FROM Shadows TO Real

A study of the Book of Hebrews

Exalt Jesus Christ’s Real Priesthood
Refute Religions of Shadow Priesthoods
The book of Hebrews exalts the sufficiency and supremacy of Jesus Christ. That’s important! Especially when surrounded by religions that claim their rituals are still necessary. We pray that “From Shadows To Real: A Study of the Book of Hebrews, Exalt Jesus Christ’s Real Priesthood, Refute Religions of Shadow Priesthood” may turn folks away from the deception of faith in shadow rituals to the reality of faith in Jesus Christ the One and Only Sacrifice, Offering, Mediator, King, and High Priest.

In the Old Testament tabernacle, the curtain that separated the Most Holy Place provided a blue, purple, and scarlet backdrop for golden furnishings. Since the Book of Hebrews takes us on a tour of that tabernacle, the pages of this study are framed in shades of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet.

Each passage of Hebrews that you’ll be studying in this book is divided into four sections:

1. A brief overview of the passage
2. Discussion questions relevant to the passage
3. Further personal study relevant to the passage
4. An explanation of how that passage unveils the reality of a shadow.

Go ahead, be dazzled! Let the realities of Jesus Christ our Messiah take your breath away.

Bob and Ruth Froese

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HEBREWS SHOWS US THAT GOD NO LONGER WORKS THROUGH SHADOWS
SUCH AS:
The Word spoken through prophets
Law given through angels
Any earthly rulership elevated above or considered equal to Jesus Christ
Law & miracles
Scapegoats
Kinsmen-redeemers such as Boaz
Moses & the tabernacle
Lost rest through death in the wilderness
Promised rest in Canaan, attained by obeying the law
Human high priests
Earthly appointed priests
Promises to Abraham or to Israel or to the Jewish nation
Melchizedek—king & priest
Levitical priesthood & the old covenant
Old covenant sacrifices
Repeated atonement
Representative sprinkling
Law offerings by priests, and the keeping of prescribed rituals
Law which never provided access to God
Worship like Able, Walking like Enoch, Working like Noahs
Men and women of faith
Prophets and martyrs
Perfect performance
Mount Sinai and the blood of Abel
Ritual ceremonies

You shall not ignore the Word delivered by God’s Son
You shall not grumble, rebel or refuse to believe God’s Word
You shall not be lazy, but rather endure to spiritual maturity
You shall not be disloyal to Christ and His body, the NT church
You shall not turn back to comfortable shadows from the realities of Christ
INSTEAD, WE MUST PERSEVERE WITH OUR FAITH COMPLETELY GROUNDED IN THE REALITY OF:  

BECAUSE JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONE AND ONLY:

Word spoken through Christ .................................................. Shining Glory 1:1-4
Jesus Christ, whom angels worship ..................................... Creator of Wind & Fire 1:5-7, 13-14
Christ’s unmatchable rulership .............................................. Throned Creator 1:8-12
Salvation & heavenly perfection ........................................... Great Salvation 2:1-4
Christ’s suffering that brought him below angels to deposit our sins in hell .................................................. Transcendent Son 2:5-9
Christ the Kinsman-Redeemer .............................................. Kinsman 2:10-18
Christ & His church ................................................................. Faithful Builder 3:1-6
Forfeited rest through a hardened heart .............................. Wilderness Messiah 3:7-19
Eternal rest in Heaven attained by faith according to the Word of God .................................................. Living and Powerful 4:1-13
The heavenly High Priest ......................................................... High Priest 4:14-5:4
God’s appointed Priest after Melchizedek’s order ....................... Eternal Priest 5:5-10
Promises to mankind in Christ ................................................ Promised Anchor 6:13-20
Christ—King & Priest ................................................................. Melchizedek 7:1-10
Christ’s priesthood & the new covenant ................................... Superior Priest 7:11-18
New covenant forgiveness ...................................................... True Tabernacle 8:1-13
Christ’s once for all atonement .............................................. Bloody Mercy Seat 9:1-10
The forgiving and fully cleansing blood of Jesus Christ .......... Cleansing Blood 9:11-28
Love offering by Jesus Christ, and the sanctification of holiness .................................................. Sin Taker 10:1-18
Drawing near, persevering, loving Christ’s body through the local church .................................................. House of God 10:19-39
Faith fully placed in God’s existence and reward ...................... Real Rewarder 11:1-7
Faith in Christ, not in comfortable traditions .......................... Certain City 11:8-31
Faith in Christ over earth’s perceived safeties .......................... Better Promise 11:32-40
Hope gained through discipline that trains in holiness ................. Enduring Champion 12:1-13
Mount Zion and Christ’s blood ............................................... Sprinkled Blood 12:14-29
Christ’s forgiven, loving church and her leaders ...................... Guardian Grace 13:1-17
Great Shepherd, Eternal covenant, Jesus Christ ....................... Great Shepherd 13:18-25
Ticker tapes and promos dance across TV screens. Interesting ideas pop onto Pinterest pages. Widgets enliven blogs. Digital billboards change messages in the seconds it takes to drive by. These days, new messages constantly and unexpectedly bombard us, and the variety catches our attention. But technology’s got nothing over God. God spoke at various times and to various prophets. All the while, He is One God, Alpha and Omega, God and Son, Unchanging Ancient of Days.

There is no match to the declaration of God’s message:


Son, the exact expression of God’s nature. The engraved expression of God. Divine pressed into man. Transcendent character and image of God in Son.

Son, sustaining the universe by His powerful word. Logos. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Word in flesh. Wisdom.

Ancient wisdom literature, written in the Century surrounding Christ’s time on earth, described the Son this way:

“…a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty;…a reflection of pure light.”¹

“…the radiance from everlasting light, and the image of God’s goodness.”²

Glory is the nature of God. Jesus is the expression of God’s nature. In His expression all things are held together. He is the Word, the Wisdom that creates and sustains, and He becomes our Purifier, our Great High Priest.

Son, Sustainer, Savior, Superior. Exalted and enthroned at the right hand of the divine Majesty on high, having been exalted as far above the angels as the name which He has inherited is superior to theirs.”

As we read Hebrews 1:1-4, quickly we note that the unmatched dignity and achievement of the Son supersedes prophets and angels. Prophets diversely declared the dispensation of the Son. Angels announced the arrival of the Son. Jesus Christ, Son unified with the Father, unchanging, shines the pure radiance of God’s glory.

Don’t turn Him off. Be dazzled. With just one glimpse, we’ll certainly stop our hopeless chasing after the elusive and illusive, and we’ll surely cease our foolish striving after the unsatisfactory and unattainable. Shadows dim and fade away as their allure pales before the beaming ray of glorious reality.
Jesus Christ is Shining Glory: Hebrews exalts the word spoken through Christ, refuting shadows such as the word spoken through prophets.

Discussion Questions:

1. Jesus Why is it vitally important to understand who Jesus is? List seven things that Hebrews 1:1-4 teaches about Jesus. _____________________
   _____________________
   _____________________

2. Power Consider the phrase in Hebrews 1:3, translated “upholds all things by His mighty power” or “sustains the universe by His powerful word,” and echoed in Colossians 1:17. How are you encouraged by this fact? _____________________
   _____________________
   _____________________

3. The glorious image of the Father

As you answered the above questions, did you notice how the writer formatted ideas in a way that emphasizes who Jesus is? Read Isaiah 43:7. Why would the author of Hebrews begin with the fact that the Son bears the glory and nature of God? _____________________
   _____________________

“No one prophet could speak out all the truth. Each was entrusted with one or two syllables in the mighty sentences of God’s speech. At the best, the view caught of God, and given to men through the prophets, though true, was partial and limited. But in Jesus, there is nothing of this piece-meal revelation. In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” ... In Jesus, there is the steady shining of the pure ray of His glory, one uniform and invariable method of revelation.”

F. B. Meyers
Further Personal Study

“After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...” Hebrews 1:3b

How does Hebrews 10:12-14 explain why Jesus sat down at the right hand of God after making purification for sins?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

How does Isaiah 53:10-11 explain the mood, or attitude, of God after Jesus made purification for sins?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Where is Jesus now? If you need a reminder, check Hebrews 1:3b.

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

In Revelation 4:6-11, with the door of heaven cracked open just enough to catch a glimpse, we see what is going on right there, where Jesus is right now. Describe what is happening there at this moment:

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

And in Revelation 5:12, we are reminded why. What is the reason for such endless, self-abandoned, indescribable, all-out worship of the Lamb?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Jesus was slaughtered to purify us. As we study Hebrews, we’ll see shadows of blood-lettings that point to the Awesome Reality, and we’ll be shown afresh the Great Once-for-all Bloody Sacrifice. How dare we refuse to admit that we are the sinners for whom He came to be murdered? How utterly foolish are those who build defenses instead of readily bowing and admitting sinfulness, at any given moment, in any given situation. I am that fool. We are those fools, truly, for we do not worship yet. When we see the reality of our own personal sinful wretchednesses, spotlighted by the reality of His purification, then, and only then, do we really worship. And then we do worship. Then, oh my, how we worship.

“Is not this a great lack in our personal devotion? We are so apt to concentrate our thoughts on ourselves; and to thank for what we have received. We do not sufficiently often forget our own petty wants and anxieties, and launch down our tiny rivulet, until we are borne out into the great ocean of praise, which is ever breaking in music around the person of Jesus.”

John Piper

Read Isaiah 53:7, and be silent before your Purifier. Read Isaiah 53:5-6, and be sorrowful before your Sacrificer. Then, read Isaiah 53:10-11, and let your soul soar in wonder before Jesus, the Righteous Servant, the Messiah, the Christ.
Hebrews takes us by the shoulder and rivets our gaze squarely on Jesus Christ. Hebrews throws the door of Scripture wide open so that we can see the contrast between Christ’s shining glory as revealed in the New Testament and the shadows that abound in the Old Testament.

Our enemy wants us to keep our eyes on the shadows. That enemy tries to skew our perspective so that we see shadows as reality. He works overtime to make shadows appear more important than their glorious fulfillment in Christ. Why? Ultimately because he wants to stop us from entering heaven. The shadows feel so safe and comfortable that they can be a tool to hinder us from embracing the real thing.

Hebrews was written at a time when Christians faced escalating humiliation, ridicule, and public abuse. The first readers of Hebrews had already endured very real persecution (Hebrews 10:32-34). So it’s perfectly understandable that they were thinking about returning to the “good ole’ days.” The former religious traditions had been so much more comfortable, so much “safer.” After all, they were full of meaning, weren’t they? No. Hebrews 13:9 points out that they had not, and would not, benefit from traditions.

You see God had torn the shadow veil behind which, once a year, He had met with His representative priest. With that tearing, a much greater veil, the one spanning the cosmic heavens and separating mankind from God, had also been rent open. All the traditional symbolisms, the shadow glimpses of being in God’s presence that had been given to the Hebrews, now served only one purpose—to reveal Jesus Christ as the only way to God. In Christ, God fulfilled everything to which the shadows and traditions had pointed.

When the new covenant replaced the Hebraic old covenant, the beautiful traditions actually began to present a form of danger. The Old Testament indicates that the Israelites had been tempted to worship other gods all along. After Christ ascended, they were tempted to worship the old ways. Those rituals felt so familiar, so comfortable, and provided such tangible perception of perceived safety, but they were only a shadow in which God had visited them with glimpses of His Shekinah Glory. Those old ways threatened to lure them away from the worship of Jesus Christ in ultimate Shining Glory.

What is a cult? A cult is a religious system that calls for devotion to, or veneration of, any person or thing above Jesus Christ; that adheres to or obeys another word added to or different than the written Word of God. Cult members are those who worship any person, place, thing, ideal, or desire other than the God who will have no other gods before Him.

The Hebrew people faced the temptation of cultish devotion to the familiar. We face similar seductions, often under the guise of religion. We love that with which we are comfortable. Lazily, we allow our thought patterns to be driven by feelings and desires, rather than test our thoughts by God’s Word. We elevate our experiences above Christ, the Word. We find reasons not to heed and obey the words of reality and truth breathed out by God in the Scriptures (Hebrews 4:12).

The writer of Hebrews directs us to think based on the living Word of God. Not just for a moment, but with enduring perseverance. Thinking biblically always results in wonder-filled worship of the Superior, the Preeminent, the One who is Real. So, as we journey together, may the Holy Spirit open our eyes to see the unveiled grand reality of Shining Glory, and may we give our lives in whole-hearted worship of Jesus Christ.
It’s perfectly logical that Hebrews strings Old Testament quotations to prove Christ’s superiority over angels. After all, the early Hebrew Christians had once adhered to OT law.

The writer quotes OT passages to prove Jesus Christ is heir of all things and creator/sustainer of all things. As God’s heir, He is worthy of worship. As creator/sustainer of earth, angels serve Him. Angels are winds because they are swift and invisible as messengers, and flames because they are fiery in their zeal as worshipers. There is obviously a great chasm between the One who created, and ones whom He created, in the likeness of wind and fire. It is the difference between one who is worshiped and ones who worship.

At first, we may wonder, “Why the big deal about angels? Isn’t it obvious that Jesus is superior to angels?” Establishing Christ’s preeminence over angels is an important beginning point for two reasons.

First, the Hebrew people held angels and law in proximity to each other. In Hebrews 2:2 we see that angels and law melded together in their thinking. What hovered over the Ark of The Covenant which held the Ten Commandments in the Temple’s Holiest of Holies? Two golden cherubim. And while Exodus doesn’t clearly say that angels were present at the giving of the law, in Deuteronomy 33:2 Moses describes the presence of angels on Mt. Sinai (Psalm 68:17). Some Jews had exalted angels to the point of believing that angels acted as God’s consultants in the law (Acts 7:53, Galatians 3:19). Typically, the Hebrew people held angels in too high regard. So to show that the Gospel is greater than the law, and that the new covenant is better than the old covenant, the writer had to show that Christ is greater than angels. Hence, we see why establishing Christ’s preeminence over angels was the starting point in addressing the Hebrews.

Second, we also hold angels in too high regard. Have you noticed that movies or TV shows about angels are an easy sell? Or that some “Christian” fiction gives fallen angels far more credit than they deserve? The progression of art over time reveals how mankind increasingly elevates fallen angels (see pictures at far right):

- 800 A.D.—In The Temptations of Jesus Christ, small heavenly angels minister to Jesus, who towers over the fallen angel.
- 13th C.—When Duccio di Buoninsegna painted The Temptations of Christ on the Mountain, he placed a heavenly and a fallen angel on either side of Christ, both clearly under His command.
- 15th C.—Sandro Botticelli painted The Temptations of Christ for the Sistine Chapel. He depicted angels and priests with greater eminence than Christ, who is a small figure at the top of the picture.
- Current—In Chris Cook’s contemporary painting, The Temptation of Christ, the tempter towers above and appears to dominate Christ, creating the impression that there is an equal battle between two forces. The truth is that Jesus commands both fallen and heavenly angels, as di Buoninsegna appears to more accurately understand.

So, let the opening argument of Hebrews catch our attention. Christ is superior!
Jesus Christ created Wind and Fire: Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows such as law given through angels. Rather, faith exalts the reality of Jesus Christ, Creator of angels.

Discussion Questions

1. Angels In our day-to-day life, what are some ways that we attribute too much superiority to angels, whether heavenly or fallen? ____________

2. Fallen Angels Read Ephesians 6:11-13. Are we in trouble because of fallen angels, or can we resist them? If so, how? ____________

   In Christ, what is our position when we face their schemes? ____________

   Read Ephesians 3:10. Rather than any angels causing a problem for us, what is our job before them? ____________

3. Superior Christ is superior to fallen angels and heavenly angels alike. However, in James 4:6-10 and 1 Peter 5:6-9, we are taught that humility is required to resist the devil and fallen angels. Discuss how pride and a lack of trust in Christ’s superiority stop us from resisting them: _____

4. King of Glory As the Son, whom angels must worship, Christ Jesus is the King of Glory. Read Revelation 11:15 aloud. What an announcement of the inaugural moment when Christ takes final rule. And what a day that will be, when Christ receives His royal inheritance. Read Romans 8:16-17, and let the wonder of the truth that Christ will share His inheritance wash over you, if you are one who has trusted Christ. Write a sentence of personal gratitude below. If you are in a discussion group, express your gratitude by praying together. __________________________

The Temptations of Christ
800 A.D.

The Temptations of Christ on the Mountain
Duccio di Buoninsegna 13th C.

The Temptations of Christ
Sandro Boticelli 15th C.

Temptation of Christ
Chris Cook current
“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.”

**Job 1:6**

“And the angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.”

**Luke 1:19**

“God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment...”

**2 Peter 2:4**

“It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.”

**1 Peter 1:12**

“For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”

**Psalm 91:11-12**

“So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.”

**Philippians 2:10**

### Further Personal Study

Read Hebrews 1:5, Acts 13:33, and Psalm 2:7, and re-write the common sentence in your own words. ________________________________________________________________

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Hebrews 1:7 is the echo of Psalm 104:4. Re-write in your own words. ______

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While angels may be referred to in plural as sons of God (Job 1:6) what statement could never be true of angels? ________________

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What does the angel Gabriel pronounce in Luke 1:19? _____________________

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Read 2 Peter 2:4 (fallen angels) and 1 Peter 1:12 (holy angels). Angels do not understand the Gospel. Fallen angels who followed Lucifer into rebellion did not get a second chance. Holy angels in heaven do not need the gospel, but they long to look at it. What do you suppose they think about humans when we are not grateful for the second-and-third-chance mercy of God toward us? ________

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Read Psalm 91:11-12. What task has God ordained for angels? ________________

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You can read an exciting narrative of angels doing their job in 2 Kings 6:15-17.

Hebrews 1:13 (an echo of Psalm 110:1), describes the destiny of enemy angels. What does Philippians 2:10 teach in regards to this truth? ________________

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Wind & Fire: Shadows to Reality

In this discussion, we consider very real angels, about which the Bible has much to say. Over 270 references are made to angels, both fallen and holy. The Bible mentions various ranks of angels. Michael is the head of heaven’s armies. Gabriel is the “mighty one.” Cherubim, seraphim, and living creatures all have different roles.

God created all angels at one time (Colossians 1:16). They do not marry and procreate (Matthew 22:28-30). They do not die, but Lucifer refused to submit and those who followed him fell from heaven (Isaiah 14:12-13, Revelation 12:4). Still, the number of holy angels that remain to serve and worship God is uncountable (Daniel 7:10, Revelation 5:11). Holy angels live in all the heavens, including the heavens over the earth (Mark 13:32, Jude 6).

Angels can take many forms. We may entertain them unawares (Hebrews 13:2). Matthew describes the angel at Christ’s resurrection as dazzling in brilliance (Matthew 28:3-4). We know that angels can speak (Galatians 1:8), and that they rejoice when a sinner repents (Luke 15:10).

Scripture does not belittle the struggle with fallen angels, and we are warned repeatedly to be on guard against their deception. The New Testament Church is given three specific ways to resist the devil:

1. Those listening to lies, and in danger of being deceived, are taught how to resist the devil in Ephesians 6:10-20. Paul teaches that taking up the armor of God results in standing firm against the devil. The armor of God begins with truth, righteousness, the Gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the offensive weapon of God’s Word, and finally prayer.

2. Those facing oppression are taught to resist the devil in 1 Peter 5:6-11. (Don’t you wonder how Peter felt writing that? Did Christ’s words, “Get behind me Satan” ring in his ears?) Peter teaches us to maintain practical obedience with clear-headed dependency on God. We must trust God’s proper time of deliverance (vs. 6). We must take refuge in God’s care (vs. 7). We must keep an alert hold on reality when the lion strikes (vs. 8). And we must set our hopes fully on the grace of Jesus (vv. 9-10), by worshiping the One who will rule forever (vs. 11).

3. Those struggling with sinful hearts are taught to resist the devil in James 4:7. If Paul addressed the carrot being dangled in front of the donkey (lies), and Peter addressed the stick beating the donkey (oppression), James addressed the donkey itself (our hearts, as in James 1:12-15). James teaches us to repent and draw near to God (James 4:6-10). When we look James’ listing of demonic folly, may we see our own hearts, and repent.
   • A fire-starting tongue (James 3:1-2).
   • Demanding and selfish hearts that produce chaos (James 3:14-16).
   • Desires that produce interpersonal conflict (James 4:1-3).
   • Pride (James 4:6).
   • Double minds and dirty hands (James 4:8).
   • Playing god by not resting in God’s sovereignty (James 4:11-17).

Notice, not one of these biblical solutions given to the New Testament Church for resisting the devil include casting out demons. While Christ walked on earth, some of the angels who chose not to worship Him in the heavens also took the opportunity to torment the people He had come to save. As they taunted Him He cast them out. But when it comes to sinful behavior, Christ did not cast it out. Rather, He forgave sinners. We dare not name sinful behavior as demonic activity. Sin is to be confessed and repented of, and then God forgives and grants repentance.

Near the end of the first century, the historian Josephus described how closely Hebrew people connected angels to law: “...we have learned... the most holy part of our law by angels or ambassadors.”

Flavius Josephus

“But did not angels always worship Christ? Yes, they had worshiped Him throughout all the time of their existence, but prior to His incarnation, they worshiped Him as God. Now they are also to worship Him as Son, in His incarnate character. This Son who became a man is higher than angels. He is the very God that the angels had always worshiped. It is an absolute sin and violation of the most basic of God’s laws to worship anyone but God. So if God Himself says that the angels are to worship the Son, then the Son must be God! In His incarnate Person, even as in His eternal Person, Christ is to be worshiped.”

John MacArthur
Between the rhetorical questions about angels, we find electrifying descriptions of Christ’s enthronement and Christ’s eternality. Again, Old Testament proofs are used. No Scripture-loving Israelite would be able to refute the truth of Jesus Christ’s superiority.

At the beginning and end of this passage, Christ’s eternal nature is stressed. His throne endures forever. He never changes or grows old. Between these realities of His permanence, we learn two truths about the Son: He rules, and He created.

HE RULES—Jesus reigns from God’s throne forever and ever. He rules with flawless unchanging righteousness (Deuteronomy 32:3-4). The Throne of Heaven is perpetual in duration and just in administration. The Son has proven Himself perfect—loving things that are right and hating things that are wrong—and that is why He reigns.

Notice the connection between love of righteousness, hatred of lawlessness, and joy. What are God’s requirements for joy? Love of right and hatred of wrong. If you lack joy, check your loves.

HE CREATED—Christ’s signature is imprinted on all that we see. Sun and stars, rocks and roses, mountains and molehills, lakes and land—all bear the touch of His fingerprint. F. B. Meyers describes it as:

> “With what new interest may we now turn to the archaic record, which tells how God created the heavens and the earth. Those sublime syllables, “Light, be!” were spoken by the voice that trembled in dying anguish on the cross. Rolling rivers, swelling seas, waving woods, bursting flowers, caroling birds, innumerable beasts, stars sparkling like diamonds on the pavilion of night - all newly made; all throbbing with God’s own life; and all very good: but mainly and gloriously, all the work of those hands which were nailed helplessly to the cross, which itself, as well as the iron that pierced Him, was the result of His creative will.”

If you’re wondering why it was important to teach Christ’s role in creation, realize that “Jewish theology assigned a prominent role to the angels as those who were present at the moment of creation.”

We live in a changing world. Since the fall, creation is changing; actually decaying. The sun radiates heat, causing the moon to reflect less light. You might say the universe is growing old, it’s becoming threadbare, worn out. Soon it’s time for the Creator/Wearer to roll it up and take a new cloak. Change can be frightening, but take comfort. After the Wearer has laid the earth aside and created a New Heaven and a New Earth, He will not have changed one bit. He will not have grown older. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Hebrews was written to comfort those who were suffering on this perishing earth. No matter how our world changes, one thing never does. Christ is the unchanging, enduring Ruler.
Jesus Christ is Throned Creator: Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows such as any earthly rulership elevated above or considered equal to Jesus. Rather, faith exalts Christ’s unmatchable rulership.

Discussion Questions

1. Joy Consider Hebrews 1:9 and Psalm 45:7. Clearly, Christ’s heirship includes the truth that “because you love right and hate wrong, therefore I give you joy.” Might that be true for us as well? In what ways would joy be the blessing of loving truth and hating wrong? ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. Christ’s Commitment Compare Hebrews 1:9 and Psalm 1:1-2. Christ’s commitment to righteousness resulted in God crowning Him with joy. What is necessary for us to be blessed with joy (Psalm 1:1)? ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   What is our greatest delight (Psalm 1:2)? __________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   How must we evidence commitment to righteousness in order to be crowned with joy? ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

3. Superior Jesus Who is referred to in Hebrews 1:10? Jesus. Who is referred to in Psalm 102:25? God. Therefore, what do we learn about Jesus Christ, and how does this help us understand His superiority to angels? ________________________________________________________________
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   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

4. Clothing Read Hebrews 1:11-12 and Psalm 102:26-27. The imagery of clothing speaks to a frequency and casualness of change to created order. What are the ramifications of earth’s instability compared to Christ’s unchangeability? ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

5. Repeated Truth Psalm 90:1-2 repeats the message of Hebrews 1:10-12 and Psalm 102:25-27. What truth is repeated in these passages? ________________________________________________________________
   Discuss how this truth impacts our lives: __________________________
Further Personal Study

Hebrews 1:8-9 was a familiar poem for the Jews, regarding God the Father’s agelessness (Psalm 45:6-7). Here the writer references it in context to how the Son created earth. Note that the Son is named God.

When you read Psalm 45:6-7, it’s easy to see why Psalm 45:6 was quoted in Hebrews 1:8. After all, Christ’s heir-ship to the throne has been the writer’s point. But Psalm 45:7 and Hebrews 1:9 introduce a new concept, how Christ’s love of rightness and hatred of wrongness results in anointing with the oil of joy/gladness. What phrase in Psalm 45:7 and Hebrews 1:9 might refer to Christ’s superiority over angels? _____________________________________________________________________
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___________________________________________________________________
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Perhaps the writer draws from Psalm 45 because of the little phrase “above your companions.” His goal is to establish Christ as superior to angels. The angels were not friends or peer companions, but subservient. Do you realize what a great privilege it is to be called a friend of God in the service of God (John 15:14, James 2:23)? _____________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
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Read Isaiah 61:1-3 on the left, with the truth in mind that God anointed Christ with the oil of joy because He loved righteousness and hated wickedness. What acts of righteousness are described in these verses? _____________________________________________________________________
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___________________________________________________________________
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Compare Psalm 1:3 with Isaiah 61:3. What kind of tree are we called to be? _____________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

How does Hebrews 1:8-9 resound with truths from Psalm 2:1-6? _____________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

Consider these verses from Hebrews. Write what you learn about either the transitoriness of earth, or the permanence of Christ:

Hebrews 10:34 _____________________________________________________________________

Hebrews 12:25-27 _____________________________________________________________________

Hebrews 13:8 _____________________________________________________________________

Hebrews 13:14 _____________________________________________________________________

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions…”

Psalm 45:6-7

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”

Isaiah 61:1-3

“He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither.”

Psalm 1:3
There is only One on the Throne, Jesus Christ the Son of God. Beginning with heavenly beings, Hebrews proves that none else may be elevated to the position of sovereign power or rulership. Two thousand years ago, it was necessary to refute wrong thinking about power or rule. It is also necessary today.

Certainly there are shadow positions of rulership—kings, governors, employers, pastors, husbands, parents—all of whom are responsible for their area of rule. That is, as reflections of the real rule of Christ.

However, beware of religions, cults, or other organizations that belittle the Rulership/Kingship of Christ by elevating men to positions only Christ can fill.

One example to consider is where Roman Catholic dogma gives bishops the power to dispense order:

“The Sacrament of Order confers sanctifying grace on the recipient... imprints a character on the recipient...confers a permanent spiritual power on the recipient. The ordinary dispenser of all grades of Order...is the validly consecrated Bishop alone.”

Today it is more necessary than ever to recognize, to agree with God’s Word, to teach, that Christ only is superior. That Christ alone sits on the Throne. Cults elevate a man, or the teachings of a man, above Christ, or the teachings of Christ. To say a man can be elevated to the position where he can confer a permanent spiritual power on another man is heresy! John MacArthur explains:

“One statement in the Dogma that struck me was, “The Sacrament of Order confers a permanent spiritual power on the recipient.” So the system teaches that this individual has received grace, permanent spiritual power in which he is literally entered into the priesthood of Jesus Christ, is then obliged to dispense the saving treasures of Christ. He mediates the treasures of Christ to people, and he is empowered to lead a morally, pure life...”

John O’Brien has a popular work called The Faith of Millions, and in that he has written this, I think it’s really fascinating. “When the priest announces the tremendous words of consecration at the Mass, he reaches up into the heavens,” you’ve seen that image, “he brings Christ down from His throne and places Him upon our altar to be offered up again as the victim for the sins of man. It is...listen to this...a power greater than that of saints and angels, greater than that of seraphim and cherubim.”

Weep, dear friends, weep. Millions are being deceived. No priest, but Christ alone has the power that is greater than saints and angels. Only God is sovereign.

God is sovereign. Our lives may not look like anyone is ruling, let alone God. Often we wish we could rule our own lives, and we could choose our own rulers, our own priests. Often we are overwhelmed and confused and confounded. As limited humans, there are aspects of God’s sovereignty that we may never understand, and we have to come to the point of saying, “That’s OK with me” (Romans 11:33-36).

Paul David Tripp says, “Real rest is found in trusting the Person who is in control of the things you don’t understand.” Are you trusting in shadow deceptions? Or will you rest in God’s sovereign control by elevating Christ, and Christ alone, to rulership of your life?

Hebrews 10:5-9

“And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”
Ho hum. The gospel message? Not such a big deal anymore. The Hebrew Christians were being tempted to drift back into something a little more comfortable. It seems that some had already fallen, for the writer pleads with passion and urgency. Three things:

1. Listen up! Pay careful and close attention. Since Christ is greater than angels, it is of utmost importance that we hold fast to the message of His life—the words spoken to the Son, by the Son, and about the Son.

2. Don’t drift off course! Hold the ship toward port! Stay true to this one great quest.

3. Treasure salvation! Great salvation means great damnation if ignored. The answer to the question, “How can we escape?” is that if we neglect this superior message of salvation, we can’t and won’t escape certain destruction.

Five motivations frame the rhetorical question, “How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?” Let them push us to greater loyalty.

The first two reasons are given prior to the how-shall-we-escape warning. They have to do with angels/law and the certainty of judgment:

1. The law spoken by angels was valid. Those hearing the message of Hebrews wouldn’t argue this point. We’ll see as we continue through Hebrews that they were being tempted to bring elements of the law into the new covenant.

2. Disobedience means punishment. Hear the compounding of courtroom expressions: “proved legally valid,” “every infringement and disobedience,” “received appropriate punishment.” Here’s a reminder that careless contempt of God’s commands receives just punishment. Unwillingness to listen is deliberate rejection, which equals legal liability before God.

The final three reasons, given after the do-not-neglect-salvation warning, have to do with the proclamation and confirmation of the Gospel:

3. God announced salvation through Jesus Himself. No longer through angels, now through Christ and His body, the church. Ignoring this message creates catastrophic consequences. Apathy and unresponsiveness to the Gospel invites “appropriate punishment.” What’s appropriate for those who ignore or deny Christ’s reality? Punishment that is even greater than the law had required. The reality of this punishment needs to frighten us.

4. There were eyewitnesses, fervent hearers who passed on the message with accuracy and truth.

5. Signs and wonders and miracles and gifts of the Spirit accompanied the message of the Son. Tangible evidences validated God’s declaration. To provide those evidences, God had intercepted earthly weakness with heavenly power. The signs/wonders/miracles/gifts were and are anchored in God’s will, not man’s desire or command. What is God’s will? The revealing of Christ’s superiority and supremacy, which alone provides great salvation.
Jesus Christ offers Great Salvation: Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows such as law and miracles. Rather, faith exalts salvation and heavenly perfection.

Discussion Questions


What is similar in 1:4 and 2:4? ____________________________________________

2. **Anchored**  In the warning not to drift away (Hebrews 2:1), the original Greek uses a nautical term that indicates “holding a ship toward port, or fastening anchors to the sea bed to keep from drifting” (Lane, 35). How does Hebrews 6:19 provide further explanation? ____________________________________________

3. In Proverbs 3:21, of what is the reader warned not to lose sight? ______

What dangers in our culture might tempt you to drift away from the realities of Christian salvation? ____________________________________________

4. **Exhortation**  In Hebrews 13:22, the book of Hebrews is described as a “message of exhortation.” Exhortation awaits response. Notice how the writer has paused from teaching about Christ and angels to insert a passionate warning as to what will happen if the exhortation is ignored. What can we learn from this for parenting or disciple-making? __

5. **Warning**  The warning of this passage includes degrees of punishment. Those who disobey will receive appropriate punishment. Those who neglect salvation will not be able to escape. Consider Jesus’ warning in Mark 12:40 about “greater condemnation,” and in Luke 12:47 about “more lashes.” Read Hebrews 10:28-29. How will our disciple-making be impacted by realizing that those who hear, and put on a show as if they believe the Gospel, then drift away, will receive the greatest condemnation? ____________________________________________
Further Personal Study

1. In Hebrews 2:2, we read about the appropriate punishments for infringements and disobedience to the law. What does Leviticus 24:14-16 reveal as appropriate for those who curse God?

________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________

What does Numbers 15:30-36 recount as appropriate for defiance against the Lord’s commands?

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How does Jude 5 describe the consequence of not believing?

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2. The above consequences for disobedience prove that God isn’t kidding when He says something. God cannot be unjust because He is justice/righteousness. How is Jesus’ warning of Matthew 11:20-24 echoed in Hebrews 2:4?

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________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

3. At this point we will pay attention to what Jesus taught about hell. Fear of hell can motivate us to never neglect salvation. When you read the following passages, be thankful for GREAT SALVATION, then note how Jesus described hell:

Matthew 22:13

________________________________________________________________

Matthew 25:41

________________________________________________________________

Mark 9:43-44

________________________________________________________________

Revelation 19:20

________________________________________________________________

Revelation 9:11, 11:7

________________________________________________________________

Jude 13

________________________________________________________________

“Hell is undoubtedly full of people who were never actively opposed to Jesus Christ, but who simply neglected the gospel. Such people are in view in these four verses [Hebrews 2:1-4]. They know the truth and even believe the truth in the sense that they acknowledge its truthfulness, its rightness. They are well aware of the good news of salvation provided in Jesus Christ, but are not willing to commit their lives to Him. So they drift past the call of God into eternal damnation. This tragedy makes these verses extremely important and urgent.”

John MacArthur
Great Salvation: Shadows to Reality

It seems a stretch to think of signs, wonders, and miracles as shadows. Miracles amaze us! But the reality of heaven is that, in heaven, there are no fleshly limitations, no pain, no suffering nor illness; and, therefore, no need for miracles. When the gates of Heaven opened to incarnate Christ on earth, the realities of Heaven trailed after Him. Rather than thinking of miracles as shadows, it’s good to think of miracles as glimpses of Heaven’s reality, permitted to confirm the message of Christ.

In our culture, there are those who place undue emphasis on the miraculous confirmations of Jesus Christ’s message, as if they are part of the message.

John MacArthur has blogged:

“There is an obvious difference between, say, a tourist attraction and a road sign directing you there. The sign merely points to what is ahead—it’s not the destination itself. In much the same way, the miraculous signs performed by Jesus and the apostles were never ends in themselves but pointed to the authority of what they proclaimed (Hebrews 2:1–4; Acts 2:22). Throughout Christ’s and the apostles’ ministries, people often fixated on their miracles and missed their messages. In Matthew 16:4 Jesus said, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign.” His point is clear: Seeking after signs means missing—or worse—ignoring what those signs point to.

The signs and wonders performed by the Lord and His apostles were not intended to be the focus—they served to validate the teaching they accompanied. Even Peter—who heard the audible voice of the Father, saw the revealed glory of Christ, and performed countless miracles himself—did not put his confidence in those experiences but in the “more sure” Word of God (2 Peter 1:17–19). In absolute contrast to phony sideshow miracles, the greatest wonder on display today is the perfectly preserved, fully sufficient, and totally inerrant Word of God.”

Pastor Steven J. Cole writes:

“Those who emphasize such gifts overlook God’s purpose for them. He gave these gifts to confirm the gospel. If you study miracles in the Bible, you will find that they are not uniformly distributed. They occur in clusters at critical times in history.

It would seem that these gifts had diminished by the time Hebrews was written. Otherwise, the author would not have referred to the miracles done by the apostles. Rather he would have called attention to the ongoing phenomena in their midst, which would have strengthened his point. Even in Paul’s ministry, there seems to be a chronological tapering off of such miracles. In Acts 19, even handkerchiefs carried from Paul to those who were sick brought healing. But at the end of his life, he didn’t tell Timothy to claim healing for his stomach problems by faith, or to wait until the handkerchief arrived. He told him to drink a little wine (in modern terms, “take your medicine”; 1 Timothy 5:23). Paul didn’t heal Trophimus, but left him sick at Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20).

So it would seem that these miraculous gifts are not God’s normal way of operating in this era. But we should not restrict His ability to perform miracles if it is His sovereign will...”

So let us not dream of or long for miracles. Rather, let us yearn for and live for the day Jesus welcomes us home and heaven becomes our reality.
In general, we’re quite smug in thinking we’ve obeyed God’s first pre-fall command to be fruitful and multiply. Truth is; we’ve turned away from God’s intent with that command, that we create little images of Himself to reflect His glory. Instead, if we’re truly transparent, we’ll admit that often our goal in procreating is to create our own family identities, to clone the best characteristics and values of our marital unions, and to preserve our own names. This disobeys God’s first intent for mankind—to reflect His image, according to His likeness (Genesis 1:26).

And, we’ve openly defied God’s second intent, that mankind rule over the earth. Our dominion and rule of earth has been mocked and frustrated by the presence of sin and death. In Hebrews 2:5-9, we see how God fulfills His will. His perfect Son transcends humanity and its sin/death burden, takes sin/death on through unspeakable suffering, beats sin/death by an unmistakable victory, and achieves the glorious destiny of God’s will regarding rule.

Presently, angels have varying levels of terrestrial rule. This world is ruled by the dark principalities and powers tempered by the vast array of shimmering faithful heavenly beings. For a time, the glorious Son was humiliated below the angels.

At first glance, humiliation and glory sound like opposites to us. But Philippians 2:9 says that the Son is glorified because of His humiliation, from which He arose crowned with glory, to sit in sure rule over the earth. Hebrews reminds us that God did not lower Christ under angels to leave Him there, but rather raise Him to victorious and glorious rule from Heaven’s Throne.

On that day, He will rule unquestionably, completely, certainly. Nothing will be outside His control. Given the fact of Christ’s certain rulership, when we face earthly disasters that evidence our present failure to rule earth, do we dare echo the woe-earning, God-wearying question of Malachi 2:17, “Where is the God of justice?” The question, “How could God...?” shows that we haven’t trusted truth. We don’t see it yet because it isn’t here yet, and that’s for sure. Human suffering under the rule of sin/death is very real. But the reality of the coming rule of the glorious Son is not less real for the not seeing. Hear Peter, a first-hand witness of Christ’s victory over sin/death: “Though you do not see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory...” (1 Peter 1:8). The reality of Christ’s glory far exceeds the despair of death.

What’s your everything that’s not yet in subjection? Terminal diagnosis? Rejection? Loneliness? A broken heart? A lost child? Bills run amuck? As F. B. Meyers said, “Anarchy and rebellion have laid waste man’s fair realm... These are the products of sin. An enemy hath done this.” Hold on my brother! There’s shining glory coming, certain and sure. Yes, today we share the taste of death, but not alone—with the Son who tasted death for everyone, the Son who transcendently humiliated Himself for the glory. We shall get earth back, better than ever and more glorious than before. Yes, enemy angels tempted us to sin, and we chose death. But hear this well, the transcendent Son tasted the suffering of death, and He conquered death.
Jesus Christ is the Transcendent Son:
Therefore, Hebrews reveals the reality behind the shadow of scapegoats: Christ’s suffering sent Him to the worst wilderness, below angels, to deposit our sins in hell.

Discussion Questions

1. **Not yet subject** Compare Romans 8:21-22 with Hebrews 2:8
   “At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to Him.” In what ways does creation’s groaning (i.e. drought, disasters) help us to long for the day when all is subject to Christ?

   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________

2. **Crafty vs. Meek** If God’s intent for mankind to rule was to be thwarted, the logical place for the enemy to enter his deception would be the order of rule that God set in place. Before Satan’s deception, God’s ordering of earth included Adam’s headship (Genesis 2:15-17), and Eve’s helpership (Genesis 2:18). In Genesis 3:1, we see Satan’s first act of craftiness. What steps did he take to undercut God’s intended order of rulership?

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

   Discuss ways in which you struggle with Satan’s deception. Talk about specific ways you naturally prefer not to follow God’s plan for rulership and dominion:

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

   In Matthew 5:3, Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” In light of Hebrews 2:8-9 and Philippians 2:9-11, why is meekness necessary for right rulership and dominion?

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

3. **Scapegoat** In Leviticus 16:8-10, one goat was slaughtered, foreshadowing Christ’s sin-cleansing blood flow. The other goat was sent into the wilderness as a scapegoat, foreshadowing the complete removal of our sins to “Azazel,” or demons. How does this help us understand Christ being temporarily “a little lower than angels?”

   ____________________________________________________________

   What does Ephesians 4:9-10 describe?

   ____________________________________________________________

   Discuss why it is difficult to think about Christ as the real scapegoat completely removing our sins to the place of demons:

   ____________________________________________________________

4. **Suffering Son** Read Isaiah 53:11-12, and write a prayer of praise that God was satisfied by the suffering of the Son:

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

   “And God said, ‘Have dominion.’ There you have royal supremacy. Man was intended to be God’s vice-regent and representative. King in a palace stored with all to please him: monarch and sovereign of all the lower orders of creation. The sun to labour for him as a very Hercules; the moon to light his nights, or lead the waters round the earth in tides, cleansing his coast; elements of nature to be his slaves and messengers; flowers to scent his path; fruits to please his taste, birds to sing for him; fish to feed him; beasts to toil for him and carry him. Not a cringing slave, but a king crowned with the glory of rule, and with the honour of universal supremacy. Only a little lower than angels; because they are not, like him, encumbered with flesh and blood. This is man as God made him to be.”

   [But] ‘We see not yet all things subjected to Him.’ [Man’s] crown is rolled in the dust, his honor tarnished and stained.”

   F. B. Meyers
“We follow a stripped and crucified Savior. Those words go very deep. They touch everything, one’s outer life as well as one’s inner, motives, purposes, decisions, everything. Let them be with you. You are sure to have tests as well as many an unexpected joy. But if you follow a stripped and crucified Savior, and by the power of His resurrection seek to enter into the fellowship of His sufferings, you will go on in peace and be one of those blessed ones who spread peace all around.

You are, by His grace, counted worthy to follow the crucified way of the cross. So few are ready for that. They preach about it, sing about it, but when it comes to doing it, then they just don’t. But I should not say ‘they.’ ‘I’ is the pronoun. What do I know of this way?”

Amy Carmichael

Further Personal Study

1. Write down what the following passages teach regarding our personal identification with Christ’s suffering:
   Galatians 2:19-20
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   Philippians 3:10
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   Colossians 3:3-4
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   Romans 6:5-11
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

2. Someday, when everything is in subjection to Christ, things will be different. How does Isaiah 2:2-4 teach that man will be different?
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

3. Someday, when everything is in subjection to Christ, animals will be different. How does Isaiah 11:6-9 teach us that animals will be different?
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

4. Someday, when everything is in subjection to Christ, plants will be different. How does Isaiah 35:1-2 teach us that plants will be different?
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

5. Write down how Isaiah 55:12-13 describes the earth in subjection to Christ:
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

6. How does knowing these glorious truths about Christ’s rule encourage you as you identify with Christ in His death?
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
Transcendent Son: Shadows to Reality

One of the Hebrew shadow ceremonies to atone for sins foreshadowed Christ’s suffering and death (Leviticus 16:8-10). On that day, two goats were chosen. They slaughtered one goat until the blood flowed in plain sight; a shadow of the reality of Christ’s shed blood. The other goat was taken to the desert and abandoned for “Azazel,” which means demons. This shadow picture is replaced by the reality of Christ dying and depositing our sins in hell.

God’s glory required that Jesus suffer and become for a time lower than the angels, to have victory over Satan’s present rulership of the earth. Ultimately, man will rule with the Son, and glorify God by ruling as He wills. Presently, we glorify God by suffering like Jesus, for the joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2).

During the years I (Bob) played in the National Hockey League, at the end of each season Hockey Ministries International (HMI) invited Christian players to Word of Life Camp in the Adirondack Mountains. There, guest speakers addressed us twice a day for a week. One year, on the evening of our arrival, a quiet, pleasant man played ping pong and hung out with us until late, nearly midnight. When we realized he was one of the speakers, we asked his topic. He said, “I don’t know yet. I’ll be praying through the night. Let you know in the morning.” That year Keith Price spoke to us about suffering, and we began to think in entirely new ways about the privilege and beauty of suffering.

Eventually, Price battled cancer. Afterwards, his daughter published his work on suffering in a booklet called The Lonely Road: Seven Words About Suffering.4 In times of suffering, those seven words can help refocus our eyes onto Christ:

• STRAIGHTENED—Have you ever sensed great constriction, terrible pressure, being hard pressed and crushed until unable to move? During times of straitening, know that there is light, in the end, after the baptism of the present suffering (Luke 12:50).

• TROUBLED—If we would imitate Jesus, we cannot hope to sidestep trouble (John 12:27). We must be willing to step out and be immersed in it, all the while trusting Him to keep us from slipping. In Keith Price’s words, “Until we give up the comfort of dry land, we will never turn to him completely.”

• SORE AMAZED—When evil presses in with dread, and the grip of shuddering horror leaves us “scared stiff,” take comfort. Knowing that Christ personally understands, you can persevere (Mark 14:33a).

• VERY HEAVY—A weighty cloud of dense heaviness can hinder us from crying out to God. Notice that those were the times Jesus went out alone to pray (Mark 14:33b). When the burden seems unbearable, cry out to God.

• EXCEEDINGLY SORROWFUL—Christ faced what we need never face: “sorrow unto death” through unbearable separation from the Father (Mark 14:34). In times of excessive, deep grief, we are able to gaze on Him and not give up hope, knowing He endured suffering greater than ours.

• AGONY—The word agon originated to describe the strain and tension of those captured as bait for the Greek games. Christ’s agony in facing the battle with evil was so severe that He sweated drops of blood (Luke 22:44). He won the battle, and, therefore, we gain courage to rise above our agonies, and minister to others in the midst of our own suffering.

• FORSAKEN—Christ’s abandonment brought Him “to the dark abyss no one else, in this temporal life, will have to penetrate—the place where God isn’t.” The pure and holy Lamb of God willingly chose to be forsaken and become our scapegoat. Truly, any suffering we endure is less than His.

If you’ve accepted Christ’s suffering as payment for your sins, He’ll grant you repentance, and you’ll never suffer God’s wrath. You’ll think differently about suffering as you join the throng of Christians that imitate Him in their suffering.
The storm raged with double fury, fast and hard. Opposition and testing tackled those who followed Jesus. Fear of death loomed large in the face of Gentile persecution. Comforting traditions were pushed away in the face of Jewish excommunication. All for a suffering King they’d only seen wearing a crown of thorns—their champion, captain, founder, leader, Prince.

A salvation perfected through suffering? Just one of the many antithesis we struggle to meld into the grand reality. Glory and humiliation. Salvation and suffering. Let the words of F. B. Meyers shake your soul:

“Shall the sufferings of Christ cause us to reject Christ? Ah, strange infatuation! As well reject the heaven because of its sun, or night because of it’s queenly moon; or a diadem because of its regal gem; or home because of mother. The sufferings of Christ are the proudest boast of the Gospel ... Had He wished, the Father might have conducted the Son to glory by another route than the thorny, flint-set path of suffering. But the reasons for this experience were so overwhelming that He could not evade them ... Those reasons may be stated almost in a sentence. Our Father has on hand a work greater than His original creation. He is “bringing many sons unto glory” ... Many sons, though only one Son ... Many sons are to be His joint-heirs; reigning with Him on His throne, sharing His unsearchable riches and His everlasting reign.”

But these many sons, these joint-heirs, share more than glory. We share His suffering. We’re crucified with Him. We sorrow over our own sin. A journey of tears for the agony we’ve caused the Son our Brother. And we welcome the mortification of our flesh, the putting to death of our desires, the taking up of our crosses.

As we travel the rough road, pools of living water that are found only there refresh us, and we grow in grace, discipline, dignity, compassion. It’s not angels who are helped. It’s us. The kinsmen for whose sins our Brother paid full price. We are the brothers of the High Priest in God’s service whom He helps. And how He helps:

• Sovereignly, unexpectedly—There is no help for fallen angels, though they once traveled heaven’s streets. Once they fall to hell, they have no second chance. But the brethren, the fallen children of dust, receive repeated and endless mercy, just for the asking.
• Humanly—One of the profound mysteries of the faith is the incarnation. Love incomprehensibly defies every material principle, and God becomes man. Born to rescue His brothers, born to die.
• Mercifully, faithfully—To those crying for it, comes grace that trumps and triumphs over sin, as tender as it is tenacious.
• Sympathetically, savagely—He wept. He experienced rejection. He knew extreme anguish. He never failed the test, and He is the unfailing strength of our weakness.
Jesus Christ is our Kinsman: Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows such as human kinsman-redeemers. Instead, faith exalts Christ the real and final Kinsman-Redeemer.

Discussion Questions

1. Archegos Consider the Greek word archegos, which in Hebrews 2:10 is translated founder, or author, or captain. In Acts 3:15 and 5:31, it is translated “Prince.” Archegos always refers to the one out front, leading by example. Christ is our Pioneer, blazing the trail. How does 1 Peter 2:21 describe the path Christ has cleared for you?

How does the fact of Christ’s valiant trail blazing bring hope?

How does the story of  Ruth portray a shadow of Christ, the real Kinsman Redeemer. Boaz’s person and character illustrate the great measures Christ is willing to take to redeem His bride. Ruth arrives at Boaz’s bed, empty-handed and humbled to the core, yet Boaz treats her with respect and kindness (Ruth 3:10-13). Disgraced by her position and despised for her ethnicity, the young Moabite woman appears to have little to offer. Despite all this, Boaz views her as a worthy woman (Ruth 3:11). Though Ruth comes from a family that has turned their backs on the Lord, the Lord turns his face towards Ruth and reveals himself to her through Boaz. Boaz foreshadows Jesus Christ, the ultimate kinsman-redeemer who will redeem a bride for himself—the church.

As a redeemer, Boaz not only takes Ruth as a wife, but he also fulfills the levirate law by producing a son to carry on Elimelek’s family line (Ruth 4:13). But, this wasn’t merely a son. This was a special son who would preserve the royal line from which not only the great king David would descend, but most importantly through whom would descend the greatest king—King Jesus! It was this son who would redeem His elect as the ultimate kinsman-redeemer.

Though Boaz redeemed the line of Elimelek, Jesus would come to redeem all the people of God. It was him to whom Boaz’s position pointed, for in the person and work of Christ was found the true definition of kinsman-redeemer.”

2. Family Hebrews 2:11-12 tells us that because the One who saves (Jesus) and the ones being saved (us) have a common origin, Jesus considers us family, without hesitation or shame. In treating us as family, what three things does Jesus do in verses 12-13?

In our families, it’s important to praise God, to trust God, and to remember that Jesus is with us. How would our relationships with one another be different if we remember those three things?

3. Kinsman Redeemer Hebrews reveals realities of which we see shadows in the Old Testament. One such shadow was the kinsman-redeemer, described in Leviticus 25:47-49, and fleshed out for us in the relationship between Boaz and Ruth. Following are three of the OT requirements for the shadow kinsman-redeemers. How does Christ fulfill them to become the very real kinsman-redeemer of sinners?

The kinsman-redeemer must be a family member:

The kinsman-redeemer must be free from bondage or debt:

The kinsman-redeemer must be willing and able to pay the price:

Stephanie Van Eck
Further Personal Study

Do not fear death! Christ has conquered death! Hebrews 2:14-15 explains that since we, God’s children, are human beings - made of flesh and blood - He became flesh and blood too by being born in human form; for only as a human being could He die and in dying break the power of the devil who had the power of death. Only in that way could He deliver those whose fear of death causes them to live as slaves to constant dread.

So Christ died to defeat death, and remove our fear of death. For this study, we’ll look at some of the realities of this comfort.

1. In Hebrews 2:14, who has the power of death? ________________________
   Since Jesus died and was raised, what happened to that power? _________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. Read John 7:31. How did Christ reveal that He holds ultimate power? _____
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

3. In Luke 10:18-19, over whom did Christ reveal that He holds ultimate power? ___________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

4. How does John 16:11 reveal that Christ holds ultimate power? ___________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

5. In Psalm 23:4, what is true for Christians walking through the valley of the shadow of death? ___________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

6. In 2 Corinthians 5:8, at the moment of death, what is the reality for Christians? ___________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

7. In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, we are told to encourage and build each other up. What is the reality by which we are to do this, given in 1 Thessalonians 5:10? ___________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
Kinsman: Shadows to Reality

Hebrews 2:10-18 brings to light two of the Old Testament shadows. First, the real Kinsman-Redeemer steps out in front of the shadow kinsman-redeemers. Second, the real High Priest steps out in front of the shadow high priests.

The only way Christ could fulfill the role of the real kinsman-redeemer was to become our brother. Christ is not ashamed to be called our brother, and He legally meets the requirements to be able to pay the full price for our sins. And so He is the powerful reality of the beautiful, romantic kinsman-redeemer shadow that threads through the Old Testament into Matthew—the story of a Moabite woman who needed a kinsman-redeemer.

We catch first glimpses of the shadow kinsman-redeemer in Genesis 19:37, with the very ugly incestuous situation of Abraham’s nephew Lot bearing a child with his oldest daughter. The child was named Moab. From then on, the Moabites caused much trouble for God’s people. One example is in Numbers 22-25, where the Moabite King Balak unsuccessfully tried to curse the Israelites through Balaam, whose donkey ended up setting him straight. However, generation after generation, the Moabites rejected God. They chose to worship Chemosh instead, who required the burnt offering of children (1 Kings 11, 2 Kings 3), and God cursed the Moabites (Isaiah 15:1-16:14, Jeremiah 48:42, Ezekiel 25:8-11). God commanded that no Moabite was ever to enter His assembly, or ever be blessed by an Israelite (Deuteronomy 23:3-6).

Whew. Stinks to be a Moabite. Except for the promises of Isaiah 56:1, 6. “Let not the foreigner who has joined Himself to the Lord say, ‘The Lord shall surely separate me from His people.’” Therefore, the Israelites could not turn away anyone who was willing to join up with the Israelite God, to love His Name, serve Him, and keep His covenant. The curse was only in place until a Moabite turned to God.

So when we read the story of Ruth, the Moabite, we’re thankful that she had a chance to be accepted in Israel. But accepted is one thing, and becoming the grandmother of King David to be included in Christ’s lineage (Matthew 1:5) is quite another. How is it that God gives a cursed person a key role in His royal, holy family? How is it that God gives mankind, subject to the curse of slavery to sin and death, a ruling role in His kingdom?

Enter Boaz, the shadow kinsman-redeemer. Boaz offers a picture of how we, cursed for rejecting God and worshiping idols, enter God’s royal plan through a kinsman-redeemer.

• Boaz was a kinsman of the family by whom Ruth was saved. Christ is the brother kinsman of all who are saved.

• Boaz exhibited love for Ruth. Christ exhibited love for us.

• Boaz willingly paid the necessary redemption price that provided Ruth all the privileges of an Israelite. Jesus willingly paid the necessary redemption price that provides God’s children all the privileges of God’s kingdom.

So as we read, in Hebrews 2:16, that Jesus helps Abraham’s offspring, realize that the ultimate and kinsman-redeemer stands before us—qualified, able, willing, and ready to redeem.

The second reality revealed in this passage is mentioned in Hebrews 2:17, where we read of Christ becoming our high priest. We’ll consider this further with other passages, but for now, please pause to thank our real high priest for going beyond every duty ever assigned an earthly shadow priest, for offering Himself as the all-sufficient, fully-atoning, final, bloody sacrifice.
It’s a castle for ministry, we’re told. Turns out some kind folks from Alliance churches are willing to alliance with folks in ministry, so we are able to stay a few nights. And soon we’re breathing the mysteries held secret in the thick stone walls of Sibley Castle. Twisty halls invite and we explore room after room, turn by turn. Stairs wind up and up, and there we are in a towering theatre that showcases the sky and rivers and hills of Franklin, PA.

The Internet insists on giving information about the house itself, which is old news since we’ve experienced it already. We want to know the story of its builder. Then we visit the church to which he donated an enormous pipe organ that billows grand chords week after week. We peer at a gravestone, curious to see the place he mourned his wife and then quickly married her sister. And though we’re sure to visit that house again, it’s the builder who receives honor (or disgrace).

The Jews hearing Hebrews 3:1-6 for the first time likely thought often about a house. Some remembered Herod’s temple personally. Some heard bed-time stories about it. It was a house their ancestors had replicated, not once, but twice. Moses, the faithful servant of God, built the first tent-house under God the Master Builder. Solomon imitated it; then Herod. Solomon’s temple could have tucked into a corner of the gold monstrosity that was Herod’s massive, exaggerated imitation.

God’s Spirit was never present in Herod’s temple (so we can’t call it a shadow, as Moses’ tabernacle and Solomon’s temple). And God’s Spirit left Solomon’s temple, for Israel was not faithful. That’s got to be the saddest story of Israel’s history, recorded in Ezekiel 8-11, especially 10:18. Moses, however, was faithful in all God’s household. Among the Hebrews, some were being tempted to follow Moses the servant, rather than Jesus the Son. The Son, who is the superior and completely faithful builder.

Why do we elevate a house over its builder, servant over Son? One reason is that we don’t do abstract concepts as automatically as concrete things. To drive a car is concrete. We know the steps, we do them without thinking, and we arrive at our destination. But, to do abstract things, such as creating a home or worshipping God, comes more easily if we attach it to something familiar. Anybody will tell you that home has nothing to do with color, but still we paint walls in our new house the same color as the old. It just feels more like home. In the same manner, being in a familiar environment for church feels more like worship. Anybody will tell you that worship has nothing to do with four-part harmony, but because we grew up hearing people praise God in four-part harmony, hymns sung in harmony tug at our hearts.

Do you see how we’re tempted to feel that it’s more God’s house when it seems familiar? So it’s easy to understand how the Hebrew people were tempted to think they were worshiping God by performing the earthly traditions Moses had introduced. We are likewise tempted to elevate traditional performances that have no basis in heavenly hope. The answer to this dilemma is to cling courageously to confidence in Jesus Christ and His hope, all the way to the end.

Hebrews 3:1-6

“For this reason, holy brothers, sharing in a heavenly calling, observe that the apostle and high priest of whom our confession speaks, Jesus, was faithful to the One who appointed Him in His house (as was Moses also). For Jesus has been considered worthy of greater glory than Moses, in the same measure as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of all things. Now Moses was faithful in all God’s household as a servant to bear witness to those things which were to be spoken by God in the future, but Christ is faithful as the Son presiding over God’s household. We are God’s household, supposing that we continue to hold firmly to our confidence and the hope of which we boast.”
Jesus Messiah is the Faithful Builder:  
Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows, such as Moses’ tabernacle. Instead, faith exalts Christ and His church.

Discussion Questions

1. Faithful understanding  Why, as those who share in a “heavenly calling,” must we understand Jesus according to God’s Word, the Bible? Why may we not allow ourselves to understand Jesus and what it means to follow Him on the basis of personal experience or familiarity? 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“He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.”
1 Chronicles 17:12-14

“And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever.”
1 Samuel 2:35

“Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house.”
Numbers 12:7

“If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.”
1 Timothy 3:15-16

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”
Ephesians 2:19, 22

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”
Matthew 16:18

“You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”
1 Peter 2:5

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Further Personal Study

1. The writer of Hebrews positions two OT texts side-by-side in this passage. In 1 Chronicles 17:12-14, what is stated regarding Christ and God’s house? ______

What two promises are given in 1 Samuel 2:35? ______

In Hebrews 3:1-6, how does the writer entreat us with the above truths? ______

2. The testimony of Numbers 12:7 is regarding Moses. How is Moses described and how is the description repeated and explained in Hebrews 3:5? ______

3. Notice that in Hebrews 3:1-2, the writer begins not by pointing out differences between Jesus and Moses, but similarities. Both were faithful to deliver God’s message. In Hebrews 3:3-4, though, the writer points out differences, namely Christ’s superiority. Why is Jesus superior to Moses? ______

4. How do the following passages teach us that the church is the household of God?

1 Timothy 3:15-16 ______

Ephesians 2:19 ______

Ephesians 2:22 ______

Matthew 16:18, 1 Peter 2:5 ______
Faithful Builder: Shadows to Reality

What does the word “house” mean to you? Do you think of a building? Or do you think of people? Here in Hebrews 3, God is talking household—all the elements and people and events that make up His dwelling place, His 1 Corinthians 6:19 temple. “Don’t you know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, whom you have from God?”

The house of which Christ is the builder. The Builder who is more important than His tools. The Builder who outlasts buildings (all of them). The Builder who is real, here seen presiding faithfully over the shadow of tradition. Holding on to any form of traditionalism, such as forms of Judaism or its greatest leaders, even its’ Moses, is to hold on to the shadow of reality. Clinging to Jesus is to cling to reality itself.

Moses served well as a shadow. But see how a shadow can never supersede its reality:

- Moses is a faithful servant. Jesus is a faithful Son. The shadow shares the common denominator—faithfulness to fulfill what God wants to build.
- Moses served as a high priest, and all the Jewish priests came from his brother. Christ is the royal priest, and all his brothers/sisters are priests (that’s us).
- Moses was a servant of dignity and honor, in a relationship with God characterized by intimacy and trust (Exodus 4:10, 14:3, Numbers 11:11, Deuteronomy 3:24, Joshua 1:2, 8:31, 33, 1 Chronicles 16:40). Jesus is the Son of purest nobility and most shining light, in a relationship with God characterized by oneness and complete equality (John 1:1-3, 14, 17, 5:19-20, 8:19, 42).
- Moses was the high priest who experienced God’s presence. Christ is the High Priest in whose presence we are with God.

Why is the writer of Hebrews so pressed to demonstrate Christ’s superiority to Moses? The novelty of faith had worn off. Confusion and fear threatened and tempted to return to the comforts of the traditions of Moses’ law.

How would austere rooms where hymns must be whispered to keep authorities at bay, ever satisfy as had freely blasting trumpeters in the grandest, showiest building in Jerusalem? (That’s an understatement, but still it was only a shadow.) How would direct access to God in confession ever result in the feeling of forgiveness they’d known as they watched the flow of blood from a slaughtered lamb? How could being a tradition-less priest in Christ’s service ever ease the conscience; as had regally robed earthly shadow priests?

It is a common struggle, this temptation to elevate the legalities and traditions of Judaism above holding fast to the confession of faith in Christ for justification of sins. And so we are reminded, “You became the house of God through faith and hope in Christ. Christ is the builder of a new, real house, of which you are part.” In the face of pressure to return to a shadow house, this passage only begins the writer’s passionate, multi-faceted plea to persevere in loyalty to the real household of God, the church built on Jesus.

Two thousand years ago they needed encouragement toward unswerving, courageous, loyal commitment to the faith in Christ alone that offers access to God. As do we.
Ever feel as if you’re in limbo? Waiting and waiting for something that you deeply desire? That’s the reality of our lives as Christians. We’re like the generation of Hebrews wandering in the wild desert, waiting to enter their promised land.

- They had walked away from the comforts of home (as they knew it), and were on hold to approach a yet-unseen, apparently better home.
- They had been promised a country, and had yet to experience it.
- They had been delivered from slavery’s drudgery and were longing for the satisfaction of meaningful work.
- They had been rescued and were waiting for rest.

There in the isolation and desolation of their desert wilderness, God protected and met with Israel. There in the sustenance and consolation of God’s presence, Israel resisted and rejected God.

They complained bitterly. They lost patience and murmured. They tested God and flung that insult into His face. They failed to obey God’s voice, no matter how patiently He repeated His commandments and statues. They rebelled against God’s ordained leaders. Although rescued from slavery, they did not remain faithful to the reality of their redemption, and refused to believe that God was present and sufficient. Their ingratitude, disobedience, and unbelief provoked the Lord until He swore in His wrath, “They shall not enter my rest.”

Take warning! Today!

“Today” implies a fresh moment in history. The “if you” warning is as real for us here and now as it was for the first hearers of Hebrews. Beware the danger of hard-hearted unbelief, of a temporary declaration of faith that does not hold firm to the end.

Hebrews 3 is a serious call to joyful gratitude and obedient perseverance and faithful endurance. Exhort one another every today that there is. Beware the dangerous hardening, called the deceitfulness of sin. Such deceitfulness makes sin look good. Feel fine. Seem logical. So why not?

Because every one of their bodies fell in the wilderness, and they did not enter His rest.

Very, very scary. Therefore, hang on! Hang on with a desperate clinging, like you’ve never latched on to anything else. Throw your whole life onto Jesus. Leech yourself on to someone who will blast you when you complain, or murmur, or question God. Someone who won’t be afraid to drag you out of disobedience, and bring you back to obedience. That’s a disciple-maker.

Let’s enter His rest together.
Jesus is the Wilderness Messiah: Therefore, Hebrews reveals that the Israelites lost rest through dying in the wilderness, as a shadow of the reality that we forfeit rest through hardened hearts.

Discussion Questions

1. **Holy Spirit** Read Hebrews 3:7a and 2 Peter 1:20-21. Notice that the writer of Hebrews does not identify himself, but rather points to the Holy Spirit. Discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in the writing of Scripture, and also in the comprehension of Scripture:

2. **Hard Hearts** Compare Hebrews 3:7-16 and Psalm 95:7-11. Why was God disgusted and provoked? What warning can we take from this?

3. **Rebellion** Hebrews 3 warns against emulating “the rebellion” of the wilderness-generation. To better understand what is meant by “the rebellion,” read and summarize the following OT reports of rebellion:

   The heart-hardening incident reported in Exodus 17:1-7 (referred to in Hebrews 3, and in Psalm 95:8 as “Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, as on that day at Massah in the wilderness”):

   The rebellion of Meribah and Kadesh as reported in Numbers 20:2-13 (take special note of vs. 10-12):

   The forty year sentence given at Kadesh (referred to in Hebrews 3:9,17 and Psalm 95:10) followed the rebellion reported in Numbers 14:20-35:

Discuss ways we fall to similar rebellions in our culture.

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“Numbers 14 records the event aptly described as the ‘rebellion on the day when your fathers put me to the test.’ Kadesh became the symbol of Israel’s disobedience, the place where God’s past redemption was forgotten and where the divine promise no longer impelled the people.”

William Lane

**Warning #2:** You shall not grumble, rebel, or refuse to believe God’s Word.

“The Holy Spirit is saying to everyone who hears the gospel, “Respond to Jesus while your heart is still warmed and softened by His truth, while it is still sensitive. Respond to His sweet love and His call of grace. Wait too long and you will find your heart getting hard and insensitive. The decision will become harder and harder as your heart becomes harder and harder. If you continue to follow your evil, unbelieving heart rather than the gospel, you will forever depart from the living God, and forfeit salvation rest.”

John MacArthur
“We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, 10 nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.”

1 Corinthians 9:10-11

“Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, ‘Give us water to drink.’ And Moses said to them, ‘Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?’ But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, ‘Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?’ ...7 And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, ‘Is the LORD among us or not?’”

Exodus 17:2-3, 7

“For the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth. You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.”

Deuteronomy 6:15-16

“And the people complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes, and when the LORD heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp.”

Numbers 11:1

“And they said, ‘Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?’ And the LORD heard it ... 10 When the cloud removed from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, like snow. And Aaron turned toward Miriam, and behold, she was leprous.”

Numbers 12:2, 10

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**Further Personal Study**

1. Hebrews 3:12 and Hebrews 3:19 conveys one of the major warnings in the Book of Hebrews. Write it out in your own words: ________________________________________________________________

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   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

   1 Corinthians 9:10-11

2. Another passage where the wilderness-generation is used as an example to warn us is 1 Corinthians 10:1-14. In 1 Corinthians 10:11, why did those things happen to the Israelites? ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

   What terrible sin did the Israelites commit against God in Hebrews 3:9 and 1 Corinthians 10:9? ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

   Hebrews 3:16 talks about those who heard and rebelled. How does 1 Corinthians 10:10 describe their rebellion? ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

3. The following passages convict us regarding the grave sins of testing God, grumbling, or complaining. Write down the Israelites’ sin, and how the Lord responded. Then confess your own sin of testing, grumbling, or complaining.

   Exodus 17:2-3, 7 and Deuteronomy 6:15-16 ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

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   Numbers 11:1 ________________________________________________________________

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   Numbers 12:2 and 10 ________________________________________________________________

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   ________________________________________________________________
Wilderness Messiah: Shadows to Reality

“For we have become companions of the Messiah if we hold firmly to the end the reality that we had at the start.”
Hebrews 3:14 (Holman)

“For they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.” 1 Corinthians 10:4 (Holman)

The shadow? A wilderness wandering with PROMISED REST.

• For the wilderness generation:


Unrest. Daily tent uprooting, only to be pitched in eyesight of last night’s spot. Always the same sandy horizon, sandstorms of perpetual discomfort, mirages of oasis that only fade into the desert air. Aimless wandering.

And with every complaint, every seeking after greater health and prosperity, every forsaking of the Rock of Living Water—the Lord was provoked. His anger burned against them.

He commanded Moses to strike a rock, and water flowed. But the rock striking power got to Moses’ head. Next time, when God had said that words would bring water, Moses struck again. His punishment? Same as the other rebels—he would never experience the promised rest.

The Real? A lifetime longing for ETERNAL REST.

• For our generation:

We wait. Our hearts stray in affection. We don’t know our Bibles; we don’t know God. We murmur and complain because we don’t believe that life is hard, but God is good.

And with every complaint, every praying less, every avoidance of enjoying His people, every fungus infection of earthly desires and comforts—the Lord is provoked.

But wait! The promise of Hebrews 3:14! If we cling to Christ, if we hold fast to the end, we have satisfying REALITY. We eagerly expect to experience the promised rest.

Some folks think the phrase “if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end” means it’s possible to lose salvation. However, in John 10:27-29 Jesus clearly says that’s not possible, and many other passages affirm this truth (John 6:39-40, Ephesians 1:4, Romans 8:35-39, Philippians 1:6, 1 Peter 1:3-5). The correct way to read Hebrews 3:14 is to emphasize both the words “FOR” and “IF.” “FOR we have come to share in Christ, IF indeed we hold fast our original confidence firm to the end.” Those whose hearts become hardened, who do not hold fast, may have appeared outwardly to have shared in Christ. But the truth is that they do not and never did genuinely share in Christ. They may have appeared to walk the walk and talk the talk, but this one thing evidences that it wasn’t real—they fell away. Genuine believers persevere to become who they are. So it’s a stern warning to examine ourselves carefully for evidence. Ask yourself, “Am I persevering in grateful faith and God-glorifying obedience?” It’s also a fabulous promise that if we hold firm to the end, we belong to Jesus. And we will spend forever in His promised rest.

Turn back to Jesus and stay! Pull others back! Now! While it’s still today!

“Lament”

Weep, weep for those
Who do the work of the Lord
With a high look
And a proud heart.
Their voice is lifted up
In the streets, and their cry is heard.
The bruised reed they break
By their great strength, and the smoking flax
They trample.

Weep not for the quenched
(For their God will hear their cry
And the Lord will come to save them)
But weep, weep for the quenchers

For when the Day of the Lord
Is come, and the vales sing
And the hills clap their hands
And the light shines

Then their eyes shall be opened
On a waste place,
Smouldering,
The smoke of the flax bitter
In their nostrils,
Their feet pierced
By broken reed-stems…
Wood, hay, and stubble,
And no grass springing,
And all the birds flown.

Weep, weep for those
Who have made a desert
In the name of the Lord.

Evangeline Paterson

37
They’d been thinking of giving up on Jesus. Know anyone in that boat? Sure. So, pay attention to how Hebrews persuades them (and us) to be faithful to Jesus.

In the first two paragraphs on the left, the persuasions to faithfulness crescendo into the underlined quotes. The highlight of paragraph one is Psalm 95:11, and of paragraph two is Psalm 95:7b-8a (note that the Word of God is the source of persuasion). Both are familiar quotes that had already been cited in Hebrews 3 where they pointed to death in the desert. Here, they reveal the perilous punishment earned by unfaithful, hardened hearts—eternal unrest.

Notice how the first paragraph begins and ends with the dangling carrot of promised rest. It seems that, among the Hebrews, the attitude toward God’s word wasn’t what it should have been, because the writer urges fear, lest they suffer the horror of not entering God’s promised rest. God modeled this rest for us immediately after creating the world (Genesis 2:2-3). Rest is the promised reward for faithfulness to God’s Word. No shadow rest this, but the deeply-longed-for, satisfying rest that originates from the foundation of the world.

Here on earth, during busy, rushing, weariness, Jesus calls, “Come unto Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest... take up My yoke and learn from Me because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest...”

Then in heaven, where there is never dark or dusk, God promises an eternal day of rest, an endless festive celebration.

Notice how this text’s second paragraph begins and ends with disobedience. That word is not used elsewhere in Hebrews, only here, in the context of rest. Disobedience is the danger that denies us rest. We know Joshua led Israel into the promised land where they lived in disobedience, suffered the sharp sword of enemies, and lost their rest. And though we have a seventh day on which to rest, we equally face the real possibility that disobedience will negate our rest. God’s all seeing-eye uses the sharp sword of His Word to reveal disobedience and to persuade obedience. In the old covenant, God dealt with those who broke the law, those who ignored His Word. In the new covenant, God deals with our thoughts and intentions, piercing those who ignore His Word. Listen up! If we disobey or ignore God’s Word, and instead regard the counsel of human philosophies and psychologies, we can expect God to deal with us.

Thankfully, Hebrews 4:14 reminds us of our hope—the great high priest who intercedes for us in the heavenly realm, the place of our promised rest. Jesus Christ is the only way that God’s people will celebrate rest, in Heaven.

So in Hebrews 4, we realize an astounding and personal reason Jesus is superior. Though we disobey, and though God’s Word exposes our sinful thoughts and intentions, Jesus our high priest guarantees that every believer who holds fast the confession will enter the promised rest in heaven.
Jesus Messiah is Living and Powerful:
Therefore, Hebrews refutes the shadow picture of attaining rest by obeying the law. Rather, Hebrews reveals that rest in heaven is attained by faith in the living and powerful Word of God.

Discussion Questions

1. **Unity** In Hebrews 4:2, we read that “the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.” Taken in context with Hebrews 4:11, what is it vital for us to listen to?

   How is Jesus described in Revelation 1:16 and Revelation 19:15?

   We gain a sense for why Hebrews 4:1 says “let us fear” if we aren’t united. Read Jesus’ prayer in John 17:21, and discuss ways to warn those who are unfaithful to the unity God’s Word requires of His people.

2. **Giving Up Control** Hebrews 4, together with Christ’s call in Matthew 11:28-30, makes it abundantly clear that Christians rest in God’s sovereignty. The opposite of resting is grasping at control. Discuss specifically what you are tempted to try to control, so that instead of being characterized by rest you would better be described as fretful, worried, stressed, downtrodden, discouraged, or anxious:

3. **Contentment** In the margin to the right, F. B. Meyers points out that one of the rests Christians are invited to share is the rest of a contented heart. What specific discontentments can stop us from resting in God?

4. **Word** Discuss the differences it makes to you that the Word of God is:

   - Living (John 6:63)
   - Active, energizing (1 Thessalonians 2:13)
   - Sharp and piercing (Acts 2:37-38)
   - Dividing and discerning (Colossians 1:9-10)

God’s rest “was the rest of a finished work...It was equivalent to saying, ‘This creation of mine is all that I meant it to be, finished and perfect. I am perfectly satisfied; there is nothing more to be done; it is all very good.’

This then, is the rest we are invited to share. We are not summoned to the heavy slumber which follows over-taxing toil, nor to inaction or indolence; but to the rest which is possible amid swift activity and strenuous work; to perfect equilibrium between the outgoings and incomings of this life; to a contented heart; to peace that passeth all understanding; to the repose of the will in the will of God; and to the calm of the depths of the nature which are undisturbed by the hurricanes which sweep the surface, and urge forward the mighty waves.

This rest is holding out both its hands to the weary souls of men throughout the ages, offering its shelter as a harbour from the storms of life.”

F. B. Meyers
**Further Personal Study**

1. In Numbers 14:43-45, what happened to those who tried to enter Canaan after God declared they would not? ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________

   The Israelites lost their “promised rest” because of their unfaithfulness, and their attempt to thwart God’s word resulted in the sharp sword of the Amalekites and Canaanites. In Hebrews 4:11, the Word of God is described as a lethal weapon that is more alarming than any double-edged sword because it lays bare our inmost beings. When we are unfaithful to it, we are defenseless before His piercing gaze.

2. In Genesis 16:13, what did the runaway slave girl, who had until then only seen statutes of gods with far-away, stony stares, learn about God? ________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________

3. In 2 Chronicles 16:9, what do we learn about God’s piercing gaze? _______
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   How does 2 Chronicles 16:9 compare with Hebrews 4:12-13? ______
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
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   ________________________________________

4. How do the following verses promise God’s rest to the obedient Christian?
   Psalm 23:2 ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   John 14:27 ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   John 16:33 ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   1 Peter 5:7 ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
Living & Powerful: Shadows to Reality

Multiple shadows and realities flit and shine through this passage. One reality bursts out so unbelievably bold and brilliant that we surely don’t see it or believe it with earthly eyes. Glory. Eternal rest, the reality that was foreshadowed by Canaan.

The Israelites longed for a home, a place to rest. They longed for it during their desert wanderings. Because of disbelief, they lost access to it for the forty years until the last of them died. All that while, they longed for their children to have it. Which they did, for a time. Then their children disobeyed and were taken into captivity. Those days of captivity didn’t feel like shadows to them, although it was a shadow rest that they’d lost. So the shadows brought to light by Christ aren’t elusive and unable to grasp. It’s just that there’s something better and real available when we leave the shadows and place faith fully in Christ.

Take the books of Isaiah through Malachi. They wouldn’t be in our Bibles if God weren’t calling, begging, pleading, and commanding His people to obedience. Hebrews 4 connects disobedience with losing rest; therefore, it connects obedience to obtaining rest. There are obediences that gain some levels of rest, even in the shadows. In the margin to the right, you see the various shadow-rests and the real rest mentioned in Hebrews 4:1-13.

You sure do lose rest by disobedience. Not that obedience can ever earn rest; whether peace on earth or glory in heaven. No, such perfect obedience is humanly impossible to drum up. Jesus the Perfect obeyed that way, and so God sent Him to the cross as our bridge into real rest.

Real rest differs completely from the fake rests with which we deceive ourselves. Singles check websites, looking for perfect relationships. Barren visit clinics, looking for implanted cells. Mediocre strive incessantly, looking for success. Singers move to Nashville looking for big breaks. Beware fake rests.

In Psalm 137, fake rests had replaced their beautiful shadow rest. Listen.

By the rivers of Babylon, they sat down and wept when they remembered the rest they’d known in Zion. There they hung up their instruments on the poplar trees, because their captors asked for songs and their tormentors asked for mirth, saying, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion, that place of shadow rest.” And they asked (a question we need to ask), “How can we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign fake-rest land?”

Oh, shadow and reality, if we forget about you and seek false rests, silence us completely. May our right hands forget their skill. May our tongues stick to the roofs of our mouths. Oh, remember the great reality. Exalt heaven as our greatest joy!

And, remember, remember how our disobedience removed us from the beautiful shadows. Remember when they came in and said, “Destroy the shadows! Down to the foundation. Let them have a fake rest, a Babylon.”

Well, those who are truly happy are those who destroy the fake rests and dash every little variation of the fake rest against the rocks!

If you’ve chased fake rests, let the horror of fake-rest captivity lean you into real rest.

Rich Mullins said: “Closeness to God is not about feelings, closeness to God is about obedience… I don’t know how you feel close to God… I know if we obey occasionally the feeling follows, not always, but occasionally. I know that if we disobey we don’t have a shot at it.”

Once a young man asked Rich how to become a successful singer. Rich told him to go read Psalm 137. “Set your sights on Heaven, on your Jerusalem,” he said, “not Nashville.”

A word about the mini-shadow—the seventh day of rest. It’s one of the shadows we can enjoy here on earth. Determine that on Sundays you will intentionally focus on Jesus Christ. A day to worship Him, to serve Him, to learn from Him, to encourage His body, to snuggle tighter into the yoke with Him. Try it. The result is not a shadow; it’s real rest.
Why did Jesus leave the awesome glories of heaven? Why did He clothe Himself with the sick frailties of humanity? Hebrews 2:17 teaches it was in order to become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God. And that it was necessary.

Necessary for whom? For us. He passed through the heavens until He hit our reeking, rebellious earth where He suffered perfectly to attain the unique and unsharable real high priest position. And today, He’s not sitting all aloof and attitudinal in His exalted status. No, Jesus is not incapable of understanding. Let the double negative drive the point home—He gets it! Whether it’s accusation or abandonment, helplessness or hostility, persecution or rejection, suffering or shame, trial or temptation—He knows exactly how you feel!

Church, are we weary and discouraged? Our Head knows. He already endured it all—every agony, every slander, every reviling, every temptation. Our real high priest leads us with sinless empathy.

The Hebrews loved having a priest in flesh. Since Moses, every generation enjoyed priests who were sons of his brother Aaron. They wore unique, elaborate clothing; ate unique, consecrated food; lived in unique, special towns. These prestigious things identified men set apart to take care of spiritual concerns. What a relief that someone could handle so serious a matter. Surely the specialness of human priests brought a sense of security. Indeed, the Hebrews were having trouble accepting a faith devoid of living priests, stripped of a temple, barren of rituals.

But they were chasing a shadow, a fake, now that reality had shown up. The human priests bore none of the credentials for real high priesthood: Sonship with God, preeminence over angels, superiority to Moses (and Aaron, and Aaron’s sons), and exclusive ability to give promised eternal rest. In this chapter and chapters to follow, reality takes claim of shadow as Jesus Christ is proven to be the ONLY high priest.

As the real high priest, Christ can and does invite us into the very presence of God. What ticket is needed to bring us there? Men wearing special clothing? Special foods? Rituals? No. Only need. Our need. Our best days are those when we recognize our destitution and wretchedness, as long as we storm the throne of grace with our need. Our worst days are those when we feel the most capable, wealthy, or wise.

“We are the safest and happiest when we feel our needs most keenly.” That’s when we cling with bold desperation to the throne of grace. That’s when we confess our dependence, and that’s when God meets our two great needs: mercy and grace.

• Mercy. Without God’s mercy, we’re all in hell. Mercy provides access to all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies.

• Grace. With God’s grace, we all have help. Help to suffer well. Help to be still long. Help to wait quiet. Help to overcome fully. Help to forgive freely. Help to rejoice truly. Help to love. Help to live. Help to die.
Jesus Christ is the High Priest: Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows, such as human high priests. Instead, faith exalts the heavenly High Priest.

Discussion Questions

1. **Sympathetic** Hebrews 4:15 says that Jesus is able to sympathize with our weakness. Does this mean that He tolerates our sin? Discuss His sympathy in light of Hebrews 4:13. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. **Throne of Grace** The term ‘throne of grace’ expresses two opposing realities. Thrones in the ancient world represented a fearful place of sovereign authority and judgment where a lowered scepter meant death. Grace, on the other hand, represents welcoming mercy, sympathy, and help. How does removing reverent fear of God from our preaching and thinking lessen gratitude that He accepts broken sinners who seek His mercy (Acts 9:31, Matthew 5:3, Luke 18:13-14). ________________________
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3. **Promise** Up to Hebrews 4:16, the writer of Hebrews has been motivating people to persevere in Christ mainly through negative motivation. Staying with Christ means avoiding wrath, judgment, perishing, and hell. Now the motivation becomes positive, with the promise of Christ the high priest and a throne where mercy and grace are provided for need. Did you accept Christ based on negative or positive motivation? _________

Discuss ways to use both negative and positive truths in spreading the gospel and encouraging people to persevere: ________________________
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4. **Rest** In Hebrews 4:11 we read, “let us strive to enter that rest.” How can we strive for rest? It seems to be an oxymoron, until Hebrews 4:14 explains how. “Let us hold fast our confession.” Persevere. Hang in there. Can you see how stick-to-it-ivity brings rest? Sure, it’s exhausting to jump from one thing to the next without finishing anything. Now in Hebrews 4:16 we read, “let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace.” Discuss the importance of this third “let us” when considered in context with the first two instances of “let us.” ________________________
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“It is not the utterance of words, nor is it alone the feeling of desires, but it is the advance of desires to God, the spiritual approach of our nature towards the Lord our God. True prayer is not a mere mental exercise, nor a vocal performance, but it is deeper far than that— it is spiritual communion with the Creator of heaven and earth. God is a Spirit unseen of mortal eye and only to be perceived by the inner man; our spirit within us begotten by the Holy Ghost at our regeneration.

Prayer is a spiritual business from beginning to end, and its aim and object end not with man, but reach to God Himself.”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon,

“How to approach the Throne of Grace:
• Genuinely
• Humbly
• Submissively
• Expectantly
• Confidently, with boldness

What to expect at the Throne of Grace:
• Mercy
• Grace
• Help
• Compassion
• Rule

“First the apostle terrifies us, then he comforts us.”

Martin Luther
“Come, Ye Disconsolate”

Come, ye disconsolate, where’er ye languish,
Come, at the shrine of God fervently kneel;
Here bring your wounded hearts; here tell your anguish;
Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.

Joy of the desolate, light of the straying,
Hope when all others die, fadeless and pure;
Here speaks the Comforter, in God’s name saying,
“Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot cure.”

Come, ask the infidel what boon he brings us,
What charm for aching hearts he can reveal,
Sweet is that heavenly promise Hope sings us—
“Earth has no sorrow that God cannot heal.”

Thomas Moore, 1816

Further Personal Study

1. Read Exodus 28:1, Numbers 3:10, and 18:1. What were the requirements for becoming an OT priest?

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________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

2. The OT high priest was governed by strict regulations, yet he remained in need of atonement. Read Leviticus 16:6, 11, 15-17, and list the three people or people groups for whom he was required to make atonement.

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3. The Levitical priesthood provided a representation of the reality of Jesus Christ, but only in obedience to God’s commands. Read Judges 17 and 18, which relates a curious narrative that reveals human craving for a priest. In Judges 17:13, what did Micah think about his new priest?

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________________________________________________________________
Why would Micah’s priest not be pleasing to God?
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In our culture, how are we tempted to combine idolatry and Christianity, like Micah or the 600 Danites?
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4. Christ’s blood provides direct access to the throne of grace, without any intervention by a human priest. What does 1 Peter 1:2 teach about the sprinkling of blood, and what role does that play in our direct access to God?

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What does 1 John 2:1 teach about Christ’s advocating for us, and what role do you think that plays in our direct access to God?
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________________________________________________________________

“Come, Ye Disconsolate”

Come, ye disconsolate, where’er ye languish,
Come, at the shrine of God fervently kneel;
Here bring your wounded hearts; here tell your anguish;
Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.
High Priest: Shadows to Reality

Does Jesus truly understand? Could He have fully shared the condition of humanity without participating in sin? Hebrews clearly states that He experienced temptation as we do, but endured it without falling. By implication, this means He endured more temptation than any of us. We give in. Jesus didn’t. Satan badgered Him and tormented Him without relief, but He never gave in. It was our horrific sin He carried all the way to hell; not His.

Therefore, He is the real and only high priest.

The shadow high priest had to atone for himself before God would even consider admitting him into His presence in the Holiest of Holies. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, he was given opportunity to offer sacrifices for sin. If accepted, he could approach the altar to make the shadow atonement that allowed mercy to flow to the people.

The real high priest had no sin. Therefore, He had no need to atone his own sins.

The expression in Hebrews 4:15 “in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” means just what it appears to at first glance. In Hebrews 7:27, the writer says Jesus never had to offer sacrifice for his own sins. In Hebrews 9:14, we learn that Jesus offered Himself unblemished to God.

The shadow high priest alone gained access to God’s presence for others. Once a year, only he could attempt to enter the Holy Place that housed the shadow mercy-seat. If he were accepted, he alone entered.

The real high priest provides us with direct access to the “throne of grace,” the place of God’s presence. By His sacrifice, God accepts and gives grace to everyone who seeks mercy, at any time.

Hebrews 5:1-4 provides a list of the qualifications of human “shadow” priests, prior to the realization of the priesthood in Christ:

- He had to be human (Hebrews 5:1).
- He offered gifts and sacrifices to resolve the problem of sin, as a fore-shadowing of Christ’s offering (Hebrews 5:1).
- His methodology was to “deal gently” with the ignorant and straying, from a sense of his own sinful weakness (Hebrews 5:2-3).
- He had to be appointed by God. No one could make himself a priest, and no person could make priests (Hebrews 5:4).

In Hebrews 5:5-10, we are shown how Jesus perfectly and fully met, and fulfilled, these qualifications.

- Christ’s time on earth was the “days of His flesh” (Hebrews 5:1). Although divine, He was also fully human.
- Christ offered the gift of Himself (Hebrews 2:17, 8:3).
- Christ’s agony on the cross results in empathic gentleness as He fulfills His high priestly duties (Hebrews 4:15-16).
- Christ was appointed by God (Hebrews 5:5).

There are no longer formal priests, but rather every believer under Christ’s high priesthood is a priest. The believer’s priesthood requires Christians to:

- Offer our lives as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2).
- Offer up spiritual sacrifices of praise and good works (Hebrews 13:15-16).
- Live as a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5).
He tottered and doddered about, all sweaty and cumbered by the twelve-stone ephod. That morning, extra hands had helped him fasten the onyx clasp on his shoulders. Golden bells jingled, and pomegranate tassels swung. The shoulder-to-toe linens of blue, purple, scarlet contrasted with the white turban heavied by a gold-plated sign that read “Holy to the Lord.” Why? Might the people forget? Or might the Hebrew priest himself forget? (Exodus 28:6-12, 28:36-38, 39:2-7, 30-31)

There was an ideal for the sons of Aaron who served as priests; being blonde or blemished excluded them (Leviticus 21:9-23). We know at least one priest was fat—Eli. And certainly, when a dark-haired priest-husband walked in the door and hugged his wife after a day of judging and worshiping, he smelled like an animal-slaying butcher and an incense-burning hippie.

The bumbling dwarves and commanding elves of Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings Trilogy come to mind. Doomed by evil Orcs an ax clang behind, the dwarves halt panting before shining elven-land safety. A deep fast-running river guards the entrance. The dwarves fidget and fuss frantically, fearfully, desperately. But at the Elven-King’s last-minute command, the river roars to life and separates. In the nick of time, the dwarves totter across the dry river-bed. The elven-river swells behind them into white-crested, foaming wildness that rushes and lunges reckless as a herd of wild stallions, until the Orcs are buried in its fierce reality.

The high priest of whom God said, “You are my Son,” is of a different order. As different as flabby over-dressed dwarves fumbling for safety from other-worldly elven-folk with unpredictable, unstoppable, rescuing power. As different as a tottering ephod-wearer from a chiseled Melchizedek.

Perhaps we miss the contrast because of Christ’s loud cries and tears and suffering. The real high priest, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, had long anticipated His supreme agony. His descending into man’s sin. His bearing our curse. His rejection by God. You see Christ had watched as conscience-stricken sinners carried yet another lamb to its temple-slaughter, knowing who would be the last slaughtered Lamb. He’d seen each lone scape-goat wander abandoned into the wilderness, and known He’d be the last. Perhaps He cringed as the shadow-priests dipped a pigeon into water crimsoned by its mate’s blood. For thousands of years, these had fore-shadowed the hour He would bear the sin-weight of the whole world. No wonder He sweated blood.

A last minute mini-rescue would have been simple. But until Christ’s obedient suffering was perfectly complete, He held back shimmering myriads of ready angels. As long as He breathed earth’s air, He quieted its quake. Until His eyelids closed in death, He stayed the dark. But the very instant He completed His great obedience; the earth quaked, darkness fell, and angels began their endless song of adoration. And God, who heard every loud cry and tear, exalted Him to the Name above all other names, the High Priest over all. The grand rescue, far greater than a mini-angelic-rescue, brings many sons to glory. Christ is Mediator above mediators.

Jesus Christ’s obedient suffering is the perfect triumph over death. It is the brilliant, dazzling reality that ends shadows. When the order of Melchizedek swelled into the ferocity of its full work, the need for shadows was finished. Indeed, they had only been enacted to anticipate and pre-symbolize that faultless and final work. Earthly priests may still totter and dodder about, but they do so with utter purposelessness. The writer of Hebrews exposes this truth: Faith that includes ritualistic earthly priests is not faith in God, now that God has sent the real, Eternal Priest.
Jesus Messiah is the Eternal Priest: Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows, such as earthly appointed priests. Rather, faith exalts the High Priest appointed after Melchizedek’s order.

Discussion Questions

1. Christ’s Humility Discuss why the world’s teaching, regarding the necessity of building self-esteem, is opposed to Scripture’s teaching regarding growing in Christ-likeness (Hebrews 5:5, Philippians 2:6-8):

2. Our Pride Can you think of any sin, which at its’ root, is something other than pride? Discuss ways to grow in true humility.

3. Prayer About Trials Hebrews 5:7 tells us about the prayers Jesus offered up as He was about to face death. Discuss what it means that “He was heard because of His reverence” and the implications of that statement on our prayer lives.

4. Emotions In this passage, we have a glimpse of Jesus exhibiting His emotions. Although He cried loudly with tears, we are told that He was reverent. How can we evaluate whether our emotions in any situation have overcome reverence?

Arise, My Soul, Arise

Arise, my soul, arise, shake off your guilty fears; The bleeding sacrifice, in my behalf appears; Before the throne my Surety stands, My name is written on His hands.

He ever lives above, for me to intercede; His all redeeming love, His precious blood, to plead; His blood atoned for every race, And sprinkles now the throne of grace.

Five bleeding wounds He bears; received on Calvary; They pour effectual prayers; they strongly plead for me: “Forgive him, O forgive,” they cry, “Nor let that ransomed sinner die!”

The Father hears Him pray, His dear anointed One; He cannot turn away the presence of His Son; The Spirit answers to the blood, And tells me I am born of God.

My God is reconciled; His pardoning voice I hear; He owns me for His child; I can no longer fear With confidence I now draw nigh, And “Father, Abba, Father,” cry.

Charles Wesley
Further Personal Study

Hebrews 5 informs us that Jesus Christ is the real high priest, the perfect fulfillment of what had been portrayed by OT shadow priests. Hebrews 5:1-4 gave us four credentials of on OT priest. Hebrews 5:5-10 give us Christ’s credentials as high priest, carefully making the distinction that He is of a different order.

1. An OT priest was human (5:1)–How does the first phrase of Hebrews 5:7 describe Jesus? ____________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________

2. An OT priest was appointed by God (5:4)–Hebrews 5:5 explains how Jesus fulfills this requirement. How is this divine appointment described in Psalm 2:7? And how is it linked with Psalm 110:4? ____________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________

3. An OT priest offered gifts and sacrifices for sin (5:1)–Jesus offering of Himself as the sacrifice for sin is a major theme of Hebrews. How do Hebrews 2:17 and Hebrews 8:3 explain that Jesus met this qualification? ________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________

4. An OT priest felt his own weakness and sin (5:2-3)–Jesus fulfillment of this qualification is described in Hebrews 5:7-8. These verses explain how a sinless person could feeling his own weakness and sin. Christ faced the experience of the cross with deep unrest in his heart. Read Matthew 26:39-44 and record His cries to the Father that evidence the desperate emotional misery that sin produces - a sense of hopeless shame, discouragement, defeat, despair. ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________

   The very thought of being forsaken by the Father crushed Christ, like grapes crushed in a wine-press. He felt the shame and stain of sin to a far greater degree than we ever need to, in bearing the full brunt of wrath for the world’s sin. Beyond any earthly priest, Christ experienced our sins as His own, and is therefore able to deal gently with sinners. Describe your own experience of coming to Christ with shame over your personal defilement, and how gently He has dealt with you. ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
Eternal Priest: Shadows to Reality

As we’ve studied, Hebrews 5:1-10 lists four similarities between OT earthly shadow priests and Christ the real eternal priest. Flashing at us between and at the end of the comparisons is the phrase “priest in the order of Melchizedek.” We will hear this phrase five times. It is important. The “order of Melchizedek” shows us how we need to understand Christ’s priesthood, which is the subject of the Book of Hebrews for this and the next four chapters.

• Jesus is a different sort, or kind, of priest—“in the order of Melchizedek.”
• Jesus meets (and far exceeds) the qualifications of an OT priest, but he is not the same manner of a priest as the OT priests.
• Jesus is more like Melchizedek than Aaron.

Hebrews 7 will argue at length regarding how God patterned Christ’s priesthood after the priestly order of Melchizedek. But here the writer sets foundational facts in place, and one of them is that Christ is not an Aaronic shadow priest. Since Christ’s real and everlasting priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek, let’s consider a few introductory facts about Melchizedek:

• Melchizadek (melech) means king. Melchizedek was the King of Salem (“Salem” originates in the word “shalom” that means peace)(Genesis 14:18a).
• Zedek means righteousness. Melchizedek was king-priest of righteousness. His priesthood was to the Most High God. His ancestry, however, is completely unknown (Genesis14:18b).
• Melchizedek predates Aaron and the Levitical priests. Abraham, who was ministered to by Melchizadek, was Aaron’s great-great-great grandfather.
• Melchizedek’s priesthood is unending, unlike Aaron’s priesthood, which ended with the Temple’s destruction in A.D. 70 (Hebrews 7:3). Some religions carry forth vestiges of Aaron’s shadow priesthood, in cultish defiance of Christ’s priesthood and the New Covenant that replaced the old.

Christ learned obedience by what He suffered (Hebrews 5:8). That brutal cross made Him both the sin offering and the high priest who offers the sin offering. That’s something He and only He could accomplish. It’s a work so astoundingly other-worldly that we see immediately, yes, it abolishes and does away with the role of earthly shadow priests.

No more representative scapegoats are sent out to bear our sins. Christ Himself has borne our iniquities (Isaiah 53:12). Shadow priests no longer listen and respond representatively to our sin-sorrows. Christ Himself helps, cleanses, and forgives (Isaiah 53:4-5, Hebrews 4:16, 1 John 1:9). The veil no longer separates us from the Shekinah Glory. The temple and all its shadows have been razed, and the Real temple raised (Matthew 27:51). Christ in us, glory to be revealed at His return (Colossians 3:4).

Christ, the perfect sacrifice—offered up. Christ, the perfect high priest—established. In the unending order of Melchizedek, Christ entirely supersedes earthly high priests. No earthly priest can ever again offer mercy or atonement. Out of Christ’s unparalleled experience of anguish, comes unparalleled satisfaction. Christ Himself justifies the many.

And for those saved by Jesus Christ the high priest? Obedient, loving, mutual, priestly assistance to one another (1 John 3:16-4:12, 1 Peter 2:5-9), but not adherence to present-day cults hanging on to shadow priesthoods. Our high priest is complete, perfect, eternal. It is unfathomable that this indescribable high priest invites us into relationship with Him. At the same time, it is completely understandable that He will not share His position.

“Until one gains an adequate sense of the overwhelming majesty of the thrice-holy God and simultaneously a true sense of one’s sinfulness and unworthiness (as Isaiah did [Isaiah 6:1-5]), one is not in a position to understand or appreciate the importance of priests and their work [in the OT]. Our failure on these two points probably is what makes the idea of priesthood unfamiliar and without apparent significance or meaning.”

Donald Hagner

“Oh the trouble God has taken to win our poor hearts to trust and confidence. Let us accept this revelation, and have our hearts so filled with the sympathy and gentleness of Jesus, that in every perplexity, our first thought shall always be the certainty and the blessedness of His compassion and help...Do learn the lesson: the whole priesthood of Jesus has but this one subject, to lead thee boldly and joyfully to draw near to God, and live in fellowship with Him. With this view trust Jesus as definitely with thy ignorance and weakness as with thy sin.”

Andrew Murray
The colorful, unusual Hebrew word “nothros” begins and ends this passage. It means dull of hearing, lazy, sluggish, no push. It’s used only here in the entire Bible. The author catches our attention with it. The stern warning, “Don’t be lazy,” envelopes or frames a well-organized lesson, one that we all need take to heart.

They hadn’t started out dull and lazy. At one time they’d been eager and passionate. But apathy had set in. They’d lost their push. We might describe them as unmotivated. It wasn’t that they’d failed to reach faith and understanding. They obviously didn’t need education about simple concepts because, at one time, they’d matured beyond that point. But now they’d reverted to infancy, to a diet of milk. As a baby can’t eat solid food, the Hebrews had lost their grasp of right principles; they lost touch with tough truths.

Using the bite of irony tinged with sarcasm (Hebrews 5:11-12), the writer seeks to shock and shame the readers out of their regression. Awake to awareness! Acknowledge your calloused, lazy hearts! Live up to your maturity!

Were they to dismiss the fundamentals? Not at all! And neither are we. At our biblical counseling conferences, we offer a fundamental track. Each time we teach that material, it’s as comforting as walking into a cozy living room and closing the door to keep out a sub-zero, sleety blizzard. But the teaching is only beneficial because we push ourselves—even in the face of persecution—to obey its truths, to counsel it at our counseling center, and to teach it through conferences.

The Hebrew readers knew the basics of Christianity. Likely, they’d grown up in the church. Some of their parents may even have seen Jesus. But, in the face of persecution, they’d stopped moving forward obediently. The writer warns them to wake up, quit reverting to the OT shadow traditions, and grow loyal to Christ through the church.

Sad, isn’t it? Here in the middle of Hebrew’s grand and glorious explanation of Christ’s superiority as High Priest we see the tragedy of rejecting Him. Maybe the writer had a particular friend, or even his own child in mind. He certainly tucks a passionate plea between the two phrases “don’t be lazy.” Here’s an overview of the concise, well-structured appeal which calls them (and us) to endure:

- Biting irony and sarcasm wakes up, catches attention (5:11-14).
- Basic teaching reminds us of repentance and faith, which they had known in shadow form but was now to be embraced as the reality of Christ (6:1-2).
- Sorrow alerts to the great danger and harm of sitting under real truth and appearing to taste it, but then falling back into shadow traditions (6:4-8).
- Warm encouragement calls to evidence diligent, faithful, steadfast, and unwavering faith in the real truths about Jesus, through loving service toward those in the church (6:9-12).

Earlier, in Hebrews 5:8-9, we saw Jesus as both suffering and obedient. In order to mature in Christ, the suffering Hebrews would need hope-filled, persevering obedience.


Jesus Christ is Brighter: Hebrews teaches that shadows fade away before the reality of Christ. Faith perseveres to spiritual maturity.

Discussion Questions

1. **Dullness** In Hebrews 6:11 and 12, we read about dullness, laziness, or unmotivated apathy regarding the gospel. This problem rears its ugly head in our culture as well. Emotionalism gets people excited and stirred up - but when it wears out, sluggishness grows. Experience sounds like the real thing - but when truth counters it, rebellion grows. Discuss how emotionalism and experience foster dullness rather than endurance: ______________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

2. **Christ Nearby** In Mark 1:15, now that the time had been fulfilled and the kingdom of God had come near, what response to the gospel does Jesus call for? ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

In Hebrews 6:1, what elementary message about the Messiah should not need to be re-established? ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

Discuss ways people who call themselves Christians in our culture balk against a life of repentance and faith: ______________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

3. **Profession of Salvation** Read Titus 1:16. How does this verse confirm the fact that salvation is not just a profession, or a response to an altar call? What other Scriptures affirm this reality? Discuss the dangers of emotional “altar calls:” ______________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

4. **Genuine Salvation** In Hebrews 6:10, we see the mark of genuine salvation. Discuss ways this truth is echoed in John 13:24, John 15:12-14, 1 John 3:14, and Galatians 6:9-10: ______________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________

“Repentance becomes impossible when a person has been fully exposed to the blessings of God’s people, but falls away through deliberate unbelief and denial of Christ. Therefore:

It is dangerous to traffic in Christian matters, but to reject or disobey the light that God has graciously given to us.

It is dangerous to profess faith in Christ but to have no evidence of fruit in your life.

It is dangerous not to practice frequent repentance. Turning from sin ought to be a chief identifying mark of the believer.

It is dangerous not to be concerned about this warning if your heart is callused, or to worry excessively about it if your heart is tender...True believers do not go back to their old way of life. True believers persevere in faith and obedience.”

Steven Cole

Warning #3:
You shall not be lazy, but rather endure to spiritual maturity.

51
Further Personal Study

Hebrews 6:1 echoes Christ’s description of the on-going lifestyle that characterizes those who move out of traditional shadows to the saving reality of Jesus Christ—a life of repentance from dead works and faith. Hebrews 6:2 goes on to describe two teachings that they had learned in shadow form, and two eternal realities that supersede OT shadows.

1. “Instruction about washing...” Leviticus and Numbers are full of teaching regarding ceremonial washing (Hebrews 9:10). In Matthew 3:13-15 and 28:19, what does Jesus model and teach, and how might this explain Hebrews 6:2a?

Hebrews 6:2a?

How does Ezekiel 36:25-26 compare with 1 John 1:9, and how might this explain Hebrews 6:2a?

2. “...the laying on of hands...” The context of Hebrews doesn’t seem to indicate the laying on of hands seen in Numbers 27:18-23, or Acts 5:18, 6:6, 8:17. Read Leviticus 1:4, 3:7-8, and 16:21, where laying hands on the animal taking the sacrificial place of the sinner symbolized identification with the sin. How might Hebrews 6:2b remind the reader to leave behind the shadow tradition (of laying hands on the animal) and grab hold of confession and forgiveness through Christ?

1 Corinthians 15:14

How does Jesus describe Himself in John 11:25?

3. “...the resurrection of the dead...” While this teaching doesn’t appear to have shadow imagery in the OT, what was Abraham’s belief about resurrection from the dead in Hebrews 11:17-19?

John 11:25

How does 1 Corinthians 15:14 reveal the importance of the reality of the resurrection of the dead?

4. “...eternal judgment...” Describe the consistent reality of eternal judgment as described in Ecclesiastes 12:14 and Matthew 25:46.

Acts 17:31

How does Acts 17:31 combine the realities of resurrection and judgment?
Christ is Brighter: Shadows to Reality

How far they’d come. So near to reality that they’d been able to taste it.

• Sipped the sweet delight of Christ’s living water. Taken pleasure in the beautiful suffering of Christ’s cross.


• Tasted the goodness of God’s Word. Enjoyed the sway of many a powerful sermon. Been charmed and interested, even used the Bible to support some of their ideas.

They’d heard, and at one time agreed with, preaching about repentance. They might have spoken loud and clear about faith in God. Some of their parents might have seen and heard and touched Jesus Christ.

However, they were reverting back to the comfort and perceived safety of the shadows. They had not embraced and been regenerated by Christ’s reality. If they had, the following would be true:

• Real delight in Christ would have ruined them for other affections, and would overshadow persecution, suffering and hardship.

• The Holy Spirit’s reality would have converted and changed them. Not just a gracious conviction that resulted in forsaking a few sins for a little while. A filling and constant daily empowering.

• They would be sold out for the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, trained by its teaching, changed by its rebuke and correction. They would correctly discern the OT shadows whose reality had now appeared. They would see how OT traditions foreshadowed the living Word.

• They would not fall away from the church, but would continue to lovingly serve their fellow saints, and imitate those who hold fast to the promises of Jesus Christ’s reality.

• They would persevere and endure to the end of their lives.

How fitting that in the middle of the book the writer inserts passionate, practical teaching that highlights ways to move from shadows to reality. Read this passage as a call to your own personal surrender to God’s work in you and to real, unwavering, enduring faith in Christ’s superior and sufficient sacrifice.

One former Roman Catholic explains it this way:

“I find [it] disturbing [to] see sincere people held captive by doctrines that are not found in the word of God but have their origin in the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. Decent people, pious people, have been led to believe that they can earn their way to heaven by being good, being charitable and being faithful to the Church. They see the path to heaven achieved by ticking boxes and keeping a spiritual scorecard.

Their thinking reflects more of a business model. For example, if you work hard and perform well in a company then you will qualify for a bonus...Yet the glorious doctrine of God’s amazing grace buries such a line of thinking forever...When their doctrines – particularly of purgatory and the mass – undermine the one sufficient sacrifice of Jesus, then we must speak up.”

―F. B. Meyers

“Those who are Christians persevere.”

Pastor Bob Froese
Why persevere? Why endure? Hebrews 6:13-20 provides a confident basis for the steadfastness that has been passionately pleaded for in previous chapters.

God is good for His promises. The high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ is utterly reliable. Take it to the bank. You have a lifetime guarantee.

The writer of Hebrews uses a familiar narrative of human history to prove his point. The readers knew God’s promise to Abraham. They knew God guaranteed it with an oath, a covenant. And they knew it came true, because they were its’-- children. Abraham is presented to them as a shadow picture (prototype) of faithful endurance while waiting for the fulfillment of God’s promises.

The language of Hebrews 6:13-18 sounds almost like forensic proof presented in the courtroom. Proving what? That God is reliable. Hear the force of the words:
- Promise
- Swear
- Surely
- Oath
- Final for confirmation
- Show more convincingly
- Unchangeable character
- Unchangeable things (irrevocable)
- Impossible for God to lie

The steadfast irrevocability of God’s promises stands in stark contrast to His people - fugitives who flee to Him for refuge. We are desperate for God’s deliverance. Desperadoes with an anchor! Anchors denote firm security, stability, assurance. Refugees held fast and secure.

Where is the promised anchor that grips us firm and unmovable in the storm-tossed sea of earthly suffering? The term “inner place behind the curtain” evoked a beautiful shadow picture in the minds of the Hebrews. The unapproachable earthly shadow veil had been torn useless and replaced with an accessible inner place complete with throne of grace that anchors us in time of need.

The conclusion of the passage we are studying here re-announces the writer’s intention to develop the subject of Melchizedek. Indeed, Melchizedek becomes the subject of the next chapter, Hebrews 7.

The fact is; every promise God ever made comes true. Likewise, the OT narrative shadows surely become real in Christ. So hold on brethren. Be strongly encouraged. You have a sure and steadfast bulwark who makes it impossible for you to veer from the steadfast hope. Jesus Christ is the anchor of your soul.

Promised Anchor

Hebrews 6:13-20

“For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, ‘Surely I will bless you and multiply you.’”

And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Hebrews 6:13-20
Jesus Messiah is the Promised Anchor:  
Therefore, Hebrews reveals that promises to Abraham, or to Israel, or to the Jewish nation, are shadows. Faith in Christ exalts His promises to mankind.

Discussion Questions

1. Waiting for promises In Romans 4:18-20, we read Abraham’s response while he waited for the promise of God. Discuss why a believer keeps waiting in hope although for many years promises may appear unfulfilled: ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

2. Trust Hebrews 6:18 admonishes us to hope in Christ our anchor, as does Jeremiah 17:7-8. In Jeremiah 17:5-6, we see the opposite. Discuss the problem of placing trust in people, and the description in Jeremiah 17:5-6 of those who allow themselves to be disappointed by people: ____ ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

3. Hold Fast and Test Hebrews 6:18 teaches us to “hold fast to the hope set before us.” 2 Corinthians 13:5 teaches us to “test yourselves to see if you are in the faith.” What does it look like to “hold fast” and “test?” How does this combination build hope? ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

4. Anchored The following passages, together with Hebrews 6:19-20, explain that Christ is already in the heavenly Holiest of Holy. How do these verses provide a secure anchor?
   Hebrews 1:3 ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   Colossians 3:1 ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   Ephesians 2:6-7 ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

A Christian man traveled to Russia in 1993. He felt conspicuous walking down the streets of Moscow, and could not figure out why. He wanted to blend in, but it was obvious that people knew he was not Russian. He asked the group of Russian educators with whom he was working whether it was his American clothes: jeans and a Chicago Bulls shirt. “No, it’s not your clothes;” they replied.
   “What is it, then?” he asked.

They huddled together and talked for several minutes. Then one, speaking for the group, answered politely, “It is your face.”
   “My face!” he laughed.
   “How does my face look different?”

They talked again and then one of the teachers quietly said, “You have hope.”

William Brown
Further Personal Study

1. It makes sense for Abraham to be set forth in this passage as the example of God’s absolute trustworthiness to fulfill His promises. After all, Abraham, the “Father of Israel,” waited faithfully for their fulfillment. Read Deuteronomy 7:7-8. Was Abraham chosen to this position for any merit of his own or because of the sovereign will of God?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

2. We think of covenant conditions as something where both parties hold up their end of the bargain. But when the covenant conditions were set between Abraham and God in Genesis 15:1-5, were there any conditions for Abraham to fulfill?

______________________________________________________________

On whose faithfulness did the fulfillment of the covenant depend?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

What was Abraham’s response in Genesis 15:6?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Let this wash hope over your soul: you can do nothing to save yourself. You must believe that God is good for His promises to save you through Jesus’ blood.

3. In His sovereignty, God chose Abraham’s offspring as His special people group. As we consider His purposes for them as shadows, we can often see how those shadows are fulfilled in reality. In Exodus 19:6, we learn that Israel was God’s kingdom of priests and a holy nation. What does God say about His church today in 1 Peter 2:9?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

In Psalm 144:15, we learn that God’s people showed how blessed, or happy they were because God was their Lord. What does Philippians 4:4 teach us for our role today?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________


_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Psalm 42 teaches us how to live beyond what we feel, in the reality of God’s promises. The words used in this psalm to describe the author’s feelings include: depressed, turmoil, forgotten, sorrow, oppression, taunted, crushed. The psalm also includes instruction for how to hope in God when such feelings overtake us. In Psalm 42:5b, and 11b, what are the instructions?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

In Psalm 42:8, what are the instructions for hoping in God?

_________________________________________________________________

In Psalm 42:9, what are the instructions for hoping in God?

_________________________________________________________________
Promised Anchor: Shadows to Reality

Hebrews 6:13-20 turns us toward the promises of God. We are talking about divine promises. Rich, lavished, unchangeable promises. Real promises. When God “blasts this cosmos to kingdom come” (in the words of Rich Mullins), all the things of earth will be merely shadows in the memories of true believers, those who endured, those who persevered.

Abraham received many promises from God. Land. Seed. And, blessing to all mankind through him.

The promises to Abraham extend to all believers. Romans 4:16 says: “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.” That right there is the promise in which the writer of Hebrews anchors us. The promise is:

- Immutable
- Eternal
- Permanent
- Sure
- Steadfast
- Unmovable, unchanging
- Unimpaired, unimpeded
- Word that outlasts heaven and earth, because it never passes away

Jesus Christ is the blessing to all mankind through the lineage of Abraham. Abraham saw a shadow of Christ the day a ram in the thicket meant he could drop the knife. And if he had disobeyed? Refused to give up his precious son? He’d never have seen that shadow of the hope that anchors every Christian.

The door that opened his eyes to see the reality of the shadow—the rescuing ram—was obedience. Not emotion. Not clinging to a person. Rather, obedience. In obedience the shadow ram that is fulfilled in Christ becomes our reality, the anchor of our souls.

When you are tempted to drift: Grip the anchor. Grapple with the anchor. Hold fast to the anchor. Hope.

When partial shadows are all that is visible to you, remember where Jesus went when He ascended and became invisible to the disciples. Although their longing eyes never forgot the sight, and they lived for the day of reconciliation with Him in Heaven, they forged ahead so that generations would know the real truth.

Remember that you have an anchor of hope in Jesus Christ. That anchor is beyond what you feel. Paul described it this way in Philippians 3:12, “I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.” When hope lulls, battle by laying hold, by hanging on, by taking refuge in God’s promises, fulfilled in Christ.

Persevere with faith in the reality of hope—Jesus Christ.

“Apprehend for yourselves this truth of God. Christ justifies believers. He is worthy of trust—trust Him—and He has justified you.

“I do not feel it,” says one. You do not need to feel it! It is a matter of believing, not feeling. Believe in Jesus and, because you are a believer, be assured that you are saved.

“But I thought I should feel,” says another. Yes, you shall feel enough by-and-by, but now there is a question between you and God. Is the Lord a liar or not? “He that believes not has made God a liar,” and, on the other hand, “He that believes on Him has set to his seal that God is true.”

Which of the two is it to be?”

Charles H. Spurgeon
Ah, here’s where history comes to life! And, here’s where the writer of Hebrews picks up from the tricky little sentence of Hebrews 5:11, “About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain…”

We wonder, why is Melchizedek not discussed elsewhere in the NT? Because he’s so hard to explain? We know the Galatians were being tempted to revert to traditions as well, and even though Paul becomes very stern with them, he does not raise the issue of Melchizedek. Perhaps those in this Hebrew audience were struggling to let go of an earthly priest.

Several times, we’ve read that Jesus is a priest “after the order of Melchizedek,” so we understand that Jesus is that type of priest. But what is the order of Melchizedek? OT priests who served in the Hebrew temple were “types” or shadows which were fulfilled in Christ, but Melchizedek is the real thing, not a shadow. Lane describes it this way:

“The writer’s use of Melchizedek is positive. An understanding of Christ’s eternal priesthood will be gained from a consideration of the select features of the perpetual priesthood of Melchizedek. He regards Melchizedek not as a type to be fulfilled, but as a witness to the higher priesthood he finds foreshadowed in the OT. Melchizedek serves as a precedent for a superior priesthood…Melchizedek is not a redeemer, and he performs no saving act. He is a historical figure who serves as a precedent for a [perpetual] priesthood not based on lineage or law.”

Regarding the superior priesthood of Melchizedek, we learn all we need to know from these three things:

• The meeting between Abraham and Melchizedek—vs. 1a and 10. Melchizedek, king of Salem, is Abraham’s superior. The priests of Israel (Levites) were seeds in Abraham at the time of their meeting, and so they bowed before Melchizedek.

• The blessing from Melchizedek to Abraham—vs. 1b and 6. Who is greater between the two? The more prominent one is Melchizedek.

• The tithe Abraham paid to Melchizedek—vs. 2 and 4-5. In Genesis 14: 17-20, Abram had just defeated Sodom’s enemy, Chedarloamer (say that fast three times). So Élam, King of Sodom, wanted to pay Abram. Abram refused, but instead gave Melchizedek, King of Salem, a tenth of everything. The writer of Hebrews argues that, in effect, all the OT shadow priests paid a tithe to Melchizedek, because their seed was in Abraham at that time.

We must draw an important conclusion. Melchizedek is only important for one reason. As a non-lineage, non-law, non-ending priest, He shows us the deficiency of shadow priests, and He points us to unique, perpetual, primary priesthood of the Son. Just as the shadow priests point to Christ, so does Melchizedek. He helps us understand that earthly priests ended with the tearing of the temple veil, and the job was handed over to Jesus.
Jesus Messiah is like Melchizedek: Therefore, Hebrews refutes Melchizedek as our king and priest. Rather, Hebrews exalts Christ as our king and priest.

Discussion Questions

1. Most Important  What does Philippians 3:8 explain as the most important thing? Discuss how adherence to traditional earthly priests would hinder the knowledge of Christ: ________________________________________________________________
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2. The Danger of Traditions  Matthew 7:21-23, we read the frightening verdict, “Depart from me, I never knew you.” Discuss the danger of traditions that could make us “feel” falsely as if we know Christ: ________________________________________________________________
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3. Righteousness, then Peace  In studying Hebrews 5, we noted the literal Hebrew meaning of Melchizedek, King of Salem as king of righteousness king of peace. Discuss how peace can follow the righteousness of Christ in us, but is impossible in our own righteousness: ________________________________________________________________
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4. Some Won’t Get It  We know from Hebrews 5:11, that not everyone would understand about Melchizedek. Jesus gave us a similar example when He revealed Himself to only a particular group of people in Matthew 13:10-17. Are there things you don’t understand about God? ________________________________________________________________
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When we encounter difficult topics, what does Romans 11:33-36 teach us as a right response? ________________________________________________________________
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“The author of Hebrews was trying to convince people that a religious system of sacrifices, rituals, and rules that had been in place for over 1,400 years had now been replaced by a better way. He focuses on the supremacy of Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of all that was written by Moses and the Jewish prophets. He introduces a theme that is only treated in the Book of Hebrews, that Jesus Christ is our high priest.

We will only appreciate our need for a high priest to the degree that we realize how holy and unapproachable God is and how sinful and defiled we are. When Isaiah saw the Lord...the prophet was undone (Isa. 6:1-5). It devastated him because immediately he became aware of how utterly sinful he was, in contrast to God in His awesome holiness.

The Jews knew that they could not saunter into the Holy of Holies to chat with God! Only the high priest could enter there, and only once a year, with blood. The Jewish people knew how desperately they needed a high priest if they were to approach God.

That entire old system was designed to point ahead to Jesus Christ, who superseded and fulfilled it. To go back to the old way would be to abandon God’s only way of entrance into His holy presence.”

Steven J. Cole
In this study we will consider five differences between the Levitical order of priesthood and Melchizedek’s order of priesthood, given in Hebrews 7:1-3.

1. NATIONAL VS. UNIVERSAL—The Levites were national priests to Israel, and their mention is connected with the personal name of God—Jehovah, or Yahweh. They ministered to Israel, for Jehovah God. In Genesis 14:18, Melchizedek is spoken of as priest to God by His universal name. What name of God is used?

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   ______________________________________________________
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   Interestingly, in Genesis 14:22, when Abraham spoke to the king of Sodom, by what names did He refer to God?
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2. COMMON VS. ROYAL—The Levites were not royal, but Melchizedek is a king and priest. How many times is he referred to as a king in Hebrews 7:1-2?

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3. RITUAL VS. RIGHTEOUSNESS—The Levites role was to offer sacrifices to God as a temporary ritual by which God would accept the Israelites. Dead bulls and goats never created a true righteousness. Although we know little of how, the Bible calls Melchizedek righteousness and peace. In Romans 5:1, what does our high priest, who comes to us in the order of Melchizedek, give us?

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4. LINEAGE VS. TRANSCENDENCE—The Levites all obtained their position by a hereditary opportunity, being sons of Aaron. Hebrews 7:3 carefully points out that Melchizedek’s genealogy is not important, but that his resemblance matters. Whom does he resemble?

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   Read Romans 8:29. Who does God want us to resemble?

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5. TEMPORARY VS. ETERNAL—How long did the Levitical priests serve (Numbers 8:23-24)?

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   How long did the priesthood of Melchizedek last (Hebrews 7:17)?

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“We might not have the temptation to run to a Levitical priest and offer an animal sacrifice, but we might be tempted to depend upon lesser priests and worthless sacrifices of human ingenuity for our assurance. Some among us might be struggling to keep their spiritual heads above the rushing tides of temptation, doubt, fear, and lethargy. From the time that Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, the Lord God worked through thousands of years and generations of families to install His eternal Son as the Great High Priest of the Redeemed. All of the sacrifices and priestly mediators before were merely types of which Jesus Christ is the antitype— the real substance.

No one else can take away your sin. No one else can mediate for you before the throne of God with perfect satisfaction. No one else can eternally intercede for you and rule over your life to bring you through the dark waters to Heaven’s bright shore. None but our high priest and king, Jesus Christ, can give us a sure and steadfast hope that will be an anchor for the soul!”

Phil Newton
Melchizedek: Shadows to Reality

There’s a frailty to shadows, at best. They are temporary. They do not provide a complete picture. At the same time, if we consider them correctly and don’t put our hope in them, their very fleetingness provides a strength. As pictures to help us understand great truths, shadows are very helpful.

The danger of shadows is that we might fall in love with them. That’s what’s happening when folks find themselves caught up in working for salvation, in clinging to traditions, or in holding on to religions that require priests. God provides shadows as types or picture-lessons, to foreshadow an anti-type or reality. Shadows/types are real and put in place by God, but they are temporary and partial. Realities/anti-types are also real and put in place by God, but they are eternal and complete.

Here are a few of the biblical shadows and realities:

- Shadow - A lifted-up bronze serpent saved the Israelites from snake-bite punishment (Numbers 21:8).
  - Reality - The lifted-up Christ saves us from eternal condemnation (John 3:14).

- Shadow - Meek and innocent lambs were offered as a sacrifice for sins (Leviticus 1:10).
  - Reality - Jesus Christ was offered as the final sacrifice, to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29, Revelation 5:6).

- Shadow - The blood of sacrificed animals was sprinkled before God (Leviticus 1:11).
  - Reality - The blood of the sacrificed Lord Jesus Christ sprinkles believers before God (1 Peter 1:2).

- Shadow - Abraham’s beloved son Isaac willingly carried the wood upon which he was laid as a sacrifice (Genesis 22:2).
  - Reality - God’s beloved son Jesus willingly carried the cross upon which he was killed as a sacrifice (John 19:17).

- Shadow - Melchizedek was a high priest of the eternal order, a king of righteousness and peace (Psalm 14:18, Hebrews 7:1-3).
  - Reality - Jesus Christ is our high priest of the eternal order, our king of righteousness (from this time forth and forevermore) and peace (the increase of which will have no end) (Isaiah 9:7, Hebrews 6:20).

Hebrews 7 was pivotal teaching for the Hebrews. All their lives, they’d understood restored fellowship with God to hinge on the work of a priest. The priests of Israel provide for us a beautiful shadow illustration of Christ’s work. We understand that God has installed a new reality. But, for the Hebrews, to give up earthly priests must have felt strange and weird, as in unfaithful. The blood sacrifices that God accepted prior to the ultimate and final sacrifice of Jesus Christ were always connected to a priest. So for them, following Jesus meant giving up what must have felt like connection with God. It might mean the same for some folks in our culture, who have grown up in religions that embrace earthly priests.

What’s the point? Why all this painstaking, careful teaching about the different priesthood that Jesus belongs to? The writer of Hebrews is calling for the laying aside of earthly priests and the placing of trust in Jesus Christ alone.
Hebrews 7:11-28

“Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.”

This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of him, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”

For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: “The Lord has sworn, and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever.’”

This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.”

As much of a mystery as he remains, our new friend Melchizedek has managed to clarify a few things for us. First of all, next to him those poor Levitical priests seem, well, insufficient. Certainly anything but perfect. And secondly, through him we’ve been able to see the amazing supremacy of Jesus our High Priest.

Until now the writer of Hebrews hasn’t yet compared Christ to the Levitical priests. But here a smattering of facts thrown down before us the reality that Jesus Christ is an incredible and superior high priest. Follow along, and it will become clear that Christ totally and completely fulfills and negates the Levitical priesthood:

- Vs. 11—Psalm 110:4 is brought to our attention through a rhetorical question. It’s a dramatic way to open the argument, and the answer is obvious. The Levitical priesthood did not bring perfection, so, yes, there is the need for another priest from another order, not a son of Aaron.
- Vs. 12—A change of priest means a change of law. Surely the Hebrews were reminded of Christ’s first sermon, and the new perspective He cast on the law (Matthew 5-7).
- Vs. 13-14—Christ as our high priest is not like Aaron because He comes from a different tribe (Judah instead of Levi). Moses had said nothing about someone from Judah being a priest. Do you remember how the writer carefully established that Christ is better than Moses? Now you understand why.
- Vs. 15-17—And now, it’s even more obvious how different they are, by virtue of Christ’s perfect indestructibility (sounds like a trump card).
- Vs. 18-19—Yes, the old way has to go. It’s weak, unprofitable, insufficient. Essentially, there’s been an annulment of a decree, a replacement by a better one. The law fails to do what Christ accomplishes, that is, bring people into right relationship with God.
- Vs. 20-24—Psalm 110:4 again. In forceful closure to the argument, we hear how by divine oath, Levitical priests are lesser, while Jesus is greater. Also, we hear how Levitical priests were temporary, while Jesus is eternal.


Christ always lives to make intercession. Men will attack. Enemies will assail. Prodigals will run. Desires will rise. Rest sure, Christ will intercede, always.

And finally, the concluding truth, for which we want to run into His arms and praise Him: CHRIST HAS NO NEED TO OFFER SACRIFICES ANYMORE. HE ALREADY OFFERED HIMSELF. The oath, the promise, the long awaited Messiah, the perfect Son has come. There is no longer need for the law that appointed weak men to the position Jesus fills with utter and absolute perfection.
Jesus Messiah is the Superior Priest: Therefore, Hebrews reveals that the Levitical priesthood and the old covenant are shadows. Faith exalts Christ’s priesthood and the new covenant.

Discussion Questions

1. Weak and Useless The problems with the Law were based in the sinful flesh that could not keep it (Romans 7:13-14). Discuss why God would institute a law that had one purpose; to show us our sinful hearts: ______________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
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2. Not Under Law Romans 6:14 says we are no longer under the law. Discuss our relationship to the Ten Commandments, with Christ’s Sermon on the Mount in mind: __________________________________________________________
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3. Always Interceding Hebrews 7:25 says, “Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” How did Jesus pray for Peter in Luke 22:32?
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   In 1 John 2:2, what is Jesus doing at this very moment? ____________________________________________________________
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   Thank Jesus for His intercessory work. ____________________________________________________________
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4. Urgent Need of Pardon Read the quote to the right, and discuss how Hebrews 7 refutes those who say they don’t need to confess sin regularly, because it was all forgiven on the day they accepted Christ. ____________________________________________________________
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   “This chapter needs to be read under a deep sense of sin, to be properly understood and appreciated. It is the conscious sinner who needs the Priest. We can do very well with Christ as Teacher, Philanthropist, Ideal Man, until we see ourselves as we are in the sight of God; but when that vision is given to us, our hearts cry out with an exceeding great and bitter cry for the Priest, who can stand for us with God, and for God with us.

   There is urgent need for a fresh consciousness and conviction of our sinnership...light views of sin give slight views of the sacrifice of Calvary, of the need for propitiation, and of the dread future penalty on wilful wrong-doing...If men really felt their sins, there would be a unanimous rush to the precious Blood and to the only Priest for absolution and pardon.”

   F. B. Meyers
Further Personal Study

1. Hebrews 7 brings us a fifth quote of Psalm 110:4. Describe the differences noted in Hebrews 7 between Levitical priests and the high priest God promised back in Psalms: ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

2. Hebrews introduces the word “covenant” for the first time in Hebrews 7:22. Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 and write down what you learn about the new covenant: ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

3. In Hebrews 7:22, what is Christ’s role regarding the new (better) covenant? ______________________________________
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   ______________________________________
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   In Hebrews 7:23-25, we learn how Christ guarantees the covenant. A guarantor sees to it that the covenant is fulfilled, even in the face of resistance and times of failure. Each Levitical priest’s death ended his work, which was related to the old covenant. Christ’s death and resurrection began and continues forever His work, which is related to the new covenant. So we have the guarantee that will never expire. Another fabulous aspect of the guarantee is that Jesus always lives to intercede for those He saves.

4. Scripture provides glimpses of Jesus Christ praying for us. How do the following verses describe His prayers for us?
   Romans 8:34 ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

   Luke 22:32 ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

   John 17:20-21 ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

   John 17:24 ______________________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

“God has provided a merciful, faithful, faultless, competent and sympathetic high priest. He will meet their needs for cleansing, courage, wisdom, and personal support in danger or sorrow... He will not change His mind about it, for, indeed, He offers no other alternative! The old covenant will no longer work and no secular or pagan solution to the problem of sin and spiritual immaturity is acceptable.”

Ray Stedman

“Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”
Romans 8:34

“...but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”
Luke 22:32

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me... Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”
John 17:20-21, 24
Superior Priest: Shadows to Reality

With Hebrews 7, we see why the sacrifices, rites, and ceremonies had to go. They were types, not substance. Shadows, not reality. Nothing was ever perfect about them; their only purpose was to reveal the need for hope and point to hope.

One important factor was missing in Melchizedek, the Righteous Priest and King of Peace. Fact is; Jesus Christ became the high priest of sin-cursed people. And there’s nothing about atonement or sacrifice or redemption in the shadow picture presented by Melchizedek.

Thus, God also provided the shadow picture of the Levitical priests. Very effectively, they illustrate the bloody mess of atonement and redemption. Can you imagine what an affront to your senses it would have been to enter the temple? Slaughtered animals and burning fat and sprinkled blood. No wonder so much washing and incense burning accompanied it all! This shadow illustration can’t be beat; it is a perfect illustration. We need a horrific, bloody, slaughter for our sin. And no pretty picture could represent the reality sin always incurs—namely, the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God.

Yes, temple sacrifices vividly represented the horror of the price that sin requires. But we must realize this truth:

- When Christ hung on the cross, the temple picture fell and smashed.
- When Christ became the real slaughtered lamb, the shadow tore to pieces, top to bottom.
- With Christ’s sacrificial slaughter, priests lost their job.
- The law served a new purpose—to reveal that all along Christ had been the intended hope.

It is no light thing to annul a system followed by an entire nation, a stronghold of religion, an institution placed by God. Laying aside the Jewish priesthood with all its traditions, customs, rites, and ties surely felt like a cruel break. Indeed, the Hebrew readers struggled, even given the Hebrews 7 irresistible argument that Christ’s priesthood was better, perfect, and perpetual.

Those who follow a religion that includes priests deny Christ. Priests no longer serve the old purpose. Thus, these religions are holding out false hope. Many are being deceived by what was once a beautiful shadow.

Tragically, present day priesthoods seem to have a stronghold on those who choose to follow them. F. B. Meyer communicates the gravity of the situation:

“How absurd it is for either the Roman or the Anglican priest to base his pretensions on the example of the Old Testament. To do so is to confess their inferiority to the only Priesthood which is recognized in the present age. They are in evil case. Press them for their warrant of existence. If they quote Revelation 1:6, then we all have equal right to wear their dress and fulfill their office. If they quote Leviticus, then are they hopelessly undone; for that Priesthood has been superseded. The time is coming when all HIS people will have to disavow connection with those men whose pretensions are baseless, or worse, delusive; and an unwarrantable intrusion into the sacred offices of Christ. Alas! Poor souls, deluded and fleeced by them!”

“Jesus, My Great High Priest”

Jesus, my great High Priest,
Offered his blood and died;
My guilty conscience seeks
No sacrifice beside.

His powerful blood
did once atone,
And now it pleads
before the throne.

To this dear Surety’s hand
Will I commit my cause;
He answers and fulfills
His Father’s broken laws.

Behold my soul
at freedom set;
My Surety paid
the dreadful debt!

My advocate appears
For my defense on high;
The Father bows his ears
And lays his thunder by.

Not all that hell
or sin can say
Shall turn his heart,
his love, away.

Should all the hosts of death
And pow’rs of hell unknown
Put their most dreadful
forms
Of rage and mischief on,
I shall be safe,
for Christ displays
Superior pow’r
and guardian grace.

Isaac Watts, 1674-1748
Ta Da! A triumphant announcement! We have such a high priest! But they weren’t convinced, not yet.

All those superiorities and supremacies of Christ that we’ve seen set next to the deficiencies of the Levitical arrangement were only the beginning of the argument. Here in Hebrews 8, it’s as if the writer senses the need to heighten the contrast between Christ’s perfect gift and shadow priests’ gifts; between Christ’s sacrifice and priestly sacrifices.

Two issues are raised—ministry and covenant. In verses 1-5, the ministry of Christ is contrasted with the ministry of OT priests. In verses 6-13, the new covenant is set in opposition to the old covenant.

Christ’s ministry takes place in a different location, a holy place, a true tabernacle. Of course, the location of priestly sacrifices and slaughters was the temple. Now, in our culture when someone mentions 9/11, we immediately think of great tragedy and loss. Those living in proximity of Manhattan see a skyline stripped of twin towers. Then, in the Hebrew culture when someone mentioned 70 A.D., they thought of famine, and systematic Roman siege and pillage. Those living in proximity of Jerusalem saw a skyline ravaged, brilliant, golden temple, by a raging fire. It is not, however, the Jerusalem temple of which the writer speaks. Rather, he refers to the desert tabernacle, the starting place of Christ’s ministry.

Moses pitched the tabernacle according to God’s pattern—furnishings, golden pillars, heavy curtains, consecrations, liturgies. The burden of tents that had to be carried, raised, and lowered at physical expense, every time, existed as a model, an illustration. A rough reminder intended merely to be a shadowy suggestion of the reality of the celestial sanctuary, the true tabernacle. The earthly priests with their rituals are, after all’s been said and done, only a superficial foreshadowing of Christ’s superior ministry.

Christ’s covenant is better; Hebrews states this repeatedly and forcefully. A better ministry. A better covenant. Better promises. A better accomplishment than law. A better keeping of the covenant, never to be broken.

The new covenant is not so much new content as a new establishment. A new relationship, which directly accesses the heavenly sanctuary, the truer tabernacle. A new embracing, in hearts; hearts that will temple God’s Holy Spirit.

Better and new. The shadow ministry with its old covenant was rendered obsolete, inefficacious, outmoded, antiquated, vanishing. It has no further use, except to point out the need for, and superiority of, God’s glorious redemption plan. Jesus Christ’s ministry shines supreme with exceeding unmatchable excellence. The new covenant is lasting and true, perfect and real. In the true tabernacle, before God, hearts rejoice and endure by the presence of His saving glory.
Jesus Messiah is the True Tabernacle:
Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows, such as old covenant sacrifices. Rather, faith exalts new covenant forgiveness.

Discussion Questions

1. Heavenly Tabernacle Hebrews 8:1 tells us that our priest is in the heavenly places. Read Colossians 3:1-4. Discuss what it means in daily life to “set your mind on things above, where Christ is:”
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2. Law in Hearts Hebrews 8:10 explains that the new covenant includes God’s law in our minds, written in our hearts, as described in Jeremiah 31:31-34. What does this mean? Why is studying and memorizing Scripture so important?
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3. God’s Concern Hebrews 8:9 says that God showed no concern for the Israelites because they did not continue in His covenant. In light of God’s disregard for a people who neglected His covenant, discuss the hope Hebrews 8:12 provide for every Israelite and Gentile: ________
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“It is hard...to realize that the Old Covenant, with its laws and ceremonies, was only a symbol, a picture of God’s plan for the world...like a person who has a picture of a long-lost dear friend. He looks at the picture often, with love and hope and expectancy. The picture is a beautiful representation and reminder of the friend, and consequently the picture itself becomes dear. One day the friend shows up and says, “Hello. Here I am in the flesh, in person.”

But the one he has come to see continues to look only at the picture, never recognizing his friend’s presence. He has focused so long on the picture that he does not, or will not, recognize the one in the picture when he comes in person. The symbol has been substituted for the reality. The symbol is treated as the real thing, and the real thing is discarded as unreal. Whatever the friend could do for him is not done, and the picture can do nothing.

The Old Covenant symbol is not bad, and was never bad. It had a beautiful, God-given purpose. It pointed to the Son, represented the Son, foreshadowed the Son before He came to earth. But now that the Son has come, the symbol had no more purpose, and God means for it to be discarded.” 1

John MacArthur
Further Personal Study

1. Read Hebrews 10:11, and take note of the position of every Levitical priest. They certainly never sat on the mercy seat! The standing position indicates that the job was never over, the work never permanently effective. In Hebrews 1:3 and 8:1, what is Christ’s position?

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

What were Jesus’ words in John 19:30, and how do they relate to His seated position?

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______________________________________________________________

Acts 7:55 is the only place we read of Christ standing. John MacArthur explains: “As far as redemption is concerned, Jesus is seated, because He rests from the finished work of redemption. But when one of His own falls into trouble, He stands up, because He takes the position of action. His power and His energy are immediately activated in behalf of His beloved. He is seated as our Redeemer, but is standing as our Helper in time of need.” In Revelation 3:21, what amazing promise is given to those who persevere and overcome?

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2. Hebrews 8:7 tells us that the old covenant had faults. In Genesis 15:1-5, we note that the covenant was purely from God to Abraham. There was, however, a contingency for Israelites if they wanted to live under the blessings of that old covenant. In Hebrews 8:9, what happened to Israel because they did not live under the old covenant?

______________________________________________________________

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Although the old covenant was about to disappear, Israel was given first opportunity to respond to the new covenant. Although as a nation they have rejected the new covenant, God’s promises to Israel will come true. Read Romans 11:17-24 to see how Israel will someday be grafted into the new covenant (of salvation). In Romans 11:25-26, what has yet to happen before Israel will be saved (grafted into the new covenant)?

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Praise the Lord for His generous mercy to those of us who are Gentiles.


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Truer Tabernacle: Shadows to Reality

It must have been quite a trip for the boys—Nadab and Abuhi, together with their dad Aaron and the 70 elders of Israel. Surviving the sight of Israel’s God on a crystal clear sapphire path should have been enough memory to last a lifetime, but Exodus 24:10-11 tells us they even had a meal together. Then, Moses and God went up further, where a pattern was shown to Moses. Moses was with God (please, say that so reverently), for forty days. Moses was in God’s presence on that mountain for over a month!

And his face shone.

Meanwhile, back in the camp, Aaron and the boys created a calf god for the people to worship.

So it makes perfect sense that God would strike Aaron’s boys dead during a service when they tried to rouse up the crowd’s admiration by performing strange fire tricks God had not commanded. Read Leviticus 10 for one of the most convicting narratives regarding how we do church.

- How dare we receive praise for a kind act, which only reflects Christ.
- How dare we play an instrument or sing a song and think about how it will sound to people, more than what God will hear.
- How dare we write or speak words to make people want to hear us more.
- How dare we preach, teach, or serve and then pat ourselves on the back for a job well-done.

You see, it never was a game, this worship of God. It was a shadow, a picture of the real thing. God is serious about only being around people growing to reflect His holiness. And God is serious about His glory. There is never, ever room for any personal claim to fame in God’s miracles. As God said in Leviticus 10:3, when he refused to let Aaron mourn for his sons, “Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.”

For our time, Francis Chan has written an important book, Erasing Hell. God is in charge of what’s holy, and we do not tell him when to do a miracle, or when to heal, or who to save, or when we want to exhibit a sign (like Aaron’s boys). Yes, we wait with open arms for our prodigals to come home, but if God refuses to call them? We worship God regardless, just as Aaron and the dead boy’s brothers were commanded to.

There is much to be learned from the shadows. We dare not belittle the forty days and nights during which God showed Moses a pattern. Moses stuck with it, no matter what short-cuts anybody presented, and they tried (Exodus 25:9, 40, 26:30, 27:8). It’s a good thing for us to be interested in and familiar with the Old Testament pattern for worship. The more we examine them, the more heaven will look like home when we get there. After all, those patterns imitated heaven.

One detail we do not want to miss is the intricate beauty of workmanship called for in the shadow patterns. Basins, vessels, tables (not sure why we’ll need candlesticks for it won’t be dark, but we know that the lamp-stands are the churches). Colors and carvings. Fabrics and tapestries. Precious metals and stones. Stones to elaborate a priest’s breastplate—the gates we’ll walk through in Heaven. Gold donated by Pharaoh and the grand Egyptians—the pavement we’ll walk on in Heaven. On our way to worship, in the very presence of the Lamb that has been slain.

How Sweet The Name Of Jesus Sounds

How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds in a believer’s ear! It soothes his sorrow, heals his wounds, and drives away his fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole, and calms the troubled breast; ‘Tis manna to the hungry soul, and to the weary rest.

Dear Name! the Rock on which we build; our shield and hiding-place; our never-failing treasury, filled with boundless stores of grace.

Jesus, our Savior, Shepherd, Friend, our Prophet, Priest, and King; our Lord, our Life, our Way, our End, accept the praise we bring.

Weak is the effort of our heart, and cold our warmest thought; but when we see Thee as Thou art, we’ll praise Thee as we ought.

Till then we would Thy love proclaim with every fleeting breath; and triumph in that blessed Name which quells the pow’r of death.

John Newton, 1779

How Dare We Receive Praise for a Kind Act, Which Only Reflects Christ?
This writer has a funny habit of introducing his topics, before tackling them, in the reverse order. Here he begins by mentioning regulations for worship, then the place of worship. But then he describes the place of worship before tackling regulations.

In a way, don’t we wish he could have spoken “in detail?” It’s important that he says he cannot (not now anyway). He leaves out what has nothing to do with the point he is making. He doesn’t search for meaning that God hasn’t ascribed. When hidden meanings are drawn from details, that is allegory. What we’ve been calling shadows in this study is typology. Typology is different from allegory.

Shadow Place of Worship: Take note of what Hebrews explains about the tent, that it had two sections, front and rear. We will see their purpose and significance as we tour the places where the priests followed regulations.

One entered the tent’s front section, the Holy Place, after crossing the courtyard where the brazen altar screamed with burning sacrifices. It had to be quieter beyond that curtain. Golden lampstand. Table spread with twelve loaves of unleavened bread. Incense wafts from the golden altar.

The rear section, the Most Holy Place, was behind thick draperies of blue, purple, and scarlet. In the Most Holy Place, the ark of the covenant gleamed gold, containing the stone tablets of the old covenant, the golden manna urn, and Aaron’s budding rod. Golden cherubim spread their wings over the blood-sprinkled mercy seat (Leviticus 16:14-15). Elsewhere in Scripture, the golden altar of incense is described as standing in the Holy Place, not the Most Holy Place. F. B. Meyers explains: “The altar of incense is classed with the most holy place; not because it stood inside the veil, but because it was so closely associated with the worship rendered there...Is not this his perpetual work for us, in heaven as our great high priest? - ever living to make intercession for us, catching our poor prayers and presenting them to His Father, fragrant with the savor of his own grace, and loveliness, and merit?”

Shadow Regulations for Worship: Consider the regulatory preparations that occurred in these places. Inside the front Holy Place, only the priests could go in and perform the duties, but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.”
Jesus Messiah is our Bloody Mercy Seat:
Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows, such as repeated atonement. Rather, faith exalts Christ’s once-for-all atonement.

Discussion Questions

1. System of Barriers Hebrews 9:1-10 has described a place and a package of rules that made it impossible for a people to have access to God. The worshiper could gaze longingly into the Holy Place, but only the priests could enter. And as for the Most Holy Place, forget it. That was risky business even for the high priest whose name was pulled, once a year. And when he went in, he required the safeguarding of fresh blood. Why would God order such limited access to His holiness and the mercy seat, in contrast with Hebrews 4:16? ________________________________
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2. Time of Reformation Hebrews 10:9 mentions that the tabernacle rituals would occur until the time of reformation. Reformation means straightening out, correcting, or re-forming. Name a difference between the OT tabernacle with its old covenant, and the present day church with her new covenant, that is meaningful for you personally: _____
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3. Guilty Conscience Hebrews 9:8 reads “the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper...” So until the rituals of the tabernacle were demolished, there was no such thing as complete forgiveness that would “perfect the conscience.” How does 1 John 1:9 teach us that we are forgiven, and how is that different from the symbols of forgiveness in OT rituals? ___________
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When Christians who have confessed and forsaken their sin allow guilty “feelings” to dominate them, what does that tell us about their lack of faith? How does Hebrews 11:6 address them?
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“Precious, Precious Blood of Jesus”

Precious, precious blood of Jesus,
Shed on Calvary;
Shed for rebels, shed for sinners,
Shed for me.

Precious, precious blood of Jesus,
All the price is paid;
Perfect pardon now is offered,
Peace is made.

Precious, precious blood of Jesus,
Jesus, God’s own Son,
Telling that the work is finished;
All is done.

Though thy sins are red like crimson,
Deep in scarlet glow,
Jesus’ precious blood can make them White as snow.

Precious blood, whose full atonement Bringeth us to God!
Precious blood, our song and glory,
Praise and laud!

Frances Ridley Havergal, 1836-1879
Further Personal Study

This passage lifts back the tent veils to give us a quick glimpse at the tabernacle furnishings. If you have the chance, sit down and read through Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. While reading, if you take note of the instructions God gave for the tabernacle, you will be astounded by the attention to detail. For our personal study in conjunction with Hebrews 9, we’ll briefly consider just three of the specific furnishings of the tabernacle—the altar in the courtyard, and the table and lampstand in the Holy Place.

1. THE BRAZEN ALTAR—A cacophony of mooing, baaaing, and bleating greeted sinners entering the outer courtyard for worship. Where does Psalm 118:27 tell us that the sacrifices were tied? __________________________

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The altar was the first furnishing which everyone who entered the courtyard walked past. The animals tied to its’ horns provided a reminder that bloody sacrifice is necessary for sins. The altar is described in Exodus 27:1-8. Write down your own description:

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2. THE GOLDEN TABLE WITH LOAVES OF BREAD—Read Exodus 25:23-30. Describe the table:

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The table held twelve loaves of bread, which would be eaten by the priests when they replaced it, every seven days. In John 6:51-52, Christ addressed the reality behind this shadow. What is the bread laid out for us to eat? Who are the present-day priesthood (1 Peter 2:9)? ________________

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3. THE SEVEN-BRANCHED LAMP-STAND—Read Exodus 25:31-40. Write down your impressions of the only light that cast shadows in the Holy Place: ____

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Read Revelation 1:12-20, where Christ reveals the reality of the seven lampstands among whom His presence is near. How does this reality help us see the vital importance of being part of a church? ________________

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—Isaac Watts, 1709

“Not All the Blood of Beasts”

Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain
Could give the guilty conscience peace
Or wash away the stain.

But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they.

My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head, of Thine
While like a penitent I stand
And there confess my sin.

My soul looks back to see
The burden
Thou didst bear
When hanging on the cursed tree
And knows her guilt was there.

Believing, we rejoice
To see the curse remove;
We bless the Lamb
with cheerful voice
And sing His bleeding love.
Charles Simeon was an Anglican pastor at Holy Trinity Church of Cambridge. He tells the story of his conversion in 1779:

“As I was reading Bishop Wilson on the Lord’s Supper, I met with an expression to this effect—“That the Jews knew what they did, when they transferred their sin to the head of their offering.” The thought came into my mind, “What, may I transfer all my guilt to another? Has God provided an Offering for me, that I may lay my sins on His head? Then, God willing, I will not bear them on my own soul one moment longer.” Accordingly I sought to lay my sins upon the sacred head of Jesus.”

F. F. Bruce

Bloody Mercy Seat: Shadows to Reality

There was great purpose and significance in the OT tabernacle with all its rituals. I can think of no parallel to the great meaning that it holds. And it is very worthy of our study, seeing as it teaches life and death lessons. When we learn them, which takes patience, they provide great comfort and hope (Romans 15:3-5). However, as we study the tabernacle and the rituals performed therein, we must remember that it was imperfect and temporary. It only presented a picture of Christ’s atoning work. Its imperfections are part of that picture because they show us that only Jesus Christ is totally perfect. When Jesus Christ became our sacrifice, He fulfilled God’s purpose for the tabernacle and its priests and rituals. And those things gained a new role, no longer a performance role. Now they play a pointing role—to turn our eyes to Jesus Christ and His precious blood.

In Hebrews 5:10, God declared Jesus to be the only, the real high priest. Here in Hebrews 9, we revisit the shadow high priest, to help explain the role and significance of Christ the real high priest. So, keeping in mind that today and every day Christ is in God’s presence, let’s consider what the tabernacle high priest had to do to enter God’s presence in the Most Holy Place. He could not go into the Most Holy Place whenever he pleased; the penalty would be death (Leviticus 16:2). Once a year on the Day of Atonement, once a lifetime, here’s what was involved in the high priest entering the Most Holy Place:

• The purpose of the day was to cleanse the worshipers’ guilt by atoning whatever sins the daily sacrifices had missed. Thereby they were to free their consciences of guilt, although we know from Hebrews 9:9 that it never, ever worked perfectly (Leviticus 16:34).

• The high priest of Israel rose early for ritual cleansings and wore special, humble linen clothing which would be discarded later that day (Leviticus 16:4).

• In addition to the regular daily sacrifices he had to offer, there were bulls, rams, seven lambs and at least three goats. The day was full of busyness and bloodiness, wherein he slaughtered at least 15 different animals. One bull sacrifice and blood sprinkling ritual on that day were for his own sin and his family’s sin (Numbers 29:7-11, Leviticus 4:3-12, Leviticus 16:3-6).

• Entirely alone in the tents, he smoked two handfuls of incense and thus those in the courtyard would know he was entering the Most Holy Place. The cloud of incense would protect him from seeing God’s holy glory, which would kill him if he saw it (Leviticus 16:12-13).

• He carried the blood of bulls and goats through the curtain-veil that shielded the Most Holy Place, and sprinkled the mercy seat with the blood of sacrifices (Leviticus 16:15-19, Exodus 26:31-33).

• Upon exiting, he lay his hands on the scapegoat’s head (that he had earlier cast lots for) and confessed Israel’s sin and rebellion. Then he sent the scapegoat, with the man he appointed, to its wilderness wandering (Leviticus 16:9-10).

• Another bathing preceded his change to the glorious gold and bejeweled costume (Leviticus 16:23-25).

• He came out to the people and completed another round of sacrifices (Leviticus 16:23-24).

All this hard work, under the pressure of death if he messed up, and still the shadow high priest could never cleanse with perfection. Only one high priest, Jesus Christ, cleanses and forgives us from all unrighteousness, perfectly and completely (1 John 1:9).
Hebrews 9:11-28

“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is in force as long as the one who made it is alive. Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.” And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”

Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, providing access to the eternal inheritance (vv. 14-15).

Christ’s blood inaugurated the new covenant, as Moses had inaugurated the law with blood (vv. 18-21).

As you read the text to the left, did you notice the underlined word? Primarily, Hebrews 9:1-10 shouted that access to God is only possible through blood. Hebrews 9:11-28 develops how Christ’s blood provides union with God. The author proves Christ’s blood to effectively remove every barrier between man and God.

Several yet unexplored differences between the shadow priesthood and Christ’s real priesthood are presented in these verses:

• The holy place of Christ’s great and perfect priesthood is in heaven where it will never decay, fade, or get old, as did the tabernacle and its priests (vv. 11-12).
• Christ’s blood-letting was a willing act of obedience—a voluntary sacrifice. Goats, calves, bulls, and heifers were involuntarily slaughtered (vv. 12).
• Christ’s blood purges defiled consciences. Animal blood symbolically purified flesh (vv. 13-14).
• The work Christ’s blood accomplished was “once for all.” Not one or all of the millions of animal sacrifices ever completed the task (vv. 12-14, 25-27).
• God’s acceptance of Christ’s redeeming blood opened the door of heaven, providing access to the eternal inheritance (vv. 14-15).
• Christ’s blood was the ink of the ratifying signature on the new covenant. The new covenant mediates reconciliation with God, and Christ’s death enabled Him to serve as the mediator (vv. 15-17).
• Christ’s blood inaugurated the new covenant, as Moses had inaugurated the law with blood (vv. 18-21).

Hebrews 9:22 refutes the commonly heard phrase, “you’ve got to forgive yourself.” Impossible. No other blood than Christ’s would ever be acceptable as a forgiveness sacrifice. Under the law, blood purified, but not perfectly. Christ’s blood purges sin from us—it and only it forgives. When Christ has forgiven us, we believe it in faith. Then we forgive those who sin against us, in evidence of the gospel that forgave us.

Every so often the Red Cross comes to our church and sets up a blood draw event. Those who give blood give life. Blood gives life. One’s blood is his or her life. Christ gave His life for our lives.

Christ’s blood annihilated the power of sin. Sin is death. Blood is life. No wonder we sing, “There’s pow’r in the blood.”

Christ has effectively dealt with sin. When He returns, it will prove the effectiveness of His blood’s forgiving power. Why? Because that day, forgiven sinners who are eagerly waiting for Him will join Him in heaven. Those who eagerly wait know Christ’s forgiveness for their sin, and, therefore, forgive sinners who offend them. Are you eagerly waiting for Jesus to come back, because you know the powerful work His blood has accomplished in your life?"
Jesus Messiah is our Cleansing Blood:

Therefore, Hebrews refutes the shadow of sprinkling as a representative form of forgiveness. Rather, faith exalts the forgiving and fully cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Confession Hebrews 9:11-28 teaches how Christ’s blood provided a once for all sacrifice for our sins. So once we’re saved, aren’t we covered? Why do we need to continually confess sins and ask forgiveness of our Heavenly Father? (Luke 18:9-14 could be one passage you consider): ________________________________________________________________
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2. Cleansing The OT priests’ lives included a lot of ceremonial washing. Yet it was all symbolic, temporary, and imperfect. Christ cleanses in a totally different way, He replaces and recreates, as we are taught in 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Ephesians 4:24. As cleansed new creations, what is different about us? How are we not just rule-keepers like the OT priests? ________________________________________________________________
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3. Last Will and Testament Here in Hebrews 9, the new covenant is compared to God’s last will and testament, with Jesus being the one who died, and the executor of the will. Discuss the inheritance of the new covenant that would cause the writer to consider it a “will:” ______
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4. Eagerly Waiting Hebrews 9:13 teaches that animal blood worked on a physical level. Hebrews 9:14 teaches that Christ’s blood works deeper, on our inner-mans’ conscience level. Will we ever be done with sin as long as we live on earth? No! 1 John 1:8-10 provides the solution, that we will be cleansed if we confess our sin. Our mindset because of this is described in Hebrews 9:28. What does it mean to eagerly await Christ’s return? Why is a statement that we “eagerly await Christ’s return” such an appropriate conclusion to teaching regarding Christ’s offering for our sin? ________________________________________________________________
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“If there are any here who are conscious of the burden of their past guilt, are quickened so as to be sensitive of the curse, can hear the rolling thunder of the impending Wrath of God—to them it will be a great joy to hear of One who can put away sin! It is for such as you are that the Great Redeemer in the end of the world came among men; He could not come to put away sin from those who had none, or from those who by their own efforts could put that sin away from themselves. It is, then, for such as you are who are hopelessly sinful. Hopelessly so, I say, if viewed from any aspect short of the work of Jesus Christ; it is for such as you that He has come! If your house were on fire you would rejoice to hear the fire engines coming down the street, for you would feel an absolute certainty that they were coming to you, because your house was in a blaze, if no one else’s might be.”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon
Further Personal Study

For our study of Hebrews 9:11-28, we will consider five effects of Christ’s blood sacrifice.

1. Christ’s blood cleanses one’s conscience from sin. Read Hebrews 9:13-14. What is the purpose for which Christ’s blood cleanses from dead works? ________________________________________________________________
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   From Mark 7:15-23, what disqualifies us for service? ________________
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2. Christ’s blood sacrifice puts the new covenant into effect. Read Hebrews 9:15-22. What was necessary for the new covenant to be effected? ________________________________________________________________
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3. Christ’s sacrifice cleanses heaven. Read Hebrews 9:23. The copies of heaven were cleansed with blood of animals, but heaven itself required a better sacrifice. Now, isn’t heaven perfect? Why would heaven need a sacrifice? What imperfect beings would cause heaven to need cleansing? ________________________________________________________________
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4. Christ’s blood sacrifice allows Him to enter heaven as our high priest. Read Hebrews 9:24. For whom does He now appear in the presence of God? __________
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5. Christ’s death utterly transforms ours. Read Hebrews 9:27-28. Because of Christ’s blood, death becomes an entrance to salvation. Do you want only to escape hell, more than you want to see Jesus? Or, do you trust Christ in a way that makes you eager for Him to come back? Does your faith make death an entrance rather than an end? Write a prayer of eager anticipation for Christ’s return: ________________________________________________________________
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“Rock of Ages”

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure.

Not the labor of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law’s demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow;
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyes shall close in death,
When I rise to worlds unknown,
And behold Thee on Thy throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

Augustus M. Toplady, 1776
Cleansing Blood: Shadows to Reality

Why do we find familiar rituals and traditions so comforting? Here’s a helpful explanation:

“The eye is quicker than the ear. And there is, therefore, no language so expressive as the language of symbols. The multitude will better catch your meaning by one apt symbol than by a thousand words. The mind shrinks from the intellectual effort of grappling with the subtle essences of things, and loves to have truth wrapped up in a form which can easily be taken in by the eye, the ear, the sense of touch.

This explains why there is such a tendency toward Ritualism in the Romish and Anglican Churches. Where man’s spiritual life is strong, it is independent of the outward form; but when it is weak it leans feebly on external aids. And it was because the children of Israel were in so childish a condition that God enshrined His deep and holy thoughts in outward forms and material shadows. For fifteen hundred years, therefore, the Jewish worship gathered round the most splendid ceremonial that the world has ever seen—a ceremonial which these Hebrew Christians sadly missed when they passed into the simple ordinances of some bare upper room.”

Personally, we find our eyes brimming, and our hearts longing for the traditions of the Mennonite Brethren, when we hear the four-part harmonies we heard week after week while growing up. But what was tempting the second generation Christian Hebrews to whom the author writes? It hardly seems they’d have found all that bloody slaughter as they entered the temple alluring. Imagine standing there all day long, watching blood spurt from bulls and goats and rams and lambs. Thereafter, waiting for the high priest (even if you like the smell of incense), straining for a glimpse of the scape-goat as it symbolically wanders off with your sins, and then seeing a few more sacrifices!

Apparently this idea of repeatedly offering sacrifices is deeply ingrained in religious people. Hebrews 9:24-26 is clear that Christ’s sacrifice was so much better that it was a once-for-all sacrifice, yet many embrace some form ritualistic, repetitious sacrifice. John MacArthur explains and refutes:

“The perpetual offering of Christ is a heretical doctrine that for many centuries has contradicted this and the many other clear biblical teaching about the finished work of Christ. It maintains that, inasmuch as the priesthood of Christ is perpetual and sacrifice is an essential part of priesthood, therefore the sacrificial offering of Christ must also be perpetual.

Ludwig Ott, a Roman Catholic theologian, explains this perpetual sacrifice dogma, which was made official by that church at the Council of Trent in the middle of the sixteenth century. “The holy Mass,” he writes, “is a true and proper sacrifice. It is physical and propitiatory, removing sins and conferring the grace of repentance. Propitiated by the offering of this sacrifice, God by granting the grace of the gift and the gift of Penance, remits trespasses and sins however grievous they may be.” In other words, God’s satisfaction regarding sin depends upon the weekly mass. That is why attending mass is so important to Catholics.

But the theory of the perpetual offering of Christ is in absolute and direct opposition to Scripture...This false doctrine is plainly reflected in the crucifix, the ubiquitous symbol of Roman Catholicism. Whether in pictures, in statuary, or wherever, the cross is rarely empty in Catholic representations. To Catholics, Jesus is still being crucified.

In communion, or the Lord’s Supper, we remember Christ’s sacrificial death, as He commanded us to. But He is not re-sacrificed. The Lord commanded His disciples to remember His death, not to try to redo it.”

“Joy of Heaven”

The old old story has come so far,
He is my life, hope’s Morningstar.
Praise, only praise while my life is long
With every breath faith sings this song.

From glory and the Father’s throne
Highest love sacrificed His own.
Wrath wrought beloved Son to murder
All this to become my Father.

Blood was poured out at the slaughter
Price to purchase son and daughter,
Carving a place in Heaven’s hollow
Christ my Savior I will follow.

Desire bows to my King forever
Service streams from His love river
God may they see Your loving face
Know your eternal mercy and grace.

How glorious the heavenly height
Sweet purest love the only sight,
Beauty finally fully known
Jesus, Savior, joy of Heaven.

Lydia Reimer, 1928
Offer. Offerings. This word “offer” is found only in chapter 10 of Hebrews. But, here it’s repeated fourteen times. Circle it and see!

Since it was only a shadow, the law required daily repeated sacrificial offerings (vs. 1). As the real thing, Christ fulfilled every sacrifice and offering requirement (vs. 18). By His one offering, we can never again try/train/work/do penance/sacrifice/etc for forgiveness. Forget it. The work is finished. The supreme and final sacrificial offering is complete, and it takes away sins.

Certainly, the daily sacrifices created an incredibly impressive and awesome picture of the need for forgiveness. Kids watching the Day of Atonement’s slaughter surely never forgot the sight. However, none of it ever perfectly cleansed anyone. Always they lived burdened with transgressions, smitten with a sense of sin. And that was the whole purpose of the animal sacrifices—to ingrain in them greater awareness of their sin. The endless offerings served to constantly remind them that their sin was a barrier between them and God, that access to God required impossible sacrifice. Blood of bulls and goats never even came close.

All the same, for a while, that ineffective tabernacle process had great purpose. Animal sacrifices did cover sin. Temporary, yes, but immeasurably better than nothing! Ultimately God had purposed that He would take on a human body, become a human sin offering, and be our sin taker. He would completely remove sins from repenters. And remove the barrier between God and man, thus fulfilling God’s pleasure.

Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus lived to fulfill God’s will (John 5:19, 8:28-29). Here in Hebrews 10:7 and 9, the OT quote “Behold I have come to do your will” describes Christ. God’s will was the cross, the end of OT sacrifices, and the sanctifying removal of sin from God’s people (Hebrews 10:5-10). In the most generous and lavish pouring out of love, God willed our forgiveness.

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” then he adds, I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.”

And now Christ sits at the Father’s right hand. This would be a fine portion of Psalm 110:1 for the author of Hebrews to end with, but he qualifies it with a time-frame: “until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet.” Just a little extra encouragement for the suffering Hebrews. We win, in the end!

Christ’s offering has won the forgiveness by which God remembers our sins no more. Mercy, with its full and flowing forgiveness, replaces bloody sacrifices. Grace, with its empowered and enacted obedience, supersedes regulated offerings. Because Christ is Sin Taker, nothing else is needed.
Jesus Messiah is the Sin Taker: Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows such as offerings by law through priests, and the keeping of prescribed rituals. Rather, faith exalts Jesus Christ’s love offering that results in the sanctification of holiness.

Discussion Questions

1. Reminder Hebrews 3:4 says that “in the sacrifices there was a reminder of sins every year.” This was a reminder of guilt. The word “reminder” is the same word Jesus used in Luke 2:19, when he said, “Do this in remembrance of me.” This is a reminder of forgiveness. Why is examining ourselves and confessing our sins before taking the Lord’s Supper such an important aspect of Christian faith? ________________________________________________________________
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2. Forgiveness We understand to a greater degree the magnitude of Christ’s perfect offering, when we recognize that its shadow required millions of bloody sacrifices and endless regulatory rituals. In light of this, discuss the deception involved in the popular phrase “you have to forgive yourself.”

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3. God’s Will Read Hebrews 10:5-10. Teachings that require penance for forgiveness deny God’s will and undermine Christ’s offering. Talk about how concepts like penance or self-flagellation have absolutely no purpose and reveal rebellion against God:

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4. God’s Pleasure In Hebrews 10:6 we learn that God did not take pleasure or find delight in the sacrificial offerings. In Isaiah 53:10-11 we learn that God was pleased to crush Jesus, and that His suffering was satisfying. Hebrews 12:2 records that joy motivated Jesus to endure the cross and despise the shame. Why is God so pleased with the cross?

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Perhaps you’ve wondered why we’re studying such long passages in Hebrews 9:11-28, and 10:1-18. For one thing, it seems that as the author has built his case and is nearing his conclusion, you can almost hear him talking faster and using more and more words. Also, these divisions seem to follow the reasoning and literary style being used, such as beginning and ending the section with the same word:

Hebrews 9:11 talks about how Christ appeared as a high priest and Hebrews 9:28 tells us Christ will appear a second time.

Hebrews 10:1-18 is filled with the word offering (used only in these verses in Hebrews). Verse 1 presents the problem that priests could never bring enough offerings, and verse 18 provides the solution that we never need another offering.

The paragraph conclusions of Hebrews 10:1-18 build a cohesive theme:

• When Christ offered His body, we were consecrated (set apart to serve Him).

• By that one offering, Christ decisively and forever purged those whom it consecrated (set apart to serve Him).

• Those who are decisively purged have no need for any other type of offering for sin.

Our next section, Hebrews 10:19-39 is another lengthy passage focusing in on one theme—another warning.
And Samuel said, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.”

1 Samuel 15:22

In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.

Psalm 40:6

“Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me. I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.”

Psalm 50:8-10

“For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

Psalm 51:16-17

“Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations-- I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.”

Isaiah 1:10-13

“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”

Hosea 6:6

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Further Personal Study

1. Read Hebrews 10:5-7 and Psalm 40:6-8. Re-write in your own words:

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Read Hebrews 10:12-13 and Psalm 110:1. Re-write in your own words:

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Read Hebrews 8:11-12, Hebrews 10:16-17 and Jeremiah 31:33-34. Rewrite in your own words:

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2. God takes delight in hearts that love Him and long to obey Him. Study how the following OT passages reveal this, along with the fact that the sacrificial offerings failed to grow love and longing to obey God:

1 Samuel 15:22

Psalm 40:6

Psalm 50:8-10

Psalm 51:16-17

Isaiah 1:10-13

Isaiah 66:2-4

Jeremiah 7:21-24:

Hosea 6:6

Amos 5:21-27
Sin Taker: Shadows to Reality

“If the original readers were to go back to Judaism, with its sacrificial system, they would forfeit the tremendous benefits that Jesus Christ secured for them...namely, total forgiveness for those who draw near to God through Him...If you have total forgiveness in Christ, why go back to a system that could never provide that?”

Steven J. Cole

“Thus far did I come laden with my sin; Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in Till I came hither: What a place is this! Must here be the beginning of my bliss? Must here the Burden fall from off my back? Must here the strings that bound it to me crack? Blest Cross! blest Sepulchre! blest rather be The Man that there was put to shame for me.”

John Bunyan
Hebrews 10:19-39

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.”

Are you amazed yet? Christ’s blood forgives totally! The way into the holy places is wide open! No curtain. No rituals. No more sacrifices. No more high priests of the shadow order. Brothers, we have confidence (vs. 19). We are not those who shrink back to destruction (vs. 39).

The writer has reached the peak of his message. This passage sounds like both an urgent plea and a stern warning to beloved friends. Look what Christ’s blood has bought. Be faithful. Be loyal. Rejoice, there is a great reward.

It’s reassuring. Just as high priests ruled over the temple, Christ the high priest rules over the house of God. God’s high priest is of a different order, an order which is real, lasting, and perfect. In two places the writer uses the phrase “since we have a great high priest.” Earlier in Hebrews 4:14, “since we have a great high priest” meant access to the throne of God to pray. Here in Hebrews 10:19-21, “since we have a great high priest” refers to the house of God, the community of pray-ers, the church, which is under that great high priest.

And to that church, the writer pleads three things, underlined in the first paragraph to the left. With these “let us’s,” the writer introduces the remainder of the Book of Hebrews. He reminds us of 1 Corinthians 13:13 “Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest is love.”

- Let us draw near with a true heart—in fullness of faith. True hearts are those with consciences purged clean by Christ’s blood. The writer will elaborate in Hebrews 11, known as the great “Faith Chapter.”
- Let us hold fast without wavering—to our hope. Because God is loyal, faithful, true, unchanging. Hebrews 12 will teach how God uses testing and trials to grow hope in us, providing we endure without bitterness.
- Let us consider how to stir up one another—to love. Regular church gatherings and discipleship relationships are necessary. Hebrews 13 is a pithy conclusion offering practical ways in which the church expresses love.

Loved ones had left. They’d responded to adversity by running. The writer is responding to their noticeable departure. This is what he’s been leading up to, what he’s waited to say. He wants everyone to understand the terrifying reality for such calloused neglect. They. have. no. sacrifice. If there’s one thing we’ve learned, it’s that Christ’s sacrificial, bloody offering is our life line. Without that sacrifice for our sin, the wrath of God in hell will be our reality (no shadow there). What’s real for those who leave? Fear. Judgment. Fury of fire. The vengeance of the living God. Because disloyalty to the church tramples Jesus, defiles Jesus’ blood, and outrages God.

Endure suffering, he says. Take public reproach and affliction. Be plundered, but don’t throw faith away. There’s a great reward when you endure. And that’s us, he says. We have faith. Our souls are preserved.
Jesus Messiah rules God’s House: Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows, such as law, which never provided access to God. Rather, faith exalts drawing near, persevering, and loving Christ’s local church body.

Discussion Questions

1. New Covenant On the “Further Personal Study” page, we will dive deeper into the benefits of keeping the new covenant (Hebrews 10:19-23), the stipulations of the new covenant (Hebrews 10:28-36), and the perils of breaking the new covenant (Hebrews 10:26-31). Quickly peruse those passages, and take note of these benefits, stipulations, and perils. Read Psalm 103:17-19 and discuss the benefits of keeping covenant and why there’s no option.

2. Shadow “Behind the writer’s discussion there can be discerned the language and imagery of the peace or fellowship offering.”1 The peace offering (Leviticus 3:1-17 or 7:11-34) could ever be made alone, and featured a fellowship meal (Leviticus 22:29-30). The peace offering always followed the sin offerings because there is no peace with God when sin has not been dealt with. Discuss the importance of confessing sin to the fellowship of Hebrews 10:24-25:

3. Future Promises Hebrews 10:37-39 teaches us to look forward to future promises as motivation to endure faithfully. Discuss ways we get into trouble by not working hard to deal with today’s responsibilities while waiting for the promises of God. Discuss ways to help those so caught up in worry that they are tempted to neglect Christ and His body:

4. An Angry God? This passage juxtaposes the terror of the judgment with the refuge of the cross. When we are sharing the gospel, can we separate the fact of God’s wrath for sin from God’s love for sinners? Consider the title of Jonathan Edwards sermon: Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God. Recently Jonathan Leeman wrote a book called, The Surprising Offense of God’s Love. In our feelings-driven culture, we are tempted to neglect all the realities of God, and only speak of His love. What would be the result of sharing the gospel with negligence regarding God’s wrath, speaking only of God’s love?

Warning #4: You shall not be disloyal to Christ and His body, the church.

“Think lightly of hell, and you will think lightly of the cross. Think little of the suffering of lost souls, and you will soon think little of the Savior.”2

Charles H. Spurgeon

1 Leviticus 3:1-17
2 Charles H. Spurgeon

“Think lightly of hell, and you will think lightly of the cross. Think little of the suffering of lost souls, and you will soon think little of the Savior.”

Charles H. Spurgeon
“Once We Stood In Condemnation”

Once we stood in condemnation waiting thus the sinner's doom, Christ in death hath wrought salvation, God has raised Him from the tomb.

Strangers then to God we lived, Filled with enmity and fear; Souls from death He has reprieved, Love revealed and brought us near.

Now we see in Christ's acceptance But the measure of our own; Him who lay beneath our sentence, Seated high upon the throne.

Quickened, raised, and in Him seated; We a full deliverance know; Every foe has been defeated, Every enemy laid low.

Now we have a life in union With the risen life above; Now we drink in sweet communion Some rich foretaste of His love.

Soon, O Lord, in brightest glory, All its vastness we’ll explore; Soon we’ll cast our crowns before Thee, Whilst we worship and adore.

George West Fraser, 1840-1896

Further Personal Study

1. Hebrews 10:16-36 addresses what it will look like for someone to live under the new covenant. What stipulation does each of the following verses present?

   Hebrews 10:18 _______________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   Hebrews 10:23 _______________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   Hebrews 10:24-25 ____________________________________________
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   ____________________________________________________________
   Hebrews 10:35 _______________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   Hebrews 10:36 _______________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
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2. This listing of the functions of the new covenant is couched between the benefits of those who keep covenant, and warning of what happens to those who break covenant. Life and death. List the benefits of keeping covenant:

   Hebrews 10:19-20 ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   Hebrews 10:21 _______________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   Hebrews 10:22b _____________________________________________
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   Hebrews 10:23a _____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   Hebrews 10:23b _____________________________________________
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3. Now list the perilous destruction that results from breaking covenant:

   Hebrews 10:26 _______________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   Hebrews 10:27 _______________________________________________
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   ____________________________________________________________
   Hebrews 10:28-29 ____________________________________________
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   ____________________________________________________________
   Hebrews 10:30-31 ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
Sin Taker: Shadows to Reality

Why the Book of Hebrews? To call back those who had heard and for a time embraced Christ’s reality, but reverted back to shadows. To cry out to those who receive knowledge of the truth, but willfully remain under shadows that can never forgive. We need Hebrews today more than ever.

• We live among myriads of religions that have adopted various portions and forms of the shadows. Some of their traditions tug at our hearts with their beautiful familiarity, and it feels sinful to neglect them. But the traditions are not able to remove sin; instead they deceive the adherent who is veritably denying and trampling on Jesus.

• We live in a sensual world where feelings and experiences have been elevated to reality. Faith in the facts of Christ’s reality receives less credence than experience and emotions. Many in even Bible teaching churches are guilty of this, probably all of us at some time. Jesus is the truth, the reality. In effect, when we elevate experience and feelings above God’s Word, we are denying and trampling on Jesus.

• We live in an easy part of the world, in America today. But persecution does abound. It presently belongs to Christians in many communistic countries around the world. And it’s coming here. Tolerance of sin is the cruellest taskmaster of all, as it denies and tramples on Christ.

Hebrews 10:32-36 is a plea to friends of the writer who have faced hard struggles, suffering, and public exposure to taunts and afflictions, or known others who’ve had those experiences. He begs them to endure, warning them against the peril of disloyalty to Christ and neglect of the church.

• We live amongst false teachers. We all have anarchic hearts that question and rebel against authority, and we all must confess our sin and fall under God’s authority. False teachers are those who bring others into rebellion with them, and convince the naive away from faithful loyalty to Christ and His church (Jude). False teachers who divide churches, while convincing others to believe they are for Christ, are in reality trampling on Christ.

• We live in a post-modern world. Postmodern culture is a system in which authority is undermined. The crisis of authority is in a way a bigger crisis than the crisis of truth, because the gospel is unimaginable without some concept and recognition of authority. Also, because Christ’s church is the face of the new covenant to which He mandates submission. (For more on the problem with authority, see Os Guinness, The Gravedigger File: Papers on the Subversion of the Modern Church.)

• We live in a consumeristic, pluralistic culture. Folks don’t bat an eyelash at shopping for a church, or at changing churches when the previous one seems a bit shabby. The word “pluralism” describes a culture that discards relationships as quickly as clothes (not to be confused with plurality; that is beautiful). That we are pluralistic is evidenced in how quickly we change a spouse, a job, a location, a house. Many children have multiple families during one childhood. Many folks remove themselves from a church family that is doing its best to follow and glorify Christ biblically, without regard for the loss. Pastors move on to a bigger or better church and leave folks to deal with the shrapnel (placing the fate of that church into the hands of its search committee). We think nothing of trampling on Jesus in this way.

Truly, we need the warning of Hebrews more than ever. We chase comfort, based on experience and emotion. We lose sight of our desperate need for sacrifice of Christ, and so neglect His body. By forsaking the gathering of His body, we deny Christ and trample on Him. Please, take seriously the warning of the Book of Hebrews, against this horrific and treacherous danger.
Faith celebrates the reality of hope. Faith takes full assurance from Jesus’ blood sacrifice. Faith eagerly anticipates all the present and future blessings of being convinced Jesus Christ is real, and His sacrifice is all the reality we need. “Faith arises when a person lets himself be convinced by God, and so attains a certainty which is objectively grounded and which transcends all human possibilities in its reliability.”

Faith demonstrates the existence of reality that cannot be perceived through earthly senses such as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching. It is the faith of Christians who demonstrate conviction regarding unseen things, that shows people there is a reality. That reality is after the order of Melchizedek—more real than the shadows we can see/hear/smell/taste/touch, and without end, because death does not touch it. Faith is confident in the reality of God’s future timing.

And by this faith there is commendation. Validation. Attestation. Confirmation. People with faith are certain. They have had a one-on-one, personal encounter with God. They admit their sin and need for Jesus’ sacrifice. They submit to His priesthood and His kingship. He is their suffering Savior and their living Lord.

Everyone who celebrates this reality understands and accepts that God called creation into being “ex nihilo,” which means “from nothing.” By a word. The word. Living Word.

The writer of Hebrews catalogues “people of old who received commendation.” He shows how their lives took shape as they celebrated the reality that was unseen to them. And he shows how God commended them. Notice that, in this section, the people we’re studying existed prior to Israel—Abel, Enoch, and Noah.

ABEL WORSHIPED BY FAITH—Abel’s faith, not his spilled blood, speaks the important lesson. He teaches us that faith begins with a sacrifice for sin. We are all sinners worthy of death. We must plead with God for mercy and by faith accept His plan of forgiveness. God commended Abel by accepting his offered-up gifts, which are described as righteous, because of his faith. Cain also believed and brought an offering, but it was not according to the plan God had given them. You see, we don’t decide how to worship, God does. We must worship according to the reality of His Word—in spirit and truth. Not shadows and traditions.

ENOCH WALKED BY FAITH—Enoch enjoyed the pleasure of God. He believed without seeing, and rejoiced in relationship with God. God commended Enoch with the reward of ongoing life. Enoch teaches us that faith is necessary to please God and that the walk of faith takes pleasure in God. We must believe God exists, and we must enjoy God who rewards those who seek Him. To walk with faith in God is to enjoy Him.

NOAH WORKED BY FAITH—Noah’s faith showed. He paid attention to God’s warning. Faith has to do something to show itself real, and in Noah’s case God called for intelligent, illogical obedience. Noah’s obedience rebuked his world, ineffectively for his generation, but perhaps we will listen? His faith-based obedience saved his life. Christ’s obedience saves our lives, by faith that obeys.
Jesus Messiah is the Real Rewarder: Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows, such as worshiping like Abel, walking like Enoch, or working like Noah. Rather, faith must be placed fully in God’s existence and reward.

Discussion Questions

1. Creation  Since none of us were there, faith is a necessary aspect of how we understand creation. Faith is equally necessary for evolutionists. But, they give credit elsewhere that belongs to God, and that is blasphemy. Naturally those without faith in God try to explain our universe apart from faith in God, but tragically, even the church has allowed the subtle infiltration of science to override God’s Word. Read Colossians 2:8 and 1 Corinthians 2:9-10. Consider ways to be on guard and protect faith in God:

2. “Good People”  People who think of themselves as pretty good don’t confess sin, and therefore don’t cling desperately to Christ’s blood. Abel shed blood for his sacrifice, evidencing his admittance of needing a blood sacrifice for his sin, and God accepted the offering. We know that Cain didn’t kill an animal—rather he brought produce—and we know that Cain didn’t do it right. Many will talk about praying to God, but refuse to confess sin. How would you respond to folks who say, “When I received Christ, He forgave all my sin. I don’t need to confess any more”? 

3. Faith That Works  What is the difference between faith that works (like Noah) and faith plus works (as some religions teach)?

4. Pleasing God  Hebrews 11:6 teaches that we must have faith in God’s existence and in God’s rewarding of those who draw near and seek Him. What difference does it make to know that we can only please God by anticipating His reward when we pray and seek Him? What would stop us from taking pleasure in God?

“I guess that as long as there are massive mudslides in Washington, earthquakes in Chili, and droughts in California, we’re all consigned to keep paying attention to yet another mini-disaster: The incessant chatter of newscasters who used to blame all this on Mother Nature, and now are bold instead to hold climate change responsible. For serious Christians, though, such references should remind us of the unusual opportunities such events give us for saying straightforwardly that the doctrine of creation matters.

Those who hold to any form of flat creation are regularly made to feel as if they should also be speaking Elizabethan English...These days, even those who speak in tones of theistic evolution, or are so restrained that they publicly commit to nothing more than intelligent design, are regarded as retrograde throwback to simplistic thinking.

[Due to] the profound social taboo of allowing religion to contaminate a conversation... folks get so annoyed when the question is raised about the possibility that the Creator of the universe also occasionally rattles parts of that universe a bit. “Leave God out of this,” they insist. ...God gives us countless opportunities to witness to His greatness...Shame on us all for not taking the hint and using it more often as a springboard to a few more God-centered conversations.”

Joel Belz
Further Personal Study
As we study the difficult lives of these faithful men and the lessons they teach us, we will verify the OT lessons with NT Scriptures.

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In Genesis 9:20-21, what do we learn about Noah? How does Romans 4:5 help us understand that it was Noah’s faith rather than his works that credited God’s righteousness onto him?

4. Think about Hebrews 11:6. What two things must we believe in, if we would come near to God? What is the result of seeking God? ________________
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________________________________________________________________
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“There are many difficulties before us all. Stormy seas forbid our passage; frowning fortifications bar our progress; mighty kingdoms defy our power; lions roar against us; fire lights its flaming barricade in our path; the sword, the armies of the alien, mockings, scourgings, bonds, and imprisonment—all these menace our peace, darken our horizon, and try on us their power; but faith has conquered all these before, and it shall do as much again. We will laugh at impossibility; we will tread the shores of the seas, certain they must make us a way; we will enter the dens of wild beasts and the furnaces of flame, sure that they are impotent to injure us; we shall escape the edge of the sword, out of weakness become strong, turn to flight armies of aliens, and set at nought all the power of the enemy; and all because we believe in God. Reckon on God’s faithfulness. Look not at the winds and waves, but at his character and will. Get alone with him, steeping your heart and mind in his precious and exceeding great promises. Be obedient to the utmost limit of your light. Walk in the Spirit, one of whose fruits is faith. So shall you be deemed worthy to join this band, whose names and exploits run over from this page into the chronicles of eternity, and to share their glorious heritage.”

F. B. Meyers
Real Rewarder: Shadows to Reality

Faith is not just one thing we do to please God; it’s the whole enchilada. All the cartwheels and handstands in the world mean nothing without faith.

Our postmodern world has trouble getting a handle on faith. We’ve given reason, logic, and experience more validity than faith in God and His Word. People smile condescendingly, pat our heads, and say, “That’s the Bible, dear. I’m talking about real life.”

How did we get here? Well, if faith is the one thing that pleases God, it makes sense for Satan to send in the cavalry against it. Frances Schaeffer, a leading Christian thinker of the past century, masterfully explains what has happened in his book *How Should We Then Live: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture.* John MacArthur describes Schaeffer’s argument:

“We had a great movement in philosophy known as rationalism, which denied the very existence of the supernatural, including—especially including—God. Men...began systematically to undercut every supernatural doctrine or belief. A prime target was the Bible. Often in the name of biblical scholarship they contradicted, by supposed disproof, every supernatural claim of Scripture. They reduced all knowledge and reality to the area of natural reason, which dealt only with what the physical senses could observe and measure and with what the human mind could interpret on its own. Man became the measure of all things. Everything outside the sphere of man’s physical experience and intellectual understanding was denied or discounted.

But most men could not handle this radical explanation. Even from a human perspective, it left too much uncounted for. It made man nothing more than part of a huge, meaningless machine. Some philosophers... decided to make a place for the supernatural by putting it in a different order of reality than the everyday world. This “upper story” as Schaeffer describes it, is thought not to be knowable in the same way that the lower, earthly level is knowable. It is experienced only by a “leap of faith.” Because it supposedly cannot really be known, every man is free to make of the supernatural what he wants. He can believe in a “Wholly Other” kind of god...or he can simply believe in believing, have faith in faith. But what is believed has no definite content, no definite reality, no definite truth. To use a phrase from Schaeffer again, it is an “escape from reason”—the opposite extreme from that of rationalism. Both of these philosophies, of course, are escapes from the true God.

Relativism can lead nowhere but to meaninglessness and despair, which many proponents of this philosophy realized and acknowledged. But they insisted that this is all there is to the world, to life, to man, and that we therefore have to make the best of it

God is the only answer. Only God who made men can ever satisfy men. Only the God who made reason can make life reasonable. Only the God who made the universe can show man any purpose in it. Since Adam, some men have believed in God and believed what He said. For them life has been meaningful; it has had assurance, substance, confidence. They did not make a blind leap of faith, but put their faith in a future reality that, because of their faith, God made certain and sure for them.”

I (Ruth) grew up with parents whose faith in God sustained them well, to their last breath. In spite of it, for a time I chose to be influenced by the above-described philosophies. I remember well the day, with Frances Schaeffer’s book open on my lap, that I realized the life and death decision before me. God opened my eyes to the reality that His Word is absolute truth, and that day His Word began to order my every breath. I pray that for you too, belief in God is your reason for living. May certain faith be our reality, together, forever.
At least he had family back in Ur. But when God calls a man of faith, he’s not deterred by a strange land or an uncertain future. So Abraham rose up, answered the call to uncertainty, and receives press time for faith. All the while, his eyes were on a certain city—transcendent, unshakable, real—designed and created by God.

With Sarah shrunken old, and his own body as good as dead, Abraham had the faith to make love, and descendents. Oh, my stars, the descendents! Enough to make you laugh. Sarah too, until nine months later when Isaac (means he laughs) ripped through her body.

The writer interjects a commentary in verses 13-16. They died, he says, without seeing that for which they’d hoped. They hadn’t, he means, hoped for what they could see. Really they’d been hoping and longing for a better country, a certain city. Which is why God wasn’t ashamed of them, having prepared “for them a city.”

The writer wants to pull his apathetic friends out of their shadowy comforts, to kick them into longing for reality. Sure enough, we know God brought them around, at least some of them. A few hundred years later, a writer named Mathetes wrote this about Christians: “They dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners; they bear their share of all responsibilities as citizens, and they endure all hardships as strangers. Every foreign country is a homeland to them, and every homeland is foreign....Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven.”

This testing of Abraham’s faith was no pussyfoot business. Abraham offered Isaac, laughter, back to God. That, my friends, was terrifying, fierce, real faith. Faith that knew obedience to God could bring life from no life, and he would trust Him to do it again.

Later Isaac blessed Jacob, and Jacob blessed Joseph. And Joseph made sure his bones were brought back to where God had sent Abraham, after he and Sarah left family behind in Ur. A circle of faith.

Next up, brave parents with a beautiful baby who grew up in a palace, but gave up those pleasures. Denying pleasure and riches, Moses preferred God’s people—then a poor, oppressed, and discouraged nation. Do you hear it, dear friends? There will be reproach and ill-treatment and fear of others’ anger, but you can overcome. Moses kept his eyes on the unseen, certain reality, and so can we.

By faith, Moses obeyed the God of Israel, and He protected them from the Destroyer. By faith, Israel followed Moses across the Red Sea on dry ground, around the city that fell without a battle. Of course, we’ve seen in Hebrews 3 that between those two events, the nation hardened their hearts and rebelled, but when they obeyed by faith, God intervened and saved them. And God intervened to save Rahab the prostitute, who by faith risked her life for a friendly welcome to His people.

Each person listed, beginning in verse four, has two things in common. First, enduring faith. Second, some form of death, perishings, or killing danger. The writer is encouraging the Hebrews, and us, to endure in faith to the death.
Jesus Messiah is our Certain City: Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows, such as the comfortable traditions held by men and women of faith. Rather, faith welcomes uncertainty on earth because of Christ’s certainty.

Discussion Questions

1. **Obedience**  Obedient to God characterized each person who is listed in Hebrews 11 as an example of faith. Yet we know that we are saved by faith alone. Romans 5:8-10 makes it clear that obedience is not a preceding factor in saving faith. Discuss this statement: “Saving faith always becomes obedient faith.”

2. **Pilgrims and Sojourners**  Just as when Abraham left Ur, when we become people of faith in God we leave our old world. 1 Peter 2:11 describes us as pilgrims and strangers. Discuss ways to encourage one another to live in faith as a pilgrim and sojourner:

3. **Dying Well**  Review the writer’s interjection of Hebrews 11:13-16. The faith of Christians is not based on health or wealth here on earth, but rather God’s promises of heaven. Why is this such an important aspect of faith?

4. **A Far Better Country**  Discuss practical ways to desire heaven more, and to keep our thoughts on heaven (Colossians 3:1-4).

“Though the grace of faith is of universal use throughout our whole lives, yet it is especially so when we come to die. Faith has its greatest work to do at last, to help believers to finish well, to die to the Lord, so as to leave a witness behind them of the truth of God’s word and the excellency of his ways.”

Matthew Henry
Further Personal Study

1. Abraham: Read Hebrews 11:8-19, and notice ways Abraham is a standard setter when it comes to faith. What does Genesis 15:6 tell us about Abraham’s faith? _____________________________________________________________

Genesis provides a narrative of Abraham’s life experiences, but here in Hebrews we are given insight into his thought processes. What did he fix his thoughts on? (Hebrews 11:13-16)? _____________________________________________________________

What does Colossians 3:1-3 tell us to set our minds on? _____________________________________________________________

What does 2 Timothy 2:3-4 tell us not to set our minds on? _____________________________________________________________

2. Isaac, Jacob, & Joseph: Read Hebrews 11:20-22. What portion of these three men’s lives is implied or referred to by the writer of Hebrews? How do their dying acts reveal faith in the promises of God? ____________________________________________________________________________


Faith rejects what the world considers very attractive. Faith also accepts what the world runs from. What did Moses accept because of faith? _____________________________________________________________

4. Israel: Read Hebrews 11:30. We’ve seen how the previous generation did not believe. How did the generation described here evidence faith? How might faith require illogical obedience on your part? ____________________________________________________________________________

5. Rahab: Read Hebrews 11:31. Note that the last person described in detail differs from the others—as a Gentile, and as a woman. But there’s no fuss about her race, her gender, or her profession. To whom did she show kindness and what was the result? How would this encourage the Hebrew readers who were wavering in faithfulness? ____________________________________________________________________________
Certain City: Shadows to Reality

I do not suppose it was easy for Abraham to leave Ur. Why not? Well, for one thing it meant rejecting the system of worship under which he’d grown up.

Abraham grew up worshiping idols.

- The Bible definitively states that God called Abraham while he was part of an idol worshiping family. When Joshua preaches his swan-song sermon to the Israelites, he begins by reminding them of the religion from which Abraham moved.

  “And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac’. Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24:2-3,14)

- Isaiah points out that the Jews were “dug out of a pit.” The point of this passage is that there was nothing in the ancestry of Abraham and Sarah that would have indicated interest in the real God.

  “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him.” (Isaiah 51:1-2)

- In Genesis 31, we see that, among Abraham’s descendants, there were still those who cherished his religion of origin at least three generations after God called Him. The following story of Abraham’s grandson, Jacob, is told by James Montgomery Boice:

  “Jacob was a schemer—even his name means “supplanter”—and his underhandedness made his brother angry enough to want to kill him. Jacob was forced to flee for his life. Where was he to go? Jacob did what many people do when they are cast adrift by life—he went back to his roots. For Jacob, that was in Mesopotamia, the place from which his grandfather Abraham had come. There Jacob associated himself with his uncle Laban. In time, he married both of Laban’s daughters, Leah and Rachel, and came to own a large share of the family’s sheep and cattle.

  As time passed, bad feelings arose between Jacob and Laban, Jacob decided to return to the land of Canaan, choosing a moment when Laban was away on business. When Laban returned, his nephew, his daughters, and much of the property were gone.

  The household gods also were missing. Laban set out in pursuit. When he overtook the band that Jacob was leading, he chided Jacob for this action and accused him of having stolen the idols. A search was made but the idols were not found. Jacob’s wife, Rachel, who had stolen them, had hidden them in her camel’s saddle.”

Many strongholds of organized “religion” attempt to mingle the old covenant shadows with new covenant realities. They call themselves “Christian” but their faith is in a system of works, rather than faith in the Savior of mercy. Cast off shadows for reality. Flee idolatries for worship of the One True God. Sojourn in temporary countries with eyes set on the Certain City. The eternal city, Zion, the city of God.
An explosion of names fires at us in rapid succession. The common story is of flawed, imperfect people of faith who confronted their sins and served the Lord.

**Gideon the Judge:** Crushed the attacking Midianite coalition, after sending home 99% of his army, by faith (Judges 6-8).

**Barak the Judge:** Needed the encouragement of a godly woman to lead Israel to victory over Sisera’s deadly army, by faith (Judges 4-5).

**Samson the Judge:** Foolhardily defended Israel from the Philistines, but in the end he learned the prayerful dependence of faith (Judges 13-15).

**Jephthah the Judge:** Bravely commanded the Israelite tribes against uprising Ammonites, and even his tragic too-rash vow evidenced faith in God (Judges 10-11).

**David the King:** The Bible chronicles the depth and scope of his complete dependence on God, as well as his sinfulness. His psalms reveal a heart of repentance and praise, by faith.

**Samuel the Prophet and Judge:** Last of the judges, and leader of a prophetic guild (1 Samuel 19:20), he interceded at Mitzpah that the Israelites could subdue the Philistine, by faith.

**The Prophets:** Well, the writer is too rushed to name them, but he lists their braveries. First, rescue incidents in which faith shone. Then, occasions of martyrdom caused by faith. Men “of whom the world was not worthy,” who earn the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

History lessons are fine, but this is not one. The list of prophets is a plea of encouragement to the church as she faces a second round of suffering and possible martyrdom. We know they’d already experienced plundering of their property, hard struggle with sufferings, and public exposure to reproach and affliction (Hebrews 10:32-34). The writer has skillfully crafted his message to a church enduring crisis of faith. He knows that a heart strengthened to endure suffering and death is a heart that beats with faith. With this heightened appeal to faith, he longs to intensify their resolve of faithfulness.

The closing sentence wraps it up. It’s for you, he says. It’s because of you that God hasn’t completely fulfilled the better promise that motivated those in the list of biblical heroes. Yet. The better promise, the perfect resurrection, is still to come. And why is God deferring it? Because of you! So you can share in it too, together with all the Christians.

So church, sit a little straighter. Smile through your trial. There’s good company waiting for you. The reason Christ has not returned yet is because He wants you to be among those “eagerly awaiting His coming” (Hebrews 9:28). Wow. Go ahead, say it loud. And why not do a few cartwheels. Or at least, wake up tomorrow morning remembering the reality that overshadows earthly trials, and hum a little hymn.
Jesus Messiah is the Better Promise: Therefore, Hebrews refutes the exalting of prophets and martyrs, or earth’s perceived safeties. Rather, faith exalts Christ and opportunities to suffer like Him.

Discussion Questions

1. Faith in Action As we consider the list of faithful men in Hebrews 11, we see that they were men of action, who purposed, planned, prepared, and worked hard! How are preparations and hard work not opposed to faith? How can we know that results are from God, rather than hard work?

2. Enough Faith Hebrews 11 teaches us that it is wrong to accuse someone of not having enough faith when things go badly for them. What difference does it make to know that God is sovereign and in control (Acts 17:24-27), even when our lives appear to be or feel as if they are spinning out of control?

3. Not Rescued Read Hebrews 11:35-38. The folks who endured these things had faith, and yet they were not delivered. What are some reasons God doesn’t always rescue us from our suffering?

4. Lack Faith? Hebrews 11:34 says they “were made strong out of weakness.” Discuss how weakness and trials combine to build faith:

“When you can have it all, faith says that God is better; and when you lose it all, faith says God is better.”

John Piper

“Batter my heart, three person’d God; for, you As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend; That I may rise, and stand, o’erthrow me, and bend Your force, to break, blowe, burn and make me new. I, like an usurpt town, to’another due, Labour to’admit you, but Oh, to no end, Reason your viceroy in me, me should defend, But is captiv’d, and proves weak or untrue. Yet dearely’I love you, and would be loved fain, But am betroth’d unto your enemy: Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again; Take me to you, imprison me, for I Except you’ enthrall me, never shall be free, Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.”

John Donne (1572-1631)
Further Personal Study

We can’t be certain who is in the writer’s mind when he lists the deeds of men and women of faith in Hebrews 11:33-38. However, the following examples “put skin on” the first section of accomplishments:

1. CONQUERED KINGDOMS—We could consider any of the battles in Joshua or Judges until the time when Israel covered the most land in 1 Kings 4:20-21. Describe the conquered kingdom:

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________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. ENFORCED JUSTICE—How does Samuel describe the integrity of his governmental administration in 1 Samuel 12:3-5, 23?

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________________________________________________________________________
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3. OBTAINED PROMISES—List the promised blessings gained by Gideon in Judges 6:12-15, 7:7; Barak in Judges 4:6-7, 14, Samson in Judges 13:5, and David in 2 Samuel 7:11:

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4. STOPPED THE MOUTHS OF LIONS—How is this accomplishment described in Daniel 6:23?

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5. QUENCHED THE POWER OF FIRE—Did Daniel’s friends have any assurance they would be delivered in Daniel 3:17-18, and did that matter to them?

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6. ESCAPED THE EDGE OF THE SWORD—Describe how this type of escape was experienced by Elijah from Jezebel in 1 Kings 19:1-3, by Elisha from Jehoram in 2 Kings 6:26-32, and Jeremiah from Jehoiakim in Jeremiah 26:7-24:

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7. WERE MADE STRONG OUT OF WEAKNESS—How does this phrase refer to Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:4?

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________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

8. BECAME MIGHTY IN WAR, PUT FOREIGN ARMIES TO FLIGHT—How did Samuel experience this reality in 1 Samuel 7:5-14?

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________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

9. RECEIVED BACK THEIR DEAD BY RESURRECTION—One example of this is in 2 Kings 4:18-37. How does the Shunammite woman evidence faith in vs 22-26?

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“If you are one of those plants which seldom bloom with bunches of bright flowers, but have your blossoms hidden and concealed, be not disquieted. If you are never mirthful and seldom able to call yourself joyful—the only cure for depression is faith! Settle this in your heart—“Whether I am up or down, the Lord Jesus Christ is the same. Whether I sing, or whether I sigh, the promise is true and the Promiser is faithful. Whether I stand on Tabor’s summit, or am hidden in the vale of Baca, the Covenant stands fast and everlasting love abides.” Be assured, beyond all questioning, that he that believes in the Lord Jesus is not condemned! Believe in Him, though you see no flashes of delight nor sparkles of joy. We are safe because we are in the City of Refuge—not because we are, in ourselves, ill or well. If you will stand firm in Christ Jesus, even in your weakness you will be made strong.”

Charles H. Spurgeon
Better Promises: Shadows to Reality

It’s truly an understatement: Faith in God did not buy the faithful prophet an easy life.

- Some were tortured. In one form of torture utilized at the time “a person was stretched out on a rack, and then his taught stomach was beaten as one beats a drum, until the muscle-walls collapsed, and death occurred from internal injuries.” Those referenced in Hebrews 11 had experienced the dangling carrot of freedom, but in faith chose the “rack.”

- Some experienced mocking/jeering and scourging/lashing. The price of inhumane verbal abuse costs a man his reputation, and often his career. Jeremiah describes the indignity of his own public beating and cruel imprisonment in Jeremiah 20:2, 7-8, 37:15-16, 18-20.


- History records that Isaiah died while being sawed in two. Very likely word had traveled, that the Romans also stretched men across sawhorses to saw them in two.

- Not all prophets escaped the sword. Uriah, the prophet, tried to flee to Egypt, but was struck down with the sword in Jeremiah 26:20-23.

- If they didn’t suffer violent death, many prophets lived in a deprived state. Hence they are often depicted as homeless wanderers. The old Sunday School pictures place prophets outside cave openings, wearing animal skins. As if that was their choice. While destitution, affliction, and mistreatment were not their preference, at any cost they chose faith.

Consider our contemporary martyrs:

- Christian prisoners in North Korea suffered unspeakable death in such unity that their love for one another won fellow jail mate Soon Ok Lee to Christ. Read her story in Eyes of the Tailless Animals. Be warned, it is terrifying.

- 78 Christians killed in the suicide bombings at All Saints Church in Peshawar, Pakistan on Sept. 22, 2013.

- Countless Muslim attacks on Christians, such as a news-source report of December 14, 2013 that the four children of a Syrian Christian preacher were slaughtered because he refused to stop preaching the Gospel.

Realize that this list of horrors, this martyr catalogue, is a shadow. A shadow whose reality turns out to be glory; glory that eclipses persecution’s suffering.

My (Ruth) parents grew up under the shadow of persecution, having emigrated from the Ukraine to escape the Gulag death sentence that Lenin and Stalin enforced upon those who remained. I heard hushed tales of terror, endured by courageous ones who dared speak of faith in God. It instilled a sense that faith meant a willingness to pay the price. As a child, I often lay awake and prayed for courage to remain loyal to God, whatever price faith might demand.

Faith raises generations for whom reality is worth slander, scourging, suffering, being sawed in two. We live in a shadow-land where persecution will cast increasing suffering on generations to come. But glorious reality is the true future for all who eagerly wait (Philippians 3:20, 2 Timothy 4:8, Galatians 5:5). Faith in God does not demand present well-being, rather it celebrates with full certainty the reality of God’s promise for future glory.

“‘So what shall we do? How shall we keep our hearts in heaven? Make a regular practice of your life to consider the prophets of old who were persecuted and killed for the cause of God and righteousness. Turn to Hebrews 11:36–38 and read how by faith they suffered...Go often to these great men and women of old and get inside their hearts. Put yourself on the rack with them and learn how to love heaven with them. Listen as they say, ‘Abuse suffered for the Christ is greater wealth than all the treasures of Egypt, for we look to the reward.’”

John Piper

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

Jim Elliot
“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.”

Hebrews 12:1-13

Enduring Champion

Just when we wonder if he’s exhausted the topic of faith, the writer of Hebrews amps it up. “Faith can become hope,” he says, “and here’s how.” You need to remain in the race of faith, and it’s going to require persevering through painful discipline.

- Run with endurance (verses 1-3).
- Endure tough discipline (verses 4-11).
- Stay on the race’s path (verses 12-13).

Three things about discipline:

- Discipline is necessary for son-ship (verses 7-8).
- There’s an appropriate response to discipline (verse 9).
- When people persevere in responding properly to the discipline, eventually they will enjoy the benefits of the discipline (verses 10-11).

What will motivate these fearful, questioning second generation Christians to endure? Their eyes, like ours, must be on Jesus.

“The founder and perfecter of our faith.” Those words are concise in a manner dense and rich, pregnant with meaning, relevant to a race. Read each of the following possible translations slowly. Let the meaning sink in:

- The Prince of our faith, who is also its perfect example.
- The only Originator and Finisher of all things.
- The Exemplary Player, who is also Trainer and Chief of the games.
- The Initiator and Head of the rank and file in the order of faith, and the one who brought faith to its ultimate expression.
- “The One in whom faith has reached its perfection, who strode ahead of all believers and led faith to its definitive end.”
- The Pioneer and Perfecter of faith (NIV).
- The Champion who initiates and perfects our faith (NLT).
- The Author and Perfecter of faith (NASB).
- The Source and Perfecter of our faith (HCSB).
- The Author and Finisher of our faith (KJB).

It’s a hostile world out there. We, like the Hebrews, are prone to weariness and faint-heartedness. But don’t miss the quick slap in the face as you read the ironic “endured from sinners such hostility against himself.” It was our sin, our rebellion, our murderous spirits that nailed the bruised and beaten Savior to the cross. Do we have the nerve to compare attacks or hostilities against us with what Christ endured?

Still, our difficulties have meaning. Yes, it’s possible to become wearied and weakened by hostility, but we must endure. Why? Adversity and hardship are God’s fatherly method of instilling faithful obedience.

Our magnanimously merciful Savior not only allows us to identify with Him in suffering, but also trains us by it. Embrace the discipline of suffering. Be driven into the dust of repentance. Be ground down all the way to glory. Stay true to the path whatever the cost. We’ll know it’s enough when folks who are watching us see hope and hear only joy as we imitate our enduring Champion, Jesus Christ.
Jesus Messiah is the Enduring Champion:
Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows, such as perfect performance. Rather, faith exalts hope gained through discipline that trains in holiness.

Discussion Questions

1. Run with Endurance What could become “weight” (inconsistency, indulgence) that is not necessarily sin, but which we may need to lay aside in order to run with endurance? ________________________________________________________________
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____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. Bloody Hebrews 12:4 follows a description of those who have been “stoned, sawed in two, and killed with the sword.” At this time in our country, most Christians are not enduring torture and execution. And so we can always find someone in a worse state than ours. What should that encourage us toward, and how? ________________________________________________________________
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____________________________________________________________________
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3. Fatherly Discipline How can those who have not had an earthly father who provided loving discipline, respect God’s fatherly discipline? ________________________________________________________________
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4. Healing Drooping arms and weak knees make us think of someone who is depressed, discouraged, and despairing. Someone not able to run the race well. Discuss ways in which we as a body can help those in such a condition: ________________________________________________________________
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____________________________________________________________________

“...If you have a general undefined feeling of discouragement, it is probably the work of the great enemy of souls; but if you are aware of some one hindrance and encumbrance which stays your speed, it is almost certainly the result of the work of the Divine Spirit, who is leading you to relinquish something that is slackening your progress in the spiritual life.”
F. B. Meyers

“The trial was not as severe as it could have been. It was not as severe as I deserve. And, my Savior suffered far worse for me.”
A. W. Pink
Hardship and affliction are disciplines which God uses to shape, train, and mature His children. His discipline provides consequences for wrongdoing and prevents further wrongdoing. But there is a vast difference between God’s fatherly discipline and His judgmental punishment. Fatherly discipline leads to growth, and judgmental punishment ends in eternal hell.

1. When David sinned with Bathsheba, God disciplined David. In 2 Samuel 12:10, what was the result of David’s sin?

   In 1 Chronicles 22:8, why was David not permitted to build the Temple?

   The consequences that God provided for David’s wrongdoing served to make him a better man. In Psalm 51, we see that David responded well to God’s discipline. In Acts 13:22, how does God refer to David?

2. In 2 Corinthians 12:7, God sent a messenger of Satan to “buffet” Paul, and prevent him from becoming proud. Read 2 Corinthians 12:8-10, write down Paul’s response, personalizing the words to make it your response:

   There is a necessary relationship between suffering and God’s fatherhood over us that includes His discipline. Forgetfulness is one of the problems that stops us from embracing discipline, and from enduring with gratitude. The Hebrews needed a reminder to pay attention to the written Word of God, and so do we.

3. Write down the similarities between Hebrews 12:5-6 and Proverbs 3:11-12. What lesson must we remember?

4. Write down the similarities between Hebrews 12:12 and Isaiah 35:3-4. What lesson must we remember?

5. Write down the similarities between Hebrews 12:13, Proverbs 3:5-6, and Proverbs 4:25-27. What lesson must we remember?
Enduring Champion: Shadows to Reality

What tools does God use to discipline His children?

- Unreasonable, unjust accusations
- Obstinate, relentless enemies
- Cutting malice
- Crushing pain
- Killing cruelty

These are the realities that it pleased Him to watch His Son endure (Isaiah 53).

What are the tools of your discipline? Should they be any less than our Savior endured? Endure is the Greek word “hupomone.” It means “remain under.” It means continuing even when everything in you cries, “Quit.” It is steady determination that never bails out and never buckles under.

Are you enduring? Or, are your knees weak and your arms hanging down?

When I (Bob) entered the National Hockey League as a player, I had already experienced several shoulder separations. Normally, such an injury would require a brace to hold the shoulder straight in its place.

Hebrews 12:13 says, “and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.”

However, for my first four years in the league, I was part of a team where playing through pain and injury was admired. When I would re-injure my shoulder, instead of constraining it so that it could heal, doctors would shoot a steroid or pain block into the joint. Thus, the pain would not be felt, and the joint would have normal mobility. The injury never caused me to miss a game, because I covered up the pain.

In the long run, however, covering up the pain was not a straight path. It ended my career, as tendons and ligaments weakened and frayed until they could no longer hold my shoulder in place. Prior to the shoulder’s reconstruction, the shoulder would often pop out of the socket when I pulled a shirt over my head. Many times I would wake in the night with a shoulder dislocation. What was lame was nearly permanently put out of joint. Our society has embraced pain-killing and emotion-numbing drugs as a solution to painful emotions. Yes, drugs mask the pain, but do they also fray “tendons?” Is the short term solution a long term danger?

When God’s discipline hits—don’t run, don’t yield to discouragement, don’t mope about in dejection, and don’t mask the pain and the lessons it may need to teach you. Welcome it. Embrace it. It is proof of your sonship.

Allow God’s discipline to work. Let unreasonable men produce patience in us. Let the cutting voice of malice carve gentleness into us. Let pain crush us into peace. Welcome it. Embrace it. It is God working in you.

Consider that the reality of God’s discipline and punishment is that He laughs at our enemies (Psalm 37:13). The afterward reality of discipline is this: laughter and joy, blessing and growth. If God laughs, how dare we cry?

He will kiss away every tear. He will calm every anguish. He will ease every pain. He will chase away every sorrow. He will still every sigh. The shadows will become reality on that day when we see Him face to face, when faith becomes sight. As you endure, remember that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.”

“Some Christians are preoccupied with themselves. They may not be selfish or egotistical, but they pay too much attention to what they are doing, to the mechanics of running. There is a place for such concern, but if we focus on ourselves, we will never run well for the Lord...If our focus is truly on Jesus Christ, we will see everything else in its right perspective.”

John MacArthur
Hebrews 12:14-29

“Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no ‘root of bitterness’ springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.”

For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.” Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.” But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”

See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful and hope that God offers us a response. Only thankful, reverent worshipers will survive God’s ultimate shake-down, only those whom the blood of Christ has cleansed, only those who live to serve God (Hebrews 9:14).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHADOW - Mt. Sinai</th>
<th>REALITY - Mt. Zion</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hebrews 12:18-21</td>
<td>fear</td>
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<td>have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire</td>
<td>God is there but unapproachable.</td>
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<td>darkness and gloom and a tempest</td>
<td>Violent effects of God’s presence obscure Him.</td>
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<tr>
<td>sound of trumpet</td>
<td>A blast of trumpet heralds the law at Mt. Sinai.</td>
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<td>the voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken</td>
<td>The nation Israel trembles and begs for mercy, but mercy only comes through Christ.</td>
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<td>could not endure the order that was given</td>
<td>God’s message is not endured, but rejected.</td>
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<td>so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.” (as of burning bush on Mt. Sinai)</td>
<td>Old covenant—based on fear and terror.</td>
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<td>the blood of Abel</td>
<td>New covenant—based on love’s perfect mediation.</td>
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<td>Life, by love’s sacrifice.</td>
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| Hebrews 12:22-24 | Joyful, festive, celebration before God. |
| have come to Mt. Zion, city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem | innumerable angels in festal gathering |
|                      | assembly of the firstborn, faithful like Christ the firstborn in 1:6, and unlike Esau in 12:16-17—those who are enrolled in heaven |

Those who endure in faith and hope become instruments of God’s grace. To whom? The weak, the spiritually exhausted, the emotionally troubled, the immorally tearful, those searching for the straight path (Hebrews 12:13). The church’s responsibility toward the struggling is laid out clear and plain in Hebrews 12:1-17. And why? To see the Lord. To offer God acceptable worship.

In Hebrews 12:18-29, the writer takes the idea of “seeing the Lord” on a roller coaster ride. Down, down, down into the shadow of the old, that which will shake away. BETTER, MUCH BETTER, MUCH MUCH BETTER into the reality of the new, which will never be shaken. Hear the stern, serious call to loyal allegiance and obedience. Do not refuse the unshakable reality, the consuming fire. Stay clear of Esau’s attitude of rejecting God that caused being rejected by God.

The brilliant, catchy, rhythmic cadence that rang through the word pictures contrasting seven of the shadows and realities is lost in the translation. But still the differences strike our hearts with warning and hope: God has spoken, as introduced in Hebrews 1:1-4. There is one acceptable response. Only thankful, reverent worshipers will survive God’s ultimate shake-down, only those whom the blood of Christ has cleansed, only those who live to serve God (Hebrews 9:14).
Jesus Messiah is our Sprinkled Blood:
Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows, such as Mt. Sinai and the blood of Abel.
Rather, faith exalts Mt. Zion and Christ’s blood.

Discussion Questions

1. Two Destructive Defilements In Hebrews 12:15, we read that bitterness stops the flow of grace, and defiles many. Why is bitterness so problematic? Who are the “many” it defiles?  

   In Hebrews 12:16-17, we read how Esau was unable to repent from his selfish immorality and godless craving. Why is the warning for these sins so serious? (Consider 1 Corinthians 6:18):

2. Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion Typically, heaven is compared with hell. Interestingly, in Hebrews 12:18-24, the contrast is between heaven (Mt. Zion) and its shadow (Mt. Sinai). This contrast is tucked between two segments of relational teaching: Hebrews 12:15-17 where we are taught to interact with others in peaceful morality, and Hebrews 13 where we are taught more practical aspects regarding human interaction. Why would the writer interject relational teachings with a grand summary of the difference between the fear-driven law (Mt. Sinai) and the grace-driven gospel (Mt. Zion)?

3. A Better Word Compare the results of Abel’s death (Genesis 4) with the result of Christ’s death. Discuss what is meant by “sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”

4. Consuming Fire God is described as a consuming fire in many passages. Here in Hebrews 12, this truth is brought to bear as motivation to listen to what God has spoken. If we turn back to religions based on Mt. Sinai, only judgment of fire awaits. How can we encourage, toward Mt. Zion, those who are lured and enticed by religions based on shadows—be the shadows priests, traditions, and/or rituals?

“Holiness is not optional for the Christian...If we do not have at least a desire, a yearning, a fight for holiness, then we ought to wonder if we are saved.

Holiness is Spirit-powered. The same Spirit present at creation is at work in your being, giving you a heart that wants to resist sin and a will that can resist sin. The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us to give life to our mortal bodies (Rm. 8:11).

Holiness is gospel-driven. The gospel drives us to godliness out of a sense of gratitude...[and] by telling us the truth about who we are. Pursuit of holiness starts with embracing our identity in Christ.

Holiness is also faith-fueled. The faith in justification rests and receives. The faith in sanctification wills and works. God saved you from wrath, God saves you unto holiness, and He will save you for glory.”

Kevin De Young

Warning #5: You shall not turn back to comfortable shadows from the reality of Christ.

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Further Personal Study

1. In Hebrews 12:15, we are warned about the defilement of bitterness. That warning echoes Deuteronomy 29:17-18. Rewrite these passages in your own words, as a personal warning to yourself: ________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. In Hebrews 12:16, we read how Esau sold his birthright as a first-born. Read about it in Genesis 25:29-34. What are the firstborn rights described in Genesis 27:36? ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

   In Exodus 4:22-23, how does God refer to the Israelites? __________________________
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   ________________________________________________________________
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   In Hebrews 1:6, what title is given to Jesus? __________________________
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   Hebrews 12:23 talks about the assembly of the firstborn as enrolled eternally in heaven, by relationship with Jesus. Remember Christ came first for the Jews (Romans 1:16). The new covenant is the fulfillment of the old covenant promise that through the Jews, the whole earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:2-3).

3. Hebrews 12:18 says that we “have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire...” Read Exodus 19:10-25, and describe the penalty of death for touching Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:12-13): __________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
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4. We have not come to “a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.” Read Deuteronomy 4:11, 5:22-26, and describe the voice of God that made hearers beg for silence: ________________
   ________________________________________________________________
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5. God is described as a consuming fire in Deuteronomy 4:23-24, Deuteronomy 9:3, Isaiah 30:27-30, and other passages. This truth is used by the writer of Hebrews to motivate acceptable worship, which he goes on to explain practically in Hebrews 13. Rewrite one of the above passages, and make it a prayer by which you ask God to help you love others faithfully: __________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
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   ________________________________________________________________

“F. B. Meyers

“A room or public building may be full of delicious sunlight. But that sunlight is not the property of the room. It does not belong to it. You cannot congratulate it upon its possession. For when the shadows of evening gather, and curtain the face of the sun, the chamber is as dark as possible. It is light only so long as the sun dwells in it. So the human spirit has no holiness apart from God...

Give self no quarter. It is always asserting itself in one or other of its Protean shapes. Do not expect to be rid of it. Even if you say you have conquered it, then it lurks beneath the smile of your self-complacency. It may show itself in religious pride, in desire to excel in virtue, in the satisfaction with which we hear ourselves remarked for our humility. It will need incessant watchfulness, because where self is there God cannot come. He will not share his glory with another. When we are settling down to slumber, we may expect the cry, “Thine enemy is upon thee;” for it will invade our closets and our places of deepest retirement.”

F. B. Meyers
Sprinkled Blood: Shadows to Reality

Be warned, God has spoken. He will not speak again. He warned us from the earth, through Jesus. He warns us now from heaven. His next move is to shake things up, once and for all. We beg you, on that day earth dissolves, don’t be found in the shadows. Rather, live grateful for heaven’s unshakable reality, and worship Him in the ways He accepts, by the new covenant (Hebrews 12:25-29).

Please, catch sight of the glory and wonder and amazing transcendence of the real. Our vision is so dim, especially if we live deep in the shadows and have been deceived to think that the shadows lead to God. We need to see what is real, and even one glimpse will be enough to persuade us. Consider the seven realities of Hebrews 12:18-24:

1. THE CITY OF THE LIVING GOD, THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM, MT. ZION—There is nothing abstract or contingent about it. It is the place of heavenly sanctuary, eternal dignity, ongoing life, blessed rest. Here the living God invites us, not to be guests, but to be firstborn.

   The alternative? A blazing hell fire without relief, without even one iota of happiness ever again.

2. THE MASSIVE GATHERING OF ANGELS, ETERNAL FESTIVITY, PRAISE, FERVENT JOY, CELEBRATORY WORSHIP—The stress is on numbers. There have been demons on earth, but there are twice as many angels in heaven. And they are celebrating beautiful victory, won by the sacrificial Lamb, the darling of Heaven, crucified to death and raised to life, victorious over sin and death, bringing His blood-bought army home.

   The flip side? Darkness and gloom and a tempest.

3. THE ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRSTBORN ENROLLED PERMANENTLY IN HEAVEN—A crowd of redeemed believers. Mt. Sinai no longer separates the angels and the people of God. The real song we’ve always wanted to sing is now being sung, and we are all singing it and it is perfect and it is unending. It’s the song that began to rise in our hearts the day our names were inscribed forever in the Lamb’s Book of Life. The song we began humming the day we started our faithful journey together with the Firstborn. It’s the song of those that endure. The song Esau never sang.

   The other choice? Rejecting the sound of the trumpet that heralds Christ return.

4. GOD THE JUDGE OF ALL—Literally, “To a Judge who is God of all.” The Creator Judge cannot be disregarded or ignored. Those joyful in His presence are those who accept and welcome His governing, sovereign scrutiny and judgment.

   Or? Trampling the blood of Jesus results in terrifying expectation of judgment (Hebrews 10:26-29). Those who reject Him experience the horror of falling into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31).

5. THE SPIRITS OF THE RIGHTEOUS MADE PERFECT—The only perfect One, the Judge of all, died for us to give us His perfection. This “making perfect” is not intrinsic or earned; it is the imputed righteousness of Christ by His sacrificial cleansing. Therefore, we intimately enjoy the presence of Almighty God, lacking nothing that will ever hinder us from an on-going, steady relationship with Him.

   The antithesis? An unspeakable alternative for those who do not endure, or persevere. Hell.

6. TO JESUS THE MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT—A new and better and perfect covenant. His redemptive death and resurrection provide all that is needed.

   The contrast? Tremble in fear. Because you did not hear the message of the shadows, you will never again receive shadows meant to point you to Jesus’ reality. You are deceived in thinking that the shadows are enough, that they provide hope. You need to tremble at His Word. Today. There is still time.

7. TO THE SPRINKLED BLOOD THAT SPEAKS A BETTER WORD—Ritual sprinkling of blood ratified the old covenant, a shadow picture of Christ’s sprinkled blood. The sprinkled blood of Christ speaks redemption, reconciliation, righteousness, cleansing and forgiveness and mercy and hope and love. Run to Jesus. By obedience to Him, and by His sprinkled blood, may grace, and peace be yours (1 Peter 1:2).

   The only other option? The blood of Abel cries out to God for the avenging of his brother, Cain the murderer (Genesis 4:10-12).
Hebrews 13:1-17

Guardian Grace

Brotherly love. Love that clings an unlikely group in unity. Love that binds believers to serve one another. The persecution-prone culture of the Hebrews demanded such unselfish expression of practical love.

Whether the wealthy man who’s lost it all because he hung his hat with Christ, or the battered woman who needs safe shelter—you offer what you’ve got, maybe a guest room, maybe a few blankets on the floor. When the guy you work with goes down because he spoke up for Jesus—you visit him, as if he were you. This sharing characterized the freshly-birthed church; they needed to hang in there and persevere. But brotherly love, hospitality, and compassion are defined by:

• Immorality and greed, which stem from discontentment in God (vv. 4-6)
• Disrespect for God’s authority, which causes unacceptable worship (vv. 7-17)

Marriage and sexual responsibility must be respected and maintained. An honorable married man and woman enjoy God’s gift of sex, but those who have sex before marriage or extra-maritally, God will judge. Some are greedy for sex; some are greedy for money. Either way, discontentment is not brotherly love. Those who love money do not count on the Lord; their trust is in the money. Quiet, confident trust reveals contentment that God will take care of every situation.

Whether former leaders (v. 7) or current leaders (v. 17), those who teach God’s Word require respect. The former leaders are to be imitated in their faithfulness. The current leaders are to be obeyed in their authoritative vigilance. This is God’s ordering of His people. When Moses’ sister Marian rebelled against his leadership, she was sent outside the camp. God is serious about submission to leaders of the church. Not to false teachers who preach works or some other gospel, to those who faithfully preach Christ’s gospel of mercy and forgiveness.

Couched between the commands regarding church leaders, the writer skillfully segue ways into one last refutation of shadows. One more time, he says it, in case we missed it. There is no benefit from ritual ceremonies. The church draws case we missed it. There is no benefit from ritual ceremonies. The church draws
Jesus Messiah offers Guardian Grace:
Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows such as ritual ceremonies. Rather, persevering faith exalts Christ’s forgiven, loving church and her leaders.

Discussion Questions

1. Travelers’ Hospitality  In 1 Kings 17:19, the widow at Zarapheth provided a room for Elijah. Paul’s travel plans banked on the hospitality of the church (Romans 15:28-29, 16:1-2, 1 Corinthians 16:10-11, Philippians 2:24, 29, and Philemon 22). Discuss practical ways to grow in hospitality: _____________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  

2. Money  In Matthew 6:24 (Luke 16:13), Jesus sharply addressed those who loved money. Then He connected love of money with worry in Matthew 6:25-34. How does worry reveal that we are not contented and that we do not trust God? _____________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  

3. Worship  Hebrews teaches us how to worship. In Hebrews 12:15-16, we clearly read that there are two parts to authentic worship. Our worship offerings are these - we offer heart-felt, grateful praise to God, and we offer love to His people. Hebrews teaches us to offer praise and love as sacrifices. List at least five ways Hebrews 12:1-17 teaches us to present the sacrifice of brotherly love in the family of God: _____________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  

Hebrews 13:17 includes a sober reminder that the welfare of the church is tied to the quality of response to current leadership. How does rebellion toward leadership deter brotherly love? _____________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  

4. Outside the Camp  It was tempting for the Hebrews to return to the familiar ways of worship, with all the security it represented to them. False security. We, likewise, are pilgrims and sojourners tempted to draw our security from the familiar. How does Hebrews 13:12-14 loosen the grip of fear and stir us up from lethargy? _____________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  
__________________________________________________________________________  

“Sexual immorality is actually a rejection of the presence and goodness of God who created the human family in its maleness and femaleness. It is an expression of a selfishness blind to the emotional fragility that characterizes every person. Those who place personal gratification above responsibility to God and to the community will encounter God himself as Judge.”

William Lane

“Love is found more in the things we’ve given up than in the things that we have kept.”

Rich Mullins

“Give me the love that leads the way. The faith that nothing can dismay, The hope no disappointments tire, The passion that will burn like fire Let me not sink to be a clod Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God.”

Amy Carmichael
Further Personal Study

1. Hebrews 13:12-13 says that “Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.” In Numbers 5:1-4, defiled people were sent outside the camp because they could not exist anywhere near the presence of God’s holiness. What three afflictions, or defilements, caused an Israelite to be sent outside the camp?

In Luke 5:12-13, how does Jesus show us that He is greater than ceremonial law that never made a leper, or anyone, clean?

In Luke 8:43-48, what happened when the woman with the bloody discharge (whom not the ceremonial law nor the medical profession of the day could help) touches Jesus?

In Luke 8:49, 53-55, what does Jesus do with the dead girl?

How does Scripture reveal that Christ is greater than the law that defiles and sends us outside the camp as untouchable?

2. Hebrews 13:8-9 highlights Jesus Christ’s unchanging message of grace. In Galatians 1:6-9, what is the danger of a false message, that does not have the message of Christ’s gospel at its heart?

3. In Hebrews 12, the writer stresses the danger of bitterness. In Hebrews 13, brotherly love, whether to strangers or spouses, is stressed. How did Jesus say that bitterness would affect us in Matthew 6:14-15?

4. Hebrews 13:12 teaches us that to love, we must continually praise God. In 1 Peter 2:9, what is the overriding duty of God’s people?

5. Discontentment and greed are attitudes that begin in the mind. Hebrews 13:5-6 teaches us to live free from love of money. How do the passages below teach us to think about contentment and generosity?

Ephesians 4:28

2 Corinthians 9:8

Matthew 6:19-34
Guardian Grace: Shadows to Reality

Here at the end of Hebrews, we’re brought to consider how we treat one another. Is it with hospitality, generosity, contentment, marital joy and fidelity, imitation of and obedience to leaders who preach Christ, and new covenant adherence from hearts of praise?

Who is to be imitated and obeyed? Faithful leaders. Who is to be praised and worshiped? God, through Jesus. Not leaders. Not saints. Not Mary. Mary is one of us, not divine.

Mary, by God’s Spirit, conceived and gave birth to Jesus Christ, God’s Son. Later, by a human man, she conceived and gave birth to five more children (Matthew 13:55-56). Mary knew she was a sinner in need of a Savior (Luke 1:47, 2:24). However, the Vatican Catechism describes Mary as:

“...the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things...”4

Roman Catholics consider Mary to be the virgin Queen of Heaven. No Christian, cleansed by Christ’s sacrifice and sanctified by His blood, can accept any teaching regarding a Queen of Heaven. We will see that God removes Himself from it, and punishes it.

Worship of Mary or any human being was never a fore-shadowing—it was and remains only paganism. In Jeremiah 44, we learn that the idea of a Queen of Heaven imitates idolatrous Israelites. Israel had adopted pagan customs, burning sacrifices to the “queen of heaven” (Jeremiah 44:17). What was God’s response? He said,

“Go ahead. Confirm and perform your vows. But hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt: Behold, I have sworn by my great name, says the Lord, that my name shall no more be invoked by the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, ‘As the Lord God lives.’ Behold, I am watching over them for disaster and not for good. All the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and famine, until there is an end of them...I will punish you in this place, in order that you may know that my words will surely stand against you for harm.”

So because they worshiped a “Queen of Heaven” God would no longer be their God, and He would destroy them.

Some people say that Roman Catholics are just fond of Mary. No, they worship her. The Vatican Catechism reads, “The Church’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship.” They say it is right to honor “the Blessed Virgin with special devotion.”55 The liturgical feasts dedicated to the Mother of God, and Marian prayer, such as the rosary express this worshipful devotion. All worship of Mary is satanic, and a pagan worship ritual. God said, “You shall have no other god before Me.” When Jesus realized people were trying to worship Mary, He responded, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:28). Likewise, we may not pray to or worship Mary, but rather imitate her prayer and worship Her Savior. Compare Mary’s Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) with Hannah’s prayer (1 Samuel 2:1-10), and you’ll see how Mary humbly imitates a godly woman gone before.

Obviously heretical teaching touts Mary as co-redemptrix and co-redeemer with Jesus. She is considered excessively holy, but willing to sell some of her excess holiness through indulgences. Heresy has been a tragic money maker for centuries.

Additionally, Roman Catholic teaching states that Mary’s intercession is required to receive grace. Satan has diverted many people into the inordinate worship of Mary. “Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the title of Advocate, Helper, Benefactrix and Mediatrix. She is the chief and sovereign refuge of Catholics in their trials.”66 Pope Pius XII taught, “While Peter...has the keys of heaven, Mary has the key to God’s heart. When she turns the key, the Church guarantees the lock will open.” This teaching, that going to God will not get you anywhere, so you should rather go to Mary, directly disobeys Hebrews 4:16.

Hebrews 13 teaches us that if we would love, we must live by this hope: Christ will never leave us nor forsake us. We dare not place any faith in golden medallions of saints, in prayer beads, or in Mary. We place our faith in one reality, Jesus Christ. We confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

“You see, Roman Catholicism is pagan goddess worship, completely distracted. God is reinvented as judgmental, harsh. Christ is reinvented as indifferent. Everybody worships Mary.”

John MacArthur

“Many of the distinctive Roman Catholic doctrines emerged far after the first century. A few notable dates:

A.D. 593— belief in purgatory
A.D. 600— prayer to Mary & the saints
A.D. 709— kissing the pope’s feet
A.D. 995— canonizing dead saints
A.D. 1079— celibacy of the priesthood
A.D. 1090— praying the rosary
A.D. 1215— transubstantiation and confessing sins to a priest
A.D. 1439— seven sacraments

...The Bible alone is the final authority and source of divine revelation... such doctrines are human inventions and go against the teachings of Scripture.”8

8 John MacArthur
What do we know about the writer of Hebrews? We know he was a man, at least he referred to himself using a male pronoun in Hebrews 11:32. From this text, we realize that he is among the leadership of the church (asking them to pray for “us.”) Also, we discern that he is responding to some occurrence of non-submission toward leadership, requiring the Hebrews 13:17 admonition to submit. Whatever happened, he has a clear conscience in his conduct toward the church, because he says the leadership sought to fulfill their responsibility in ways that were honorable before God. All through the book we certainly sense a tone of personal urgency as he passionately exhorts the Hebrews to endure in faithfulness.

After requesting prayer for himself, he prays a blessing on the church:

- The God of peace—Once there was no war, but a chief angel rebelled against God and now seeks co-sinners. But sin brings misery and strife. To reconcile human sinners to peace with Him, God accepted Christ’s work on the cross and brought Him again from the dead. Therefore we can be forgiven, and peace restored.

- The Great Shepherd of the sheep—Why not the Great High Priest? The imagery doubles with intensity as we are led to think of the slaughtered Lamb who shed His blood for the sin of the world and became the Great Shepherd. The Shepherd who perfectly functions as the last, final High Priest. The Shepherd who is the Chief Shepherd. The Shepherd who loses not one sheep (John 10).

- The blood of the eternal covenant—The Covenant of Grace replaces the Covenant of Works. Remember how Hebrews 8-10 taught the new and living way to God, bought by the infinitely precious and priceless blood of Christ. What’s the price to enter God’s heaven? The blood of Christ. What enacts the new covenant? The blood of Christ.

- Equip you with everything good to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. Grace be with all of you.”
Jesus Messiah is the Great Shepherd: Therefore, Hebrews refutes shadows. Rather, persevering faith exalts the Great Shepherd, the Eternal covenant, Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Urgent We sense a tone of gentleness and warmth, not without authority and admonition, in the pastorly conclusion of Hebrews 13:22-24. The book would have been read aloud to an assembled congregation, who undoubtedly left the meeting strongly encouraged and sternly warned. Why is it important not to balk when a pastor warns us about the direction of our lives?

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2. Grace Be With You This final blessing was part of early church liturgy, functioning as a closing benediction. It is an echo of Colossians 4:18, 2 Timothy 4:22, and Titus 3:15. What is so important about remembering God’s grace at the close of a gathering of believers?

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3. Pleasing in God’s Sight In our desire to avoid the danger of “works” salvation, we often ignore passages such as Philippians 2:12-13, or read Ephesians 2:8-9 without Ephesians 2:10. But God’s Word is very clear that He “works in us that which is pleasing in His sight.” What thoughts or prayer would reveal we understand the truth that God motivates and empowers us to do His will, while at the same time we must work hard and willingly yield?

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4. Was it a Sermon? The writer concludes by asking the congregation to listening willingly, to bear with his “word of exhortation.” In Acts 13:15, “word of exhortation” refers to a sermon. Hebrews can be read aloud in less than an hour. In what ways could the Book of Hebrews have been a sermon preached with a pen?

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“…My task is not to dizzy myself by introspecting or speculating to find (if I can) what lies at the outer reaches of consciousness, nor to pursue endless, exquisite stimulation in the hope of new exotic ecstasies. It is, rather, to know and keep my place in God’s cosmic hierarchy, and in that place to spend my strength in serving God and men.”

J. I. Packer
Further Personal Study

Hebrews describes Christ as the “Great” Shepherd of the sheep. This stresses Christ’s incomparable superiority to Moses. Moses was the shepherd who led God’s people out of bondage to slavery in Egypt (Isaiah 63:11). Christ is the Great Shepherd who leads God’s people out of bondage to sin and death. The Shepherd imagery of Christ is particularly comforting. Enjoy reading and writing down key points from the following passages which provide that beautiful picture of Christ as Shepherd.

Ezekiel 34:11-16

“For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed...I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep... I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.”

John 10:1-18

“For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

1 Peter 2:25

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Matthew 9:36

“Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”

Matthew 25:32

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.”’”

Matthew 26:31

Luke 15:3-7
Great Shepherd: Shadows to Reality

The wonderful reality of God:
• Joy, laughter, true happiness
• Peace, calm, holy rest
• Love, inter relational harmony and fulfillment
• Abundant life full of purpose and complete satisfaction

Wow! Those are just the things for which people are searching. Only they are searching in all the wrong places. The enemy works hard to deceive, and so folks barely bat an eyelash at hoaxes such as “finding myself” or “self-actualization” or “self-worth.” Yet these are lies that hinder people from knowing and enjoying the reality of God.

To people like us Hebrews offers five warnings:

1. You shall not ignore the word delivered by God’s Son.
2. You shall not grumble, rebel, or refuse to believe God’s Word.
3. You shall not be lazy, but rather endure to spiritual maturity.
4. You shall not be disloyal to Christ and His body, the church.
5. You shall not turn back to comfortable shadows from the reality of Christ.

It starts with the small stuff. For example, don’t ask, “What’s God will for my life?” He’s told us all that we need to know His will, but we are so narcissistic that we make it all about our personal situation. When you buy a gas-grill with an assembly instruction manual, you don’t call the company and ask, “OK. What are the instructions for me?” No. You read, you follow, and you assemble your grill. On your porch. With your tools. Likewise, you take the Word God has spoken. You read, you follow, and you do God’s will. With your life.

• FAITH—Pay scrupulous attention to faith (Hebrews 11).
  Allow no feeling or experience to override faith, unless you have no desire to please God. To please Him, all that is required is a mustard-grain sized faith, but it must be in Him, not in your feelings or your experiences.

• HOPE—Count no trial insignificant (Hebrews 12).
  There are bound to come troubles to our lives, but that’s no reason to fear. Discipline shapes us and grows us so that we look more like Jesus. Trials are God’s good gifts to His children. Remember, Christ stands up when one of His is martyred. It will all come right in the end.

• LOVE—Evade no command to love (Hebrews 13).
  Christ taught us that love is found more in the things we’ve given up than in the things that we have kept (as Rich Mullins once stated). Hospitality, care of the needy, protection of marital fidelity, generosity with our money, and respect for church leadership—these are the tangible aspects of love commanded in Hebrews.

And it’s the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, who will equip us with everything good that we may do His will. He will work in us “that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever!”

Ah, the pleasure of God! Ah, the joy of the Messiah, the Son! Ah, the sweetness of Living Word! Let our hearts rejoice in His covenantal eternal reality. Let our thoughts rest in His mercifully gracious reality. Let our lives shine with His radiant superior reality.
Ch. 15 SUPERIOR PRIEST

Ch. 16 TRUE TABERNACLE

Ch. 17 BLOODY MERCY SEAT
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Ch. 18 CLEANSING BLOOD
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Ch. 19 SIN TAKER
2. Pilgrim’s Progress (John Bunyan, 1678), Christian’s song after reaching the cross.

Ch. 20 GOD’S HOUSE
2. Charles H. Spurgeon, Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopedia [Baker], 10:146

Ch. 21 REAL REWARDER
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Ch. 22 CERTAIN CITY
1. Matthew Henry’s Commentary [Revell], 6, pg 946
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Ch. 23 BETTER PROMISE
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Ch. 24 ENDURING CHAMPION
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Ch. 25 SPRINKLED BLOOD

Ch. 26 GUARDIAN GRACE
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4. Vatican Catechism [966].
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2. As pointed out by Henry Blackaby in “Experiencing God.”
3. C. S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory
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