make him fit for office, then how much more we, as sinners, need chastening.”

Reply: That was the reasoning a little earlier. Jesus was chastened by sinners, not for sin. Paul was saying, “Consider Jesus, who was perfect, and the chastening experiences he endured.” Jesus regarded the sufferings and persecutions as part of his role in coming down here.

Paul emphasized the love and concern of a parent for a child, saying that the principle was much the same with the Heavenly Father toward His consecrated children. The Father chastens us for our highest welfare, even if we cannot understand the reason for certain providences.

Comment: Job 5:17,18 reads, “Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole.”

Reply: The procedure is like the surgeon, who cuts a wound in order to cleanse and heal it.

Comment: John 15:2 states, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”

Heb. 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

One element of Paul’s overall instruction is that something is wrong if we do not have chastening experiences. Many years ago, when certain calamities came upon some mature brethren, their attitude was, “I must be doing something right because I am being chastised.” The Apostle Peter said that we should count these experiences as being more precious than gold. The Greek states that the experiences are the proof of our faith. Actually both statements are true. The oppositions of life are in themselves part of the school of experience for Christians, helping to develop them. But notice here that sometimes the chastisement is a “scourge,” which is much more severe than a spanking. Peter said that there is nothing meritorious on our part in receiving chastisement for wrongdoing, but it is valuable, nevertheless, because it corrects. However, if we suffer for well doing, we should rejoice. Thus there are two kinds of discipline: to correct us for wrongdoing and to strengthen us as a Christian. Opposition, going against the current, develops our character.

Comment: The servant is not greater than the Master (Matt. 10:24).

Reply: Yes, if Jesus, the Head of the Church, was persecuted, we should not be surprised to suffer similarly.

Comment: Jesus said, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you” (John 15:18).

Reply: All of these Scriptures are important from the standpoint of character development.

Heb. 12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

If one does not endure chastening, that means he gives up. An illustration would be a fighter in a ring. If he stops fighting because he feels he is not getting anywhere with his opponent, then the fight is over. The Christian is fighting for life itself, and the very destiny he has been called for could be in great jeopardy.

Comment: A prerequisite for being a son of God is to endure chastening.

Reply: Yes, because if one is not a son after consecration, he loses life entirely. Even the Great Company maintains their sonship. Therefore, Paul was discussing a very serious matter. Hebrews 10:26,27 reads, “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” In addition, Paul gave the other side of the coin, namely, the Father’s concern for us and for our welfare.

Heb. 12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

Those who are without chastisement are “bastards” (illegitimate children). Many “good” people are “bad” people; i.e., with their gentle conduct, they are friends with everyone. Stated another way, true Christians can be too popular. To have peace with everyone indicates a lack of obedience to scriptural instruction and principles. Faithful Christians receive opposition from all three areas: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Opposition and flack come from the world when we differ and maintain our integrity in that difference. On the one hand, the Apostle James said that if we have the friendship of the world, we are *God’s enemy* (James 4:4). On the other hand, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Therefore, we have to *analyze* Scripture in order to grasp the real slant or intent. The nuance, use, and context of words are what determines the meaning. For the unconsecrated world, God has made an arrangement whereby He will deal with them in the future. In other words, God does not just write them off because they are not attracted by the call. The future arrangement for the world is kind and generous on the part of the Heavenly Father. He loves the world in the sense that He is interested in their ultimate welfare, but He does not excuse their willful sin in the present life, the principle being, “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). Meanwhile, we have to be faithful unto death and maintain our relationship with the Lord as best we can.

Heb. 12:9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

After being consecrated for three or four years, we served in a labor camp for conscientious

objectors in Massachusetts. While there, we attended a testimony meeting, and we were impressed when one of the sons of the elder leading the meeting said he was thankful for his father's discipline in his younger years. At the time, he did not fully appreciate the discipline, but as he grew in years and development, he respected his father because of the discipline.

Here Paul was saying, "If we gave reverence to our fleshly fathers for correcting us, shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, *and live?*" Paul was not specifying the high calling but was simply talking about life as the bottom line in either the Little Flock or the Great Company. The Apostle John also took this viewpoint.

The term "Father of spirits" reminds us of John 4:24, where Jesus said to the woman of Samaria at the well, "God is a Spirit," and therefore, He desires people to "worship him ... in spirit and in truth." Jesus said the time was coming when people would worship God not in a specific location but wherever they were located. He was referring to conditions *after* the Kingdom Age, for *during* the Kingdom, worship will be centered in Jerusalem. All who pass the test of the Little Season at the end of the Kingdom Age will be kings, as Adam was before he sinned, and will be in heart communication with the Heavenly Father wherever they are.

Q: In a previous study, it was suggested that the term "Father of spirits" can be "Father of souls." Therefore, is verse 9 a proof text that the Father has the prerogative of determining who lives and who does not?

A: Yes. This term is also used in the Old Testament. "And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?" (Num. 16:22). "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation" (Num. 27:16).

Heb. 12:10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

"For they [earthly parents] verily for a few days [in our childhood] chastened us after their own pleasure." While we were children, it seemed to take an eternity to become an adult. But as adults, we look back at our childhood as being a very short time. Unfortunately, few parents discipline a child with his eternal welfare in mind. In fact, children are often chastened unjustly. Constructive discipline and the counsel of a friend are very valuable.

"But he [God] for our profit [chastens us], that we might be partakers of his holiness." How wonderful it would be to pass that test of *really loving righteousness and hating iniquity*, and that is what we yearn for. The Lord tests the depth of our yearning—whether it is sincere and not merely a profession. It is hard to hate iniquity in ourselves in every sense of the word, for hedging and making excuses seems to be in our very being. A true Christian would like to be honest and get that stuff out of his system. The Heavenly Father watches us to see whether we are honest with ourselves in our wrongdoing and if we confess and humble ourselves. It is a learning process.

Comment: It is good in our daily prayer to ask for help in loving righteousness and hating iniquity.

Reply: Yes. God highly exalted Jesus because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Many people feel they love righteousness, but they do not think of hating iniquity, which includes our *own* deeds. We do not judge destiny, but we can judge deeds. Jesus expressed this very thought, using the word "fruits"—"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20). There is no getting around the deeds that are done, but motive and eternal welfare we are not

to judge.

Heb. 12:11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

As has been mentioned, no chastening for the present seems joyous, but afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are *rightly* exercised thereby.

Heb. 12:12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

Comment: The thought of the race continues from verse 1 of this chapter: “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

Reply: Yes, verse 12 is related to the race. When the hands hang down and the knees are feeble, the runner is at the point of exhaustion. He must then dig into the reservoir of his energy. In a marathon, that extra little push at the end can make the difference in running a remarkable race. Some have said they felt as if their heart would burst or their lungs would explode. Sudden, startling fear can cause knees to become feeble, and so can exhaustion. In other words, we are to “lift up ... the feeble knees” to keep them from collapsing. If the knees bend, the runner will fall down. Determination is required.

Heb. 12:13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

The runner is supposed to stay on the race course. If he becomes careless, he may cross over into the path of another runner. Therefore, he should stay focused on the finish line. As Christians, we have a tendency to meander as well as to have highs and lows in feelings and emotions. Meandering can be caused by curiosity, so we should measure the value of an action or pursuit before we spend too much time on trivia. We are to avoid endless genealogies, old wives’ tales, and gossiping, for example (1 Tim. 1:4).

Comment: The King James margin has the word “even.” “Make *even* paths for your feet.” We want an even stride in our Christian walk.

In a race, time is lost in looking back. The bottom line is to stay focused on the goal. Then we will not deviate from the course, and our spirit will be a constant drive. The Master is our example.

Comment: Proverbs 4:25-27 shows the importance of focus: “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.”

Reply: Yes. For example, we have to watch the company we keep. We are to go straight ahead in a steady pace to the goal and not stray from side to side or go up or down. A helpful axiom is, “The shortest distance between two points is a straight line.”

We are to “make straight paths” for our feet “lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.” If we run a straight path, that which is lame will “be healed.” The medicine is to keep our eye on the goal and on Jesus, who is at the finish line, waiting to see our results. At the finish line, we hope to hear him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:21).

Heb. 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Verse 14 is a strong but necessary exhortation. We are reminded of Jesus' words "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8).

Heb. 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

Part of the race is "looking *diligently* lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled [including self]." This advice is food for thinking Christians—we are to *think* as well as run.

Comment: In regard to a root of bitterness springing up, we can become involved in a situation that we have nothing to do with. The Lord watches us to see our reaction. The race is difficult because in addition to being physical, it involves the mind as we try to figure out what the Lord wants us to do.

Reply: A root of bitterness can spring up within oneself, but it can also spring up in another person or persons, bringing trouble. The word "you" is supplied and probably should be omitted because it takes the verse in only one direction. As we see what is happening in another situation that does not involve us, the root of bitterness can cause trouble for us as well. The thought is, "Lest any root of bitterness spring up within ourself or in someone else, causing trouble." Great harm can result. We have seen and heard of class splits for some of the strangest reasons, for instance, on the interpretation of the doctrine of justification—whether it is tentative or vitalized. Actually both are true, for the Scriptures teach (1) tentative, temporary, or partial justification prior to consecration and (2) full or vitalized justification at consecration and the Lord's acceptance. On the other hand, grievous moral problems should—but do not always—split the class. If a class wrongfully stays together on more important issues, the result is confusion, which can continue for years. What happens? Everyone in the class is compromised. All are affected because of the tolerance of grievous sin.

Thus a root of bitterness can come up in different ways. When the bitterness has to do with personality, a split may be warranted, for it may not be possible for some to prosper spiritually in a certain environment. We are not wed to a particular ecclesia but should go where it is best for our spiritual development. A split can also occur just from a practical standpoint and does not necessarily have to be with any root of bitterness. When a principle is violated and we do not want to be party to a wrong principle, conscience could lead to our leaving a class. We would have to soberly and prayerfully weigh the principle to know if it is vital. If necessary, we should even fast on the matter and then take a stand. Emotions can trigger words and deeds that not only are unbecoming but also can be very dangerous.

Comment: If any deception is involved, it needs to be exposed in order to bring healing. There can be no imagination.

Reply: If one has ought against his brother, he should go to him alone, following the procedure of Matthew 18:15-17. If the matter is serious enough, it becomes an ecclesia matter. If possible, however, the healing process should be done first between the principals who are involved. "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and *if he repent*, forgive him" (Luke 17:3). Many like to skip the condition of repentance and just forgive in the name of "love."

Comment: Deuteronomy 29:18 reads, "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve

the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood.”

Reply: “Gall and wormwood” are certainly a root of bitterness. That same law says that those who are aware of the sin of going to another god and conceal it are also guilty. Therefore, if we overhear a Christian saying, “Let us go and worship Baal,” we cannot remain silent. On the one hand, there are times when we have to get involved in the doings of someone else. On the other hand, we must be careful not to be busybodies.

Comment: Jesus said that if we see a mote in our brother’s eye but have a beam in our own eye, we must first cast the beam out of our own eye (Matt. 7:3-5).

Reply: It becomes important to pray about our responsibility and to ask for tact.

Heb. 12:16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

Is verse 16 saying that Esau was both a fornicator and a profane person, or that he was just a profane person?

Comment: “Fornication” would not be meant in the sense that we normally use the word. Esau could be considered a fornicator from the standpoint of preferring temporal and worldly things to the spiritual Abrahamic promise.

Comment: To the extent one leaves his first love for the Lord and allows other things to have the priority, he is a fornicator.

Comment: Esau could be considered a fornicator for marrying two Hittite women (Gen. 26:34,35).

Reply: It is a little difficult to know if “fornicator” applied to Esau in verse 16, but he definitely was a “profane person,” meaning that he had worldly interests and tastes. However, we can also view him as a “fornicator,” for he mixed the spiritual with the natural. To do this in an extreme sense is an abomination in God’s sight.

Therefore, in answer to the original question, both views are profitable. Esau did not esteem the birthright as being of primary importance in his life. As a hunter, he was more interested in natural exploits (Gen. 25:27).

The last half of verse 16 is profound, for one can easily sell “his birthright” for “one morsel of meat.” In the antitype, probably many, many Christians have sold their birthright for a mere morsel, and the selling does not have to be only along sexual lines. Proverbs 23:23 admonishes, “Buy the truth, and sell it not.” When we disesteem the truth, we disesteem the Giver of the truth; we disdain the hand of the Bridegroom that is proffered. When any of the prospective Bride class dissemble from that hand, they manifest a lack of interest in the privilege of the truth, and that act can bring condemnation.

The Pastor wrote many articles on this subject. Esau was the firstborn, but he lost the right of the firstborn to his brother, who was second from the womb. The only thing that would seem to extend some mercy to Esau is that he did get a blessing from Isaac along temporal lines. As to the degree of his sin in Old Testament times, we would say that he did not know about Christ, and one must somehow know about Christ in order to crucify him and thus be guilty of Second Death (Heb. 6:4-6). Therefore, the concern that arises in the antitype with the Lord’s

children is how far the “selling of the birthright” goes. It seems that Bro. Russell always counseled a person who felt he had committed a sin unto Second Death to repent and not give up all hope. Some use this type of Esau as a reason for suicide, but selling the birthright does not necessarily so indicate.

What is the firstborn right in the antitype? Since the “church of the firstborn” includes both the Little Flock and the Great Company, the selling of that right sounds bad, yet Jesus, the true Church, the Great Company, and natural Israel are all “firstborn.” Those who are depressed along this line should take the more positive and helpful signs to try to extract themselves from the dilemma with the Lord’s help and prayer. Because Esau could not get the birthright even with tears, he is frequently used as a type of those who have no hope (Heb. 12:17). However, while he could not get back the blessing that went to Jacob, he did receive another kind of blessing. Therefore, we would say that the destiny of those who antitypically sell their birthright is not that definitive, whereas those who crucify Christ afresh clearly lose all life.

Q: What, then, is the thought in the antitype? Does Esau represent a Second Death class?

A: The primary picture in the antitype is that Esau represents natural Israel, and spiritual Israel has the hope of the divine nature. We are not dogmatic on how far to go with the antitypical spiritual interpretation of Esau.

Q: Does Esau also represent the Great Company in antitype?

A: Esau could represent the Great Company if his receiving a blessing indicates a secondary hope. Sometimes the Scriptures do not spell out the favorable sense with definiteness because the warning and admonition aspect is to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). We lose the cutting edge of fear if we begin to look at these Scriptures in too generous a light. The admonition loses its power. Thus we do not want to be dogmatic on the spiritual interpretation or definition of Esau. Earlier Paul warned, because of the danger of Second Death, “to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” and not to forsake “the assembling of ourselves together” as we see the end of the age approaching (Heb. 2:1; 10:25-27). Therefore, the cutting edge of fear is necessary. Stated another way, we need a meaningful barking dog.

We also use the Scripture that Jesus “is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25). Where to draw the line between forgiving unto the uttermost and the point of no return is a question that goes into a gray area. At any rate, we can see the seriousness of Paul’s admonition in the context of the Book of Hebrews. For Jews who were once enlightened about Christ and had accepted the gospel, there was a grave danger if they became Judaized, for cooling toward Christ while being pulled to the Jewish outlook of the Law was doing despite to grace (Heb. 10:29).

Comment: In a sense, that issue is carried through with the types of Abraham and Lot, Isaac and Ishmael, and Jacob and Esau.

Reply: Yes, and of the three pictures, the type with Abraham and Lot is a little more definitive.

Heb. 12:17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Esau “was rejected: for he found no place of repentance [with Isaac], though he sought it carefully [earnestly] with tears.” Isaac, who had already given the birthright to Jacob with an oath, found no place for a “change of mind,” even though Esau genuinely sought it with tears

(see *Diaglott*).

When we think about “repentance ... with tears,” the striking pictures in Scripture are those of Judas and Peter, who denied three times that he knew Christ, even cursing. Peter’s statements on the night Jesus was being tried were devastating. From a natural standpoint, many would have condemned Peter entirely, whereas we reason that the incident was not premeditated and it took place before Pentecost and Spirit begetting. The encouragement with Peter is that Jesus forgave him. Not only did Peter make three honest confessions to countermand his three denials, but also his weeping with tears was meaningful (John 21:15-17). While Judas had tears to such an extent that he committed suicide, the one thing he should have done he neglected to do; namely, he should have gone to Jesus and grabbed his feet, begging for mercy. To not follow through in such a manner was a defining point. Thus Judas pictures a Second Death class who are not Spirit-begotten, for he knew about Jesus *before* Pentecost.

We should be thinking about and reflecting on this type of judgment, for the Little Flock will judge men and angels, and the present life is our practicing period (1 Cor. 6:3). If brethren do not think on these issues, we doubt that they will become judges in the Kingdom Age. The Scriptures tell us both to judge not and to judge, so we must analyze them to understand the difference (Matt. 7:1,2,15-20; 1 Cor. 4:5; 5:12-6:5; 11:13; John 7:24). Some wrongly use the command to “judge not” as a *carte blanche* statement to cover every situation—a multitude of iniquities—with no discrimination whatsoever. Just as there are practicing physicians in the medical profession, so we, as Christians, are practicing physicians and priests in the present life to a certain extent. We are on probation now to see if we are worthy to be prophets, priests, and kings in the next age.

Comment: The Apostle John said that Judas was a thief from the beginning (John 12:6).

Reply: A book could be written on the character of either Judas or Peter, but the defining point is that repentance has to *precede forgiveness*. The Scriptures do say that Judas repented, but he did not go to Jesus, the one he had wronged, the very one who could have forgiven him. Jesus said in Luke 17:3, “If thy brother trespass against thee, *rebuke* him; and *if he repent*, forgive him [from the heart].”

If we are properly rebuked, we should go to the individual we have damaged and ask for his forgiveness. Then that individual would be in a position to forgive us. Conversely, we are told to forgive those who trespass against us, as we ask God to forgive us. Jesus could have forgiven Judas if Judas had taken the proper step. Since he did not, all of his remorse went down the drain.

These examples are guideposts; they are like the outside parameters of the circle in which we are to stay. In the type, for instance, the priesthood could not go outside the Court of consecration for seven days lest they perish, and that included Aaron himself, who was the high priest. Thus there is a dividing line, and we want to stay as far away from that line as possible. The contest of two drivers who were applying for a job illustrates a principle. The first driver showed that he could drive his vehicle six inches from the cliff, whereas the second driver hugged the mountain. The second driver was hired because he was cautious.

Heb. 12:18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

In regard to the statement “ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched,” we could properly draw a wrong conclusion if it were not for verse 22, which explains exactly what Paul meant in this context. “Ye are not come ... But ye are come.” In other words, drawing nigh to

literal Mount Sinai and touching it did not mean Second Death. Yes, the Israelites would die, but they would not die Second Death. There is much more responsibility for those who come and touch the true “mount Zion.”

When Moses instructed the Israelites to put blood on the lintels and doorposts of their homes, there is no mention in the Old Testament account of any Jew who refused to do so, but that does not mean it did not happen. However, the lesson is obvious—the firstborn would die in any house where the command about the blood was not obeyed.

Comment: To mention the death of any Jews who refused to put blood on the lintels and doorposts of their homes would have destroyed the type. The ones who died were pictured by the Egyptians.

Reply: That is correct. Whether or not any Israelites died, we do not know, but death was technically possible. The account is just silent lest the type be destroyed.

The command was given that both man and beast were forbidden to touch Mount Sinai, and the penalty for disobedience was death (Exod. 19:12,13). The lesson was designed to show that “our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29). We cannot be careless with Almighty God but must keep Him in holy reverential awe.

The account referred to in verse 18 is helpful along other lines as well. Of the five mountains that purport to be the true mount, only Mount Sinai answers the details of the account, for there the plain ends with the mount *abruptly* coming down in a *distinct* marking; the demarcation with the floor of the plain and the beginning of the mountain is *sharply* defined. With the other four sites, that is not the case because the mount *gradually* goes up. Also, Sinai is a concentrated mount, relatively speaking, compared to a mountain range.

“For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire.” The mention of “fire” tells us there was an earthquake. The mountain “burned with fire” because the earth opened and molten lava came out. The molten lava then set some of the trees on fire. In addition, there was smoke (Exod. 19:18). We have two slides that show lava on Mount Sinai. At the time, we were discouraged at not having found proof, so we just turned around and quickly took a couple of pictures. When we got home and had the slides developed, we could see evidence of molten lava on Mount Sinai and in back of Ras Susafeh, from which Moses read the Law to the children of Israel in the valley below.

When Moses read the Law, he had to be on an elevated spot, above the plain, so that the people would hear him. The same principle applied prior to the crossing of the Red Sea in the Exodus. Moses stood on a somewhat elevated place that was sufficiently high for him to be distinctly seen and heard as he admonished the nation prior to crossing the sea.

Heb. 12:19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

At the reading of the Law at Mount Sinai, there was not only fire, blackness, darkness, and tempest (wind, lightning, and thunder) but also the “sound of a [shofar] trumpet.” The ram’s-horn trumpet was blown in the beginning of the seventh month, but that trumpet did not have the significance of the trumpet that was blown on the Day of Atonement, nor was it heard by everyone in Israel. In contrast, the blowing of the shofar trumpet on the Day of Atonement was heard by all of the people.

When the antitypical Jubilee trumpet begins to sound during Jacob’s Trouble, the world of

mankind will start to become alerted. Eyewitnesses of God's deliverance of the Holy Remnant will return to their homelands to testify about what they saw. And those in the grave will also hear the sounding when they come forth in different generations. Bro. Russell taught that the Jubilee trumpet would last for a thousand years, beginning in 1874 and continuing until 2874. However, we would start the sounding of the Jubilee trumpet in the near future, in Jacob's Trouble, and it will continue until the end of the Kingdom Age, for there is a distinction between the blowing of the trumpet on the *first* day of the seventh month and the blowing of the trumpet on the *tenth* day of the seventh month. In other words, there are *two separate* trumpet blowings. The blowing of the trumpet on the *first* day of the seventh month corresponds to the announcement of the presence, the Millennial Age. That sounding was heard by many in Christendom, by millions of people, but not by everyone in the world. However, the sounding in Jacob's Trouble will be heard all over the world because a lot of other things will also be happening at that time.

Q: Was the trumpet in verse 19 literal in the type?

A: There was a sound like a trumpet, and the Lord was actually speaking. Isaiah 42:13 states, "The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies." When Jehovah roars, everyone will hear. When He saves the Holy Remnant out of Jacob's Trouble, all kinds of miracles will happen successively in a short period of time—within a week or two. *The Jubilee trumpet will be heard.* To the contrary, the trumpet sounding at the beginning of the seventh month was more limited, even though in the antitype, millions heard the message of Pastor Russell and the year 1874 is very significant.

Q: For clarification, do verses 18 and 19 relate to Jacob's Trouble?

A: In the antitype, yes. The Kingdom Age and the New Covenant will be inaugurated in that time period.

Q: Where verse 19 says, "And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words," should the second "and" be "even"? Did the words that were spoken sound like a trumpet?

A: No. As the trumpet was sounding, the people heard what sounded like a waterfall at the same time. When God spoke, His voice was like a multitude of water pouring forth, and the shofar trumpet was a distinct accompanying background noise. The fire, smoke, blackness, darkness, tempest, and trumpet were all separate, but they were bundled together in a concentrated period of time to be exceedingly awesome.

If these events had occurred when Paul wrote the Book of Hebrews, the people would have fallen down and accepted the gospel. Instead they spurned the gospel because all down the Christian Age, the gospel has been an *invitation*: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). But when the Law was given to Israel, it was a *commandment*, and the people said, "All these things we will do." Paul frequently gave a *present application in principle* to prophecies that are distinctly *future*. Jesus did this too. For example, in casting the money changers out of the Temple precincts, he said, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. 21:13). The prophecy, which applies to the Kingdom Age, reads, "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people" (Isa. 56:7).

In the type, the Israelites "entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more."

Their reaction is a picture of something yet future. In the antitype, an awesome symbolic earthquake, fire, etc., will occur at the time Jesus' reign begins and the New Covenant and the Kingdom are being inaugurated. When Jesus is reigning, any "man or beast" that disobeys will be cut off. "And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear [the voice of] that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:23). Any who will not get down and kneel will be cut off, for "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, ... And ... every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10,11).

Comment: In the type, any man or beast that touched literal Mount Sinai at the giving of the Law died. In the antitype, those who refuse to obey during Jesus' rod-of-iron rule will be cut off in Second Death.

Reply: Yes. The New Covenant will be inaugurated when Jesus' reign starts, and it will be consummated at the end of the Kingdom Age. Thus the purpose of the New Covenant and the whole age is to bring the people into at-one-ment with God. This process will have both a distinct beginning and a distinct end.

Paul was using this prophetic picture as an exhortation, warning, and admonition to draw lessons, but there is also an antitype yet future. The antitypical sprinkling of blood on the people will take place at the inauguration of the New Covenant. In addition, there has been a different sprinkling on the doorposts of the house that we, as Christians, dwell in. It is easy to get the pictures confused, but as time goes on, this subject will get clearer and clearer because the light goes on and on and gets brighter and brighter. Many people think the explanations are contradictory when they are really the result of clearer light.

Comment: In the introduction to the Kingdom, when Jacob's Trouble is past, the people will be able to see the fulfillment because they can then look back.

Reply: Yes, that is right.

John saw the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven. When saviors (plural) come from Mount Zion to rescue Jacob, that event will be a part of the new city's coming down before men and being established (Obadiah 21; Rev. 21:2).

Paul used principles from the type of Israel's receiving the Law at Mount Sinai as a spiritual admonition to the early Church. For that reason, many advanced Bible Students have believed the New Covenant is already in effect; that is, they consider events yet future as having begun back in Paul's day, and they use these Scriptures here in the Book of Hebrews to try to prove their point. However, the Sarah Covenant and the New Covenant are operative in different time periods. In fact, the New Covenant will begin shortly after the Sarah Covenant ends.

The penalty for disobedience at the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai was death, but no matter how awesome that experience was, those Israelites will have a resurrection. Even if some touched the mountain, they have to come forth to hear about Christ. Every human being who lived and had the breath of life before the First Advent has to personally hear and know about Jesus in some way before he could merit Second Death. Thus no matter how awesome the type was, the antitype will be more awesome because there is no possibility of a resurrection from Second Death. We think an underlying message of this epistle is that if we sin willfully after we have come to a knowledge of the truth, there remains no more hope. That thought is more fearsome than the illustration Jesus used during his earthly ministry about the millstone. "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. 18:6). In other words, because we could get a resurrection, it would be better to have a

large grinding stone tied about our neck and be thrown into the water, whereby we would sink to the bottom and drown, than to go into Second Death. To have everlasting life is such a wonderful gift that to lose it would be a pity, no matter what the cause.

Heb. 12:20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

Heb. 12:21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

Heb. 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

Although Paul said, “Ye are come unto mount Zion,” we have not yet seen “the spirits of just men made perfect” or the New Covenant blood of sprinkling (verses 23 and 24). When people come forth from the tomb, they will be told the conditions, and those who *deliberately* disobey and refuse to listen to the voice of that prophet will be cut off. However, some will not obey just from the standpoint that they are not yet perfect. Thus refusing to obey and trying to obey but not doing it perfectly are two different things.

Is it absolutely essential that all of the Ancient Worthies come forth at one moment? No. A process of time is involved in the awakening of various classes from the tomb. The Little Flock and the Great Company will be raised to life. Only in a technical sense will the Ancient Worthies not be made perfect when they come forth from the tomb, for although they will need a little more schooling, none of them will fail. They will be under the New Covenant, but since their hearts, faith, and wills have been crystallized, they will get life. To a certain extent, then, it is only a matter of semantics about the beginning and the ending of the Kingdom Age, but from a technical standpoint, strictly speaking, it is at the end that everything will be consummated with regard to the Ancient Worthies and the world of mankind.

We have come to the spiritual mount that is the antitype of what happened at the time of Moses, when the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai and were told to await the third day, for at that time, God would speak to them as a people. Events that occurred back there have a spiritual counterpart, of which Paul was now drawing the lesson. Today we are living in the third day, and verses 22-24 are speaking on a spiritual plane.

With regard to government, verse 22 mentions three terms that all mean the same thing—Mount Zion, the city of the living God, and the heavenly Jerusalem—but on a higher (or spiritual) level than the earlier comparison about *literal* Mount Sinai. As awesome as the scene was that Moses and the nation witnessed at Mount Sinai, Paul was saying that we, as Christians, have come to a greater, more significant, and inferentially more awesome mountain. But we are dull in understanding, for do we have that sensation? Moses said of the type, “I *exceedingly* fear and quake [tremble]” (verse 21). Do we *exceedingly* tremble and shake, even though the antitype is much more awesome? No, that is not the case. However, we should, to the extent possible, give *serious thought* to the subject matter about to be presented, which is even more important than what occurred in past history.

This higher level, which is much more serious, started with the early Church, for Paul wrote, “Ye *are* come unto mount Zion.” Just as the Israelites came unto Mount Sinai the first day, so Christians came unto the spiritual mount the first day. However, with the mention of the fire, blackness, darkness, and tempest in verse 18, Paul was bringing us forward to the *third* day. From another standpoint, Paul wrote during the fifth day, the interim Middle Ages were the sixth day, and now we are living in the seventh day—in other words, parts of three days down the road from when Paul wrote the Book of Hebrews. Today we live almost 2,000 years from

the day Paul wrote this book, and the antitypical events of the third day are about to happen.

“But ye are come unto mount Zion, and ... to an *innumerable* company of angels.” In referring to the Great Company, Revelation 7:9 reads, “After this I beheld, and, lo, a *great multitude, which no man could number.*” If no man knows the number of the Great Company, it is an “unnumbered” multitude, which is a different thought than “innumerable” in verse 22. “Unnumbered” suggests a great number but not nearly as many as an “innumerable” company. To be “innumerable” is like being “indescribable” because the number is so great. Certainly God knows the number of the stars, the number of His angels, and even the number of the “great multitude” (Psa. 147:4). To the contrary, we do not know any of the three numbers. The word “innumerable” is the Greek *anarithmetos*, which is rendered “myriads” in the *Diaglott* and includes the thought of arithmetic.

The suggestion is that the number of angels is almost analogous to the number of the stars of heaven, both being innumerable. In the *First Volume* chapter entitled “Spiritual and Human Natures Separate and Distinct,” Bro. Russell made a unique observation that opens the door to thinking; namely, we can extrapolate, to a certain extent, the spiritual and the invisible by the visible down here. The visible includes animals, with man being at the top of the list, and the spiritual realm also includes various kinds of being. Just as scenery and beauty are down here, so scenery and beauty are in heaven. Based on the Pastor’s writing, thought opens up along another line in Genesis 1:1,2, which says in the Hebrew, “In a beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” The Bible does not tell us how old the planet is, but subsequent verses describe how God prepared the surface of the earth to make it habitable for man; this process took place during successive Creative Days, or periods of time. First came the planet, then light, oxygen, air, seeds, herbs, animals (marine, land, etc.), and finally man, the sentient being. Thus order proceeded with regard to the surface of the earth, and we believe that the same thing happened with regard to the spirit world in heaven; that is, God prepared places in heaven for the angels. Certainly the angels were not in a vacuum or a void—they had places to live, scenery, etc., but they came forth last, that is, after an environment was prepared for them. However, the spirit substance goes back to infinity, just as, in principle, the planets in the physical realm may be billions of years old.

Paul was saying in verses 22-24 that we are coming to an awesome spectacle—to “mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Notice that the term “church of the firstborn” is used. Of the firstfruits (or firstborn) class, Jesus was the first, the Little Flock is next, and then comes the Great Company. Since the term “church of the firstborn” includes the Little Flock and the Great Company, this awesome scene will take place a little later than the change of the Church to glory and their introduction to the Heavenly Father, for when the saints go from earth’s atmosphere to the heavens where God is, the Great Company will still be down here. Thus Paul was taking us to a later period of time just preparatory to the inauguration of the Kingdom—how interesting!

Heb. 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

What is “the general assembly”?

Comment: The general assembly will be a convocation. It is a reminder of when the Israelites gathered together to enjoy fellowship on feast days.

Reply: Convocations, special gatherings, took place in Moses' day, some being on feast days. Here Paul was speaking of a particular *future* "general assembly." Those who are present will be the "church of the firstborn" (whose names are "written in heaven"), "God the Judge of all," and the "spirits of just men made perfect." Jehovah is the "God of the spirits of all flesh," the "God of the living" (Num. 27:16; Mark 12:27). At this convocation will be those who have given their heart to God and proven faithful prior to the Kingdom Age. They will have gained life.

The term "general assembly" introduces the subject matter. All of the component parts subsequently mentioned will be part of this general assembly. The thought is, "To the general assembly, *even* the church of the firstborn, ... to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect [the Ancient Worthies]."

Q: Although God is the Judge of all mankind, does this context specially emphasize that He is the Judge of the Little Flock, the Great Company, and the Ancient Worthies?

A: Yes, and the Great Company is definitely included, for Paul compared those who died at literal Mount Sinai in the type with those of the consecrated in the Gospel Age who let the truth slip away from them and die the Second Death. Therefore, he was saying, "Be very careful because if you depart from the truth, there is no hope." Those who had done something wrong would be held accountable according to the degree of culpability, but they were not to glide away from the truth. In fact, we believe that many of the consecrated will not get a resurrection because they glide away from the truth. Hence the assembling of ourselves together is important, especially in the evil day when the mount will quake. Paul was speaking with great sobriety and seriousness.

The term "just men made perfect" can be taken two ways but not in this epistle. When will the Ancient Worthies be "made perfect"? They all made their calling and election sure in the past, but they are not yet "made perfect." They will be considered perfect and worthy when they are awakened from death, when they are resuscitated, which will occur after the release of the blood that is presently mortgaged for the Little Flock and the Great Company. Following the marriage of Jesus and the Bride will come the marriage supper, which the Great Company will attend. Around that time, the Ancient Worthies will be raised with a perfect organism according to the flesh. However, even though their "spirits" have been justified, they will be under the New Covenant until the end of the Kingdom Age because they still have lessons to learn. Thus it is one thing to be considered worthy of perfection, and it is another thing to be "made perfect." The Ancient Worthies will reach that "perfect" resurrection at the end of the Kingdom Age. Incidentally, there is a remarkable distinction between resuscitation and resurrection. "Resurrection" is the Greek word *anastasis*, which means a gradual raising up.

The Ancient Worthies will appear to man in Jacob's Trouble. "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments" (Psa. 119:62). There are several "midnights" in Scripture, but this one pertains to the raising of the Ancient Worthies. "And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds [the Little Flock], and eight principal men [the Ancient Worthies]" (Micah 5:5).

Heb. 12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Jesus will come on the scene with the Church in connection with saving the Holy Remnant of Israel. "And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau [and deliver Jacob out of his trouble]; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S" (Jer. 30:7; Obadiah 21). After

this event, Jesus will be the “mediator of the new covenant,” which signifies the inauguration of the Kingdom.

The “blood of sprinkling” pertains to the New Covenant. On the Day of Atonement, both the people and the book of the Law were sprinkled with blood.

Comment: Even a beast that touched Mount Sinai at the giving of the Law was stoned. The natural promises were to the Jews, who did not have the privilege of going up into the mountain. With the superior mountain of the Gospel Age, we have the privilege of going up into spiritual Mount Zion in making our calling and election sure.

Reply: In this end-time picture, events are compacted but sequentialized. On the first day in the type, the people were at Mount Sinai. On the third day, they were assembled and waiting in reverence before the Lord, and then came the scenario of an earthquake, fire, the sound of a trumpet, etc. Thus there was the coming *unto* the mount in the type, and there is the coming *up into* the mount in the antitype when the Church goes beyond the veil.

Q: Does the “blood of sprinkling” signify that the blood of Jesus and the Church are handed over to Justice?

A: Yes. As explained in *Tabernacle Shadows*, the blood was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat just prior to the glory robes’ being put on the high priest. He wore linen sacrificial garments on the Day of Atonement until that part of the ceremony was complete.

Why was this order given: angels, church of the firstborn, God, Ancient Worthies, and Jesus? The angels are already on the scene in heaven; then the Little Flock and the Great Company will get their change. There will be an entrance corridor in heaven. If a conqueror (the Little Flock) of a foreign land (the earth) returned to his home city (heaven) triumphant, he was acclaimed by the multitude (the angels) as he made his way to the emperor (God Himself, the central figure on the throne, with Jesus at His right hand). But why were the Ancient Worthies mentioned between God and Jesus? This sequence emphasizes the relationship stated in chapter 11 that “they without us should not be made perfect.” The Ancient Worthies cannot come on the scene until after the two Gospel Age classes are finished.

“The blood of sprinkling ... speaketh better things than that of Abel.” The blood of Abel spoke vengeance.

Comment: When Abel made his offering, the blood of the lamb was favorable, but the blood of verse 24 is more efficacious than what Abel presented as a burnt offering.

Reply: There are two perspectives. (1) Abel died, and (2) his offering displeased Cain. Because Abel used the blood of a lamb, God accepted his offering above that of Cain, but Abel was slain subsequently. Thus Abel’s blood of sprinkling cries out for satisfaction, or vengeance.

Q: How did the blood of Abel have anything to do with justification? How could it be comparable to Jesus’ blood when Abel’s blood called for vengeance and Jesus’ blood justifies and brings peace?

A: There is a double picture depending on the view we take. First, we will detach ourselves from the event of Jesus’ death and go back to the blood of Abel. “The blood of sprinkling ... speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Are we talking about Abel’s blood or the blood of the lamb he offered? The double picture has two entirely different ramifications. The blood of the Old Testament, which was for *typical* justification, did have *some* value in that it *pleased God*.

Animals offered in ancient times by those who had the right spirit smelled sweet; that is, what the blood represented was “a sweet savour” to God’s nostrils (Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18). It is true that the literal offerings of bulls and goats do not compare in value to Jesus’ sacrifice, but the animal sacrifices show us the awesomeness of the calling of the Gospel Age. How wonderful and mind-boggling that God even deigns to consider people of a sinful race down here in giving them an opportunity to be elevated to His very family! Therefore, Paul was saying that for those who have consecrated to have so little appreciation that they *leave the truth* means they have left *everything*—they have left the fellowship of faith—and thus are *not worthy of life*.

It is one thing to leave one group and go to another and meet with those of like faith with some doctrinal differences, but we have to be careful what those doctrinal differences are. Of course the Ransom is the bottom line. We must not disregard the Ransom and lose interest and faith in the merit of Jesus’ personal sacrifice, which enables us to pray to God, for unless we have faith in the blood of the antitypical Lamb, God will not listen to us. Therefore, Paul was making a comparison between the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament, which are profitable to view from different angles, and Jesus’ death on the Cross. Justification in the Jewish Age was only typical, and faith back there was to *friendship* with God. The offering of an animal in the Old Testament, even if performed in the right manner and spirit, did not necessarily mean one was an Ancient Worthy. If that was all a person did, he was just an obedient citizen of the Jewish race, who did what God required. The difference in regard to being an Ancient Worthy was that *faith* had to accompany the life and activities of the individual. *Faith* gave another kind of justification that was *superior* to typical justification; *faith* justification is friendship with God. For example, since Enoch “walked with God,” he was a “friend,” and so was Moses (Gen. 5:22,24; Exod. 33:11). Such friendship was a sort of fellowship but not sonship, which is the difference in the Gospel Age. Accordingly, all who make a consecration in the present age are prospective sons of God; they are in an embryonic state or trial period.

The whole lesson is wondrously awesome, so we must not be careless in regard to the God we are worshipping. “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto [has *disregarded*] the Spirit of grace?” (Heb. 10:29). Although there is a difference with the consecrated between (1) aggressive opposition and (2) disregarding and leaving the truth, both merit the same reward. Whether there is opposition or just a complete cooling off, the result is the same. In the final analysis, many who would not be considered worthy by man or even by other brethren will attain a crown and be in the body of Christ. Surprise and unspeakable joy await those whom *God* accounts worthy of a place in the Little Flock, which will be known at death.

Heb. 12:25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

“For if they [the Israelites in the wilderness] escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we [the consecrated of the Gospel Age] escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.” At the time Moses was up in Mount Sinai, some of the Israelites even worshipped the golden calf. There were ten significant acts of disobedience in the 40-year period of the wilderness wanderings. However, the death of the disobedient Israelites was merely a sleep from which there will be a resuscitation in the general resurrection in the Kingdom Age. When those individuals come forth from the grave, they will have to make up a lot more ground than the Israelites who were not disobedient. Therefore, verse 25 is telling us not to mock God. Paul stated the principle in Galatians 6:7, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Heb. 12:26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

At Mount Sinai, there was a literal earthquake and a literal sound of a voice, but now God was saying (through Paul), “Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.” What is the thought? There will be an earthquake, a social revolution, at the end of this age, but in addition, there will be an earthquake in the ecclesiastical “heaven” and in *tartaroo* in earth’s atmosphere, where the fallen angels reside. Some judgment of the fallen angels will occur at that time, for we think that many will materialize and finish off the Great Company class, who have to die quickly when God’s time clock strikes. In other words, they cannot die one by one over an extended period of time. The career of the Great Company will terminate abruptly at a date known to the Lord, just as the Little Flock will be complete at a definite point of time.

Q: Is verse 26 a reference back to Haggai 2:6,7, “For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.” Are the “heavens” the ecclesiastical heavens?

A: Yes, and also the fallen spirits who materialize. The remainder of the fallen angels—those who do not materialize shortly before Jacob’s Trouble—will be judged by The Christ during the Kingdom Age contemporaneous with the judgment of mankind (1 Cor. 6:3). Those who materialize en masse earlier will be signaling their own execution, as it were. Similarly, those of mankind who refuse to listen to the voice of “that prophet” will be cut off summarily; they will not be given a 100-year trial (Isa. 65:20; Acts 3:23).

Comment: The fallen angels who materialize in the near future will thus manifest an incorrigible character and a heart hopelessly hardened in sin.

Reply: Yes, they will seal their fate. That bold action of many of the fallen angels is comparable to those who refuse to listen down here when the general resurrection begins. Those of the fallen angels who use discretion and do not materialize at that time still may not get life in the final analysis, but they will be given an opportunity for life. Perhaps the ratio for the fallen angels and fallen mankind will be the same. Who knows but that a great many will fail and a great many will be successful in gaining life, in spite of what they did at the time of the Flood?

Comment: 2 Peter 3:10 reads, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” And in Matthew 28:18, Jesus said, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” Having all power, Jesus will shake the symbolic earth (society) and the ecclesiastical heavens.

Reply: Yes, and spirit beings are in the picture of the Kingdom Age as well. Therefore, the “heaven” (or “heavens”) is both the ecclesiastical systems on earth and the demonic beings in earth’s atmosphere. The incorrigible fallen angels are murderers. If Satan materializes in the near future, he will appear not as a murderer but as a false messiah, a false savior, whereas the mass materializations will be open opposition that merits abrupt judgment.

Heb. 12:27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Other terminology for “things which cannot be shaken” would be “things that are stable or fixed,” “things which are built on solid rock.” The “shaking” can be considered in either a broad-stroke geographic sense or a more definitive sense.

Q: Is this shaking the smiting of the image?

A: It will be part of the smiting.

Comment: David wrote of this time period in Psalm 149:9, “To execute upon them [on kings, nobles, and people] the judgment written: this honour have *all his saints*. Praise ye the LORD.”

Heb. 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

Heb. 12:29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Verses 28 and 29 give advice that is rare in the sternness of its tone, for most of Paul’s writings are optimistic, exhortative, and constructive. We cannot trifle with the Heavenly Father.

Comment: Instead of “let us have grace,” the King James margin has, “Let us *hold fast* grace.”

Reply: Yes, this thought of steadfast holding, patient endurance, and keeping firm hope starts in chapter 2 and continues to the end of the book. A tenacious effort of determination to make our calling and election sure is ever commendable and desirable, and if we get careless, we will reap a corresponding loss, whatever it might be.

Comment: Serving God acceptably is a theme of this book. Paul now brought in the thought of true sobriety, and Jesus did the same in his message to the church of Laodicea. Apparently, there is great laxity and a lack of sobriety, particularly with a false concept of brotherly love. Paul’s stern warning is especially applicable at the end of the age.

Reply: To be faithful ministers to the truth, we are to speak encouragingly, but we must also warn. Admonitions are necessary, and not a message that makes brethren feel they are all part of the Little Flock. If an elder gives such a message time after time, there is no constructive advice. However, sternness must be properly balanced with encouragement. Much of the time should be an encouraging mode, with admonitions then given as a watchdog. A dog that barks judiciously with judgment when real danger exists is invaluable. And so we have both extremes—those who are watchdogs all the time, always barking, and “dumb dogs” who do not bark (Isa. 56:10). Paul declared the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

Comment: For “our God is a consuming fire,” a cross-reference is Psalm 21:9, “Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.” From the platform, we do not usually hear such statements. We hear just the “love” side.

Reply: Yes, to make our calling and election sure, we must love righteousness and hate iniquity. David prayed that he might have “perfect hatred” (Psa. 139:22).

Heb. 13:1 Let brotherly love continue.

Now Paul began to give pastoral advice, that is, advice on Christian living and practice. “Let brotherly love continue” is the normal idealistic state of Christian assembly. We will not consider exceptions to the general rule at this time except to say that sometimes admonitions and warnings are not only expedient but also absolutely necessary. With some, the general rule is always the rule, but there are exceptions.

Heb. 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

In entertaining “strangers,” some brethren “have entertained angels unawares” but what kind of “angels”? For example, they could be guardian angels or brethren of significance, such as one of the seven dispensational messengers to the Church. In the Bible, the term “angel” is applied to a variety of individuals. There is nothing to prohibit a guardian angel or a holy angel—and maybe someday even an unholy angel—from being on the scene.

Paul was saying to observe those we are entertaining, especially if we do not know much about them. Of course if we are in harmony with the Lord’s Spirit, we would probably be able to discern fairly quickly if something is wrong. Under normal circumstances, however, an “angel” could be a spirit being who has been allowed to materialize for a particular reason. In Old Testament times, such materializations occurred frequently. In the present age, some Christians have testified of unusual circumstances where assistance was rendered in an emergency that is seemingly attributed to a guardian angel. In addition, an “angel” may be someone important in God’s sight. If we turn down such an individual—if the Lord has sent him to be entertained and we give a cool reception—then we have missed a golden opportunity and have displeased the Lord.

In the apostles’ day, brethren sometimes came from a foreign country on an itinerary. When they entered a town, they were made known. Those living in the town could see that the visitors had information about other apostles or certain brethren. When the visitors introduced themselves, espoused consecration, and were seen to have similar religious views, it was natural for brethren living in the area to entertain them. Hospitality was extended for a day, a week, or longer. But even then, no matter how good or nice the “strangers” might be, if they overstayed their visit inordinately, it could develop into a sponging situation, which Paul warned against in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. In fact, some became habitual spongers, but that was the exception. They traveled from town to town and did not work, getting knowledge and experience as they went. They just kept taking advantage of free hospitality. This attitude eventually developed into a paid ministry, and many have liked this type of life. On the one hand, Paul said there is nothing wrong in accepting remuneration, but on the other hand, he advised observing and thinking out the situation. If brethren entertained a busybody who did not want to work, they were setting a precedent and encouraging the individual in this way of life. Then the next brother (or sister) was embarrassed not to likewise extend hospitality.

Entertaining strangers was a practice in the early Church. The “strangers” knew about Christ and had perhaps even seen Jesus during his earthly ministry. There are exceptions, but verse 2 is stating a general rule that the Christian is expected to be hospitable. Brethren should be given to entertaining strangers if their circumstances permit.

Heb. 13:3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

Now Paul gave advice about brethren who were in prison. We are to remember Christians who are incarcerated because of faithfulness to the truth. One way to “remember” is to visit them and perhaps bring a little gift. When John came on the scene subsequently as the tarrying apostle, attitudes changed because of a doctrine called Docetism. The brotherhood began to look at people who were in prison as being at fault and did not examine the reason they were there. That attitude started in degrees. The reasoning was, “If they had been living the proper Christian life, they would not be in prison. Prison is for wrongdoers.” Instead the brethren should have reasonably inquired as to the reason for the imprisonment, which was not necessarily a stigma. Another reason for not visiting and showing kindness to those in prison

for their faith was fear. Some feared that if they went to the prison, the authorities would seize them as well. The *general* advice is that when one of the brotherhood is in prison, we should empathize with him and either visit or send some kind of condolence and also pray for him.

Of course if a brother is imprisoned for true wrongdoing, Paul's advice would not apply. If a crime has actually been committed, that would be an exception where we should not extend brotherly love. We should reason on the matter and not have fear, for if a brother has suffered for Christ or righteousness and is innocently incarcerated, then to visit him would be a golden opportunity to show brotherly kindness. In most cases, the imprisonment of brethren would be the result of faithfulness to the truth. That was the experience of many brethren in Europe during WWI and WWII. In summary, usually just the general rule is given with no exceptions, but we have to be careful. "Let brotherly love continue" would depend on the reason a person is incarcerated.

In John's day too, illness was considered suffering for one's own faults and wrongdoing. But what was Paul's advice? "Remember ... them which suffer adversity." On the other hand, Peter said that suffering for wrongdoing is not meritorious but is like a natural law of retribution.

There are all kinds of "adversity," for example, being opposed in our doctrine or ministry, illness, and accidents. Paul said that if one member of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. Depending on the nature of the injury, the little finger can cause a lot of discomfort.

"Remember them ... as being yourselves also in the body." There are two ways of being "in the body," and both are profitable to consider. (1) We usually think of the spiritual body and view others as members of the body of Christ. We empathize with such as being in the Lord's family. (2) We want to do unto others as we would like them to help us if we were in their position. Therefore, if one is in the brotherhood, we suffer with him, seeing how difficult it would be if we were in similar straits, wanting and needing the help and prayers of the brotherhood.

Heb. 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

The pastoral advice continues, this time pertaining to marriage. In the past, some in the brotherhood reasoned that the sin of Adam and Eve was the physical act in having children. However, a reason for marriage is to avoid "burning," which is a problem in the flesh (1 Cor. 7:9). However, the Lord certainly approves and recognizes marriage, as stated here. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed [is] undefiled."

The exception is that God will judge "whoremongers and adulterers." "Adultery" occurs when a person who is married has physical intimacies outside of the marriage contract. One is to be faithful to his or her marriage partner, to whom the vow was made. Paul advised a person who is consecrated to marry one who is also consecrated so that they will be equally yoked.

A "whoremonger," which is different from an "adulterer," has physical relations with more than one person and can also be given to inordinate affection, for example, lesbianism and homosexuality. God's thinking on this subject is clearly stated in the Old Testament. Having the weakness is one thing, but *accommodating* that weakness is another matter. A sin may be in the mind, but when it manifests itself in a deed, the person is more accountable. As verse 4 states, "God will judge," and we should not pry into the affairs of others and be busybodies except when a matter gets noised about and may do injury to or cast aspersion on the movement. At that point, something has to be done.

Heb. 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Heb. 13:6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

Verses 5 and 6 are coupled together in principle. “Conversation” is a part of conduct, so the more embracive thought is “behavior,” which includes actions and words. Our conduct is to be “without covetousness [desiring things that others have].” One of the Ten Commandments is, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, ... wife, ... manservant, ... maidservant, ... ox, ... ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s” (Exod. 20:17). Covetousness can also include desiring another’s influence or popularity. Instead the admonition is to “be content with such things as ye have: for he [Jesus] hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” While the subject of covetousness is very broad and has many ramifications, verse 8 narrows it down to Jesus as the focus of attention.

“I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” Normally we think of this statement from the standpoint of violence or persecution, but persecution can take many different forms. For example, a landlord could pressure for rent money that one does not have, or a person’s property might be in jeopardy. But from a natural standpoint, especially back in those days, local people were much more meaningful than today. Being consecrated, we have our fellowship with the Lord’s people, so our relationship with neighbors is rather limited, for we do not want to be embroiled in foolish or empty conversation that would not be conducive to our spiritual welfare.

Comment: Another example would be where someone takes us to court. Again we should say boldly, “I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

Comment: Jesus said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

Heb. 13:7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

In what sense are we to “follow” the faith of those who “have the rule” over us and “have spoken” unto us the word of God, “considering the end of their conversation [conduct]”? The Lord used an individual to witness to and awaken us to the word of truth, but that does not mean we are bound to him for the rest of our life. But as long as the individual shows his earnestness in and devotion to the Christian life, we should pay him respect and be careful not to denigrate him inasmuch as the Lord used him in calling us—unless he departs from the truth and his conduct is changing. In all of this pastoral advice beginning with verse 1, there are exceptions. We do not dwell on the exceptions, but we should be aware of them in case problems arise.

Comment: The *Diaglott* reads, “Remember your leaders—those who spoke to you the word of God; and viewing attentively the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.”

Reply: Yes, Paul said, “Follow me as I follow Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1 paraphrase).

Heb. 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.

This principle of stability should apply to us as well so that we are “the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.” To the extent that others are reliable, they become more and more

endearing to us. Constancy of character is greatly to be desired. For instance, Jesus said, “Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay” (Matt. 5:37). Generally speaking, when we are younger, we can do these things more easily, but as we age and our memories start to fail, sometimes our “yes” and “no” are violated. We hope that the Lord, who knows our frame, will forgive us (Psa. 103:14). God desires His people to be covenant keepers.

Heb. 13:9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

Verse 9 gives pastoral advice on doctrine, whereas verses 1-8 pertain more or less to conduct. “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines [plural].” This subject is very comprehensive, but we will treat it with brevity at this time. When advice is given from the platform, we personally do not like hearing too much storytelling. Flattery and unnecessary humor are also inappropriate (1 Tim. 1:4; 3:2,8,11; 2 Tim. 2:16). In real life, many people like fiction along different lines—Westerns, murder mysteries, romance novels, etc.—but the consecrated have to be careful. The primary motive in studying the Bible should be wanting and trying to know it more perfectly and completely. We should not be always seeking new thoughts. For example, we should not spend a lot of time on genealogies. A response to refute those who are preoccupied with lineages is, “We all come from Adam and Noah, so as far as antiquity is concerned, there should be no problem. We just do not know the in-betweens.” In other words, we should not be carried about with diversity of doctrines because of their strange attraction. What is desirable is to have “the heart established with grace; not with meats.” What is the thought of “not with meats”?

Comment: Paul was speaking to Judaizing Christians, who insisted on dietary restrictions.

Reply: Yes. This epistle was written to the Hebrews, who were given to picking at a gnat and swallowing a camel. Instead of just following the simple outline in Leviticus, they added all kinds of traditions and restrictions. Thus “meats” refers to dietary laws that become almost like a religion in itself.

This can be a problem with Christians too. In the past, whenever we saw a particular brother, the topic of conversation always seemed to gravitate to diet, so that the gospel became one of diet, not the good news of the Lord’s Word. All kinds of time-consuming abnormalities will attract our attention if we are not on guard.

Christians in the early Church had to be careful not to become inordinately interested in the ceremonial Law of the Old Testament, which prohibited the eating of certain foods. Being so fastidious about food took time away from studying the Scriptures and focused attention on matters that did not profit them as new creatures. For example, bodily exercise does profit, but it profits little (1 Tim. 4:8). Yes, we should have some exercise, but we should not be given to it. With the sedentary lifestyle in this country, it is beneficial to take a walk or have some kind of change—but with moderation lest it encroach on spiritual things.

“Meats ... have not profited them that have been occupied therein.” Our observation over the years has been that those who were given to dietary laws and inordinate carefulness usually did not live long lives.

Heb. 13:10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

Heb. 13:11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

“We have an altar, ... for the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.” Of course the Hebrews were familiar with the ordinances of the Tabernacle and the Temple of the Old Testament. This good advice was given to Jews who had accepted Christ, but it is also beneficial for Christians today as long as they realize the ordinances of the ceremonial Law are not obligatory for them. However, there is a big difference between the *moral* Law and the *ceremonial* Law.

If verse 10 is read by itself (and not with verse 11 in context), the connotation is completely different because the ordinances for the sacrifices subsequent to the Day of Atonement were given to individuals of the nation. Also, when a sin offering was brought to the Tabernacle or the Temple, the *entire* animal became the priest's with the exception of a few organs. Leviticus 6:30 states, “And no sin offering, whereof any of the blood is brought into the tabernacle of the congregation to reconcile withal in the holy place, shall be eaten: it shall be burnt in the fire.” But in most cases when the blood was not brought into the Tabernacle, the animal of the sin offering could be eaten, for it was given to the priesthood. However, there were a few noteworthy exceptions where the animal could not be eaten, even though the blood was not brought in. For instance, if the high priest sinned, his sin offering could not be partaken of by either the priesthood or an underpriest. The emphasis was on the priest because he was the most notable “ecclesiastical” individual. And if the whole nation sinned, the sin offering could not be eaten. For instance, Moses appointed thousands of subsidiary rulers for the 2 million Israelites, thus providing a distribution of authority, which is not usually discussed.

Leviticus 8 was a notable exception, for no blood was brought into the Holy of the Tabernacle. Blood was sprinkled on the Brazen Altar in the Court, and all the remaining blood was poured at the bottom of the altar. But as an exception, the animal was burned without the camp. In fact, Moses understood the instruction of Leviticus 8 because of Exodus 29, which definitely and sternly states that the animal had to be burned without the camp, and no blood was brought into the Tabernacle. Nor could the sin offering be eaten. For seven days, Aaron and his sons ate the ram of consecration, which was boiled, with a basket of bread.

In Leviticus 8, *Moses* did everything—he washed and clothed Aaron, slew and offered the animals, etc.—on behalf of Aaron and his sons. But in Leviticus 9, *Moses* instructed Aaron what to do, and *Aaron* then did everything. When it came to the sin offering, *Aaron* *correctly* burned the bullock and the goat without the camp, but in Leviticus 10, *Moses* scolded *Aaron*: “What? You burned the sin offering? You did not eat it?” *Moses* was incensed because *Aaron* burned the entire sin offering. Then *Aaron* said in effect, “My two sons, Nadab and Abihu, died today. Would I have the stomach to eat the sin offering under such a circumstance?” *Moses* was content with that reasoning (Lev. 10:20). But actually *Aaron* acted correctly, for *Moses* had forgotten one thing; namely, even when the blood was not brought into the Tabernacle, there was an exception where the animal had to be burned without the camp. However, that exception applied only to Leviticus 8, 9, and 16. (Of course in Leviticus 16, the blood was brought into the Most Holy, so there would be no question.) Thus the type was preserved perfectly, for through Providence, the sacrifices of Leviticus 8 and 9 were done correctly.

Now we come to the main point: “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” Throughout the Book of Hebrews, Paul had been talking about the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), when the blood was brought into both the Holy and the Most Holy and applied to the Mercy Seat. Verse 11 says, “For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for [the] sin [of the nation on the Day of Atonement], are burned without the camp.” (In the antitype, the blood is for the sin of the world.) A fundamental lesson that has been overlooked all down the Gospel Age, particularly by those who have been indoctrinated with the gospel, is that contributions should be

voluntary, but instead a *paid* ministry was instituted. Even Paul accepted voluntary contributions and did not reprimand those who helped him, but he certainly did not suggest a paid ministry. Today some of the leading evangelists have expensive cars, homes, and property and travel extensively around the world, and they think this lifestyle is quite all right.

Paul's saying, "We have an altar," was addressed to the *congregation as individuals*, not to the elders. Earlier, in verses 5 and 6, Paul said, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he [Jesus] hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." The thought is that we do not fear the future, for "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34). We do not inordinately lay up for the future because the Lord will providentially take care of us. We do not disregard the future, but we are not to inordinately prepare for it. Regardless of one's position in the body, we are pilgrims and strangers with no "continuing city" down here (Heb. 13:14; 1 Pet. 2:11). Our primary purpose is to lay up treasures in heaven, but that does not mean we completely disregard what the future might hold down here.

Paul was giving this instructional pastoral advice to the Hebrews, but there are also many profitable lessons for us as Christians.

Heb. 13:12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

Based on the type, Jesus, the example in the antitype, spiritually fulfilled what was done under the Mosaic arrangement; that is, in order to "sanctify the people with his own blood," he "suffered without the gate." Most of his suffering whereby he was bodily injured, insulted, spat upon, etc., occurred in the closing days of his earthly ministry. During his ministry, most of the opposition consisted of snide, cynical remarks from the scribes and Pharisees, who could not injure him because he was more powerful than they. Jesus controlled the situation, but nevertheless, they found fault with him and tried unsuccessfully to use all kinds of reasoning to prove he was not the Messiah. By his words and actions, the right-hearted Jews could see that he was the Messiah without his actually having to say it.

Heb. 13:13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Now Paul narrowed down his pastoral advice to Jesus' followers. What did Jesus do? He walked from town to town and publicly witnessed. He did not have a bank account or a home. He said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head [as a home]" (Matt. 8:20). Of course we cannot travel as Jesus did, much as we might like to, especially if we are married. (Paul, being in the single state, is a very good example of one who followed what Jesus did; he traveled from place to place, preaching wherever he was, and the Lord provided.) Women who accompanied Jesus ministered unto him and prepared his meals. Jesus fully trusted his Father for his relatively short full-time ministry of 3 1/2 years. In trying to follow Jesus, we provide things needful and honest for our families in the sight of all men (Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 8:21).

"Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." In principle, we should witness and serve the truth in some capacity as the door of opportunity opens. We should ask the Lord in prayer to let us know what field of endeavor might be suited for us in serving Him. There are many types of service, for example, visiting and praying for the sick and contributing for the welfare of others.

Heb. 13:14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

We sing the hymns “Here o’er the earth as a stranger I roam; here is no rest, here is no rest” and “I’m a pilgrim and I’m a stranger, I can tarry, I can tarry but a night.” Christians who wrote those hymns kept the standard high.

Heb. 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

“By him [Jesus] therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.” For “giving thanks to his name,” the King James margin has “confessing to his name”—confessing that we are a follower of Christ. Giving thanks is a little easier to do privately, whereas confessing Jesus’ name and giving praise to God are both public and private.

“Let us offer ... the fruit of our lips.” Fruit comes from within; it is an outgrowth. As an illustration, a fruit tree has a slow beginning from a seed, and eventually it brings forth fruit that is edible and appreciated by others and is helpful to them.

Q: Why is the word “sacrifice” used?

A: The thought is of *public* confession, which costs the Christian more than the rendering of private praise, especially back in the days of the early Church. Some nationalities praise God for everything, so after a while, the repetition renders the words meaningless, so how far should the praise go? We can praise God by obedience, witnessing, confession as well as profession, suffering for our faith, sacrificing, etc.

Heb. 13:16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Here is the thought of “sacrifice” again. Outward conduct—acts, deeds, confession, etc.—is beneficial to others. We “communicate” by giving temporal or material help in some way, such as money, visiting the sick, donating food, or extending hospitality. Today “communicate” has more the thought of speaking or writing to one another, which is a *part* of what Paul was referring to here. In other words, we are to be helpful to others in various ways, and “God is well pleased” with such sacrifices.

Comment: James 2:18 is pertinent: “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.”

Comment: Paul said, “Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God” (2 Cor. 9:11,12).

Reply: Yes, “communication” is being of benefit to others.

“But to do good and to communicate forget not” reminds us of Galatians 6:9,10, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” To become weary would mean the cessation of, and the rest from, well doing. In other words, *continue* in well doing. As verse 15 said, “Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.” For example, we can praise God with our lips, but others can praise God because they notice our conduct and example. Stated another way, being an example to others is a way of offering praise to God. God is well pleased both with the one who is *setting* the example and with those who *observe* the proper behavior.

Heb. 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

Today we live in a libertine society where people do not want to be regulated or to obey parents or rules. The rule of life seems to be to do what pleases self. The lack of a standard and the desire for a standard are noticeable. In the Greek, the word “rule” includes the thought of concern for the welfare of others. For “them that have the rule over you,” other translations use the word “your leaders,” so the thought of “guides” and “elders” is included. We should respect them and submit to what is in harmony with God’s Word. Depending on circumstances such as age or infirmity, we are to give some consideration and deference even when they are perhaps not quite on the right track. With regard to the world, the Christian would not want to use an offensive title for civil rulers, but decorum such as “Your honor” or “Sir” is proper. This principle would also apply with those who might not be the best characters but are in a position of authority. In other words, we should respect the *office*.

Many years ago diplomats were schooled so that when in a foreign country, they would not offend their host, for they represented their home government. Accordingly, they were taught to use appropriate greetings and table manners and to eat whatever food was placed in front of them, and they were to eat as though the food was enjoyable.

Q: Is verse 17 spiritual as well as secular?

A: Paul was stating a general principle, namely, to give honor to whom honor is due, and the principle applies in both the world and the Church. Generally speaking, a certain deference is to be given. An example of an exception in the Church is where a fundamental doctrine like the Ransom is denied and we do not want to defile our conscience. A rule of thumb is to give respect but to be careful.

Q: Spiritually speaking, would a “ruler” be an elected elder, who watches for our soul and must give account? Paul said in 1 Timothy 5:17, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”

A: That is true here, but Romans 13:7 gives the general principle: “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.”

Comment: Three times in this chapter, Paul mentioned those who “have the rule” over us. “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation [conduct]” (verse 7). “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account” (verse 17). “Salute all them that have the rule over you” (verse 24).

Q: Elders are to watch for the souls of those in the ecclesia “with joy, and not with grief,” for the latter would be “unprofitable.” What would cause grief rather than joy?

A: Paul was just giving broad-brush principles. We are to be peacemakers as long as we do not compromise principle. However, if one is in a combative mood to start with, then the least little comment will cause friction. Such individuals are thorns and thistles, constantly criticizing.

Comment: If we were traveling abroad and disobeyed the laws of the land, we could be an embarrassment to our own country. Therefore, even as travelers, we are ambassadors for our

country and should obey where principle is not violated.

Reply: Paul stated the principle that rulers were to be against the evildoer and to keep peace. “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.... For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom. 13:3,4). Incidentally, the type of government in the United States and England is radically different from the dictatorships that existed for thousands of years. And in the family relationship, the firstborn was like a ruler, even if subsequent children were superior.

Today we are living more and more in a permissive society that tolerates gross sin. The mood of permissiveness is even in our midst with an overemphasis on love. With regard to morals, there are many standards. When we go back to the Mosaic Law, nothing was said about the doctrine of the Second Presence, but it incorporates *God’s* thinking on principles and moral issues, many of which are overlooked by Christians.

Comment: Romans 13:1-3 shows how governments and civil rulers watch for our souls. “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.”

Heb. 13:18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

Paul solicited the prayers of the brotherhood that he might live consistently according to his ideals. Didn’t he say that the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and unfeigned faith (1 Tim. 1:5)? Paul was honest; there was no deceit.

Comment: Paul also said, “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16).

Reply: Yes, several times during his ministry, Paul used the standard of a pure conscience and honesty as the ideal. In 1 Corinthians 13:13, he included faith, hope, and love. Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). Paul had his own personality and manner of expression, but he was very much influenced by Jesus’ ministry and the principles of the parables.

Paul was “willing to live honestly.” In other words, he lived that way not grudgingly and not merely because of duty love. Since God’s principles were his principles, Paul truly loved to live honestly. We, too, pray that God’s will may be done in us, and we want to be filled more and more with His Holy Spirit and the spirit of His Son, our Savior.

Heb. 13:19 But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

Heb. 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Heb. 13:21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

We will start backwards with the clause “to whom [God] be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

This expression, which is found in several places in the New Testament in one form or another, is consistently used to refer to God. Of course the glory comes to us by or through Jesus, but it is God's glory. To "the God of peace ... be glory for ever and ever." The semicolon after "through Jesus Christ" separates the last clause and shows that it refers to God.

In verse 19, Paul asked the brethren to pray for him, but what was his request? He asked for prayers that he would be released from prison. We do not know whether the Book of Hebrews was written during his first or his second imprisonment in Rome. If it was the second imprisonment, the prayer was not answered in the affirmative, for he was beheaded. In the first imprisonment, Paul was given an intimation that he would be released. According to the earliest tradition and by scriptural implication, he was released. The prayer was that Paul would "be restored to ... [the Jewish Christians] the sooner" so that he would be at liberty to serve.

Paul wanted to be a blessing to the brotherhood, and whenever he went on his missionary journeys, his practice was to go to the synagogue first. Thus he obeyed the principle Jesus set forth: "to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile" (Matt. 10:6; Rom. 1:16; 2:10). Jesus taught in a simplified way, but his parables were profound. Evidently, Paul had a tremendous grasp of Jesus' reasoning.

There is a problem at the end of the Book of Hebrews, for the Vatican manuscript is imperfect from Hebrews 9:14 on. Having been doctored, it is so garbled and defective that it is not trustworthy. For these chapters, some scholars have used later manuscripts, dating from the ninth or tenth century, instead of the fourth-century manuscript. At any rate, we can glean facts from the King James Version.

Comment: Where verse 21 begins, "Make you perfect," the *Diaglott* has, "Knit you together." Paul was saying, "Now the God of peace knit you together in every good work to do his will." This was an admonition to Gentile and Jewish Christians to work together in harmony.

Q: When did Paul die?

A: The date is disputed, but we would say about AD 67, just before the holocaust. With Paul's decease and the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, which resulted in the Diaspora, the whole picture changed with regard to the Jew. Many, many Jews perished, and the others were scattered and separated.

"Now the God of peace ... Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his [God's] sight, through Jesus Christ." The God of peace is "that great shepherd of the sheep."

Heb. 13:22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.

Paul had trouble with his eyesight, yet he wrote this *lengthy* epistle. Therefore, what did he mean when he said, "I have written a letter unto you *in few words*"? He had tried to put in as *few words as possible* a tremendous amount of advice.

Heb. 13:23 Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

Paul hoped to be released from prison, and he had asked the brethren to pray on his behalf. If he was released, he intended to return to the brotherhood with Timothy, starting in Ephesus.

In what way was Timothy “set at liberty”? We do not know if Timothy was also in prison, but if so, he was set at liberty first. If Paul was subsequently released, he would return with Timothy. As already stated, this manuscript is defective, but the implication seems to be, as stated in the NIV, that if Timothy arrived soon, Paul would come with him to see the brethren.

The only personality mentioned here is Timothy. This epistle is unusual, for both the beginning and the ending are abrupt. Hebrews 1:1 omitted the usual salutation, and Hebrews 13:23-25 did not give the usual greetings from and to other brethren by name. Nor was this epistle addressed to a particular ecclesia. Paul wrote a general epistle to the Hebrews, that is, to Jewish Christians everywhere.

Heb. 13:24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

Paul was in Rome awaiting his trial and, hopefully, his release from prison. He was acquitted at the first trial but not the second. Thus he wrote this epistle from Italy.

“They of Italy salute you.” With Rome, Italy, being the capital of the Roman Empire, all of the provinces looked to Rome for leadership and government. With the epistle being written in a convenient place in the center of authority, this greeting went out to all of the satellites and provinces.

Heb. 13:25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

Verse 25 was characteristic of Paul.