

4:1 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. 2 For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. 3 Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"

As we had discussed earlier, rebellion against God isn't drinking, smoking, swearing etc., true rebellion against God is disbelief and not trusting Jesus. It is because of this unbelief that people smoke, drink and swear, mere symptoms of a greater problem. The promise of entering rest, or heaven, still stands. The question still remains, therefore, do you believe? Be careful so that you don't fall short of the goal.

Though the gospel was preached to those in the wilderness (as we once were), the message did them no good because they did not accept it as the Word of the Living God and believe it. We read in Thessalonians that the result of hearing and believing God's Word is action. "And we also thank God continually because, *when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.* For you, brothers, *became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus*" (1 Thess 2:13-14). As I do street ministry late at night I hear this response all the time, people come up and say the Bible is just a book written by man, not God's true Word. I try to tell them sin is wrong and they respond, "based on what?" Obviously this judgment is based on the Bible but they are still in rebellion against God and remain in unbelief.

Note God's response to unbelief is anger. People often ask me where is this God of Love Christians talk about. They can't see a God of love because they have an angry God in front of their face. Only through belief can one see a loving God. This is why Jesus is the Lion and the Lamb, a Lamb to the believer and a roaring Lion to the ungodly. Corinthians states, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor 4:4). Once while doing street ministry outside a bar a fight began to break out as a man tried to get another person out of his car to fight him. The car began backing away so the guy standing outside the car hit the car with his fist. The driver then backed up about 30 feet, put the car in gear and sped toward the other man as fast as he could, ramming into him and sending him flying backward about 10 feet so that he ended up lying on the ground just in front of me. The car drove off but he was later arrested. What do you suppose would happen to this driver if he stood before the judge and said, "I know that you are a powerful, good and loving man with a wonderful reputation and because you are a man of love I believe you will forgive this crime and let me go home to rest." I'll bet the judge would say, "Your right about one thing son, I am a loving man and it is because of my love that I can't let this crime go unpunished and I certainly can't let you back out on the streets where you can do harm to those that I love." The same is true of Jesus, our Judge, the very thing that the rebellious unbeliever says is going to save them (love) is going to actually condemn them. After all, what kind of heaven would it be with

sinner and rebels all around us? The point being, God is an angry God to those who are perishing and do not believe. I often tell the ungodly that God doesn't hear their prayers. This even shocks some Christians but Proverbs tells us, "If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable" (Prov 28:9). God detests the prayers of the rebellious. Even in the wilderness, people cried out to God, but he rejected them in His anger because they turned a deaf ear to the Law due to unbelief in the giver of that Law.

3b And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. 4 For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work." 5 And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest." 6 It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. 7 Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. 9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;

It is interesting that God is comparing the entering into rest by the Israelites to the seventh day of creation. God isn't talking about not going to work on Sunday.

God wanted us to keep the Sabbath. Why? Verse 11 tells us that because God rested on the seventh day, we are to do the same. God used the pattern of creation as a model for our lives as we live through this creation with weekly cycles. It is no accident that this cycle has never been altered since creation began. As mentioned briefly earlier and explained in more depth in my book on Revelation, this creation pattern also shows that we have a Sabbath rest that will be holy in the future as well (Heb 4). God is a symbolic God who loves patterns. Not only the Bible itself, but His whole creation is patterned as a model of many things. We have seen how Eden foreshadowed heaven, likewise the seventh day of creation foreshadowed heaven. The deeper one goes into Scripture the more these patterns are revealed. Much of this book so far has shown you parallels between God's deliverance of Israel to our lives today. I pray that God would reveal these applications to you personally.

10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

Rev 14:13 Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's

sight Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

This last paragraph seems to be out of place. What does Jesus being the Great High Priest who has gone into heaven and who can sympathize with us have to do with the Israelites not entering His rest? The answer is clear. We have discussed how the Israelite rebellion was unbelief, the underlying cause of the complaining and sin. The same is true today. Everytime we complain it is really unbelief. Unbelief that God is our great High Priest who intercedes for us. Unbelief that he has gone into the heavens and has the right to intercede. Unbelief that he truly cares and sympathizes with us because He can relate to the human flesh. Unbelief that because of this we can confidently approach God's throne where we will find mercy and rest in our time of need. This is exactly why the title of this chapter was a Sabbath rest for God's people. If you want rest, not only into eternity, but beginning now, believe upon the Lord Jesus and you will be saved NOW. We think of being saved as something that is in the future when we inherit heaven. Heaven isn't the goal, eternal life is, and what is eternal life? "The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you *the eternal life*, which was with the Father and has appeared to us" (1 John 1:2-3). Jesus is eternal life, it is something we obtain, it is someone we obtain. Again we read, "We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true-even in his Son Jesus Christ. *He is the true God and eternal life*" (1 John 5:20). Jesus is in you once you believe and, therefore, eternal life begins at the moment of belief.

Hebrews 5

5:1 Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. 3 This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people.

Every high priest was to be selected from among men because it was for man that atonement was to be made. This is one reason why Jesus had to become flesh and blood, God in human form. Only flesh and blood could pay the penalty required for sin. There was no other way and by no other man than Jesus could this be done, therefore, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The high priests of the Bible were appointed by God just as Jesus was. Their purpose was to represent the people to God by offering gifts and sacrifices for sins. We often remember Jesus offered the sacrifice of himself, but what was the gift? Revelation tells us it is life, "Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (Rev 22:17). Ephesians tells us it is grace, "I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power" (Eph 3:7-8). Paul says that there are many individual gifts that come from the Spirit, "But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that" (1 Cor 7:7). You see, forgiveness was only part of what Jesus brought for us, He also brings many good gifts. This is why we read in Romans, "For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life" (Rom 5:10-11)! Look at this verse carefully. If we were already saved and reconciled to Christ through his death what more is there to be saved from through His life? Christ's death and sacrifice saved us from hell but His life saved us from hell on earth which is part of this great gift. God doesn't want you to walk through life complaining and taking anti-depression drugs. He wants to free you and give you life now.

Also note that any gift given to God had to go through the hands of this high priest. Obviously man can give no gift other than those that God has already given man and, therefore, the greatest gift is one of thanks and praise. Because this gift must go through the high priest, likewise, our gifts must go through Jesus Christ, our High Priest.

Note that the priests would deal with the people gently. Jesus does the same. Although, at times it doesn't feel that way. Jesus tells us, however, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt 11:29-30). Note that we are to take His yoke upon us though. Perhaps if God is not being gentle with you, you are not part of his flock. Paul told the Corinthians that if they were not obedient to Christ, he would not be gentle either: "What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a whip, or in love and with a gentle spirit" (1 Cor 4:21)? Jesus is the Lamb to the believer, but a Lion to the ungodly. When we walk in unbelief, the yoke will be heavy because Jesus has not taken it for you. While you are only going astray he will gently guide you, but if you are lost, He will do everything to bring you to Himself and this is often times very painful until you find the rest in Him.

Those to whom the priest was gentle were those that were ignorant and going astray. Many are ignorant of their sins and do things they don't even realize are wrong. Obviously there are sins that are clear to most people but even the slightest white lie was worthy of eternal fire. Jesus, our High Priest, cried from the cross, "Forgive them for they know not what they do." Others know the truth but go astray and it is for this reason Jesus was sent to find the "lost sheep of Israel." The great responsibility of the priest was to look after others. Looking at all of these requirements ought to make us reflect upon our duties as Christians since the Scriptures speak of us in these words: "As you come to him, the living Stone-rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him- you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house *to be a holy priesthood*, offering *spiritual sacrifices* acceptable to God *through* Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:4-6). We are now part of this priesthood and our job is to look out for others, the ignorant and those who have gone astray. This life is not about ourselves and what we can do with our time on

selfish pleasures and goals, but about being used to bring others into the kingdom of God as we serve our living Lord.

Because Jesus had no sin he only offered a sacrifice for the sins of the people (us). Yet on the other hand, this is why He sacrificed Himself because he took our sins and put them on Himself, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24). The spotless lamb became dirty for us. The average priest had to offer a sacrifice for his own sins in order to become spotless, therefore, showing their inferiority to Jesus as High Priest.

4 No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." 6 And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

As this chapter told us, the priest had to be appointed by God. One could not decide that He would become a priest. Aaron was chosen and called before God in Exodus 28. This is why "God so loved the world that HE SENT His one and only Son." Jesus said, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me" (John 8:54-55). This is why God was so upset with Aaron and Miriam when they spoke against Moses. You don't reject those whom God as appointed and anointed. Rejecting Christ has the consequence of rejecting the Father, which has the consequence of eternal damnation. Psalms clearly tells us, "Do not touch my anointed ones" (Psalm 105:15).

Christ was not seeking glory for himself for He said, "I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge" (John 8:50-51). Likewise, since we are in this same priesthood (1 Pet 2:4) we are not to seek any glory but the glory be to God.

As for being a priest in the order of Melchizedek we will discuss this further in chapter seven so for now be content with the understanding that Melchizedek of Genesis was probably Jesus Himself and that this "order" of priestly rules back in Genesis is the same that we are under today. We often think of all the Old Testament being under the Law and Old Covenant, however, this isn't true. Not until the time of Moses did the Law and what we think of as "Old Testament" really come about. Prior to this everyone was under the rules of the priesthood of Melchizedek, just as Jesus has restored to us again today.

Showing Christ to be in the priesthood of Melchizedek shows that God found this a better priesthood and calling than that of the Aaronic priesthood.

7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him 10 and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Jesus was continually offering prayers and petitions to the Father not only for Himself, but also for us. What I find interesting is that Jesus never did a single thing on His own. He was completely dependent upon the Father. Everytime before Jesus healed or performed some miracle you will see Him in prayer with the Father because Jesus only did what the Father instructed Him to do. This doesn't mean that Jesus didn't struggle and that He just naturally obeyed. Look at the Garden of Gethsemane. He wept and sweat blood. The Scriptures tell us, "And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8)! Are you willing to take up your cross and follow Him? A person who takes up a cross doesn't come back. This means you must die so that Christ may live in you. Romans says, "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin" (Rom 6:6-7). Because the old self is dead once you have true faith in Christ, we will have a new body to live through: "Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Col 3:9-10). Obedience does matter but it means getting rid of the old self first. It is just like the parable where Jesus said that a seed planted in the ground must first die before it can be raised new.

Why was Jesus heard when He prayed? Verse seven tells us only because of His reverent submission. Christ was obedient to the Father as His Son. There are many today who call themselves sons but are not submissive or obedient. Verse 9 tells us that because of Christ's obedience he became the source of eternal life for those who now OBEY him. Obedience does matter. Now I am not putting you back under the yoke of slavery to the Law of Moses nor am I saying that salvation can come by works. It can't come by works but nor can it come without them. Salvation is by grace alone. Only by faith can you receive the grace that takes away your weaknesses and gives you the strength of God to obey. This is why it is so important to spend every waking moment in communication with God just as Jesus set an example for us. We should do nothing without consulting our Lord.

Also interesting in verse nine is that Christ learned obedience from suffering. Peter said, "Though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith-of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1 Peter 1:6-7). Romans states, "We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Rom 5:3-4). Timothy recorded, "So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God" (2 Tim 1:8-9). Isn't it a wonder that we spend most of our time and money trying to stay away from suffering? Even in evangelism we try and take away all trials from the new believer when these are the very things that make us grow. Even the parable of the sower tells us that if we plant seeds on rocky ground (heart of man) there will be no root and when these trials of the sunlight pop up, the believer will wither, scorched by the heat of persecution. Would you ever take the sunlight away from a plant? No! You see, the sun is a necessary part of the plants growth. The key is

not taking away the sun, but to make sure the seed has good soil to grow in. Once that is in place, the sun will only aid in its growing. Too often, the trials of life are causing people in the church to wither because the soil in which the Gospel seed has been planted has been poor. We tell people come to Jesus for abundant life and when they get trials they run away from Jesus, not to Him. People often go to church looking to get something rather than to give sacrificially to God their thanks and praises. Oh, people often do give thanks but what they are truly thankful for is the bank account and home. Would we be able to still thank and praise God if we were out on the street, homeless and hungry? If the soil is good we would. The focus shouldn't be on abundant life (though that does come with good soil) but on forgiveness and deliverance from spending an eternity in fire, pain, suffering, and torment. People need to know that they were going to Hell without Jesus and He saved them from this. Instead, people come to Jesus so that life on earth can be "better." How can we truly love Jesus unless we realize that we have been forgiven much. Most in the churches today think they have been forgiven a \$5 debt and are appreciative but not sacrificially thankful. Just imagine the thanks people would give if they realized that this was a \$500,000,000,000 debt. Jesus said, "I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven-for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little" (Luke 7:47).

Verse seven also brings an interesting question. What is the difference between prayer and petitions. The greek word *hiketeerias* which is used for petitions here is only used here in the Bible. It has the connotation of "seeking favor." Because it is only used here we have no other case to compare it to however, it seems to show an attitude of wanting to please God. This is exactly why we obey God as believers in Christ. We don't obey so that we may be saved, we obey because we want to. When you become a Christian you can do whatever you want, you just don't want to do things that displease Christ anymore. Once, I enjoyed sin, now, as a believer, I hate it. Paul said, "Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it" (Rom 7:20). If Paul sins he says I don't want to do it. This is the true test of faith. Do you enjoy sin and still want to do things that displease Christ? If there is no conviction about the sins in your life then I do not believe you have the Spirit of God in you. Some of you may be thinking, "Oh, I don't think you should say that because that is judgmental." Well, I don't, Jesus does, "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. *And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.* But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness" (Rom 8:9-10). This is the problem with modern day evangelism. People are afraid to call sin a sin because we don't want to offend anyone. We are paving the road to hell in the name of Christ by getting rid of obedience in the Christian life. Paul warned us to, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you-*unless, of course, you fail the test*" (2 Cor 13:4-5)? What is the test? Jesus tells us, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15-16).

11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not

acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

We have a warning of how difficult a message this is and it will not be understood if you only drink milk. But think about it. If you saw a baby sucking on a bottle in church you might think, “Oh, what a pretty baby.” Now, after five years you come back and see that same child still sucking on a bottle it isn’t so cute anymore is it? Likewise, Jesus expects us to grow up. Too many Christians keep going to church on Sunday mornings to be nursed by the Pastor, always drinking milk and never growing up. If you only drink milk you will never be able to understand the teachings of righteousness and truly be able to obey God. How do we grow up and mature? Verse 14 says by “using” something. What is it? By using God’s Word and applying it to your life. Not just reading it but obeying it. In so doing you are practicing and training yourself. Bill Gillham, in his book *Lifetime Guarantee*, talks about the minds “green highway” in which our thoughts become entrenched into our brain. Once you think about something, a line is formed in the brain. The more the same thought pattern is used the more the line becomes a trench. Eventually it turns into a path, a road, and finally a green (color of garbage) highway. If the road is not traveled the grass and weeds will begin to cover it up again. For example, the more one practices a foreign language the easier it becomes to recall information. However, if the road isn’t traveled on, the information gets harder and harder to pull up. Eventually, if you don’t use your foreign language for many years, those thought patterns almost disappear. The point of all this is, that as a saint that sins, one cannot expect to be good all the time because the power of sin still resides in our flesh, but that doesn’t change who you are. Just because our flesh is there does not mean one isn’t capable of sinning less and less as we become closer to God and refuse to use those old green highways. James says, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). We do have the capability to resist the evil thoughts Satan puts in our mind because Christ is in us and we are in Him. Once a thought enters the brain we have a choice to respond or ignore. Using Christ’s strength we can ignore. The more and more we resist these temptations, the more they dissipate. On the flip side, when things of God are put in our thoughts, those good highways become well traveled and lead to a joy filled life. This is why Paul wrote, “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor 10:5). Every thought should be taken captive and analyzed to be sure it is in line with Christ-like obedience. If not, resist and ignore it. Again, we can’t do this perfectly, however, as Scripture states, “Physical **training** is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, **holding promise** for both the **present life** and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance (and for this **we labor and strive**), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men” (1 Tim 4:8-10). This type of training gives joy for this present life, but it is something we work at and can only obtain by using Christ’s strength in us. However, to use it, one needs to recognize it is there. God wants more than our salvation. He wants us to reap the benefits of all the blessings He has to offer us on this side of heaven. Eternal life is yours already. You are already seated with Christ in heaven, so act like it! We are what we think we are. You believe you are a sinner, you will act like it. Believe you are a saint and you will act like a saint. Think

about it, does the law ever motivate you to do good. NO! I don't steal because I am afraid of getting caught. I don't steal because I love Jesus and I don't want to do anything that would displease Him: "*For Christ's love compels us*, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died" (2 Cor 5:14). Likewise, thinking you are a sinner and you NEED to change won't motivate or get you the strength to become better. Paul shows us that the law KILLS, it doesn't build you up and give LIFE: "He has made us competent as *ministers of a New Covenant--not of the letter* but of the *Spirit*; for the *letter kills*, but the *Spirit gives life*" (2 Cor 3:6). Realizing you are a saint under the New Covenant, and your response to that tremendous gift will be your Gospel motivation and power to change. Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man **remains in Me and I in him**, he **will** bear much fruit; **apart from Me** you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Branches can never PRODUCE fruit, they can only BEAR fruit that is produced by the life of the VINE through them. That is also why we, as saints, are not under the law.

Paul gives us a test of what our diet is. Do you want to know if you are still on milk than ask yourself if you fit these verses: "Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly-mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men (1 Cor 3:1-4)? Peter also indicates that milk is important to start out with but milky Christians are full of disobedience: "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good" (1 Peter 2:1-3).

It is vital to understand that those who are on milk need only milk to mature. Also, just because someone is on milk doesn't mean they are a Christian yet. They are not mature enough to live without someone else feeding them. I believe Isaiah wrote about these people when he said, "Who is it he is trying to teach? To whom is he explaining his message? To children weaned from their milk, to those just taken from the breast? For it is: Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there" (Isa 28:9-10). Here we see that Isaiah was trying to teach people who were stuck on doctrine and rules; living by the Law, rather than by grace. In essence these were people trying to "earn" salvation little by little.

The question of exactly what the milk and meat are will be answered in chapter 6 and I believe the key to church problems will lie in answering that question. But for now, realize that no matter where one is in his spiritual walk, nourishment is needed. All people need to be feeding on the Word of God with the goal of maturing and continuing to eat at the meat filled table with Jesus.

Hebrews 6

6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, 2 instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the

resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And God permitting, we will do so.

Most people view the milk of Scripture to be Sunday School stories while the meat is seen as doctrines such as baptism, the rapture, communion, ordaining procedures or the color of carpet. These verses show us milk is the foundation of Christianity, consisting of repentance, ways of baptisms, laying on of hands and teachings of heaven and hell. Think about it. Aren't these milky issues where most quarrels between churches stems from? Even in John 3:25 we see that John's disciples were arguing over a matter of milk. The foundation is the most important part of a house, but if you never built upon the foundation, what good is the house? Scripture even tells us to "build" upon the foundation of Christ. In Corinthians we read, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames" (1 Cor 3:11-15). The foundation of repentance and faith in Jesus is what gets a man saved, but what you build upon that foundation is what will cause gain or loss of reward. Those who build poorly upon this foundation will be saved by the skin of their teeth according to the above Corinthians verse. Many other Scriptures tell us Faith and Repentance are the foundations of Christianity (1 Tim 3:15, 2 Tim 2:19, Mat 7:25, Rom 15:20) but we must move on to building. What are we being built into? "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5; see also Eph 2:22). God wants a building to live in, not a foundation just to stand on. This is also why the writer says "Let us go on." Not only does he include himself, but he encourages us to move forward, not forgetting the foundation that was laid, merely building onto it.

So how do we build and with what? Meat is the material, Christ will be the builder, you will just be the building, but it starts with understanding, believing and accepting the building material. Chapter 5, verse 13 tells us that the meat is the teachings of righteousness and by feeding on that one is able to discern right from wrong. Note, it isn't the foundation that gives discernment, but by constantly feeding on the meat. Not until one truly understands righteousness does the great responding love of what Christ has done come about. The teachings of righteousness are understood by first realizing you are a saint, not a sinner. Some of the best resources I have ever read on meat, pointing out and revealing the Scriptures would be [What God wishes Christians Knew about Christianity](#) by Bill Gillham and [Free at Last](#) by Tony Evans. I encourage you to buy one of those books because this great truth can not be understood by a few pages in this book.

Paul also wrote that Christianity was more than just being saved or getting life from milk, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:12-14). Note that Paul is

pressing onward towards a prize and the prize isn't salvation because salvation came from being called heavenward in Christ. The prize can only be understood from feeding on meat.

4 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, 6 if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

This is one of those verses that some do not like to put too much thought into. Look carefully at each word and examine the verbs given here. It is impossible for those who have been "enlightened" who have "tasted," "shared," and experienced the power of the Spirit and the coming age that if they "fall away" to be brought "back" to repentance. There seems to be no question here that people can share in the Spirit of God and actually repent and give their heart to Christ but later fall away. Some may say that this person never truly believed and had faith in Christ. I may agree with that to a point, however, they tasted the heavenly gift, they partook of it and shared it. They experienced the goodness of the Word and these are things that unbelievers can never partake of. I believe these are the stony ground hearers of the parable of the sower of which most churches are filled with. These are they that fall away and wither when the persecuting sun shines down its trials and temptations because there was no root. If people never go through the fires of genuine repentance with tears, fear and trembling, it is difficult to develop a root.

In James we see what people are to do when they submit themselves and turn to God, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. *Resist the devil*, and he will flee from you. *Come near to God* and he will come near to you. *Wash your hands*, you sinners, and *purify your hearts*, you double-minded. *Grieve, mourn and wail*. Change your laughter to *mourning* and your *joy to gloom*. *Humble yourselves* before the Lord, and he will lift you up" (James 4:7-10). How many times do we see new converts coming into the church this way? Rarely if ever because the Law and the Ten Commandments have never truly convicted them of their sin. Instead they come into the church as Jesus said, "Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away" (Mark 4:16-18). Isaiah spoke of these type of people when he wrote, "The Lord, the LORD Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth. But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine! 'Let us eat and drink,' you say, 'for tomorrow we die'" (Isa 22:12-13)! God has called people to repent and turn to Him with weeping so that their sorrow can be turned into joy but instead he got joy and revelry without going through the process of finding the true source of that joy that comes from the love of Jesus and understanding what He has delivered us from. Have you come into the church with mere joy, continuing to eat, drink and celebrate your selfish life by satisfying selfish desires while you simply wait to die? If so, I believe there is still a danger of falling away. The Psalmist wrote, "Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing" (Ps 34:8-9).

There are many other verses in Scripture that indicate a person can fall away. The following is a short example:

- 2 Peter 2:21-22: "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: 'A dog returns to its vomit,' and, 'A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.'"
- 1 John 5:16-17: "If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that."
- 2 Peter 2:20-21: "If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning."
- James 5:19-20: "My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins."
- 1 Tim 2:15: "But women will be saved through childbearing-if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety."
- 1 Tim 3:6-7: "He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil."
- Heb 2:1-2: "We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away."
- Heb 3:14-15: "We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first."
- 1 Cor 10:12: "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"
- 2 Cor 11:3: "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ."
- 1 Peter 5:8: "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."
- Heb 4:10-11: "Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience."
- Ezek 18:26: "If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits sin, he will die for it; because of the sin he has committed he will die"

Yet, on the other side of the coin there are many verses indicating one's faith can never be lost. The following are examples:

- Eph 1:13-14: "Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-to the praise of his glory."

- John 10:27-28: “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”
- John 8:12: “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
- John 8:34-36: “Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”
- John 6:58: “This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.”
- John 6:39: “And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day”
- 2 Peter 1:10-11: “Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”
- 2 Tim 2:13: “If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.”

I believe the difference in these two types of verses is that once the seed is received on good soil and the root goes deep, that salvation is sure, which is why Christ warned us to make it sure. Note in the parable of the sower that all “received” the seed but only those seeds planted in the good hearts bore fruit for life. In any case, we must let the Scriptures speak for themselves.

Another way to look at it is this: In the Old Testament, before the fall man was created “Able not to sin.” After the fall they were “Not able not to sin,” and when heaven comes man will be “Not able to sin.” I wonder if this spiritual truth doesn’t apply to salvation as well. When a man is an unbeliever he is like the fallen man, “Not able not to sin.” Once a man is a “new convert” he is like the newly created man, “Able not to sin.” Then, after he works out his salvation with fear and trembling he then becomes like the heavenly man, “Not able to sin.” The following chart illustrates this possible interpretation:

In the Garden -----	Able not to sin.	-----New Convert
After the Fall -----	Not able not to sin.	-----Unbeliever
After New Heaven and Earth -----	Not able to sin.	----- Saved Man.

7 Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. 8 But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

Here again we see soil referring to the heart of man. Good soil or good hearts will drink in the rain of God’s Word so that fruit is produced. However, dry land, hearts that

are not drinking in the Word will produce thorns and thistles. This is one test of a Christian: "A tree is judged by its fruit." Without taking in the Spirit of God from the waters of life you can not produce fruit. This is why Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing." He is the vine and we are the branches. Branches can not produce fruit by themselves, they need the nourishment and water from the vine.

Notice that the land produces thorns first and then the soil becomes worthless. Likewise, the land that is good first, then receives rain with benefit. The Christian must learn to walk in obedience before the waters will be received with any benefit. Too often Christians think, I believe in Jesus so I will sit back and wait for Jesus to make me obedient. It doesn't work that way. Yes, Jesus is the only one that can make you obedient, but He won't do anything while you sit back and don't "strive for godliness" (1 Tim 4:9-10). It wasn't until I began making choices to "resist the devil" that God gave me the strength to be obedient. Only when the soil of ones heart is worked up can the waters of the Holy Spirit produce anything good. If the waters are given among thorns, only bigger thorns result. We need to do some weeding in our churches today so that good fruit may result. I believe this is also why Jesus warned us not to toss our "pearls before swine" (Mat 7:6).

9 Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case-things that accompany salvation. 10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. 11 We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. 12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

Isn't this a wonderful promise? The friends he is speaking of is us. We have "better things" that *accompany* salvation. God wants more for the Christian than to just be saved, He has more for you and it can only be good.

Verse ten tells us how these "better things" come about. God isn't unjust, He doesn't forget your good works. If heaven is just a matter of salvation and the goal simply getting there, why would we care if Jesus remembered our works or not? After all, if you have faith your in and if you don't your not. The obvious answer is because those good works will go with you to heaven and you are rewarded there for them. With what and how you are rewarded I do not know, but Scripture is clear on this. Likewise the ungodly will be punished for the bad fruit they produce. People often struggle with the idea of varying degrees of heaven or hell but the following are a few Scriptural examples of this truth:

- "Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward" (Matt 10:41-42).
- "The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor" (1 Cor 3:8).

- “It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. 47 I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions” (Matt 24:46-47).
- ““Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’ The second came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned five more.’ His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities’” (Luke 19:17-19).
- “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever” (Dan 12:3).
- “That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows” (Luke 12:47-48).
- “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done” (Rev 20:12-14).
- “I will repay each of you according to your deeds” (Rev 2:23).
- (See also Luke 14:10 ff; Mat 11:11; Mat 5:19; Is 59:18).

Paul also tells us the motivation for these good works as he, too, remembers the labors of those he witnesses to: “We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 1:2-3). Faith, love and hope are the three driving forces behind works. It is interesting that Paul uses these same three things in Corinthians saying, “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13). Why is love greatest? It is the only one that will remain forever in eternity. Faith and hope will pass away because there is nothing to have faith or hope in when the object of that hope and faith are fulfilled. Love, however, will never end.

Making our hope sure is a fascinating thought. The very word hope in our society implies to be waiting for only a possibility of a certain outcome. Hope and assurance seem to be two different levels of the same thing, except assurance is a state of mind in which hope has graduated to complete unwaivering knowledge. One of the goals for the Christian is to graduate from the hope of salvation into the full knowledge that it belongs to them. Once this happens, nothing can cause you to waiver. Later in chapter 11 we read, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Heb 11:1). True faith has no doubt. The seed of hope is planted only to grow into faith. If we are lingering in the hope of salvation, do we truly have faith?

We seem to lessen the importance of good works in our society today, but Paul said, “Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring” (2 Thess 1:4). We need to brag on what God is doing in the lives of the saints.

Verse eleven tells us we are to remain diligent to the end because as James puts it, this will cause us to mature: “Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be

mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:4-5). I believe it is also this patient endurance that will help the believers in end time persecutions and trials. Isn't it better we learn it now than later? We read in Revelation of people receiving the mark of the beast and John then says, “This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus” (Rev 14:12).

So what is this patient endurance? Is it going to church every Sunday? That may be a part of it but verse ten tells us that it is helping others and producing good fruit or good works. It is in the conscious effort of doing good that keeps one strong in the faith (Note it doesn't produce faith or gain salvation) and that makes our hope sure. Peter says the same thing: “Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For *if you do these things*, you will never fall” (2 Peter 1:9-10). What are “these things” Peter talks about? The prior verses say, godliness, self control, goodness, knowledge, brotherly kindness, love, etc. Can it be any more clear that doing good and producing fruit does make a difference in our Christian walk on earth and our eternal awards in heaven? I realize this makes some readers uncomfortable, but look at what the Bible says and ignore me then.

The author of Hebrews is telling us not to be lazy but “do” something. We are to imitate those who have gone before us. I have heard some say they do not like the phrase “What would Jesus do?” To me this is splitting hairs and arguing over milk or doctrine, mainly because they say this brings the teaching of works righteousness. NO! It helps make our hope sure and grants eternal rewards, but only faith in Jesus makes us righteous. The bottom line is that if verse eleven tells us to imitate mere saints that have gone before us, how much better to imitate Jesus who has was the great Teacher of all time (and indeed much more).

13 When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." 15 And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.

God made a covenant with Abraham back in Genesis 15 that was effective for all Abraham's offspring, which, included every believer. The promise was that Abraham would multiply and receive blessings. Every believer in Christ is evidence of this promise fulfilled. Romans tells us, “For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, ‘It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.’ In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring” (Rom 9:6-8). Welcome to the family!

When one makes an oath they swear by a greater name, but because there is no greater name than Yahweh, God swore by Himself. God did not say I will hopefully bless you, instead, He said I will surely bless you. This once again shows why we are to make the hope of our salvation sure. If God promised by His name, there is no room for doubt.

Abraham waited patiently to inherit his promise, in fact, he waited his whole life because the promise isn't fulfilled until we leave this body to be with our Lord. We must all wait patiently to receive what was promised for us. However, in a way, the promise is fulfilled now, it just isn't perceived like that. Are you saved from eternal damnation now

or when you die? Now! Are living with Christ now or when you die? Now. John tells us, “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the *one who is in you* is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4-5). Paul says, “But if *Christ is in you*, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness” (Rom 8:10). Christ is in us now and we are in Him even in heaven right now (Eph 2:6). What we wait for patiently isn’t to obtain eternal life, but to get rid of this flesh (1 Cor 15:52), to be able to see clearly rather than in part (1 Cor 13:12). It is for this assurance that I wait for patiently.

16 Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. 17 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. 18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. 19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

God swore an oath for two reasons. If you think about it, it seems strange the God would even need to let us know what His plans were. Bottom line is He didn’t need to but He wanted to. First, it showed man who God was; the embodiment of truth that can not and will not change. Second, to give hope to created man because of God’s great love for him. Often people view God as some cold and distant helper. God wants to encourage us and cheer us on.

The encouragement He gives is an anchor for our soul and it can not be moved. How can our soul be anchored? Verse 19 says it (the soul) enters the Most Holy Place of the Temple where the Ark of the Covenant (God’s throne) rested. Our soul is anchored secure in and to the God’s throne. Once again Ephesians tells us, “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6-7). Does this sound like a cold and impersonal God to you? God seated us with Him so that we may be anchored to our home. Part of God’s oath was an eternal blessing when we would live with Him. God, who can not lie, has begun the fulfillment of that by putting in us a longing desire to love and be loved, of which can only be received in the Most Holy Place. It is almost as if God has put a homing device within us that directs us to Him.

An anchor keeps things from moving and being tossed around by the waves. Ephesians addresses this issue, “So that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ” (Eph 4:12-16). God has anchored us in the heavenly realms so that we are kept safe until our faith reaches maturity in love.

Note that Christ also entered the inner sanctuary on our behalf. Though our soul is anchored there, our flesh is not. Flesh and blood can not enter such a place so Christ went ahead of us, on our behalf. He did it for us, not just for Himself. Now we can have encouragement and hope for the day when “The perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality” (1 Cor 15:53-54).

Just as the High Priest went in the Most Holy Place once a year on the day of Atonement to offer sacrifices for the whole community of God, Jesus has entered the Most Holy Place, once (as a better sacrifice) for all believers. We can't think of this just like the priests did in the Bible because Jesus is in a different priesthood, the priesthood of Melchizedek. We will be talking much more about this priesthood in the next chapter.

Hebrews 7

7:1 This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, 2 and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace." 3 Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.

The story behind Melchizedek comes from Genesis 14 when Abraham went to rescue Lot from the Kings that conquered the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham took only 300 men with him and was victorious. The result was he brought back Lot, his family and all the possessions and people of the town. Then Melchizedek came out to meet Abraham where, “Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, ‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand’ Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything” (Gen 14:18-20). Shortly afterward, the townsmen were so thankful they offered to give Abraham the bounty but he turned it down because he didn't want anyone to say that they made Abraham rich. The important aspect is that the first thing Melchizedek did was eat bread and wine with Abraham. In essence, Abraham had communion with him. Melchizedek blessed Abraham. As we will see in verse seven here in Hebrews, “Without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater.”

Being king of Salem is interesting because Salem is actually Jerusalem. The name was changed later. However, we still read in Psalms, “In Judah God is known; his name is great in Israel. *His tent is in Salem*, his dwelling place *in Zion*” (Ps 76:1-2). Jerusalem is the city of God and here Melchizedek was king of it. God said that this would be a special place, “I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there” (1 Kings 9:3). Even in Revelation we see a New Jerusalem coming out of heaven, showing it to be a special place. Jerusalem is also called, the “city God loves” (Rev 20:9).

I believe Melchizedek had to have been Jesus Himself, before anyone knew Him as Jesus, the Messiah. As we examine the attributes of this man it will become clear that

he was no ordinary person. He was a priest of God Most High. Jesus is said to be our High Priest forever in this same order (Heb 6:20). Abraham tithed to Melchizedek and the lesser always tithes to the greater. Ask a Jew who could be greater than their Father Abraham. God Himself would be the answer.

The very name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness.” Who could that be? We read of Jesus, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom” (Heb 1:8). Jesus is also said to be “Christ-the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith” (Phil 3:9). The Messiah was righteousness and, therefore, King of it.

Melchizedek also means king of peace. It is no accident that it was prophesied, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, *Prince of Peace*” (Isa 9:6).

Which man was ever on earth that had no mother or father, no genealogy, no beginning or no end? Only one, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. In Revelation we see our Savior say of Himself, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Rev 22:13).

This section closes by saying that this Melchizedek is a priest forever like the Son of God. The writer of Hebrews is trying to add some meat to our diet if we are willing to chew on it for a while. For some, the fact that Jesus is only like Melchizedek seems to say that Melchizedek could not be Jesus but only like Him. The problem is that one must take this in context with the rest of the chapter and none of the rest makes sense then. Besides, the Psalmist asks the question, “O LORD God Almighty, who is like you? You are mighty, O LORD, and your faithfulness surrounds you” (Ps 89:8). The obvious answer is nobody. Nobody can be like God but God Himself, at least that would be true before the cross. One of the great mysteries of Christianity is how God changes the believer into something new. Paul recorded, “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, *created to be like God* in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:22-24). Christ has made us to be like God, but only Jesus was able to do that.

4 Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! 5 Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. 6 This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7 And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. 8 In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. 9 One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, 10 because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.

When one ponders Melchizedek you will see how great he really was. Verse five jumps ahead into the future from Abraham but looks back in time from when Hebrews is being written. The law had not yet been given at the time of Abraham but the writer

states that a requirement of the law was that the levitical priests were to collect the tithe from their own people. This was a great honor and specially given by God. Yet, Melchizedek did not come from, nor was he in the line of Levi. On the other hand, verses nine and ten tell us that Levi even paid the tithe to Melchizedek because the genes of Levi were still in Abraham, they just had not been manifested yet.

Still another evidence that Melchizedek must be Jesus is found in verse eight. It basically tells us that this tithe was collected by one who is living and does not die. Levi and all the priests in that line would die, but Melchizedek would live forever.

Why was Abraham, who was already blessed by God, getting blessed by this Melchizedek? As earlier mentioned, the greater person is the one that gives the blessing. Abraham is said to already have the promise, so what is the blessing? As we have been talking about with the milk and meat, God wants more than just your salvation. Abraham was saved by his faith in God, but there were earthly and eternal blessings that were yet to be had. As Paul was running and competing for the prize, Abraham, too, was “working out his salvation with fear and trembling.”

11 If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come-one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? 12 For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law.

Many people are still stuck on the Levitical priesthood by which they hope to gain perfection, or at least they strive for it based upon the law. Verse eleven shows that perfection will never be gained by the Levitical law. James said, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it” (James 2:10). If someone has ever told a little white lie, they are guilty of breaking all God’s commands. This is clearly why there was need for a change in priesthoods. Some may say, you mean that perfection can be attained through the order of Melchizedek? Yes, Absolutely! This is a meaty truth that Scripture is clear on, but the flesh doesn’t understand. The Scriptures are clear that we are perfect or blameless when we are in Christ Jesus, “And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may *be pure and blameless* until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ-to the glory and praise of God” (Phil 1:9-11). Some may think this is only in the Spirit but Paul said even our body is blameless, “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole *spirit, soul and body* be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:23). Praise be to God, through Christ Jesus, for this great and wonderful gift.

Verse twelve shows that a change in priesthoods means a change in the rules. If Jesus was in the order of Melchizedek than the rules for life now (under this priesthood) is the same as the rules back in Abraham’s day under Melchizedek before the Levitical priesthood began. Romans says, “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law” (Rom 3:28). Likewise, Abraham, “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness” (Rom 4:3). There is no difference between Abraham and us. Belief and faith in Christ and the promise is what brings salvation. Looking at things this way causes us to read the Old Testament before Moses differently. It explains

why certain things that Paul did seem to be under the Law but really aren't. For example, what about Acts 15:20 and 21:25 both say that the New Testament church was to abstain from eating food with blood still in it. Many say this is Old Testament and doesn't need to be followed but Paul says it is to be followed. Note that this rule was given to Noah long before Moses (Gen 9:4). Let me explain a bit further. The exact words of God to Noah when he got off the Ark was, "Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man." (Genesis 9:1-6)

In Genesis 1:29-30 we see that man was created to be a vegetarian. Now, however, God added meat to our diet, with a few restrictions. Though today we are able to eat any kind of meat (Acts 10:10-11:7); at this point Noah was only allowed to eat clean animals.

Not only this, but any meat that was eaten was not to have the lifeblood in it (Lev 17:12). Blood is a very important substance as, scientifically and Biblically speaking, it indeed appears to be where life resides. Leviticus gives us further insight into why blood was not to be eaten: "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life" (Lev 17:11). In other words, if the blood makes atonement for our life and the blood is life, it was the life of the animals that made atonement for our lives under the old covenant law. The animal's blood (life) covered our sinfulness and made atonement for us. This also foreshadowed the ultimate sacrifice to come: "Nor did He [Jesus] enter heaven to offer Himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood [life] that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him" (Heb 9:25-28). Christ's blood (life) was shed once for all (Rom 6:10) to cover our sins permanently, so that the life of animals was no longer needed to preserve our lives.

We see how Satan attempts to distort God's Word today, and in the past. Scripture states that the life is in the blood. The word for life is *nephesh*, which is "soul." Therefore, our soul is in the blood or our soul is our life. Many following the ways of evil have put into practice in various rituals, the drinking of blood, in hopes that the life or characteristics of that blood would be incorporated into one's own. We see here that this is clearly sinful, and a tool of the devil.

There is one more interesting point dealing with eating meat with blood in it. We often say that the Old Testament laws are not necessary for us today, since we live under the New Covenant of Christ. Indeed, we need not follow these laws for salvation (although we will follow them anyway out of love and devotion); however, what we just read in Genesis is not from the Levitical law which was, in a sense, revoked by the resurrection of Christ. When the Gentiles in the New Testament were being brought into

the church this is what was required of them: "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood" (Acts 15:19-20; also Acts 21:25). Even in the New Testament era we would do well to abstain from the lifeblood, just as it was stated to Noah.

Let us examine the Acts 15 passage in more depth. The Gentile believers were to abstain from four things: 1) food sacrificed to idols 2) sexual immorality 3) strangled animals 4) and blood. All four of these have a common bond, that being all of them deal with unity or "oneness" with someone or something. First, food sacrificed to idols would be like having communion with false gods. When a sacrifice to Baal or any other god was done, the food was then eaten and you partook of a communion meal with that god. When we think about it, Christ was a "food" sacrificed to the true God. Today we still celebrate this and participate in this ritual in our communion practice. When eating the "bread of life" we take in Christ's flesh and blood into our bodies, becoming one with Him. We read in John, "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the Bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this Bread will live forever" (John 6:54-58). To have this kind of "fellowship" with anything or anyone but Christ would be a grave error.

Second, sexual immorality would also go against the oneness reserved only for Christ. "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one Husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to Him" (2 Cor 11:2). This is why we see the parable of the wedding banquet in Matthew 22 and the final fulfillment of this parable in Revelation: "For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)" (Rev 19:7-8). The Scriptures make it clear that to have sexual relations with someone means to become ONE with them since, "the two became one flesh" (Matt 19:5). We also see this truth in Corinthians where we read, "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh.' But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with Him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own" (1 Cor 6:15-19). Therefore, sexual immorality compromises our unity or oneness in Christ just as food sacrificed to idols did.

Third, not eating meat with blood in it and abstaining from strangled animals are one and the same. An animal that is strangled does not have all of its blood drained properly and, therefore, to eat of this animal would be to eat of its blood. As discussed above, the life is in the blood and, therefore, you are partaking of the nephesh of someone or something other than Christ. This is why Christ's blood is reserved for us. In communion His blood or nephesh (soul) is taken in, and unity takes place. As seen

earlier, “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him” (John 6:56; see also I Cor 11:27). Therefore, all of these commands to the Gentile church deal with the compromising of oneness in Christ. We are to be one with only One.

We must remember that these commands were given to Noah before the Levitical law was instituted. Noah was given permission to eat meat, and so is the New Testament church (Rom 14; 1 Tim 4:3-4; Acts 10:15). Also, the act of capital punishment was laid out here in verse six and this, too, is accepted in the New Testament church (Acts 25:11; Rom 13:4). This is not to say that capital punishment is always the answer, because in many New and Old Testament examples God forgave men of their sins and did not kill them. The attitude of the heart needs to be measured and true repentance must exist. Many other similarities exist between the relationship that Noah had with God and the relationship that we have with Christ today. We often feel that Noah, Adam and Abraham lived in the Old Testament and, therefore, under an old covenant. However, this is not the case. Even though the Levitical laws do not apply to us today (although some are still good rules to follow), the Noahic laws seem to still be in effect as they came under a covenant somewhat unknown. We read in Hebrews, “Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 6:20). Melchizedek was a priest of Salem (Jerusalem) in the time of Abraham and of whom we know little about. It is said that he was greater than Abraham since he blessed Abraham. In fact, Abraham even gave Melchizedek a tenth as a tithe showing Melchizedek's superiority. It is said that Melchizedek was “without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever” (Heb 7:3).

Because of the above passage some believe Melchizedek was Jesus in another form. Just like the Angel of the Lord who appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Often time this Angel of the Lord was worshipped showing that He was no ordinary angel, rather God Himself. Sometimes the Angel of the Lord is even called the LORD. Therefore, one might say that these patriarchs had a personal relationship with the Lord through Christ in a different form. It is as if those from the time of Noah to Abraham lived in a period of grace, not salvation by law as those under the Levitical priesthood. They were, “in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron” (Heb 7:11). This can only mean that Abraham, Noah and Adam knew a priesthood just like we do today. After all, what was Melchizedek doing in Jerusalem anyway. At this time in history, there were none of God's called people in that city. All of the Israelites were still in the body of Abraham. This priesthood was, therefore, not just for the Jews but for the Gentiles as well. Perhaps that is why we read of Abraham, “If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about--but not before God. What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness” (Rom 4:2-5). Also, “We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised” (Rom 4:9-11). And, “The words ‘it was credited to him’ were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe

in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead” (Rom 4:23-24). Therefore, Adam and Noah were saved through faith in God and in Christ as the coming Messiah, just as we too are saved through faith.

Therefore, the Noahic commands were given in a type of New Covenant relationship and thus these commands here are also meaningful in our lives today. We must stop looking at these Old Testament passages as simply Sunday School stories. They are much more. Viewing this "new" aspect of the Noahic Covenant puts a different perspective on the Old Testament. It is still very applicable for us today.

13 He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. 14 For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. 15 And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, 16 one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. 17 For it is declared: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

Jesus did not belong to the tribe of Levi, but of Judah. Nobody from that tribe was ever a priest. Does this mean Melchizedek was in the line of Judah too? Problem with that thought is that Melchizedek and Abraham were around before Judah was ever born. It doesn't seem to be saying that the line of Judah used to be priests, but instead that this priesthood had no regulation as far as which tribe you came from. This is why verse 16 tells us that the qualification for this priesthood isn't bloodline but an indestructible life. This seems to indicate that Melchizedek could have only been Jesus Himself and not any other normal human being.

In addition, it also shows that we, too, have the qualifications for this priesthood. Earlier we looked at Peter, who recorded, “You also, like living stones, are being built *into a spiritual house* to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). Often times people look at this and think they are going to be priests in heaven like Aaron was. Not true. The priesthood we are a part of is in the line of Melchizedek and/or Jesus. We have the qualifications given to us through Christ, that being indestructible life. John speaks of our eternity this way: “And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son” (1 John 5:10-11). Our eternal indestructible life comes *in* Christ, which is why we are being built *into* a spiritual house. The spiritual house is the temple of God as John says, “Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God” (Rev 3:12). Clearly the living stones are pillars and the house is the temple, but more importantly, the temple is Jesus, “I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Rev 21:22). Clearly, we are qualified to serve Christ because of our eternal life and we will serve Him in His temple, which is He, Himself.

This priesthood will not be a temporary one, but an eternal one. As Jesus is, we too will be in the order of Melchizedek forever.

18 The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless 19 (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God. 20 And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, 21 but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever.'" 22 Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

The Aaronic priesthood had to be set aside because it was weak, in fact, useless. It has no purpose for eternal life. It may have been good in prolonging judgment or bringing us to Christ, but ultimately it could do nothing for salvation. This is why even those who died in the Old Testament did not go to heaven but Sheol. It wasn't until Christ's resurrection that the Old Testament saints were taken to Paradise. Note that I did not say heaven. Christ went to prepare a place for us and at the time of judgment there will be a new heaven and earth made. Right now those who die go go live with Jesus in Paradise, but this is not the heaven people think of when they talk of the golden streets and pearly gates of Revelation 21. We read of Christ in Ephesians, "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men" (Eph 4:8). Who are the captives that Jesus freed when he ascended? None other than the Old Testament saints who died and went to Sheol. Everyone that died, good or bad, went to Sheol before the cross. It seems that there may have been a good part of Sheol and a bad part. This may be why in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16) a personal name is given. Never in any parable does Jesus use a personal name. So why does He do so here in referring to Lazarus? It is very possible that this isn't a parable but a true historical event. This is why when Lazarus died he went to Abraham's bosom and not the Lord's. Today, when a believer dies he will go to the bosom of Jesus. When Jesus died, it seems that he descended to Sheol to proclaim victory and then lead out the faithful captives with Him to paradise and offered them as a firstfruit offering to God (on the very day of Firstfruits, which was the day of His resurrection). (You can read more about this in my book on Exodus).

In the Law there was hope, but not the kind of hope we have under the new covenant. Verse 19 tells us we have a better hope. We don't go to some peaceful part of Sheol but to the bosom of Jesus Himself. The law kept you from going to the bad Sheol and eventually Hell, but life on earth was not joy filled. Now, in the new covenant we have hope here on earth with the joy of a relationship with the God who created the universe. The law did not allow for much of a relationship.

The Aaronic priesthood began with an oath. Likewise, the priesthood of Melchizedek began with an oath from the Almighty God. There is no other name by which an oath could be greater. We even saw this described in the previous chapter where we read, "When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants" (Heb 6:13-14). This makes the Melchizedek priesthood sure and unshakable. Ultimately, what God promised Abraham was that all nations would be blessed through him and Melchizedek was the means by which God did so (both with Melchizedek and Abraham before the law and Melchizedek and us in the New Testament).

We now have a guarantee. That means sure hope and an unshakable foundation. Should this not give us pure joy today?

23 Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; 24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. 25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Jesus is a much better priest than any of the Old Testament Aaronic priests because He lives forever. Because of this, the salvation He provides is complete. It does not need to be done over and over again. Salvation, when accepted, is guaranteed. Note, that it is those who come to God through Christ that are saved. In order for Christ to intercede for anyone, they must turn towards God (Repent) and walk or come to Christ. There are many verses telling us to come to Jesus. He won't force you to follow Him, that is your choice (John 7:37, Mat 11:28; Mat 19:14; John 5:40; Isa 55:3). Of course nobody can come to God without the Spirit asking them to do so: "'No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him'" (John 6:44). This is the catch 22 that is so often misunderstood. Some say there is nothing we can do but coming to Christ means we do. Others say we do it all but Scripture says God must draw you. Clearly, it is a combination of both. God draws you, but you have the choice to ignore or accept the call, however, without God drawing you, you would be unable to come on your own.

I often tell people that they better fear the day that they no longer feel guilty for their wrongdoings because this may mean God is no longer drawing them. Eventually, when people live in sin for so long, God can harden a heart and then there is no chance of ever coming to Christ. Once the hand of God withdraws from you, your conscience will no longer be pricked when you do wrong. Romans speaks of this conscience that will accuse us or defend us in the end times, "Since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)" (Rom 2:15). Note that the law was written on our hearts and breaking that law is what causes our conscience to be pricked. Who wrote the law on our hearts? God did! Why? To draw you to Him. The word conscience means with (con) knowledge (science). Anytime one sins, he does so with knowledge that he is wrong and with knowledge that he needs to have this sin paid for. This should cause people to seek a deliverer, seek help, seek Christ. However, if God (who works in your conscience) pulls away, your desire to seek Him is gone forever.

Also note that it is God who calls and it is Christ who is the door. The law came from God on Mount Sinai, but the Gospel comes through Christ on the cross. Though three in one, the role of God the Father seems to play an active role in the conscience but Christ, the Son, plays an active role in the thinking process of the mind. This is also why Scripture says we have the "mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16).

Note the purpose of Christ's life; to intercede for us. Timothy writes, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men-the testimony given in its proper time" (1 Tim 2:5-6). This is why the Catholic church goes against truth when they say that Mary is a mediator or intercedes for them in prayer. By saying Mary intercedes for Christians is to take away one of the primary reasons Jesus came to earth.

26 Such a high priest meets our need-one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

Christ was the only one who could meet our needs because, before Him and without Him, there was no person who was holy and blameless. Jesus was set apart from anyone or anything else. Even the animals are not holy and blameless because at the fall the entire creation was cursed so that as Scripture says, “The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Rom 8:19-22). Nothing in all creation could save us and only Jesus could even redeem the creation.

Jesus was exalted above the heavens. This does not mean heaven as we think of it, but heavens as the sky and stars. The Jews had three heavens. The sky, the area of the stars, and the throne of God. This is why Paul said he was caught up to the “third heaven” (2 Cor 12:2).

In the Old Covenant, priests made daily sacrifices because people sinned every day. Jesus, however, made one sacrifice that was so much better, that He forgave the sins of all people (who would accept the sacrifice) for all time. We read in Colossians, “God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross” (Col 2:13-15). Jesus got rid of the law that accused us and nailed it to the tree. All your sins were forgiven 2000 years ago and there is no need for Jesus to come back and die again. People often think they store up sins and then go to church and dump them out only to fill their basket again. It doesn’t work that way. Once you become a believer you live in a state of forgiveness. One cannot be made holy, then become unholy, then be holy, and then back to unholy. What if you died at a moment that you were unholy? You see, Christ’s sacrifice was better than that of the Old Covenant. Isn’t this something to praise God for?

Jesus was not weak, nor was His redemption. Jesus was made perfect forever and through His sacrifice, you were too. Hebrews tells us this great truth, “Because by one sacrifice *he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy*. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: ‘This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.’ Then he adds: ‘Their sins and lawless acts *I will remember no more*’ (Heb 10:14-17). Note that we are made perfect forever through faith in Christ. However, we are still being made holy according to the NIV. The KJV is more accurate to the original when it states that God makes perfect those who are sanctified. This makes more sense because if you are perfect, you are sanctified. However, as Christians, we are becoming more and more obedient to Christ all the time. I know that in my Christian walk, I am

sinning much less than I did ten years ago. Not that I am any more perfect because ALL my sins are forgiven and remembered no more. All of 100,000,000 sins or all of 1,000 sins still equals perfection. However, the earthly blessings on life and the benefits of the holiness of Christianity is being made perfect more and more all the time in my life. When I sin I rejoice that it is no longer remembered or held against me because of this better sacrifice, however, I still do not enjoying sinning because I know there are earthly blessings missed out on.

Hebrews 8

8:1 The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.

Chapter 8 begins by putting the previous chapter in perspective by highlighting the fact that WE have a high priest as was described. It seems too good to be true but it is trustworthy. Our high priest is serving in the sanctuary. So where is this sanctuary? According to verse two it is the true tabernacle that was set up by God Himself. That still doesn't clear everything up though. What is the true tabernacle? There are two answers to this question: 1) In heaven, 2) In the saints. We read in Revelation, "And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened" (Rev 15:5). Clearly the heavens are God's tabernacle. However, at the same time God lives in us, "What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people'" (2 Cor 6:16). Christ lives in our souls and spirit and these bodies are the tent that God abides in. Only the Lord could set up the true Tabernacle. Christ purchased us with His blood to make us pillars in the temple of our God; we could do nothing on our own. This is why Christ said that apart from Him we could do nothing (John 15).

Christ was able to sit down when He was finished. The priests of the earthly Tabernacle could never rest. There was no chair in all the furnishings therein for them to rest because atonement for sin had to be continually made day after day.

In the Old Testament the normal priests only ministered on the outside of the Tabernacle. Only the high priests could go inside and then, only by presenting blood. They were daily in the middle section called the holy place but only once a year in the inner Most Holy Place. Christ now lives in this Most Holy Place and not in the shadow of what it represented, by the real thing.

In the Tabernacle there were three portions and the inner sanctuary was the most holy of all places. It was here that the ark of the covenant rested, which symbolized the throne of God. When Christ died the curtain of the Temple was torn in two allowing entrance into this most holy of all places. Why? God was showing that our high priest had gone in and opened the way for us to enter His presence through Christ. There was no longer anything to separate us from the throne of God once that curtain was ripped.

3 Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. 4 If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. 5 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." 6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

Every high priest that ever lived was appointed by God to serve the people as a mediator; to offer gifts and sacrifices to God. Therefore, if Jesus was our high priest He also had to offer gifts and sacrifices to God for us. Because there were already men alive offering the normal sacrifices prescribed by the law, there had to be something better to offer to God; nothing could be better than the sacrifice of himself.

Verse five tells us clearly that the earthly Tabernacle was a pattern of what will be in heaven. We will not go into this completely here, but if you would like more information, it is discussed in my book on Exodus or in my video on the Tabernacle. For now, it is important to know that this Tabernacle wasn't just a normal structure. It modeled what heaven is and what it would be like for us as well as a great foreshadowing of Christ.

The ministry of Christ was superior to any priest before Him because only Christ could redeem forever and lead us to the heavenly Tabernacle. A model car is never as good as the real thing. Even the promise of the old covenant wasn't as good as the promise of the new one. The old covenant promise was that if the Israelites obeyed God and followed the commandments and regulations, then they would be blessed and would enter the promised land of Canaan. The new covenant promise, however, said that simply by accepting Christ as personal Savior one can inherit the promised land of heaven, which will be much better than Canaan.

7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. 8 But God found fault with the people and said: "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 9 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord.

The old covenant given at the time Israel was leaving Egypt was faulty because it did not take away fault from within the people. The biggest cause of its faultiness is that it relied upon man's promises, of which they could never keep. The new covenant depended strictly upon God's faithfulness, not man's. Under the new covenant God will not turn away from any whose faith lies in His son Jesus.

10 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 11 No longer will a man teach his

neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. 12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." 13 By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

Part of the new covenant was that God's law would be put in the heart of man as well as in his mind. Note, the law was not destroyed as Jesus said, but merely fulfilled in our stead. Now with the law in our hearts and minds we think about it and we want to follow the law. Do you have a heart for God's law? You will if you think about it because it is written there by our Creator Himself.

Many people cite Colossians where it states, "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ" (Col 2:16-17). Verse 14 of this Colossians section tells us all our sins were nailed to the cross and then it goes on to tell us this. Many say that this means the Sabbath day and other festivals are null and void. Is that really what it says? Not at all! It merely says we are not going to be judged by whether we do or don't do these things any more that if one tells a lie or doesn't. Thou shalt not steal is no greater a commandment than keep the Sabbath holy. Neither one will get you to heaven so don't let anyone judge you by them. Jesus will judge and it will be by your faith that you will be saved. With that said, however, has God put these things on your heart and mind? Do you want to serve, worship and draw closer to God in your freedom? Then follow the law written in your heart and mind and you will. Note also in this Colossians verse that it states these things are shadows of what "*was*" to come. It seems that they have been fulfilled. NO! The NIV is not accurate to the Greek. The King James accurately states, "which *are* a shadow of things *to come*." The Jewish Festivals are still foreshadowing what will come in the future when Christ returns. Without a heart felt desire to learn about the commands God gave to His children, one will not understand future events. This is why God has left this on the hearts of His children. Don't ignore what God puts on your mind.

Yet another important aspect of the law being on our minds comes from Romans which states, "(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares" (Rom 2:14-16). Clearly the Gentiles are following the law, not because it was given to them on Mount Sinai but because God gave it them by giving them a desire to obey it by writing it on their hearts. This is why their thoughts will accuse them, trying to convict them to follow their heart and mind. Not our mind, but the new mind that Christ has given us for we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2 16). Remember, salvation does not come by works but there will be no salvation without them because faith without works is dead. Obedience to the law is closely connected to the Gospel. The Gospel takes away the burden and the consequences of our failures, however, it doesn't take away the requirements of the Law. Christ just fulfills them for us, not by getting rid of them, but by putting them in our hearts so we want to do them

and forgiving us when we don't. Anyone who doesn't want to follow the law doesn't understand who God is.

Others say that if the old covenant is obsolete, the law is too. Not at all. This would make Jesus a liar when He said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt 5:17-18). The old covenant wasn't simply the law, but a means by which salvation was to be obtained. God isn't saying the law is obsolete, only the use of the law as a means of becoming saved.

I think Matthew Henry says it best, "God articulates with his people that he will put his laws into their minds and write them in their hearts. He once wrote his laws to them, now he will write his laws in them; that is, he will give them understanding to know and to believe his law; he will give them memories to retain them; he will give them hearts to love them and consciences to recognize them; he will give them courage to profess them and power to put them in practice; the whole habit and frame of their souls shall be a table and transcript of the law of God. This is the foundation of the covenant; and, when this is laid, duty will be done wisely, sincerely, readily, easily, resolutely, constantly, and comfortably. (from Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.).

Out on the street I have many people tell me they are atheists. My response is that God doesn't believe in atheists. God put his law in everyone's mind so that they all know He exists. They may try to deny what their minds and hearts tell them, but they know the truth, they just won't accept Him. The very word conscience proves this. God gave us a conscience which means knowledge of wrong. "Con" means "with" and "science" means "knowledge." Every time the pagans sin they do so with knowledge that it is wrong. This is also why our conscience will bear witness against us when Christ judges the world as His gospel declares.

Hebrews Chapter 9

9:1 Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. 2 A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. 3 Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, 4 which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. 5 Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

The old covenantal relationship with God required worship in certain ways and traditions inside an earthly building. This Tabernacle was a model of what is in heaven, and therefore, can not be a bad thing, only obsolete because the better, real thing, is now here.

In the first room (The Holy Place) of the Tabernacle there were three articles of furniture: lampstand, table of showbread, and altar of incense. Interestingly, now in

Hebrews it says the incense altar was in the Most Holy Place, the furthest room. Why? It seems strange that the author of Hebrews did not know where the incense table should be placed. It seems most plausible that he is showing us that Christ has now made what this altar symbolized, a heavenly goal. As I go over in great detail in my book on Exodus, the lampstand represented the Word of God, a light unto our path in this dark world. The table of showbread represents Jesus, the bread of life and our communion with God. The altar of incense represented intercessory prayer through Christ to God. Therefore, prayer, communion and reading the Bible were three daily and weekly routines of the old earthly tabernacle. Once Christ died, the curtain that separated this room from the Most Holy Place was torn in two so that the priests had daily access to God's throne. Prior to this, only once a year, and then only the high priest, was allowed to go into the inner sanctuary. Now, through Christ, all have access daily to God's throne. Christ has led the way for us and now sits at the right hand of God on the throne of God in the Most Holy Place. Only after the cross did even Christ sit down in this greatest of places which may be why the altar of incense (representing Christ as mediator in our prayers) is described as being in the Most Holy Place.

Inside the Ark of the Covenant was the golden jar of manna representing Christ's body. Aaron's staff that had budded, representing the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the Commandments of God, representing the all powerful, law giving Father. Then, above the Ark were the cherubim. The point is that this inner room was a model of heaven where we see the Trinity as well as the angels. Important to note is that in heaven, communion with God will remain as seen in the jar of manna. God's law and His Word will remain as seen in the law and God's spirit will remain as seen in the staff. Perhaps this is why the altar of incense is also placed in here to show that communication with God will also be a heavenly event.

6 When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. 7 But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. 8 The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. 9 This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. 10 They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings-external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

Once everything was in place, the priests would daily do what God had placed them there to do. As we discussed in earlier chapters, God has made us priests and our job description is the same; to look out for the lost and intercede for them to the Intercessor. It is a daily job and we must enter the inner room to do it. Inside the inner room was the Word of God and communion with Christ. There is no way one can do the job of a priest on his own, he needs God. Also, today we make evangelism into a committee or a weekend project, but it is to be a part of our daily lives.

Only the high priest could enter the inner room and only once a year with blood. First the priest would offer the blood for himself because he could not enter the inner

room unclean or else he would die. Jesus was our high priest who entered once for all and took His own blood in to offer for us. He did not need to offer any for Himself because He was already holy and needed no forgiveness. Christ did all the suffering in your place to give you access to this inner room.

It is important to realize that the old covenant high priest had to cover his sins with blood first before he could go and intercede for others. Likewise, today, we can not intercede for others while we are yet unclean. God isn't listening to the prayers of the unclean (Prov 28:9). Jesus took care of this for us. Simply by accepting the blood our high priest took into the inner room (representing heaven), we are made clean and can now serve as holy children of God.

The biggest mystery of this entire process though, is that the old covenant high priest could only take away the immediate consequence of the sins of the people. Christ was able to take away all sins along with their consequences. Back then, when one sinned his conscience would still be able to condemn him, though Christ had brought forth a pardon. Now, Christ casts our sins as far as the east is from the west and they are no more. There is no reason for anyone to feel guilty when Christ has even cleansed our conscience. In order to fully understand this we need we need to go back to Genesis where we see Ishmael being driven away from the household of Abraham and his offspring. Galatians gives us a beautiful explanation of why this had to happen. "For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman [Hagar] was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman [Sarah] was born as the result of a promise. These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from *Mount Sinai* and bears children *who are to be slaves*: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. . . Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born in the ordinary way *persecuted* the son born by the power of the Spirit. **It is the same now**" (Gal 4:22-29). The quarrel between Isaac and Ishmael in Genesis was no ordinary matter, in fact, it shows us why our conscience can now be clean. What does it mean that this quarrel is the same NOW?

This relationship between Isaac and Ishmael goes much deeper than what is first seen. As we see in Galatians, Ishmael represents the law given on Mount Sinai and Isaac represents the covenant promise of Jesus. We see that the son born in the ordinary way (our sinful nature and desire to follow the law) persecutes the son born by the Spirit (the new man of God who clings to Christ's (Our high priest's) love and forgiveness). This is exactly what goes on today. Often when we do something wrong and sinful, we continue to beat ourselves and feel guilty long after we have been forgiven. The law continues to work when it should not. When I was first told that the Ten Commandments had no meaning in my life I was shocked at first. The Ten Commandments don't have any use in the Christian life unless they fall away and begin doing something sinful. Then the law is needed to convict you. However, once you are convicted we throw the law away so that we can get rid of the guilt, and let Christ's loving forgiveness take hold of our life and grant us a clear conscience. After all, is it the law that causes you not to murder? NO! It is the Gospel and the love of Christ that motivates us to lead a Godly life. But, when we allow the law to remain in our Christian lives when it shouldn't, it *persecutes* us

into an attitude of works righteousness. That is why we read in Romans, “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe” (Rom 3:20-22). Also, “Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Rom 10:4). And, “So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God” (Rom 7:4). Galatians also states, “What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions **until** the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator” (Gal 3:19). Again, “So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. **Now** that faith has come, **we are no longer under the supervision of the law**” (Gal 3:24). In chapter two it says, “For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God” (Gal 2:19). These are just a few more examples of Scripture where we clearly see that those who live by faith need not hold the Ten Commandments near their minds. If this person of the faith begins to fall away or sin unrepentantly, only then does the law need to be brought back into their lives. We must not let the “son born naturally” persecute “the son born of the Spirit.” For, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. In other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring” (Rom 9:7). Therefore, we, as children of the promise, are Abraham’s offspring and we will not be persecuted by the law (children from Ishmael) any longer. We, like Abraham, need to chase Ishmael away from under our roof. I used to beat myself up for doing something wrong. In essence, I was saying, “thanks for your forgiveness Lord, but until I stop doing this, your forgiveness and intercession isn’t good enough because my conscience is still accusing me. I need to help out a little bit to get rid of the guilt.” Understanding the above truth, however, has freed me and now I claim the forgiveness of my sin which sparks a greater love for Christ. This love then sparks the motivation not to do the sin again. All this without the continuing guilt of my sin persecuting me.

Do some churches today also make Christianity a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings? Oh yes. I have seen many Christians make forgiveness and the renewed life a matter of do’s and don’ts. Tradition and ritual replace the Spirit of God and feelings of guilt motivate works than feelings of love. As our family celebrates the Biblical Festivals many have accused me of making Christianity a matter of food, drink and ceremonies. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have missed festivals at times but have the freedom and a clear conscience to do so. We don’t celebrate the festivals because they are rituals that we feel responsible to follow. We do so because we sincerely want to seek out and look forward to what they stand for; Christ’s second coming.

One pastor told me once that we don’t need to celebrate the Festivals any more because they were null and void. I told him that I agreed that we don’t NEED to celebrate the Festivals any more than we need to celebrate Easter, but I sure WANT to and believe I am BLESSED in doing so. Also, I told him I disagreed with the fact that they are null and void. Nothing in Scripture is null and void; perhaps fulfilled, but in the case of the feasts, most are not even fulfilled. (See my Exodus book for more details)

This pastor pointed out Colossians 2 in the NIV which reads, “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ” (Col 2:16-17). Note that here it says “These are a shadow of the things that WERE to come” but the reality is found in Christ. The KJV accurately records the Greek by stating these festivals “ARE a shadow of things TO come; but the body is of Christ” (Col 2:17). The KJV clearly shows these are not all fulfilled in the past but are yet to be fulfilled. Indeed, the reality of them all will be fulfilled in Christ but that isn’t what this verse says either. It says not to judge one another whether or not you follow the festivals because the body of believers is of Christ, not of tradition or do’s and don’ts. Don’t let Ishmael on your back in such matters.

11 When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. 12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

When the Christ came to be our high priest it was better than any old covenant tradition and covering could do. I don’t want my sins covered, I want them gone. Jesus did that for us by shedding His own blood and obtaining eternal redemption, not temporary redemption. Goats and bulls could only clean the outside and for a short period of time. The blood of Jesus cleans the entire spirit and soul so that our conscience can be clean as we discussed in the previous section.

Three things made the sacrifice of Jesus better than the temporary priestly offering. First, it was being offered by one with a divine nature rather than a sinful one. Secondly, it was selfless in that the priests were offering the blood of something else while Christ laid down His own life. Thirdly, the blood that was offered was pure and blameless without any blemish. There could be no greater an offering. No wonder this is an all or nothing deal. Perfection doesn’t just partly clean, it totally cleanses.

Not until you have a clear conscience can you truly serve the living God. As long as you feel guilty you will not be able to experience the loving response of being truly forgiven. Without this loving response, serving God will be more out of responsibility than love. He who is forgiven much will love much but he who is forgiven little will love little. This is the problem in churches today. We have too many Christians that have only had their sins covered in the blood of Jesus so they still haven’t experienced God. Hebrews is showing you the greatness of what Christ has done for you. Again, get Ishmael off your back and send him away because he has no part in this family.

15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Verse fifteen tells us “For this reason” Christ was the mediator of a new covenant. The question is, what reason? The KJV says, “cause” rather than reason which is a little better. It was because Jesus offered Himself and His own unblemished blood that made Him the mediator of a better covenant.

We also get into a touchy subject among many believers and that is who exactly is called by Jesus. It isn't just the Jew because Paul said, “Even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles” (Rom 9:24). We also see they are those who are predestined, “And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified” (Rom 8:29-30). I believe it is those who accept Christ with their free will who, “Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory” (Eph 1:13-14). Some would say God predestined some to hell and others to heaven. I do not see any Scripture saying that some are picked to go to hell. I do see Christ saying that, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). I believe everyone has a chance to repent as God offers the gospel to all human beings but in His knowledge, God knows who would and who would not accept it. Therefore, in some ways, knowing one would not accept the gift, God would use them to accomplish His purposes as He did with Pharaoh. Therefore, all would be called but not many would be chosen. There can be no doubt though, that everyone falling under the old covenant (which is everyone) fell short and needed Christ as a ransom for their life. Because God so loved the “WORLD” (which seems to be everyone) He gave His only begotten son so that WHOEVER believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

16 In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, 17 because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. 18 This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. 19 When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. 20 He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep." 21 In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. 22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

No one can claim an inheritance unless the person giving the inheritance dies. This is why Christ had to die to give this great gift to men. Many have said they never understood why God would have all those animals killed in the Old Testament. The answer lies in verse 22: without bloodshed there is no forgiveness. Death is an integral part of understanding our world today. Doing street ministry people often ask how God could be a God of love and allow the death and disease in our world. I have to take them all the way back to Genesis to show them because of sin coming into the world death came about. Genesis 3 tells us that death was the curse of sin, however, even moreso it was the cure for it as well. Verse 15 of Genesis 3 tells us that Satan would have his head

crushed by the offspring of Eve (Jesus). How would He do that? Through His death on the cross. Even Romans tells us the “wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus.” How? Through his death. One cannot understand the Bible, life, or forgiveness without understanding original sin and death. Death is the curse and the cure. You can’t understand the good news in the New Testament until you first understand the bad news in the Old Testament.

Why bloodshed? Genesis tells us that “You must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it” (Gen 9:4). We also see in Leviticus this explained, “The life of every creature is its blood. That is why I have said to the Israelites, ‘You must not eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood’” (Lev 17:14). The reason blood is so important is because the life is in the blood. The Hebrew for “life” is nephesh and is also translated as “soul.” Christ gave his life for us, even His very soul. There is much greater meaning in this blood that goes beyond what Hebrews discusses here but you can read more on my newsletter “Eating Blood and the New Covenant” on our website.

Not only was the scroll on which the law was written sprinkled with blood but so was the Tabernacle, the people, and virtually everything that could be sprinkled. The “lifeblood” had to cleanse all because all is contaminated with sin. Romans tells us, “For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom 8:20-21). At the time of the fall, all of creation was cursed and all needs to be redeemed. This is why the new heaven and earth will be created at the end because they too need to be redeemed. Spiritually, Christ’s blood cleanses everything. The law brought death (Romans 7:10) for us but Christ’s blood sprinkled upon the law was hope for the future. We read of this hope in Romans, “So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God” (Rom 7:4-5).

Verse 19 brings out an interesting thought as well. The law was not just sprinkled with blood but also with water. Both of these were applied with scarlet lambs wool and hyssop branches. All of which have important meaning. Obviously, the blood represents the blood of Jesus. The red wool represents Jesus as He was the Lamb of God (John 1:29). We also know that at the crucifixion of Jesus hyssop played an important role: “A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished’” (John 19:29-30). In Psalms we read, “Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow” (Ps 51:7). Hyssop was used to cleanse and Jesus blood was the only substance that could truly clean. But what about the water? When Jesus died on the cross, “one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water” (John 19:34-35). This is partly explained later: “This is the one who came by water and blood-Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement” (1 John 5:6-8). Water, a symbol of life, testifies to the true life, Jesus. Because the tabernacle was cleansed with water and blood, Jesus also had to cleanse us with both water and blood as well. The water’s of Baptism could very well

5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. **6** And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. **9** By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. **10** For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

11 By faith Abraham, even though he was past age-and Sarah herself was barren-was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. **12** And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. **14** People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. **15** If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. **16** Instead, they were longing for a better country-a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, **18** even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." **19** Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.

23 By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. **25** He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. **26** He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. **27** By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. **28** By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.

31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. 35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. 37 They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated- 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. 40 God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Hebrews 12

12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

We are surrounded the cloud of witnesses back in Chapter 11. In the imagery of a race, we are to throw everything off that keeps us from running. The race has been marked out for us so there is no cause to stray. We know the route but will we step outside those bounds? The only true way to stay on course is to fix our eyes on Jesus. Don't let your eyes wander to the cares of this world, but firmly plant your sights on Christ. Yeshua is the author, the instigator and Creator of our faith. Jesus is also the perfecter of our faith. I have seen many Christians trying to perfect their faith apart from developing a relationship with Jesus. They think by their own power and strength they can overcome the trials of life without reading their Bible daily. Jesus didn't endure the cross simply by one deciding to set his eyes on the Father and his goal in mind. Jesus lived it and prepared for it His entire life. Jesus often went where He could be alone in prayer. He did nothing without His father's approval and in so doing was strengthened for the very day and hour His race would end.

We must consider Jesus and His life as an encouragement for us as we endure trials. If we fix our eyes on Him, our problems won't be so problematic anymore.

4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Note that our struggle isn't said to be against the fear of witnessing or persecution but the struggle is against sin. One could go as far as death in resisting sin. Why haven't we? Verse five says because we have forgotten that word of encouragement. What encouragement? Our sonship! As Christ was the Son of God we too are now sons of God, co-heirs with Christ (Gal 3:29). If we have that kind of gift, shouldn't our response of thankfulness be that much greater? Our modern day churches have given the impression that we should have few problems as Christians. In fact, start going to church and your problems will go away. Show me where this teaching is in Scripture. It isn't there. Verses five and six tell us that we should expect the Lord to discipline and rebuke us. It is no different with our earthly fathers. If they never corrected and rebuked us would they truly care for our wellbeing? Not at all. We discipline our children so that when they grow older they will have a better life to live. Likewise, our father disciplines us so that when we enter heaven we will receive a better resurrection (Heb 11:35). Verse eleven even tells us that discipline is a training tool. Perhaps rather than running from trouble, we should just accept it, thank God and move on. How would God respond to our thankfulness rather than our complaining?

12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. 14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. 16 See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. 17 Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.

By strengthening our weak knees that have been shaken through discipline and lack of trust in God, our paths will be made level and then truly, an easier walk in life. Rather than going through life disabled in mind, spirit and body, we could be healed.

We need to make every effort to live at peace with people by being holy. We are being taught to confront people when they offend you. But what is greater, to confront or to overlook? What greater effort it takes to look past an offense rather than to confront someone, but also what greater joy comes from overlooking offenses.

Are you holy? Without holiness you can't see God. Indeed, God has made us holy through discipline and training, but ultimately, it is only the holiness that comes through faith that allows us to enter heaven. The KJV seems to make this more clear that we are holy through Christ and being sanctified through Him as well. (Compare Hebrews 10:10 with 10:14).

The root of bitterness can cause the grace of God to be missed. So can sexual immorality or treating the blessing and grace of God with contempt as did Esau.

18 You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; 19 to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, 20 because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." 21 The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

Here we begin to understand the difference of those missing the grace of God from those who understand it. If you think that by going to Mount Sinai you will receive God's grace you are mistaken. That mountain brings nothing but fear and death. Consider the words of Paul, "Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:12-18).

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Rather than the law of Mount Sinai we have come to the Gospel of Mount Zion (Gal 4). We have come before thousands of angels in joyful assembly. Now that sounds like a "joy set before us" to fix our eyes on.

Verse 23 tells us we are the church of the firstborn, inheriting a double portion and having our names written in heaven. This is no small matter as only those whose names are found written in the book of life can enter the kingdom of God (Rev 20).

We have not only come to Mount Zion, but to a new city, to angels, to the church of God, to the spirits of men, to Jesus and to His sprinkled blood. The Gospel has many benefits.

25 See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? 26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." 27 The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken-that is, created things-so that what cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."

Verse 25 clearly tells us we have a choice. You can refuse or accept the invitation of God through His son Jesus.

When the law was given the earth shook. When He speaks again on Mount Zion at His return, it won't just be the earth but even the heavens that will shake. Those that have come to the new city, to Jesus, will now have become new creations and will not be shaken or terrified. However, all things of the original creation, including the flesh of unsaved man (not made new) will be destroyed with fervent heat (2 Peter 3:12, Mat 24:29). Consider the Psalms, "They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed (NIV says shaken), but abideth for ever" (Ps 125:1). Or, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee" (Isa 54:10).

What an awe inspiring thought. We should ponder this and realize that God deserves our worship with reverence and awe because He is the Lion, the judge, the consuming fire that will cause all things to melt away. (Nah 1:5, 2 Pet 3:12)