

I. Introduction to Hebrews

The Book of Hebrews is one of the most beautiful commentaries on the Old Testament that we possess as Christians. The key figure is Messiah. Therefore, we have a New Testament perspective of Messiah as presented from the Old Testament. Furthermore, we have the exhortation of a people that originated in the Old Testament. Several prefigure and types are explained by the Author. The Book of Hebrews is a connection between the Old and New Testament.

In reading the Book of Hebrews the following criteria needs to be taken into consideration.

To whom was the Book of Hebrews written?

What was the real purpose of the Mosaic Covenant?

What were the circumstances of the readers?

Who wrote the book?

A. Title and Author

While the Letter to the Hebrews does not contain the word "Epistle" in the Biblical text, early sources and manuscripts show evidence that the title was "The Epistle to the Hebrews." We know that the Book of Hebrews is an Epistle and should be treated as such from the conclusionary remarks of chapter thirteen (13).

In ancient times, authorship was important. It may have meant whether or not a letter did or did not get read; much as it today. The authorship of such a letter as the Book of Hebrews could have meant that the book did or did not get accepted as canon.

Who wrote the Book of Hebrews? Scholars, both ancient and modern, are undecided on who wrote the Book of Hebrews. The following is a compendium of views on the possible author.

1. Barnabas

Some ancient manuscripts suggest that Paul was the author, while others suggest that Timothy wrote or produced the book written by Barnabas. Those who suggest that Barnabas wrote the book believe that the book was written to contend the Marcion heresy and addressed to the Laodicians or possibly the Alexandrians. Tertullian, also a Church father, suggested that the possible author was Barnabas. Barnabas was a Levite according to the Book of Acts (4:36). This would have explained the writer's in-depth knowledge of the Priestly office. However, such knowledge was readily available to every Jew of the First Century. Scholarship has observed that the Epistle of Barnabas and the Epistle to the Hebrews circulated together until about the fourth century. Though the Epistle of Barnabas was not actually written by Barnabas, it was similar in content and style to the Hebrew Epistle. Nonetheless, there is enough diversity between the two (2) documents to cause a reasonable doubt.

2. Paul

Part of the reason that scholarship contends Paul's authorship is due to the missing prologue that is consistent in Paul's writings. Other scholars reject Pauline authorship based upon style and technique. There are those who have noted that certain passages within the Book of Hebrews negate Pauline authorship. One such passage is found in chapter two (2) verse three (3). Here the author does not make a specific reference to personally having been one of the Apostles who received the Gospel first hand. In citing this text and argument, we must remember that Paul did receive direct revelation and communication directly from the Lord.

However, some aspects of the language, style, and theology of Hebrews are very similar to Paul's epistles and the author refers to Timothy (He 13:23). However, there are significant differences which have led

many Biblical scholars to reject Paul's authorship of this book. Paul was knowledgeable enough of the Old and New Testaments to have written this book, but the actual author of the book is unknown.

Many scholars accept Pauline authorship based upon the testimony of the Church Fathers such as Eusebius and Clement of Alexandria. However, they are not wholly agreed. Some scholars believe that Peter makes a reference to Paul having written a letter to the Hebrews (2Pe 3:15). The point is often strengthened by the fact that the writer was in Italy, in bonds (10:34; 13:24). Further evidence is that Timothy was a companion (13:23). In about the year 200 C.E. (Common Era) a manuscript of Paul's writing existed on papyrus. The Book of Hebrews was included in this manuscript. Late scholarship contends that Paul wrote the Epistle in the terminology of the Mishnah, which was the language of the rabbinic schools of the early Talmudic period.

Other suggested authors are James, the brother of Jesus and author of the book titled after him. Apollos is also suggested. He is suggested by Martin Luther. However, most contemporary scholars believe that Martin Luther's suggestion of Apollos is ill founded and without sufficient evidence. There are several other names that are suggested such as: Luke, Silas, and Philip.

Recent scholarship has suggested that the possible author was Priscilla, who, with her husband, gave instruction to Apollos. However, scholarship has noted the masculine use of terminology within the Letter to the Hebrews.

3. Comment from Early Church Fathers

When Pauline authorship was accepted in the East, it became necessary to explain why Paul's name was not appended to the actual text of Hebrews. Theodore of Mopsuestia and Severian of Gabala represent the received interpretation that, because Paul was an "Apostle to the Gentiles," out of tact and appropriate deference to apostles called to the ministry to the historic people of Israel, Paul's authorship is not explicitly mentioned in the Epistle to the "Hebrews."

a. Theodore of Mopsuestia: (c. 350–428. Bishop of Mopsuestia, founder of the Antiochene, or literalistic, school of exegesis.)

“Paul did not write as to unbelievers who had acquired an implacable hatred against him but to believers who have shared all things that it is necessary to share. He writes not to those who are simple in their faith but to those who are demonstrating in their works the solidity of their faith and the keenness of their virtue, as the contents of the epistle show. Consequently, the epistle must have been delivered to them as one of Paul’s epistles, for if this were not the case the things written would not benefit them.”

“Again, in addition to these considerations the things written at the end of the epistle prove what I am stating: ‘I appeal to you, brethren’ he says, ‘bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.’ But to whom did he write, ‘I appeal to you’ if those things were not the reason the letter was sent to them? Then he adds, ‘You should understand that our brother Timothy has been released with whom I shall see you if he comes soon.’ Clearly you see that Timothy was the one who has delivered the epistle Paul wrote, with whom Paul clearly promises also to see them, if Timothy returns.”

“What then is the reason for Paul not appending his name? It is evident and very clear. Both Barnabas and Paul divided the preaching task with the disciples of the blessed Peter. [This was] not so that the former could teach some doctrines and the latter others—for there is one goal—but so that Paul and Barnabas might lead to faith some from the Gentiles while Peter and his disciples would lead some from the Jews to faith, deeming this division more expedient because at that time there was still a powerful rivalry due to the custom of the Jews (based on their law) who did not permit themselves to consort with Gentiles. Then some of the apostles had dealings with the Gentiles, while others with the circumcised. But those who had come to faith in all probability deemed the teachers and apostles to be shared by both communities. Thus, when Paul wrote to the Gentiles, he in all likelihood commands them as their apostle, but when he writes to the Hebrews, he does not. “

b. Severian of Gabala: (c. 400. A contemporary of John Chrysostom, he was a highly regarded preacher in Constantinople, particularly at the imperial court.)

“The heretics say that this epistle is not Paul’s, and they offer as their first proof of this that his name is not superscripted as in the other epistles. Second, his vocabulary is different, that is, it is foreign to Paul’s customary word choice and usage. One must know, however, that Paul was hated by the Jews on the grounds that he was teaching apostasy from the law, and having been endangered for this reason in Jerusalem and having scarcely escaped, he was sent to Rome. **Therefore, writing something useful to the Hebrews, he does not append his name, so that they might not lose any advantage they could have derived from the letter because of their hatred against him.**

And he writes to them in the tongue of the Hebrews, which was also translated by one of his disciples—by Luke or more likely by Clement who also is mentioned. For this reason the vocabulary is different. And this has been investigated by previous generations, and Eusebius of Pamphilus, a historian of those things in preceding and contemporary generations, made mention of the investigation, and it still seemed to our fathers, the predecessors of the bishops, that the epistle was Paul's.

4. Conclusion

The plain simple truth is that the author remains anonymous and it is impossible to ascertain the true identity of the author at this late date. What we can ascertain at this point is that the readers of the Letter were acquainted with the author and accepted the letter's authenticity. Likewise, the author must have held some position of authority. His letter, thought, and exhortation carried weight with its readers. He is familiar with their circumstances and encourages them on to maturity.

The author is knowledgeable of more than just the written scriptures. He is thoroughly acquainted with the Oral Traditions, as they would be codified in the Mishnah. These traditions are a part of the author's argument even though they are concealed to the average reader's eye. He is aware of the traditions and interpretations of the Biblical text in accordance with the hermeneutics of the First Century. Furthermore, he is thoroughly acquainted with the functions of the Priesthood.

While the authorship of the book is contested, we now have it as a part of Christian canon, thereby making God the author. The message was given by the inspiration of Holy Spirit. Uncertainty plagues, not only the identity of its writer, but also where it was written. The question of authorship delayed its recognition, in the west, as a part of the New Testament canon in spite of early support by Clement of Rome.

Not until the fourth century was Hebrews accepted as authoritative in the Western Church, when the testimonies of Jerome and Augustine settled the issue. In the Eastern Church, there was no problem of acceptance because Hebrews was regarded as one of the "fourteen" Epistles of Paul. The issue of acceptance was again raised during the Reformation; but the spiritual depth and quality of Hebrews bore witness to its inspiration, despite the questions about the author.

B. Audience

James, Peter, John, Jude, and Paul are the most notable letter writers of the New Testament. Some of the authors wrote to the Messianic Jews of their day. Paul addressed Gentiles in several of his letters. Without a doubt, this letter was written specifically to Messianic Jews. However, many scholars are beginning to believe that many of the letters of James, Peter, John, and Jude were also sent specifically to Messianic Jews. We can readily determine the letter written by the hand of James was sent to Messianic Jews by its prologue.

Undoubtedly the Book of Hebrews was written to a group of Jewish Believers. They had come to faith in Jesus as the Messiah. The letter is most assuredly addressed to a specific group or congregation of Jews and not just Jews in general. It has been argued by some scholars that the intended audience was the Ebonites. The Ebonites were Messianic Jews who were possibly the extreme legalists of the Book of Acts. As a matter of fact, some scholars suggest that the Book of Hebrews is a continuation of the thoughts of the Book of Acts.

Their approach was legalism as a method of Salvation rather than faith. They were “zealous of the Law,” (Ac.21:20). Their demand in Acts 15 was that the Gentiles be circumcised and keep the Law as a means of Salvation. As Jews who believed in the Messiah, they could acknowledge no other answer to the question of Gentile Salvation. How could the Gentiles become a part of the “People of God”? Their view was through acceptance of the Jewish Covenant of Election by means of circumcision. This was the basic format for conversion to Judaism in ancient times. They saw it as the means for Salvation, period. Jew and Gentile alike must be circumcised and keep the Torah. All sources seem to indicate that they were Pharisee converts to Christianity from the Rabbinic School of Shammai.

Many scholars believe that the audience was Jewish Believers, having accepted Jesus as the Messiah; they wanted to reverse their course in order to escape persecution by some of their own countrymen and Gentile oppression. The writer of Hebrews exhorts them to “press on to maturity” (6:1). This encouragement is based on the excellence of Messiah and His work. Messiah is better than the angels, for the angels worship Him. Christ is better than Moses, Christ created him. Christ is better than the Aaronic Priesthood, for Christ’s sacrifice was once and for all time. He is the goal of the Law and He mediates a preferable covenant (Ro 10:4). In short, there is more to be gained in Messiah than to be lost in Judaic legalism.

This epistle deals specifically with the relationship of the Old Testament and the New Testament revelation and is the unifier of both.

Many places have been suggested for the location of the readers, but the destination of this letter cannot be determined with any certainty. The recipients of this letter were Believers (3:1) who had come to faith through the testimony of eyewitnesses of Christ (2:3). They were not novices or mature (5:12), and they had successfully endured hardships because of their stand for the Gospel (10:32-34). Unfortunately, they had become "dull of hearing" (5:11) and were in danger of drifting away (2:1, 3:12). This made them sensitive to the renewed persecutions that was coming upon them (12:4-12), and the author found it necessary to check their downward spiral with "this word of exhortation" (13:22). While there is disagreement over the specific danger involved, the classic position is that the readers were on the verge of lapsing into Judaism to avoid persecution directed at Jewish Christians. The Book of Hebrews repeated emphasis is on the superiority of Messiah.

C. Date

It is difficult to ascertain the date of origin due to the lack of information concerning the authorship. The place of the writing is unknown, but a date can be approximated. Hebrews was quoted in A.D. 95 by Clement of Rome. The author speaks of the sacrificial system in the present tense indicating that they were still being practiced in the Temple. As a result of the present tense of the Temple cult which ended with destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 indicates that it was prior to that date. However, some scholarship considers this information inconclusive since the Mishnah, compiled after the destruction of the Temple, also speaks of the sacrificial system in the present tense.

Timothy was still alive (13:23), persecution was mounting, and some time had passed since the death and resurrection of Christ. However, some scholars suggest that Timothy died in 94 A.D. Those who are addressed in the Epistle were not new to the Messianic Faith. All of this suggests a date between A.D. 64 and 68. If the author was Paul, the letter could not have been written any later. However, based upon the thesis that the terminology of the Mishnah was used in the Epistle, recent scholarship postpones that date to after A.D. 70. The reasoning behind the late date of authorship is because of the difficulties that presented themselves to both the Messianic and Jewish Communities in the wake of the Temple's destruction. The great question was what to do in the absence of the sacrificial system. The Rabbinic Community resolved its problems with fasting, almsgiving, study and prayer. However, the Messianic Community turned its faith to Messiah who was the once and for all sacrifice needed to procure Salvation for those who put their faith in Him. Therefore, the questions that presented themselves to both communities are answered in the Letter to The Hebrews.

Another highly debated issue that undoubtedly brought division between the Messianic Believers and the Jews of the Synagogues was the destruction of the Temple. Even though Jesus prophesied its destruction,

the Jews looked for a Messianic figure that would overthrow Rome and establish, once and for all, the Kingdom of Israel. Herein was the misconception as to what the Kingdom of God really was. The Jews believed that the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Israel was in fact the same thing. However, the Book of Acts negates this idea. Jesus was not concerned with the Kingdom of Israel at His resurrection. He, throughout His ministry, repeatedly preached the Presence of the Kingdom of God.

Furthermore, all the references to the Temple are not in fact references to the Temple. Rather, all references to the sacrificial cult of Israel are references to the Tabernacle or Tent of Meeting. This would make the Letter readable to the Essene or Qumran Communities, as well as, the other Jewish Communities of the period. However, it could also hold reference to post-Temple time, because the Temple had already been destroyed.

James the Righteous, brother of Jesus, was the apparent leader of the Messianic Community (Acts 15). As the leader of the Messianic Community, he offered encouragement and perseverance to his constituents. **Some scholars have suggested that with his death and the mounting persecution that the Messianic Congregations would have considered themselves oppressed and persecuted. As a result, the Messianic Community to whom the Letter of Hebrews was addressed would have needed encouragement to continue. For them, it would have been much easier to defect than to proceed. However, defection is never the answer to persecution and oppression.**

Another thing that discouraged the Messianic Community was the return of the Lord. Why had He postponed His coming? It is much like how the believing community must feel today. They needed encouragement to continue.

Therefore, the date of the writing is placed somewhere between A.D. 60 and 95.

D. Language

While many New Testament scholars struggle with the language of the New Testament, the New Testament itself bears witness to extensive use of the Hebrew tongue. Clement of Alexandria suggested that Paul wrote the letter and that he wrote it in Hebrew. Origen, one of the Church Fathers, testified that the original writing was in Hebrew and that Luke painstakingly translated it into Greek. For us to have

translations and manuscripts in Greek is a natural course of events. With the Gentile acceptance of the Gospel, there was a great need for a Greek translation of Scriptures. This was equally true of the Epistles. However, the most ancient transcripts are Greek, and to date, there is no physical evidence of a Hebrew original.

Of all the Books of the Bible that focus our attention on the person and work of Jesus Christ revealing Him to be the key to the Scriptures, this epistle is undoubtedly the greatest and most important.

E. Purpose

The genre of Hebrews is unusual. The book is without an introduction or other early indications that it is a letter. Yet the final verses do pass on greetings and blessings (13:23–25), and the author speaks of having “written to you” (13:22). However, the author also identifies his work as a “word of exhortation” (13:22). The careful rhetorical progression of the Book, along with its frequent practical exhortations, has led many to consider it a single sermon. **Perhaps Hebrews is best understood as a sermonic letter. Hebrews frequently encourages the audience to endure and warns against leaving Christ (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39; 12:1-29).** These warning passages are interspersed throughout the Book and have noticeable structural similarities (esp. in terms of exhortation and threatened consequence). Around these passages the argument of the Book progresses carefully. Moreover, these specific exhortations themselves flow out of the surrounding material. Thus the Book is unified in both structure and intent.

The warning passages exhort church participants to remain faithful. The more expository sections of the Epistle show the superiority of Christ and His New Covenant work to angels, Moses, the tabernacle priesthood, and the sacrificial system. The implication is that these are so inferior to Christ that it is futile to return to them (or to go anywhere else). Thus the Book encourages the Church to hold fast to its faith, because that faith is grounded in the most superior revelation.

The background of such exhortations must have been the audience’s need to continue enduring through persecution and the trials of life (e.g., ch. 12). They appear to have grown less attentive to Christian instruction (5:11-14); and some apparently have ceased regular attendance at their meetings (10:25). Nonetheless, the author reminds them of their past faithfulness and communal love in the midst of persecution (10:32-34). He encourages their faithfulness by careful exposition of the Old Testament, in light of the revelation in Jesus Christ.

In addition, there are two (2) basic schools of thought about why the Book of Hebrews was written.

1. For those being persecuted and about to defect.

This view is undoubtedly one of the most commonly held views with Christianity. The general consensus is that the Jewish Community of Believers was being persecuted from without and within. This persecution was so great that there were those who wanted to defect from the Messianic faith. Given the early history of the Church, this is highly possible. In this view, those who were facing persecution were caught between two (2) struggling factions. They faced the possibility of physical death. Again, this was very possible. Many Jewish-Christians lost their lives during the early Church period.

Some have suggested that the audience of Hebrews only wanted to temporally go back until the persecution subsided. The Book of Hebrews gives little or no evidence to this view.

Difficulties with this view include: 1) While the Author argues a variety of things, he never argues the Messiah-ship of Jesus. He naturally assumes it; 2) He does not reprimand his readers for engaging in Jewish rituals and practices.

2. The Jewish-Galatians

Paul's letter to the Galatians, a Gentile Church, was written because there were those Jews that insisted that Proselytization was an essential part of Salvation. The writer of Hebrews makes very much the same argument. However, here the audience is strictly Jewish. So, rather than accept this error that Proselytization and acceptance of Messiah's sacrifice guaranteed Salvation, the author rejected it. He argues that the rituals are but a shadow of the real truth, which is Messiah. Therefore, it was necessary to look beyond the mundane. Those who held this world view placed Messiah second to proselytization. This proselytization involved a ritual acceptance of the Torah from a legalistic approach as a means to Salvation. It required ritual circumcision and washing, baptism as a visible sign of the rebirth of the proselyte. This was the reason for the great council in the Book of Acts chapter fifteen (15) and the writing of Paul's letter to the Galatians. As a matter of fact, this is the basis for many of Paul's writings. He did not argue the validity of the system God established through Moses. He argues against legalism as debated by a select few. As a result, the Author argues the superiority of Messiah and the Messianic Way.

3. The Two (2) natural divisions of Hebrews

The Book of Hebrews, like Paul's writings, falls into two (2) different natural categories. The first section of the book is doctrinal. Hebrews chapter 1-10 are primarily doctrinal in content. Chapters 11-13 are practical. They teach those who are exhorted in the primary chapters through doctrine how to apply the doctrines the Author has presented.

Regardless of the potential audience, the Author tells those in Christ how they should act. He goes further to teach them the relevancy of Faith." Faith must be relevant in order to be of value. Religion without relevance is of no value and just religion." Faith must be active and vital to be of any consequence. The audience was losing its faith and hope in Jesus, as the Messiah. This was most likely because of the circumstances that were prevalent in their day. These Jews were about to return to their old ways. While there are those who would look upon them with disdain, we must realize that when things get tough regardless of your previous belief, many return to their old practices. It does not have to be a legal system; it could be just sin,

F. The Messiah of Hebrews

Within the Book of Hebrews three (3) mysteries are revealed.

1. The opening of the Heavenly Sanctuary
2. The Sacrifice of Messiah as the way to God
3. Jesus as our High Priest

Messiah is our eternal High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. He identified with man in His incarnation and offered no less a sacrifice than Himself on our behalf.

Hebrews presents Messiah as the Divine-human Prophet, Priest, and King. His Deity (1:1-3,8) and humanity (2:9, 14, 17, and 18) are asserted with equal force, and over twenty titles are used to describe His attributes and accomplishments. Titles such as, "Heir of all things", Apostle, High Priest, Mediator, Author and Perfecter of faith can be found. He is superior to all who went before and offers the supreme sacrifice, Priesthood, and covenant.

G. Keys to Hebrews

Key words: The excellence of Messiah

The basic theme of Hebrews is found in the word "better", describing the excellence of Messiah in His person and work (1:7; 6:9; 7:19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24). Better" here does not imply a moral idea but rather a place of rank. The words perfect (perfection, perfected), eternal (everlasting, forever, evermore), heavenly (heaven, heavens), and partakers are also used extensively. He offers a better revelation, position, priesthood, covenant, sacrifice, and power. This epistle is also written to exhort its audience to become mature in Christ and to put away spiritual dullness. The Book of Hebrews places a heavy stress on Messiah and maturity. Christ is greater than any angel, priest, or old covenant institution; thus each reader, rather than leaving such a great salvation, is summoned to hold on by faith to the true rest found in Christ and to encourage others in the Church to persevere.

Following is an expanded Key Theme summary:

- a. Jesus is fully God and fully man (1:1-14; 2:5-18).
- b. Jesus as Son of God reveals God the Father, is the agent of creation, and sustains all creation (1:1-14).

- c. Jesus serves as the eternal high priest, who as a man sympathizes with human weaknesses, and yet who offered himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin (1:3; 2:10-18; 4:15-16; 9:11-10:19).

- d. Jesus is superior to angels, to Moses and the Mosaic covenant, and to the earthly tabernacle and its priesthood (1:4-2:18; 3:1-6; 5:1-10; 7:1-10:18; 8:1-13).

- e. All humanity faces eternal judgment for sin (4:12-13; 9:27-28; 10:26-31).

- f. Faith is necessary to please God and to participate in His eternal salvation promises. Faith requires conviction about the unseen realities of God and His promises. Such faith produces perseverance (4:2-3; 6:1, 12; 10:22, 38-39; 11:1-40).

- g. Perseverance is necessary in the Christian life, and thus church participants are warned against a lack of endurance (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39; 12:1-29).

- h. God's promises are trustworthy, including His promise of eternal salvation (6:13-20).
- i. With the advent of Jesus Christ, the last days have begun, though they await consummation at His return (1:2; 2:5; 4:9-11; 9:9-28; 12:22-29).

The key verses of Hebrews are 4:14-16 and 12:1-2. The key chapter is Hebrews 11. In chapter 11, we find the "Hall of Faith" which records those who willingly took God at His Word even when there was nothing to cling to but His promise. Common to all those listed is the recognition that they pleased God (He.11:6).

H. Short Survey of Hebrews

Hebrews stands alone among the New Testament Epistles in its style and approach. It is the only New Testament Book whose authorship is in question. The book builds a case for the excellence of Messiah, in which Messiah is presented as "better" in every respect. Again, "better" here does not imply a moral idea but rather a place of rank. God is truly superior to His Word being its Author. In His person, He is higher in position than the angels, Moses, and Joshua; and in His performance, He provides a superior Priesthood, covenant, sanctuary and sacrifice. Evidently, the readers are in danger of defection because of the suffering they are beginning to experience for their faith in Messiah, or they are being persuaded that simple faith in Messiah is not sufficient as a means of Salvation. Not only is the Preeminence of Christ presented, but the writer of Hebrews gives five solemn warnings (2:1-4; 3:7 - 4:13; 5:11- 6:20; 10:19-39; 12:25-29). These warnings include cautions against neglect (2:1-4) and refusal (12:25-29). After using Scripture to demonstrate the excellence of Messiah's person (1:1 - 4:13) and the excellence of Messiah's work (4:14 - 10:18), the writer applies these truths in a practical way to show the superiority of the Messianic walk of faith (10:19 - 13:25).

1. Loftiness of Messiah's person: 1:1- 4:13

Instead of the usual prologue, Hebrews launches directly into its subject. That subject is the Pre-eminence of Messiah over even the Prophets (1:1-3). Christianity is built upon the highest form of Divine revelation. This revelation is the revelation of Messiah, which was previously held in mystery. Christ is therefore, the senior of the prophets, sovereign over the angels, and He is the mediator of the Mosaic Law (1:4 - 2:18; Acts 7:5). This is seen in His name, His position, His worship by angels, and His incarnation. The Son of God partook of flesh and blood and was "made like His brethren in all things" (2:17) in order to bring "many sons to glory" (2:10). Messiah is also greater than Moses (3:1-6), for Moses was a servant in the House of God, but Christ is the Son over God's household. Because of these truths, the readers are exhorted to avoid the Divine judgments that are visited upon unbelief (3:7 - 4:13). Ancient Israel's disbelief had prevented the unbelieving generation of the Exodus from becoming the generation of conquest. What Christ offers is greater than what was provided by Joshua, who was a Messianic pre-figure. The readers are therefore urged to enter the eternal rest that is possessed by faith in Christ.

2. The excellence of Christ's work: (4:14 - 10:18)

The High Priesthood of Messiah is superior to the Aaronic Priesthood (4:14-7:28). The Aaronic Priesthood was often subject to corruption. This was seen from the very beginning with the sons of Aaron, who offered strange fire. However, in the Last Adam, we have the Divine Messiah who retrieved what Adam forfeited. Messiah's mission was to bring all things to their appointed purpose. Because of His incarnation, Messiah can identify with our weaknesses, having been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin, (4:15). Messiah was not a Levite, but He qualified for a higher Priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek. The superiority of Melchizedek to Levi is seen in the fact that Levi, in effect, paid tithes through Abraham to Melchizedek (7:9-10). Abraham was blessed by the greater. Herein the lesser is blessed by the greater (7:7). The warning in verses 5:11 - 6:20 exhorts the readers to press on to maturity by moving beyond the basics of Messianic Gospel.

Messiah's place is secured by Divine oath (7:21), Christ has become a permanent, perfect High Priest and the Mediator of a New Covenant (8:6). The New Covenant is fulfilling and renewing of the Mosaic Covenant (8:6-13). Our great High Priest similarly ministers through the Heavenly "Tabernacle," which is not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation (9:11). Unlike the former Priests, He offers Himself as a sinless and voluntary Sacrifice once and for all (9:1-10:18).

3. The vantage of the Christian's walk of faith: (10:19 - 13:25).

The author applies what he has been saying about the superiority of Messiah by warning his readers of the danger of discarding their faith in Messiah (10:19-39). The faith that the readers must maintain is defined in 11:1-3 and is illustrated in 11:4-40. The triumphs and accomplishments of faith in the lives of Old Testament Believers should encourage the recipients of New Covenant (11:40). They were to fix their eyes on Messiah, the Author and Perfecter of faith, (12:2). Just as Christ endured great hostility, those who believe in Him will sometimes have to endure Divine discipline for the sake of holiness (12:1-29).

The readers are warned not to turn away from Messiah during such hardships, but to place their hope in Him. The character of our lives must be shaped by our dedication to Christ (13:1-19), and this will be manifested in our love for God, our hospitality, concern, purity, contentment, and obedience. The author concludes this epistle with one of the finest benedictions in Scriptures (13:20,21) and some personal words (13:22-25).

4. A short summary of Christ's excellence is listed below.

a. Christ's person:

Christ over Prophets	1:1 - 3	Majesty
Christ over Angels	1:4 - 2:18	of
Christ over Moses	3:1 - 4:13	Christ

b. Christ's work:

- b. The Universe was created by Messiah.
- c. Messiah is the expression of God's Glory
- d. Messiah is the Express image of God
- e. Christ supports all things by the Power of His word.
- f. Christ purged us of our sins.
- h. Messiah is seated at the right hand of God

I. Hebrews Glossary of Words

- 1. Boldly: Confidence in attitude, speech, and without shame.
- 2. Compassion: To be merciful toward others.
- 3. Covenant: A mutual agreement between two or more person. In the New Covenant, man is placed in right relationship to God through faith in Messiah's atoning work. (Hebrews 7:22, 8:6-13)

4. Fellowship: That which is common:

5. Heir: The concept of inheritance is very prominent in the New Testament and is connected with the person and work of Christ, who is the Heir by virtue of His being the Son of God. (Hebrews 1:2) Through Christ's redemptive work, Believers are sons of God by adoption and fellow-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17, Gal. 4:7).

6. High Priest: Old Testament

In the Old Testament the High Priest supervised Priests, offered a sin offering (Lev. 4) and sacrificed on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16) and ascertained the Will of God through his understanding of the Scriptures and the Urim and Thummin (Num. 27:21 and Neh. 7:65).

In the New Testament, Jesus is described as the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 6:10). The New Testament also teaches that all Believers are Priests, they share in Christ's Priestly activities, bringing the Word to men and bringing men to Christ. (Eph. 2:18; Heb. 10:19-25; 13:15; I Pet. 2:5,9; and Rev. 1:5-6)

7. Ministering spirits: Angels sent to serve (Heb. 1:14).

8. Order: Rank or position

9. Propitiation: To cover, to appease the wrath of God so that His justice and holiness will be satisfied and He can forgive sin. The death of Christ was the atonement for man's sin.

10. Rest: This rest is spiritual and eternal. The rest God calls us to enter is not our rest but His rest, which He invites us to share. God rested from His work on the seventh day of creation. (Hebrews 4:1 and 4:3 - Salvation is still available).

11. Unbelief: Attitude of the heart, doubt or that which is contrary to faith.

12. Weaknesses: Infirmities

J. Unique Book

When we study the Book of Hebrews we must realize how unique it is. It is like no other book in the New Testament. The Book of Hebrews is best understood when the Bible student is familiar with the five (5) Books of Moses and realizes that the book is addressed to Messianic -Jews of the First Century.

1. The Book of Hebrews addresses several areas of danger:

a. Neglect of the Scriptures (2:1)

b. Unbelief (3:12)

c. Departing from the living God (3:12)

d. Neglect of public worship (10:25)

- e. Not hearing the voice of God (12:25)
 - f. Instability of doctrine (13:9)
2. Hebrews deals with the Priesthood of Christ.

As Priest, Christ was divinely appointed, and met the needs of the people (2:17-18). He opened the way into the Presence of God (10:19-20), and made the way available to the Sanctuary and the Throne of Grace (4:14-16). Messiah made all of this possible through His accomplished work. There will never be another person or thing needed. Because of the priestly ministry of Christ, the Believer has the strength of faith and the privilege of worship.

3. Christ's sacrifice

Christ's sacrifice, once and for all paid the way for us to go, where we ourselves could not go.

4. Ethical standards

In Chapter 13, Hebrews teaches high ethical standards in the way we should treat others.

- a. Brotherly love (13:1)
- b. Kindness to strangers (13:2)

- c. Kindness to the less fortunate. (13:3)
 - d. Honourable marriage relationships (13:4)
 - e. A right attitude towards material wealth (13:5)
 - f. Honour toward overseers (13:7-17)
 - g. Doing good (13:16)
5. The Christian does not have a choice in these areas.

Christian conduct is what sets us apart and how we conduct ourselves in these areas show the world what standard we live by. Morals are changing rapidly, today, but we must hold fast in our conduct as Christians, as a source of stability in our changing times.

K. The Warnings of Hebrews

There are five warnings listed in Hebrews.

1. First warning: Hebrews 2:1-4 - Danger of Neglect

It is vital that we do not drift away from that which was spoken by God. Human reasoning is so subtle in its attempt to dilute the Word of God. It is so crucial that we keep a firm grip on what we have heard so that we do not drift off. The Lord has confirmed His Word over and over.

- a. The Word was spoken through the angels (Deut. 33:2; Ps. 68:17; Acts 7:53, and Gal. 3:19).
- b. Salvation was spoken of by the Lord.
- c. It was confirmed by the Apostles.
- d. It was validated with gifts through the Holy Spirit. (I Cor. 12:8-11; Mark 16:20 and I Cor. 2:4)

The writer of Hebrews is issuing a warning that there is danger when we neglect the Word of God, which has stood throughout history.

2. Second warning: Hebrews 3:7 - 4:13 - Danger of Hardening the Heart
 - a. Do not allow rebellion or false doctrine to harden your heart (3:8) and cause disobedience or sin.
 - b. Work to enter into His rest (4:1-13). There is a rest for those who are in Christ. To those who unite hearing and faith, the Word is profitable to them.
3. Third warning: Hebrews 5:11 - 6:20 - Danger of not maturing

- a. Dullness of hearing (5:11-14)
 - b. Need for maturity (6:1-8)
 - c. Exhortation to maturity (6:9-20)
4. Fourth warning: Hebrews 10:26-39 - Danger of shrinking back
- a. His soul will find no pleasure in him
 - b. Do not shrink back to unbelief, works, law, etc.
5. Fifth warning: Danger of refusing God (12:25-29)
- a. There is punishment for turning away from Christ (12:25)
 - b. Danger for those who do not receive the revelation, vs. 25. If those who ignored earthly warnings did not get away with it; what will happen to us if we ignore heavenly warnings?
 - c. The return of the Lord will signal the removal of all that is earthly and temporal, vs. 26.
 - d. All that can be shaken will be, vs. 27, 28. There will be a thorough house cleaning, till what is left is only of Him.

e. Our God is a consuming fire, vs. 29. God is not an indifferent bystander. He is actively cleaning house, touching all that needs to be burned. All the hard, wood, and stubble that man stores up does not and will not impress God.

II. Brief Outline of Hebrews

A. Part One: The Superiority of Christ's Person (1:1-4:13)

1. The superiority of Christ over Prophets (1:1-3)

2. The superiority of Christ over the angels (1:4 - 2:18)
 - a. Christ is superior because of His deity (1:4-14)

 - b. First warning: danger of neglect (2:1-4)

 - c. Christ is superior because of His humanity (2:5-18)

3. The superiority of Christ over Moses (3:1 - 4:13)
 - a. Christ is superior to Moses in His work (3:1-4)

 - b. Christ is superior to Moses in His person (3:5-6)

 - c. Second warning: danger of unbelief (3:7 - 4:13)
 - 1) Danger of hardening of the heart (3:7-19)

2) Challenge to enter His rest (4:1-13)

B. Part Two: The Superiority of Christ's Person (4:14-10:18).

1. The superiority of Christ's Priesthood (4:14 - 7:28)

a. Christ is superior in His position (4:14-16)

b. Christ is superior in His qualification (5:1-10)

1) Aaron's Priesthood

2) Melchizedek's Priesthood

c. Third warning: danger of not maturing (5:11 - 6:20)

1) Dullness of hearing (5:11-14)

2) Need for maturity (6:1-8)

- 3) Exhortation to maturity (6:9-20)

- d. Christ is superior in His Priestly order (7:1-28)
 - 1) Description of Melchizedek (7:1-3)

 - 2) Superiority of Melchizedek (7:4-10)

 - 3) Imperfection of Aaronic Priesthood (7:11-28)

2. The superiority of Christ's covenant (9:1 - 10:18)
 - a. Old Covenant's sanctuary and sacrifice (9:1-10)
 - 1) Old Covenant's sanctuary (9:1-5)

 - 2) Old Covenant's sacrifice (9:6-10)

 - b. New Covenant's sanctuary and sacrifice (9:11 - 10:18)
 - 1) New Covenant's sanctuary (9:11)

- 2) New Covenant's sacrifice (9:12 - 10:18)

C. Part Three: The Superiority of Christ's Person (10:19-13:25)

1. Exhortation to full assurance of faith (10:19 - 11:40)
 - a. Hold fast the confession of faith (10:19-25)
 - b. Fourth warning: Danger of shrinking back (10:26-39)
 - c. Definition of faith (11:1-3)
 - d. Examples of faith (11:4-40)
 - 1) Abel (11:4)
 - 2) Enoch (11:5-6)
 - 3) Noah (11:7)
 - 4) Abraham and Sarah (11:8-19)

- 5) Isaac (11:20)
 - 6) Jacob (11:21)
 - 7) Joseph (11:22)
 - 8) Moses' parents (11:23)
 - 9) Moses (11:24-29)
 - 10) Joshua and Rahab (11:30-31)
 - 11) Other heroes of faith (11:32-40)
 - 12) Endurance of faith (12:1-29)
 - 13) Example of Christian endurance (12:1-4)
- e. Exhortation to endure God's chastening (12:5-24)

- f. Fifth warning: danger of refusing God (12:25-29)

- 3. Exhortation to love (13:1-17)
 - a. Love in the social realm (13:1-6)

 - b. Love in the religious realm (13:7-17)

- 4. Conclusion (13:18-25)

III. Revelation of the Son

It is essential that we have a sound theological basis upon which to place our faith in Jesus as Messiah, the Son of God. No other book in the New Testament presents Christ in such an excellent manner. Here, the Author of Hebrews presents his splendid case on the personage of Messiah. Remember, that this epistle is to a group of Jews. They were undoubtedly Believers. However, the arguments of the Letter are aimed at Jews within the infrastructure of First Century Messianic Judaism. These arguments must take place within their real and scope of understanding. Therefore, the Author makes his appeal to the Hebrew text and theologies that we may find unfamiliar in our present day.

Throughout this Commentary there will be several references to Old Testament passages. When an Old Testament passages is referred to, it would be most beneficial to the student to read the Biblical reference before reading the Commentary.

A. Hebrews 1:1-3: Christ is greater than the Prophets

1. The Prologue

Here in verses one (1) through three (3) we have what is commonly called the prologue of Hebrews. This prologue is a summary of the entire Epistle and will be the basis for the development of his polemic concerning the dignity of Christ. The prologue is considered to be very mishnaic. In order to facilitate our understanding of the Book of Hebrews, it is helpful for us to be acquainted with coexistent literature of the New Testament period. The Mishnah is a Jewish commentary that covered a period from just before the opening of the New Testament until the approximate destruction of the second Temple.

The Hebrew word "*mishnah*," means to "repeat instruction." Specifically, the Mishnah is a Hebrew commentary that discussed the various rulings concerning the Old Testament by the Rabbis. The tractate Pirke Avot, (Sayings of the Fathers), opens as "Moses received the Torah on Sinai, and handed it down to Joshua; Joshua to the Elders; the Elders to the Prophets; and the Prophets handed it down to the Men of the Great Assembly." Here in the Book of Hebrews, this order is not contested but the Word of God came to these men in the past as God spoke to the forefathers in different ways for centuries.

2. Divers Manners of God's Speech

God spoke in many diverse manners: sometimes by the Spirit through His servants, through angels, or even theophanies (appearances of God, Himself as the Angel of The Lord, or to Abraham in Genesis 18). He spoke sometimes by putting His words in the mouths of His prophets and sometimes through visions, dreams, poems, and aphorisms. Here, in the Book of Hebrews, the use of terminology is very Jewish. In the Old Testament, through the Prophets, God often spoke through types, shadows, and figures. In the Book of Hebrews, we have a revelation of many of those figures and types. Just as the book of Genesis redundantly repeats the phrase, "God said" and Exodus records, "God spoke to Moses saying," the Jews followed the same technique of discourse in giving commentary on the message of God.

Why did God speak? What was it that God said? God spoke His words in the past through the Prophets and presently through His Son as a means of revelation whereby we could understand His Will for humanity. God gave a revelation of His nature so that we would not act contrary to our own nature, being created in the likeness and image of God himself. The revelation of creation, as recorded in the Book of Genesis and the rest of scripture, demonstrates that God created the entire universe as man's home.

The revelation of the Bible is progressive. However, this does not mean that Judeo-Christianity is a progressive religion. The revelation given to the Prophets was "line upon line." Their language was often enigmatic and symbolic. Even with the contemporary revelation of Messiah, many of the prophetic passages are problematic. According to Paul, Messiah's identity and complete occupation remained a mystery for ages. This was because passages concerning Messiah's occupation often seemed conflicting and contradictory. Some commentators have noted that the Greek term here can also mean, "in many parts," or portions. Therefore, the revelation of God was progressive, piece by piece and divided into many parts. Here in the end of days, finally God has finalized His revelation through His Son. The communication of the Son was direct and complete. The diverse modes of speech that God gave through the Prophets only prepared us to receive the revelation of and through His Son. The shadows of the Old Testament have come to life in the person of Jesus, the Messiah (He 10:1). Paul said it very plainly in his second letter to Timothy, The Scriptures were God-breathed and for the purpose of doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness (2Ti 3:16). Peter notes that the Prophecy of Scripture was through the agent of the Holy Spirit and not by men's invention (2 Pe 1:21). Likewise, the diverse speech as the progressive revelation of God took many years to complete and covered several stages. Because of the overwhelming impact the Word of God has on the soul of man, God revealed His full plan in these stages.

Several of the New Testament Books and letters open much like the Book of Genesis. John's Gospel begins very much like the Book of Genesis by talking about "the beginning." Here the author of Hebrews also begins with God. The author offers no apologetic and no polemic. He simply declares that God spoke, accepting the authority of the previous covenants and words God gave to the forefathers.

3. The Last Days

In these "last days" God has spoken to us through or by his Son. Luke uses this phrase in the Book of Acts quoting Peter's sermon on Pentecost (Ac 2:16). The Rabbinic concept behind this phrase was that the "Days of Messiah" would initiate the final period of the earth's history. The Days of Messiah would be the beginning of the "Aend times" or the "last days." The "present times" were referred to as the "Apresent days" and the phrase "world to come" intended the renewal of the heavens and earth, as prophesied by Jesus and the Prophets. The "world to come" would be the perfected reign of Messiah after this era of earth's history.

4. By His Son

The Old Testament must be understood as the Word of God. However, as a part of God's Word, it must also be considered incomplete. The Old Testament looked forward to the coming of Messiah and His message, which would provide finalized truth and redemption.

Messiah is made the heir of all things. Here, Messiah is made not only heir, but is also given His coronation rites. These rites are carried out in the Book of Revelation. Messiah is the heir of the nations and the whole earth with its ages or administration. Being an appointed heir brings legal action to the election of Messiah. In the election of Israel and Judah's Kings, not every firstborn son succeeded his father. This was because the office of the King, who himself was a Messianic prototype, was by Divine election and appointment. Being appointed heir establishes his rite of inheritance.

5. The Glory of the Son

By His Son, God created the world. The author of the Book of Hebrews is not the first writer to note that Messiah was the agent of creation. However, this idea did not originate in Christianity. Inter-testamental Judaism taught that it was the "Logos" of God who had created the world. The "Logos" Theology of Judaism, always viewed the "Word of God" as a literal person. In Jewish literature, he was given various titles such as "*Memra*," "*Logos*," "*Spohia*," "*Kivod*" and the "Angel of the LORD."

The title *Kivod*, which is a term for Messiah means the "Glory of God." Not only is Messiah the Glory of God, He is the express image of God, as well as His essence. The word "glory" used here has a double meaning. It means that there is an inward glory or luminance and it means that there is a reflective quality. From the Gospels, we can see that Christ possessed both of these qualities. He revealed his innermost being to the three disciples, Peter, James and John on the mountain top (Mk 9:2). He is also the mirror of the Father's Glory. The Son perfectly mirrors God and is stamped with God's nature. Christ was the exact image of His Father. The word "image" used here is only used here in the Book of Hebrews. However, it is found in secular Greek writings. It is used with the idea of making an image on a coin.

Just as the Book of Genesis demonstrates the creative force released through the spoken word, we see that Christ holds everything together by His word. The "word" of God here is "*rhema*." *Rhema* implies a providential decree set forth from the mouth of God. It is ratified and sustained by Christ, who is bringing all things to their appointed purpose. Christ is not just ". . . *upholding all things with the word of His Power*;" He is causing them to fulfill their designed role in the earth. Christ, through His Spirit within people is actively working within this world.

It was the sinless Christ who made atonement for our sins. After making atonement for our sins He sat down at the right hand of God. Here the contrast is made between the Levitical Priesthood and the Priesthood of Christ. There was no place for the Priest to sit in the Tabernacle or Temple for the High Priest when he had completed making a sacrifice. This was because the work of the Levitical Priesthood was never complete. Furthermore, the only Priest who could approach God face to face was the High Priest. This could only be done once a year on the Day of Atonement. Therefore, Christ as the Great High Priest not only made atonement for our sins, He sat down in the very Presence of God. Not only was He seated in the Presence of God, He was enthroned next to Him.

It seems obvious that Psalms 110:1 is eluded to here. The way the author uses this passage indicates his understanding of the AMystery of Messiah” much like Paul. This same Scripture is used by Christ to debate the Pharisees in Jerusalem concerning the identity of Messiah (Mt 22:41). If Messiah is the Son of David, how is it that David calls Him Lord? How can Messiah be his son? It is because Messiah was the Son of David and Lord at the same time gave him both human and super human qualities. The Pharisees must have realized this point. While it is not well know among Christians, the Trinitarian view of God originated in Judaism. The Trinitarian view of God was not a Christian invention.

B. Hebrews 1:4: Greater than the Angels

This verse introduces the theme that will be played out throughout the rest of the book. In the previous section, Messiah proved to be greater than man. Ancient scholarship saw Messiah as the archetype of man. Here the Author proves that He is also greater than the angels. The Author establishes Christ as the Creator and the angelic host as a part of His creation. John recorded that the disciple is not greater than the master. Likewise, the creature is never greater that the Creator. Most religions placed a great deal of emphasis on the authority of the angelic messengers. Such was the case with Judaism. Judaism had a sophisticated Angelology. Judaism was divided between those who believed in the angelic host, the Pharisees, and those who did not, the Sadducees. The question for those who believed in the angelic host was where does Messiah fit in the realm of rank and order? In the Greek culture, the messengers of the gods were in many ways gods themselves. However, this was not the case in Judaism. The authority of angels was secondary to God Himself. The Jews had received the Law as ordained by the ministry of angels (Acts 7:53). Because of the high opinion of angels, the Author seeks to exalt Christ far above any possible subordinate object of worship or minor deity. Paul warns in the Book of Galatians that “. . . *though we or an angel preach any other gospel let him be cursed.*” The impact of a heavenly messenger can hardly be underestimated. The New Testament is filled with angelic activity and messages. There was a great deal of controversy as to the order and rank of angels in the structure of things during the inter-testamental period. The author of Hebrews places Messiah above the angelic host and equal with God.

The contrast established here is between the Son and the servant. Christ, after making a sacrifice for sins, took His honored place in the heavens right along side God, far higher than any angel in rank and rule. The

writer presents overwhelming evidence showing that Messiah is to be exalted. As the exalted Messiah (Savior), Jesus is given the place of superiority above all the angelic host. As Heir, he possesses dominion and authority over all the powers of the heavens and earth. Paul does not make this argument in his letter to the Ephesians. However, he does establish the fact that Messiah is far above all principalities, authorities, powers and dominions, not only in this present age but in the world to come (Ep 1:21). Interestingly enough the following passages in the letter to the Ephesians make a similar statement to the passages of our text here in the Book of Hebrews.

He has inherited a name much more honorable than any Angel. Many of the angelic names are more titles than they are names. Their name often depicts their function as messenger and servants. The Hebrew name for Jesus is "Yeshua." This name "Yeshua" is virtually the same as Joshua. It means the "Salvation of God."

The name *Yeshua* comes from the Hebrew verb "yasha" which means: "to save" or "to deliver." The Hebrew noun "yeshu`ah," means Salvation. A further study reveals that the main ideas behind these two (2) words are to "liberate," "to deliver from evil," or "to free from oppression." Thus, the full meaning of the name "Yeshua" is to offer and provide safety, welfare, prosperity, and victory. Jesus (*Yeshua*) provided all these in His saving activity.

The Hebrew concept of Salvation is that of deliverance. They were "saved from Egypt." The Salvation that Jesus provided included all of a person's being. Jesus has made provision for our complete Salvation, and deliverance.

The name "Yeshua" revealed the destiny Jesus was to fulfill in his life and ministry on this earth. Mary and Joseph did not choose the name *Yeshua* because they wanted their son to be the Savior. Everyone in that day wanted the Messiah to be born to them. *Yeshua* was the fifth most common name of males in the time of Jesus. An Angel, messenger from God, told them what to name their son.

C. Hebrews 1:5-13

The author of Hebrews makes extensive use of the Hebrew Scriptures. His use exceeds all other New Testament writers in his use of the Old Testament. Here the writer gives a collage of passages from the Old Testament proving Christ's place and authority.

The following passages are much like the sermon notes or the outline of a Preacher. The Author uses the appropriate passages from the Bible to make his case. It must be remembered that there was no "New Testament" in the hands of the Believers until about three-hundred (300) A.D. There were some letters and documents that were circulated within the believing communities. However, the dominant source of Scriptures available was the Old Testament. Therefore, to prove his point by Scripture was to quote the only available Scripture. These Scriptures might not have been necessary to prove his point to a group of Gentiles. Still, proving his case and point to a Jewish audience required more than adequate knowledge of the Hebrew Text. The following is an outline of the author's sermon and polemic in the remainder of this chapter.

1. Messiah: Rightful King and Heir to the Throne

To establish Messiah's rightful place as heir the Author quotes appropriate, Messianic, scriptural reference.

Psalms chapter two (2) established the enthronement rights of the Son. The terminology of this Psalm is covenantal, establishing Messiah's right to the throne and inheritance. God has made His decree, He will keep it. When He swore to Abraham, God could swear by no greater so He swore by Himself. Which angel was so high in place or position that God called him his Son? Lucifer, who was the highest of the fallen angels was called "son of the morning" but never "the Son of God." Obviously this Psalm is a prophecy of the birth of Christ. The promise of this prophecy is spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles to the forefathers; God fulfilled His promise of bringing Messiah. The events of Psalms are a decree within time, not the timeless eternity before Christ was manifest upon the earth to redeem humanity. Psalms two (2) is cited here to identify Jesus as Messiah, Son of God. The imagery here causes us to remember the words of Jacob concerning his firstborn son, Ruben, in his prophecy of the end times, or the "Days to come" (Ge 49:1-3). Ruben was the first-born and first-fruits of Jacob's might, pre-eminent in pride and pre-eminent in power.

2 Samuel 7 is the covenantal promise God made to David. The Davidic Covenant furthered the covenant mentioned in Psalms chapter two (2). The dynasty of David's Son, Jesus, would last forever.

Psalms 97:7 and Deuteronomy 32:43 recognize Messiah as the universal King and the Sovereign of the universe. As the highest in rank and order, Messiah is to be the object of worship of man and angel. The Books of Daniel and Revelation record angelic worship of Messiah in unity of man with the angels.

The title “First-born” is a term of tribute. The term first-born can be used with both positive and negative connotations. Those who are the first-born of the poor are the poorest of all (Is 14:30). Those who are the first-born of death are those who have suffered a violent and horrible death. (Job 18:13). The son of Joseph, Ephraim, is called the “first-born of God.” It was given as a testimonial to his character (Jer 31:9). The term First-born, in reference to Messiah, means that He is the authority over all of God’s creation.

Those who were the first-born in the Old Testament were

- a. The Family Priest
- b. Received a double portion
- c. Held the authority over the rest of the family such as the Patriarchs.
- d. Consecrated to the LORD

The blessings, duties and responsibilities of the first-born, should have been passed to Jacob’s “first-born” son, Ruben; however, he was disinherited because he slept with his father’s concubine. Simeon and Levi were disinherited for their crimes against the Shechemites. This caused Judah to receive the birthright. In the right of the “first-born,” Judah would receive the praise of his brothers as well as be the authority over them (Ge 49). However, there is no mention of Judah receiving a double portion of the family inheritance as was customary. Joseph’s sons received an inheritance being adopted sons and Joseph was also disinherited (Ge 48).

2. Messiah: The Eternal King

Psalms 104:4: the spirits or angels were created to be servants to the King. As His servants, they do His bidding, carrying His messages, and carrying out His commands.

The Hebrew text in which this passage was derived from says, "He makes the winds his messengers and flames of fire His servants." However, it is possible within Hebrew grammar to reverse the subject and predicate. Here the author does exactly that.

Wind is a symbol of power and fire is a symbol of judgment. Like wind, the angels remain primarily unseen. Fire is a picture of judgment and we see angels executing the decreed judgments of God from time to time. One such case was when David numbered Israel against God commands. The angel executed judgment on Israel because of David's sin (1Ch 21). Likewise, we see that when an angelic host is made manifest to human eyes, they usually appear as beings of light. The fact that fire and light are synonymous is of great relevance. Nevertheless, Christ's Glory is greater than that of the angels.

Psalms 45:6-8: Here we have the Anointing and Coronation of Messiah. The Throne of God is eternal and God has Anointed Messiah with the oil of gladness above His fellows or brothers. As heirs with Christ, we are to be governed by our older brother (Ro 8:14-17). This picture is more fully developed in the Book of Revelation. The dominate theme of the Book of Revelation is the Coronation and Wedding ceremonies of the Messiah. He will rule, not just as our brother but as our King. Upon Coronation, the Messiah, like David, destroys all the enemies of God. The term "Abrothers" is also a reference those of the audience that our Author is addressing, the Jews. It is also a reference to those who share in His circumstance. All the language of the Author's quote from Psalms is in the kingly metaphor. He is Anointed, He has a scepter, and He rules his fellows or brothers. Therefore, this Psalm establishes the Kingly Authority of Messiah. The use of the term "scepter" is a symbol of His authority. His scepter is one of righteousness indicating the type of Kingdom He would rule.

The spices mentioned in verse eight (8) of Psalms chapter forty-five (45) are a part of the Sacred Anointing Oil used to Anoint the Kings, Priests, Prophets, and Lepers. Because of His fragrance, the virgins love Him (Song 1:3).

This Psalm informs us of five (5) points concerning the Rule of Messiah.

- a. The Decreed right of Messiah to Rule

- b. The Exalted Status of Messiah

- c. The Type of Government He will Rule

- d. His Disposition as Ruler

- e. His Sovereignty as Ruler

Often times Christ is seen as a somber sad faced individual. Multitudes of passages paint a picture of Christ in gladness and joy. He was anointed with the “oil of gladness.” Likewise, He endured the shame of the Cross for the *Joy* that was set before Him (He 12:2). His joy was bound up in His obedience to His Father and the redemption He was bringing to humanity.

His throne and rule is one of righteousness. He will say to the *Aantinomian*” (workers of iniquity) to depart from me. Messiah will later be compared to Melchizedek. Melchizedek is not a name, as we will discuss later, it is a title. The meaning of that title is “King of Righteousness.” From a youth, He loved righteousness. In His righteousness, we see obedience and loyalty to God the Father. He did not act until the Spirit told Him to do so. Even when He was “. . . *led into the wilderness to be tempted of the adversary,*” He obeyed. His obedience to the Will and Word of God is irreproachable. Job’s redeemer also feared God and chased away evil (Job 1:1).

Psalms 102:26-28: While everything and everyone else will perish Messiah is eternal outlasting His creation. While all of creation is subject to change, Messiah is immutable. In chapter thirteen, verse eight Messiah is described as the changeless one. The heavens and the earth will undergo a renewal. Man will be changed and this corruption will put on incorruption (1 Co 15.) Scientists tell us everyday that the earth is wearing out. They are only echoing the Psalmist. However, creation will remain true to its nature until Christ withdraws His Word.

3. The Rank and Authority of Messiah

Psalms 110:1: This Psalm has a threefold implement of the number seven (7). Because of the implementation of the threefold use of seven (7) this Psalm is considered Prophetic. Scholars have noted that this is the number of the oath or covenant.

Again, Christ is given the greatest place possible. He is seated at the right hand of God. The hand is typical of Salvation. The right hand is the hand of direct intervention. God, through Christ, has directly intervened in the affairs of man to provide redemption for those who will accept it.

The Author will return to the passages later and make a comparison between Christ and Melchizedek.

D. Hebrews 1:14:

In the above verses, we saw that the angels were subordinate to Messiah. Here the Author will define the angelic host and their functions within the realm of God. In verse 14, we find out the angelic occupation. What are angels? Are they not ministering spirits? As ministering spirits, they are sent to minister to and on behalf of those who are the heirs of Salvation. It was an angel who told Cornelius where to find the "Good News." However, the angel did not bring the Gospel to Cornelius or his family. The occupation of preaching the Gospel is a human affair.

The occupation of angels is that of ministering spirits that are sent to minister to the heirs of Salvation. Christ was not sent to minister to the heirs of Salvation, He was sent to redeem them. No angel was qualified to take the sin of man. It was Christ alone who was able to pay the penalty for the sins of humanity.

The second Book of Kings notes the angelic ministry to Elisha. Elisha prays that the eyes of his enemy will be blinded and the angelic host blind them until Elisha prays for their sight to return (2Ki 6:8-23). Angels brought food to Elijah after he had slain the prophets of Baal. They ministered to Christ and brought messages to many of the Prophets. Daniel portrays them as warring in the heavens on the behalf of humanity.

The angelic hierarchy and occupations have filled volumes. Christianity has yet to understand and take advantage of their attendance. They are sent for our welfare.

The use of the word “heirs” indicates our legal right to the provision of Salvation by God. Furthermore, we are entitled to all the benefits that Salvation was to provide. Just as Christ is above the angels in rank and authority, so are those who accept their position in Christ.” The Author’s use of the term, Administering spirits” suggests their subservience to the heirs” of Salvation. Therefore, we should avail them of their knowledge and potency just as Elisha, Elijah, and Christ did. This is their occupation. As one scholar pointed out, angels are not mere spectators. They are an active essential part of Gods plan and creation.

III. PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. Personal Pronouns Repeatedly Applied to Him

1. In speaking of the Holy Ghost, Christ Himself used the masculine pronoun to designate His personality.

a. He shall speak about Me (Jn.15:26)

b. I will send Him unto you (Jn.16:7)

c. He shall glorify Me (Jn.16:14)

d. He shall not speak of Himself (Jn.16:13).

B. Personal Characteristics are ascribed to Him

Holy Spirit has all the qualities of personality. He knows, wills, purposes, loves, grieves, thinks, feels, leads, appoints, guides, and teaches.

1. He has intelligence (Ro.8:27)
2. He has power of volition or choice (1Co.12:11)
3. He has knowledge (1Co.2:10?11)

C. Personal Acts Ascribed to the Holy Spirit

1. He teaches (Lk.12:12; Jn.14:26; 1Co.2:13)
2. He regenerates, quickens, gives spiritual birth (Jn.3:5, 3:6, 3:8)
3. He fills believers (Ac.2:4, 4:8, 7:55; Lk.4:1)
4. He makes intercession for the saints (Ro.8:26?27)
5. He glorifies Christ (Jn.16:14)

6. He guides (Jn.16:13; Ga.5:18; Mt.4:1)

7. He directs (Ac.8:29, 13:4, 16:6)

8. He gives access to the Father (Ep.2:18)

9. He comforts (Ac.9:31; Jn.14:16?17)

10. He reproves and convicts (Jn.16:8)

11. He strives with sinners (Ge.6:3)

Thus in reviewing the acts of the Holy Spirit, we find One Who has knowledge, intelligence, One Who teaches, guides, leads, makes intercession, searches, enables and comforts. Therefore, the Holy Spirit, being capable of doing all of these personal acts, must be a personal being having all the attributes of personality.

D. Further Facts of the Personality of the Holy Spirit

1. He is affected as a person.
 - a. He may be grieved (Ep.4:30).

- b. He may be resisted (Ac.7:51).
- c. He may be lied to (Ac.5:1-10).
- d. He may be insulted (He.10:29).
- e. He may be quenched (1Th.5:19).
- f. He may be blasphemed against (Mt.12:31?32).

IV. Warning Against Drifting Away

This section opens much like Deuteronomy chapter six (6) verse four (4). "Hear" O Israel;" Listen, Israel to the Word of God. Here the words might sound like; Christians listen to the Word of God. However, we are also reminded of the words of James. Be not a hearer only but a doer of the Word of God."

A. Hebrews 2:1-4:

This section is actually a continuation of the previous chapter. The word "therefore" naturally connects this section with the previous chapter and verses. In fact, this section is the conclusion of the first chapter. Since Messiah is superior to Prophets and Angels, we should pay more careful attention to His words.

The Author begins to more fully develop his thoughts on the excellence of Christ. As we have mentioned above, there are five (5) warnings in the Book of Hebrews. The First warning is against the danger of neglect. It would benefit us to learn our lesson from the Book of Hebrews. This book was not written specifically to us, as Gentiles, but nevertheless, we can benefit from reading it studiously. We, just as they, need to pay closer attention to the Word of God.

The Author uses reason as a means of conveying his polemic. Here, the Author uses a Rabbinic Hermeneutic called "*Qal vachomer*." This means the "light and heavy of the text." He weighs the shortcoming against the consequence. The New Testament sets the contrast against the Old. The Old Testament demanded various punishments for certain sins. However, the New Testament demands eternal damnation for those who will reject Christ. While this letter is sent to Hebrews, it is a fitting message to Gentiles as well. The Word given by the Angelic messengers was legally binding. Since this is true of the creature, it must be more binding of the Creator. The Author weighs one passage against one another to verify His argument.

In the context of what the Author intended, he was in reference to the message of Christ and the truths that He conveyed. The neglect of God's Word will cause wandering. As we have mentioned, James lets us know that we must not be hears only. If we are faithful to be involved in the things we know to do, we will always be alert to their instruction.

The use of the term "slip" or "drift" depending on the translation, means to let something slide or slip. We must hold on to the things we have heard and not allow them to slip. The holding is an activity of the mind. We must mentally rehearse them repeatedly so we do not forget what we have heard. The most accurate interpretation of this thought here requires guarding ourselves against letting thoughts slip in that would cause us to defect from the faith. The Greek language contains the idea of liquid leaking out of vessels filled with fluid. We are reminded of the parable of wineskins (Lk 5:38). New wine must be placed in new wineskins. The Message of Messiah will naturally produce a new Believer. However, if we are not careful to be actively involved in the truth of His words, we will let the wine leak out. Likewise, we are reminded of the parable of the virgins. There were those who were not mindful of their circumstances and they ran out of oil. We must defend ourselves against complacency, lethargy and neglect.

Growth in God requires forward motion. If we are not growing we are drifting.

Messiah is not just another Messenger, Prophet or Angel. There are three reasons given why His Word is true:

1. The Word was delivered personally by Jesus.
2. The Word was accurately passed on by those who heard it from Jesus.
3. God was stamping His approval on the Word with gifts through the Holy Spirit, signs, wonders, and miracles.

B. Pneumatology of Hebrews

Here in verse four (4) the Author begins his pneumatology. Unlike Paul, the Author of Hebrews sheds a different light on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Believer. Pauline Pneumatology is highly developed. However, scholars have noted that his pneumatology is very much in line with the pneumatology of First Century Judaism. In brief, Pauline Pneumatology is as follows.

The Presence of the Holy Spirit within the Believer produced two (2) basic results.

1. The first was ethical behavior.
2. The second was inspirational.

The Author of Hebrews views the Holy Spirit in an entirely different way. However, this does not negate Pauline Pneumatology. The Holy Spirit is mentioned seven (7) times in the Book of Hebrews. The first mention, here in verse four (4), demonstrates Him as a Miracle Worker. This fits the First Century perspective very well.

The Holy Spirit conveyed two basic images.

1. The first was miracle working power.
2. The second was the Presence of God.

Here we have both of those demonstrations. However, the pneumatology of Hebrews is far more intricate than what we see in this passage. In basic summary, the pneumatology of Hebrews is that of the one who

ratifies the message of Messiah. He confirms the Word of Christ, His Disciples and the Prophets by miraculous signs. In the Book of Hebrews the Spirit is likewise the source of revelation and enlightenment.

C. Hebrews 2:5:

So great is Christ that this world and the world to come” are subjected to His rulership. The Rabbinic scholars differentiated between the present age or world” and the “world to come.” The World to Come is somewhat parallel with the Christian concept of Heaven. Likewise, it contains all the imagery of the Garden and Paradise. However, the difference is that the Christian concept of Heaven is often an ethereal existence in some spiritual nonmaterial place. The true Biblical view of the afterlife is that of the World to Come. There are a multitude of Biblical passages that refer to the coming New Heavens and Earth. The Book of Revelation is very clear that once we have concluded our Heavenly business, we will return to the renewed earth. However, the point being made here is that no angel will rule over humanity in either period. The Ruler and King of both worlds is and will be Messiah.

D. Hebrews 2:6-9:

What is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you visited Him? This is a quote from Psalms chapter eight (8). The Hebrew text reads, what is man that he permeates your thinking? You made Him a little lower than or just under God.” Many translations read “. . . man was created a little lower than the angels.” However, the text of Psalms eight (8) literally reads man was made a little lower than God. This establishes the order of the created host. The Hebrew word translated “angels” is “*Elohim*.” The word “*Elohim*” is a clear reference to God, and is translated as such over 2,300 times (see Psalm 8:5). The Pauline Epistles confirm this order when talking about our place and position in Christ. Angels are subservient to the heirs of Salvation. This could never be the case if the angels were higher in rank than man or Messiah. Man is above the angels and Messiah is above man. God is above them all. The literal translation of this Psalm is, man is just under God.” The context of the argument of Hebrews is the superiority of Christ to the angels. Therefore, the Author quotes from Psalms showing the superiority of Christ to angels and yet, He is subordinate to God the Father.

Adam was to be God’s authority in the earth. He failed his Godly occupation and sin came on all humanity because of his disobedience. Through the efforts of Messiah, humanity was again restored to fellowship and liberated from bondage to the adversary. Therefore, the present era and the world to come” are rightfully Christ’s to rule. Those who accept His sacrifice and join Him in faith will also reign with Him (Ro 5:17). The imagery of verses seven through nine is again the coronation of Messiah. As we have stated earlier, the Book of Revelation is set against this backdrop. Messiah will be crowned with glory and honor.

Verse eight calls to mind the similes of Genesis 1:28 and 3:15. Messiah fulfilled the neglected responsibility of Adam in subjugating the earth. In His contention with the adversary, Messiah would be struck in the heel; however, He would crush the head of the serpent. By crushing the head of the serpent, Messiah placed all things under his feet.

Where is the victory of death? Death could not hold Christ. Death was the prescribed punishment for sin. Yet, Christ was the sinless eternal sacrifice. Therefore, death had no right or power to hold Him. Why did He taste death? He tasted death so that we would not have to. Now, death has no dominion over those who are in Christ. Does this mean that we will never die? In order for death to be victorious over its victim, it must be able to hold it. Death's occupation now is to escort us to the world to come." Because of the victory of Christ, it is powerless to do any more than that. The phrase "taste death" is a rabbinic phrase. Jesus uses this phrase in Matthew 16:28. That someone "tastes" death means that the experience the temporary hostility of death. The taste of death is the result of sin. Therefore, those who have accepted the propitiatory work of Christ will only feel the temporary effects of death. Death will not be able to hold them and as a result, lose the victory. Tasting death for every man is something impossible for angels. Angels do not die (Lk 20:36). Therefore, an angel could not serve as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity. Angels, such as the fallen host, can be punished. This was the cause for the origin of hell. However, it has been enlarged to accommodate sinful man (Mt 25:41; Is 5:14).

E. Hebrews 2:10:

It was suitable to Divine wisdom, justice, and to the program of grace to offer Jesus as a sacrifice in order to bring to the Father many sons. Jesus' death brought about a harvest of souls. Without suffering, He could not have died, without dying; He could not have made atonement for sin. Christ could not have been made complete or brought a complete end to the work He was supposed to do without His sufferings and death. It is obvious that He did not go to all this trouble for angels. His passion and death were to redeem humanity. As a High Priest, He was not estranged from the conditions that we face in our humanity. It is easy to label Messiah as God" and therefore alienate Him from our suffering. However, He clothed Himself in humanity to identify with our suffering and human experiences. Therefore, we are left without excuse. He lived an exemplary life animated and motivated by the Spirit of God. We have been endued with the same Spirit (Ro 8:9-11).

Here in verse ten (10) Messiah is described as the "Author" of Salvation. Other translations render the Greek "*Archegos*" as Ruler, Captain and Pioneer. However, the basis for this word is "*Arche*." We see this word combined with the word angel, Archangel," and understand that it means the "highest angel." "*Arche*" is symbolic of the highest authority and power. This is the power possessed by magistrates and rulers. Therefore, He is the Ruler of Salvation. His very name means "Salvation." He is the source of

Salvation and through His creation He had produced many sons and daughters. The plan of Salvation originated before the fall of humanity. God foreknew the earth's end from the beginning. Before the foundations of the earth a Lamb was slain for the sins of humanity. The continued plan was culminated in the suffering, death and resurrection of Messiah. He perfected or accomplished the goal of Salvation. The Greek word "*telios*" is used to describe the goal of Salvation being accomplished. That goal was not the Salvation of a race or nation. The goal of Salvation was to redeem all humanity from the bondage of sin and the adversary. As our High Priest, He made atonement for our sins once and for all.

F. Hebrews 2:11:

Here the mystical union of the Believer is described. How can this union be fully described? The Greek word for "sanctify" used here is "*hagiazō*" from the root "*hagios*." There are two (2) things to be noted here.

- a. The concept of Holiness.

There is no direct translation for Holiness to any other language from its Hebrew original. To be "Holy" in Hebrew mind frame means to be a Covenant Keeper. To violate the Covenant means to be unholy. Therefore, God went to great lengths in the Old Testament to establish a system of covenantal renewal. This was the infrastructure of the Levitical System. When man breached, his Covenant with God, he was restored through the sacrificial system. The "Holy Spirit" was the source of Covenant keeping. Through the agent and Power of the Holy Spirit, New Covenant Believers were empowered to keep the Covenant. This was the perfection of the plan of Salvation.

- b. "*Hagios*"

The origin of the Greek word "*Hagios*" and all its derivatives comes from the Hebrew word "*Chag*." The use of a good Bible Concordance will verify this point. The meaning and definition of the Hebrew word "*Chag*" is a feast, festival or a festival sacrifice. This brings to mind several points. However, we will confine our remarks to only two (2) observations.

- 1) Saints

The Greek word, "*hagios*," is most often translated as the word "Saint" in the New Testament. Its intention is that those who are Saints are festival keepers or those who attend the Feasts of the Lord (Le 23). We must interject here that the Feasts described in Leviticus chapter twenty-three (23) are not "Jewish Feasts." They are "The Feasts of the Lord." In those Feasts are manifold pictures of Messiah. The Children of Israel were commanded to appear before the Lord three (3) times a year. The Feasts that they were to appear before the Lord at were the Feast of Unleavened Bread, The Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles. Each is symbolic in the life of the Believer. Unleavened Bread and the Passover season is indicative of the New-Birth. Pentecost is picturesque of total commitment and Tabernacles it pictorial of Maturity.

2) Festival Sacrifice

In our second observation, we point out that the Hebrew word "*Chag*" can also be a Festival Sacrifice. This also brings forth a multitude of imagery that we cannot cover in-depth at this point. Christ died on Passover becoming the Passover Lamb. Herein He is a Festival Sacrifice. However, under the Levitical System, when the one offering the sacrifice came to the door of the Tabernacle he must lay his hands on the sacrificial victim. He identified himself with the animal and they became as one. In essence, he was saying this innocent animal is going to die in my place. There was an identification with the animal. The animal and the one who offered it were one. However, the sin of the one who offered it was transferred to the sacrificial animal and the guilty went free. Here is the illustration that the Author of Hebrews is trying to communicate. We have been identified and unified with Christ. We should have died but He died in our place. God placed our sins upon the sinless innocent Christ and we went free. Because the Sacrifice and the one who offered it became one, we are brothers in Christ. As a result, Christ is the firstborn of many brothers.

Having become partakers of the nature of His Son, Christ becomes the firstborn among many brothers. Christ, our Great High Priest and Advocate, presents us sinless before the Lord. Through Him, we have been restored to fellowship with God and we can come boldly before the throne of Grace. Likewise, Paul's Letter to the Ephesians declares that God is demonstrating our righteousness and His excellent wisdom to the underworld (Ep 3:9-11).

G. Hebrews 2:14-15:

Because of Christ's conquest of death and hell, deliverance has come for the righteous souls delivering them from captivity (Eph. 4:7). By Christ's completed works in His life and His death on the cross, He destroyed the enemy's hold on death.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus proclaims the Year of Jubilee. We are not certain if it was the actual year of Jubilee or not. However, He presents to His hearers the great Messianic occupation. How many even to this day are held captive by the fear of death? What will deliver us from the fear of death? The hope of eternal life! The New Testament furthers the theology of the afterlife. Paul's words in His Letter to the Corinthians says, "*That if this life is the only hope we have we are miserable*" (1Co 15:19). The angel of death was stayed by the blood of the Passover Lamb. The imagery of the Passover sacrifice continues from verse eleven (11). There must have been a great deal of fear on the night of the Passover. Likewise, for those who did not fear God on the night of Passover, death became a prevalent enemy. Now for the Believer, death and the fear that lorded itself over humanity is powerless. Christ recorded that He had taken the keys of death, hell and the grave (Re 1:18). As we have stated above, death is only the vehicle of commuting from one realm of existence to another. This mortality will one day be exchanged for immortality. This is not just a hope it is death's defeat.

What was the great power of death? The great fear that death produced was judgment. The Covenant of Moses revealed sin. Sin was to be punished. What punishment would God demand for the souls that had not been atoned for? Death lorded fear over humanity never letting the mind rest. Messiah destroyed this fear of death by receiving our judgment for sin upon Himself. This passage calls to mind the imagery of Isaiah chapter 53 where Messiah is punished for our sins.

Even the High Priest feared death. A great deal of preparation was made for the Day of Atonement. Seven to ten days before the Day of Atonement the High Priest entered the Temple to study and practice for the Great day of the Lord. On the single day the High Priest met God Aface to face." However, before the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies he must make atonement for himself and His family. Every minute detail must be done exactly to God's expectation. Only after making atonement for Himself and his family could the High Priest make atonement for the people of Israel. The people outside the Temple or Tabernacle listened intently for the sound of the bells that lined the robe of the High Priest. If the bells continued to make noise the Priest was still alive.

H. Hebrews 2:16-18:

Sin required a much greater sacrifice than any angel could make. As the promised Seed of both woman and Abraham, the promise of redemption was secured through a sacrifice of eternal worth and value.

This is the first time that the occupation of High Priest is accredited to Messiah in the Book of Hebrews. The occupation of the High Priest was that of an intercessor. Biblical and secular History records the deeds of the High Priesthood. Not all the Priests were compassionate toward their people or faithful to God. This was especially true during New Testament times. The High Priesthood of the New Testament was not legitimate, nor was it as sympathetic. It was an opportunity to swindle money from the people of God. It was marked with corruption and prejudice. That Christ is compared to the High Priest requires that He follow the order of Melchizedek. The legitimate High Priest must be from the tribe of Levi. Christ was from the tribe of Judah.

Because Christ became incarnate, we have a Priest that understands every aspect of our humanity. Because He suffered all that we will ever suffer, He can offer help. The Messianic occupation did not stop with deliverance from the penalty of sin. It continued to the actual assistance of those who suffered at the hands of the tempter. Christ was tempted and overcame. It is often consolation to find out that others have similar faults. However, we need to seek out those who have overcome; such is the case in Messiah. He was tempted just as we were and yet, He did not succumb to the advances of the enemy. Therefore, He can help us learn how to do just as He did. He offers His assistance mercifully and faithfully.

V. Messiah Greater Than Moses

In the third chapter of Hebrews Christ is compared to Moses. The similarities are immense. We are called to consider the similarities so that we can see the excellence of Christ.

A. Hebrews 3:1- 6:

1. Holy Brothers

The Author uses the Greek word "*hagios*" again to describe the holiness of the followers of Messiah. Holiness is the inherent character of those who have given their lives to God, in Christ. This is the result of the indwelling Spirit of Christ. Being "In Christ" makes us partakers of the Divine nature and citizenship (2Pe 1:4). Here the Author says that we are also partakers of the heavenly calling. The Author gives an exhortation to his readers to conduct themselves after the manner of their heavenly vocation. Those who had mimicked Christ were called Christians in Acts chapter nine (9). This was because they understood

their heavenly occupation and conducted themselves accordingly. Men and women commit to God because they feel called to do so. However, the heavenly calling implies conducting ourselves after the manner of those in Heaven, such as God. Remembering that this Epistle is to First Century Hebrews, we remember that they were called upon to be a "Holy Nation and Priesthood. Their occupation was to demonstrate Holiness to the degenerate world. It was by their witness of Messiah that the Gentile peoples of the New Testament accepted the propitiatory work of Messiah. Here we have an illustration to pursue in the Jews of the First Century.

2. Apostle and High Priest

"Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession Jesus the Messiah." The Author makes an appeal to their reasoning. Moreover, he continues to use his hermeneutic of weighing one thing against another. Notice the titles given to Messiah. He was an Apostle and High Priest. An Apostle is an Emissary or Sent One. Being an Apostle implies a definite and specific mission. The Apostle is sent for a very specific purpose. In the Gospel of John chapter six, Jesus is declared "The Sent One." This establishes His Messianic occupation of redemption. The first Epistle of John defines the Messianic occupation as destroying the works of the enemy (1Jo 3:8). Here our Heavenly calling and profession is revealed with greater clarity. The destruction of the works of the enemy required an Apostle sent to accomplish the task and a High Priest to mediate for those bound in servitude to the enemy.

Messiah is the centerpiece of everything we believe, faithful in everything God gave Him to do. Therefore, the Author presents His faithfulness. Faithfulness requires being wholly committed to the task at hand. Jesus endured the pain and suffering of the Cross to produce many sons for God. Women giving birth bear a great deal of pain to produce life. Messiah was faithful in and through the torments of death and the Cross. Therefore, His faithfulness is exemplary.

3. Greater than Moses

Moses was the greatest Prophet of the Hebrew Scriptures. He was not just a Lawgiver. He was also an Emancipator and Intercessor. He is a prototype of Christ himself. In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses prophesies of the Messianic Prophet who would come after him (De 18: 15-19). The Rabbis looked forward to the day when the "Second Moses" would arise. Like Moses, Messiah explained God's expectations. In rabbinic literature, Moses is pictured as the first savior. Moses performed miracles to liberate the Children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Rabbinic literature looked forward to the "Last Savior" who would do as Moses had done. Jesus demonstrated the miracle working power of God to liberate all of humanity from the oppressive torments of the enemy. The Messiah would also perform supra-historical miracles. Jesus did exactly that. He brought Salvation for those in history past, present and future. Therefore, He

performed supra-historical miracles. Moses fed the Children of Israel with the Bread of Heaven. Jesus was the "Bread of Heaven." However, Messiah demonstrated the same supernatural ability by feeding the multitude. Moses produced water from the Rock. Messiah was that Rock. Nevertheless, Messiah offered the woman at the well the "Living Water." Moses was from the tribe of Levi and naturally ascended to the office of the Priesthood. He taught the people of heavenly things and gave them the "Law of God." Fifteen times in the Book of Hebrews Messiah is referred to as a High Priest. Throughout His ministry He taught the people the principles of God.

4. The House and Its Builder

Moses was faithful in his house. Messiah was the builder of the house. The earth is often referred to as a house. Messiah was the builder of the house. Moses lived in the house that Messiah built. However, the Children of Israel were referred to as a "House." Moses was faithful in his house. Christ was faithful over His house. We are that house. Messiah is greater than Moses because Moses was a servant. Messiah was not the servant, He was the Son. The Son is greater than the servant.

B. Hebrews 3:7-11: Second Warning: Danger of Unbelief

1. The Voice of the Spirit

Here the Holy Spirit makes His second appearance in the Book of Hebrews. His Voice speaks to us today. The key word here is, today. The Voice of the Spirit is Messiah. In the Garden the Voice of God appeared to Adam and Eve. Over and over throughout Scripture the Voice of God speaks or appears to man. These are pre-incarnate appearances of Messiah. Here, the Spirit calls to remembrance the stubbornness and rebellion of the generation that died in the wilderness. Even though they watched God work for over forty years, the Hebrew's ancestors refused to let God do things His way. They continually provoked God. Sin produces continuity for further sin. Habitual sin brings about rebellion. Rebellion produces a hard heart. The term "hard heart" is figurative of those who refuse to listen to and obey the voice of God.

2. Peace and Rebellion

For those who walk in rebellion there is no peace. This is because there is no faith in God. Faith in God naturally produces peace. Peace of mind brings mental rest. The heart can be permeated with peace when it is filled with confidence in God. This is one of the most outstanding definitions of faith. Simply defined, faith is confidence in God. The generation that died in the wilderness saw miracle after miracle however, they had no confidence in God. The First Century generation is warned against following the example of the rebellious generation of the Exodus.

In the Book of Exodus, the children of Israel have been delivered from the tyranny of the Egyptian Pharaoh through the slaughter of the Paschal Lamb, which is also a picture of Jesus. They have crossed the Red Sea and have been once and for all, delivered from any possible attempt by Pharaoh's schemes. He was drowned in the sea with his mighty army. In Exodus chapter seventeen, they have come to camp at Rephidim, where there is no water for the people to drink (Ex 17:2). The Biblical text says that the people began to chide Moses. The word "chide" means that they brought "suit against" him. It was as if there was court assembled to bring charges against Moses. The charges were that they have no water to drink for themselves and their animals. The meaning of this text goes deeper than the superficial meaning. Water is the source of all life. Without water a man will die. Their complaint was that they did not have life; not just to be alive, but to have real God-life.

God's instruction to Moses was to assemble all the Elders and to take his rod, the rod that he used to cross the sea and bring the plagues upon Egypt. This rod was the rod of judgment. Moses was to stand before the people. God told Moses that He would stand before him upon the Rock of Horeb. Moses was then commanded to smite the Rock. This was the "Rod of Judgment" punishing the Rock for the sins of Israel. Rather than punish the rebellious generation for their murmuring God punished Himself.

The name of the place was called Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD. These Hebrew words literally say that the name of the place is "Where the Children of Israel brought God to trial." While they should have been destroyed for the very thought of putting God on trial, God punishes Himself in love for His chosen people. God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2Pe 3:9).

Therefore, the Author of Hebrews makes an appeal to the First Century generation by drawing a comparison between the rebellious generation and their present circumstances.

C. Hebrews 3:11:

The rebellious generation was not able to obtain rest because of their behavior and hardened hearts. God fully intends for His people to have rest and peace but often we cause the strife and hardships that comes our way. God does have a promised land that has all the provision and rest we need.

In Hebrew the word rest is associated with peace. The Hebrew word for peace is *shalom*. The word “*shalom*” is full of meaning. It also means to be complete, whole and lacking nothing. The rebellious generation were lacking in this quality because of their murmuring.

D. Hebrews 3:12:

A warning is being issued to the readers about the danger of falling away from the faith. We need to heed this warning, also. He could be our God but we fall short of His rest and blessing. Note that the Hebrew people were not warned about falling away from God Himself. It is unbelief that causes us to fall away from a Living God. Our falling away usually comes little by little, day by day, and here a little there a little.

The Greek word for unbelief is “*Apistis*” meaning “no faith.” As we have stated above, the rebellious generation placed no confidence or faith in God even though He had performed mighty miracles on their behalf. The word “heart” is the Greek word “*kardia*.” It is indicative of the human soul. The soul (heart) is described as being deceitfully wicked in the writings of Jeremiah (Jer 17:9). The soul is the source of man’s actions. Here the Author suggests that there is a soul or heart of unbelief. Abraham was persuaded to faith by continually hearing what God had planned for His life. Likewise, the soul can be persuaded to distrust God through continual evil suggestions.

E. Hebrews 3:13-19:

1. Comfort One Another

We are given the answer to doubt and unbelief. If we will remain faithful to each other we will exhort one another to press in and on. Trust God and believe in His Word. *You who are strong restore the weak* (Ga 6:1). We are to exhort or encourage one another daily to keep on keeping on so our hearts will not be hardened. Remember that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. The flesh is the degenerate soul. That means that there is a part of the soul that remains untransformed. Paul's resolve of this dilemma is the whole transformation of the soul (Ro 12:1-3).

2. Partakers

The word "partakers" is in the Greek, "*metochi*". In Luke 5:7, it is translated as partners. In Hebrews 3:1, it is "partakers of a heavenly calling." It indicates the calling of all true Believers in this age who have become sons. Being a son and partaker requires faithfulness and perseverance.

3. Learning from the Past

Here is an exhortation for First Century Jews to profit by the rebellious generation's failure. The word "sinned" has a peculiar and terrible meaning. There are acts of willful and rebellious sins which the effects go on and on. The rebellious generation of Israel came so close to entering the Promised Land; but had to die in the wilderness because of their unbelief. This generation would not receive the promises of God because of the sin of unbelief.

4. Destructive power of Unbelief

Unbelief is an attitude of the soul; it is the source of disobedience. Unbelief is not the inability to understand, but unwillingness to trust. Trusting God puts everything in God's hands. Unbelief is the attitude of neglect or distrust of God. Here, we are reminded of the words of the Psalmist in the ninety-fifth chapter (Ps 95). The Psalmist exhorts his audience to sing praises to God and not be like the rebellious generation who died in the wilderness and were forbade the peaceful rest of God.

VI. A Sabbath-Rest for the People of God

A. Hebrews 4:1-2:

1. The Rest of God

Therefore, we should greatly respect God who can permit peace or bring torment. God's original covenant of rest remains unchanged and is still valid. During the wilderness trek, a cloud and a pillar of fire protected the Children of Israel. As long as they were within the boundaries of the camp, they were protected from the dangerous elements that were outside the camp. Those who violated the principles of God were cut off or cast out of the camp. Outside of the camps boundaries there were creatures such as snakes and scorpions (De 8:14-16).

There was little or no water and an abundance of other wild creatures. Therefore, the camp was a picture of the environment of God. The hand of God protected those within the camp. Here was their rest. They had to do little other than learn of God and obey His voice, much like Adam in the garden. The provision of God was more than abundant. Yet, there were those who murmured and complained because it was not the way that it was in Egypt. They talked of the food and vegetables that they ate. However, the thing that seems to have escaped their memories was the cruelty of their taskmasters and slavery. There was no rest in Egypt. They must have seen the requests of God at Sinai as ways to please God. Their view must have been very legalistic.

2. Legalism vs. Faith

The legalism of some of Jews throughout the ages has forbid them from experiencing the rest of God. A rest remains available for those who will mix their activities with faith. They had heard the gospel. It seems impossible that the Gospel can be found in the Mosaic Covenant. However, the Author knew that the precedent of Salvation was not by works. Actually, he contends for faith over works just as Paul had done in his writings. Faith will naturally produce rest because it trusts God.

The lesson for Christian Believers is no different today. We can ridicule the legalistic sects of Judaism as if they were the only ones who have experienced these weaknesses. However, the truth remains that Christianity vacillates between antinomian grace and its own legalistic approach to the Scriptures. The Mosaic System was never intended to be a legalistic approach to God. The Author of Hebrews makes this fact clear. The Word of God in both the Old and New Testament must be mixed with faith. When the word is mixed with faith, we will have rest for our souls. Likewise, we must remember at the time of the writing of Hebrews that there was no "A new Testament," at least not in written form. The Hebrew people were experiencing the "A new Covenant" God had made with Messiah afresh.

The idea of mixing things together means to blend by mixing. The Gospel does not profit unless it is properly mixed and blended together with faith.

B. Hebrews 4:3-4:

1. God's Faith

Here the Author draws another parallel against the Sabbath. It was on the Sabbath day that God rested. He has rested since that day. Man was never created for the Sabbath. The Sabbath was created for man. To this very day, most cultures have one day out of seven to rest. The Sabbatical idea was initiated by the Bible through the Word of God. The faith of God gives Him the opportunity to rest. He has been able to rest since the creation of the universe because He has faith in the works of His hands. All things are upheld by the words of His power. His power flowed out of His mouth and remains operative to this very day. Our occupation, as Believers, is to place our confidence in God. As we place our confidence in God, we will find the needed rest for our souls. In the words of Christ, what man can add height to himself by worry? Adam tried the legalistic approach to Salvation by covering himself with fig leaves and it failed. He was a living example to all men that works were insufficient. God's grace covered and made atonement for Adam's sin.

The Mosaic System was identical. It was a means whereby God could restore covenantal fellowship with those who had violated the standard of righteousness that was laid out in the Covenant. However, the general populace of Israelites had to do little more than accept that the High Priest had adequately done his job. Each Israelite was required to bring appropriate offerings. The Mosaic Covenant is replete with examples of mechanical obedience being insufficient. Again, faith must be mixed with God's Word and obedience.

2. The Torah

The most appropriate translation of the Hebrew word *A Torah*, "is not A Law." The most appropriate translation of *A Torah* is *A principle, teaching or instruction.* The Greeks had no better word than "*Nomos*" to translate the Hebrew word "*Torah*." "*Nomos*" does mean "Law." The Rabbis tried to protect men from sin by building *A fences* around the Torah. This practice was not condemned by Christ unless it negated the intent of the principles God intended to convey. This was the case with the Sabbath. The Scriptures defined certain activities that were forbidden. However, the Rabbis built so many "*fences*" around that Sabbath that it became more work to abstain from the rabbinic *A fences* than to naturally observe the Sabbath. There was no enjoyment in the Day of Rest because the common people feared violating the "*fences*" of the Rabbis.

C. Hebrews 4:5-8:

1. The Coming Rest

The rest mentioned in these verses is more than Sabbath observance. This can be clearly seen as a result of the narrative. There were those who thought that the above-mentioned passage concerning the Second Moses applied to Joshua. Here the Author negates this theory. Joshua did not cause the people to enter into the promised rest, nor did any of his successors. During the reign of Solomon, the Children of Israel experienced the greatest time of peace and prosperity. However, Solomon as great of a King as he was, demanded high taxation. Therefore, no King or leader of ancient Israel produced the promised season of rest. The promised rest looked forward to another time. This rest is not just the current reign of Messiah. It looks foreword to the time when all the enemies of Messiah and humanity will be placed under the feet of Messiah and we will have eternal rest. There is an eternal rest that we will someday enter in to. For Believers, there is an eternal rest in heaven (John 14:1-3, Heb. 11:10, 16). Entering this final rest means ceasing from the labors, trials, and sufferings common to our physical lives.

D. Hebrews 4:9-11:

1. The Sabbatical System

The Sabbatical system, as established in the Mosaic Covenant, was never fully observed. It was for this reason that the Children were carried away captive. They did not allow the land to rest in the Seventh Year. However, Christians often fail to see the picture of the Sabbath that God intended for both the Jew and Christian to see. The Sabbath was a picture of living in the restful Presence of God. Adam was created on the eve of the Sabbath. This was because God intended humanity to continually experience the Sabbatical peace and rest that God Himself had entered into upon completion of His creation.

The Greek word "*Sabbatismos*" is often translated in various ways. Nevertheless, its true meaning is "Sabbath Keeping." However, we must keep in mind to which this Letter was being written. It was written to Jews who had put their faith in Messiah.

According to the Rabbis the world to come will be like the Sabbath. Scholars have noted the following observation concerning the Sabbath and the Aworld to come."

a. Nature of the World to Come"

The world to come will be the cessation of wearisome toil. We will experience the rest of God just as He did after the work of creation.

- b. The world to come will be like the Sabbath

This remains a mystery to many Christians. How can the "World to Come" be like the Sabbath? A full study of the Sabbath will reveal that it was to be an "island of time" where we are separated from the mundane tasks of daily life. The speech and activities of the Sabbath were to be Heavenly. What had caused fear, anxiety and dread during the week was verboten on the Sabbath. This was not to be legalistic as we mentioned above. It was to be picturesque of the world to come.

- c. The Sabbath here should be like the "World to come."

Our remarks above fit here as well. The Sabbath is an illustrative type. During the Sabbath we are role-playing, practicing or rehearsing for the world to come. One scholar pointed out that we should be involved in the same employments, joys, and communion with God on the Sabbath as we will experience during the world to come.

2. Laboring to Enter Rest

"Therefore, let us labor to enter that rest." The idea of laboring to rest seems foreign to us. However, there are those occasions where we must make ourselves rest rather than being preoccupied with service. This was the case with Martha and Mary. (Lk 10:38-41). Mary had chosen the restful Presence of the Lord while Martha supposed that service was the key to winning the Lord's favor. We must interject here that we must find a happy balance between labor and rest. Rest and labor both have their appropriate seasons.

E. Hebrews 4:12:

God deals with us not by mere influences or through human thinking, but through His Word, written or preached. It is an amazing statement when we read that the Word is living. The word "powerful" in Greek is *ergon*. "*Ergon*" is better translated "the Word is at work." The Word of God is accomplishing its appointed task and purpose. *The Word of the Lord will not return to Him in void* (Is 55.11).

The Word is ". . . *sharper than any two-edged sword.*" The double edged sword was a formidable weapon used for close fighting. However, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. Nothing that men can manufacture could be as sharp as the Word of God.

The Word brings about a “. . . *dividing of soul and spirit.*” The Word of God will separate what is spirit and what is of the soul. The Holy Spirit does not present truth to the soul, to the “reason”, but directly to the human spirit. The Word can separate for us what is life and that which is not.

The Word of God is quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. Just by reading the Word of God, our thoughts are judged. Any thought that does not line up with the Word of God has to be brought under subjection. The Word of God judges our thought. The Word judges our motives.

What is the function of the Word of God? Its design is to determine what is spiritual and what is carnal. Many scholars use this passage to dissect the human being, proving his tricotomy. This is acceptable as long as we understand the intent of the author. The Author is not trying to divide the soul from the spirit. Rather he is trying to unite them in genuine spirituality. The only way this can be done is through discerning what practices originate in man's thinking and differentiating them from those which originate in his human spirit. The Word penetrates the inner most recesses of the soul. Here the Author makes an illustration of the joint and marrow, together, they form the bone. However, the marrow is the life-giving source and inner strength of the bone.

1. Man's Tricotomy

By understanding the tricotomy of man, we can more fully understand and develop ourselves spiritually. Man is a spirit with a soul who lives in a body.

The distinction between soul and spirit is often difficult. The Hebrew word for spirit is “*ruach*” and the Hebrew word for soul is “*nefesh*.” There are times in the Old Testament when the spirit and soul, are parallel, just as there are also places where “heart” and spirit are parallel. The Hebrew word for heart is “*lev*” and it is “*kardia*” in Greek. They are both terms for the soul. By the soul, we are referring to the general attitude and disposition of man known as the mind, will and emotions. The term heart as used in Scripture is generally mistaken for the human spirit because the term heart means the core of man. The root of this thinking comes from the usage of the Hebrew word “*lev*” which often refers to the human soul. This term can be an all encompassing term for the human soul and spirit. The term “*nefesh*” is rarely defined and can refer either soul or spirit. Only by the context of its usage in the verse can the true definition of “*nefesh*” be understood as either soul or spirit. The Rabbis adopted the view that the heart was the seat of the mind, will and emotions. The “*Midrash*,” a Jewish Commentary, names over sixty (60) emotions of the heart.

The human spirit is the animating principle and the soul is responsible for the reasoning. In the New Testament, there are places where man seems to be regarded as bipartite, made up of body and spirit. Often the soul and spirit are regarded as parallel terms. However, soul and spirit are not always employed interchangeably. The same functions are often ascribed to each because of their joint responsibility for the government of man's being. The soul can be said to be lost, for example, but this is never said of the human spirit. According to chapter twelve of our text, the spirits of righteous men are made perfect. For the most part ‘spirit’ and *soul* are not only distinguished, but set in contrast to each other.

The body we presently live in is capable of being influenced by the soul. However, the resurrected body will not be subject to such influences. This redeemed body of the resurrection is described by Paul as a spiritual body completely controlled by the Spirit.

2. The Human Spirit

The human spirit works in perfect harmony with the Holy Spirit. All spiritual activities are the result of the human spirit conforming to the Will of the Holy Spirit as it communicates it to the Believer. The following observations are the human spirit imparting to the being of man what it has received from the Holy Spirit.

a. The spirit imparts life.

The governing principle of the human spirit is the Law of life." To walk after the spirit or have the mind of the spirit is to be genuinely alive. Through the power of the human spirit, we are able to mortify the deeds of the flesh. The deeds and practices of the flesh originate from the old man. According to Book of James the absence of the human spirit leaves the body dead (Ja 2:26). Those who are born again are said to have the "spirit of Christ." To be "in the spirit" is the opposite of being "in the flesh." However, the practice of being spiritual is a personal matter. To be in Christ is to be incorporated into the body of Christ, but to be in the spirit is a matter of submitting oneself to the spirit's control. Not only does the spirit supply life here and now; its presence guarantees the resurrection to eternal life. The life of the world to come is given to Believers as the gift of God.

b. The spirit gives freedom.

Men's bondage is viewed as bondage to sin or bondage to death. In both cases, it is the spirit who liberates them. It is the spirit who conveys the power of the risen Christ to the Believer. By this power, they are made free from sin. The human spirit releases them from bondage of the letter of the law, so they can serve in newness of the spirit. It is the spirit who imparts the new principle of life in Christ Jesus, which sets them free from the law of sin and death. The spirit enables Believers, here and now, to realize their privilege as the Lord's free-born children.

c. The spirit supplies directive power in the lives of the sons of God.

It is the spirit that makes us sons. Within the spirit of the Believer is the inherent power of God. As sons of God, we possess God-like qualities and abilities. The spirit enables Believers to live in the present

enjoyment of the glory that is yet to be revealed. The deliverance from bondage, which they have already begun to enjoy in the spirit, will be consummated in the world to come. Their adoption will be fully realized with the resurrection. When Believers yield to the Spirit, they experience the Spirit of adoption and the glory of full conformity to the image of God's Son. This was their created purpose; they were foreordained to like Christ.

d. The human spirit in conjunction with the Holy Spirit intercedes for the Believer.

The spirit within the Believer is aware of every minute detail of our lives. He makes intercession according to the Will of God. He therefore, must be perfectly aware of the Will of God. While the Spirit is within us, He can also be in the Presence of God to state our case.

e. The spirit is the sanctifying agent in the lives of Believers.

The spirit and flesh are in opposition and wage perpetual warfare with one another. But the spirit is divinely empowered and can put the flesh out of action in those lives, which are yielded to its control. Paul knew his own spiritual life to be a struggle, which would continue so long as he remained in mortal body. This was a struggle in which victory and final glory were assured by his possession of the Spirit within his spirit. The Spirit within us is preparing for our final glory, reproducing and increasing in us the measure and likeness of Christ.

f. The Spirit is our pledge of the future.

According to Old Testament prophecy, the outpouring of the Spirit of God would be a sign of the approaching Day of the Lord. This prophecy was quoted by Peter when the Spirit came down upon Jesus' disciples on the day of Pentecost. This initiated the age of the Spirit. This would be an age when the spirit of man would be reborn and our seal of the redemptive future. This is an advance installment of that liberty of the glory of the children of God. According to Paul, we eagerly await this promised day. Likewise, all of creation waits for total redemption (Ro 8:21). The present gift of the Spirit is the earnest of the coming day when Believers will be clothed upon with their "house which is from heaven", when mortality will be "swallowed up of life" (2Co 5:5).

3. The Human Soul

a. The Mind

As we have stated above, the human soul is the seat of the mind, will and emotions. Through the mind we have the ability to think and reason. However, we must interject that fallen man does not always do things according to the Principles of God. It was for this reason that God gave the Law. The law is a definition of sin, righteousness and the expectations of God. The mind has the ability to determine a rational course of action.

b. The Will

The will is the volition of man. It is the seat of control. Both the human spirit and the soul contend for control of the human will. The victor controls the activities of the human being.

c. The Emotions

Emotions are the result of influencing the soul through circumstance. Emotions must be set in contrast to the fruit of the spirit. Joy is not based on circumstances. The word "happiness" comes from the word "happenings". Moods are the result of emotions. When we are happy or sad, it is the result of happenings.

d. The Flesh

This term is one of the most confused terms in Scripture. This is because the term equates human practices with the practices of animals. Scientists tell us that animals function without thought or reason. Their actions are carried out primarily by instinct or impulse. The flesh is the carnal mind that is void of spiritual influence or control. The human body has no ability to think and reason apart from the soul. The body is totally dependant upon the soul. The soul determines the course of action based upon its line of reasoning. The body is not capable of determining any set course of action good or bad. The soul, (mind) controls all bodily functions. However, the soul enjoys certain stimuli. When we are said to be operating in the flesh, we are being governed by the base appetites of the human soul. When we are operating in the flesh, the soul is producing a stimulus that is pleasing to the brain that is forbidden by the Word of God or

His Spirit. The soul is connected to the body through the physiological means of nerve endings. These nerve endings send sensations to the brain. The brain determines whether they are pleasurable or painful.

The term flesh is almost always set in contrast to the spirit, whether it is the Holy Spirit or human spirit. The term is used to demonstrate the difference between the degenerate soul and the regenerated human spirit.

F. Hebrews 4:13:

Nothing can escape the eye of God. In Rabbinic literature God is referred to as "the Place." This is a reference to His omnipresence. *"All things are open and laid bare before the Lord."* As David said to Solomon, *"know thou the God of thy Father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts"* (1 Ch 28:9)

G. Hebrews 4:14-15:

Here the Author mounts his theme of Christ's High Priesthood. This theme will permeate the rest of the Book. These verses prove that Jesus is the Messiah and our great High Priest.

The Author has just described the judgment of God. Nothing can escape His view. However, we do not have a Priest who is out of touch with our reality. He has been through weakness and testing. Jesus experienced all that we do, in this life, and did not sin! If we make a mistake, our great High Priest is before the throne of God on our behalf.

The weaknesses addressed here seem to have more to do with the weaknesses that we possess as humans. The weaknesses are ours not His. However, He is acquainted with or moved by our weakness having had a physical body that itself was subject to weakness and disease. As humans, we often face the dilemma of trying to overcome some habit or personal bent that seems insurmountable. His compassion can see past our weakness to our potential. He is able to provide the victorious example we need for growth and progress.

H. Hebrews 4:16:

Because Christ is our High Priest, we can come before God with faith. The Amplified Bible says: *"Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace (the throne of God's unmerited*

favor to us sinners), that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find grace to help in good times for every need [appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it].

"Boldly" is equal to "confidence in speech, attitude, without shame."

This is the throne from which all grace proceeds. For Israel, it was the mercy seat or covering for the Ark between the two cherubim. The High Priest could approach this only once a year with the blood of atonement. If he transgressed in anything while he was in there, he would be struck dead. He approached with fear and trembling. Under the New Covenant, Believers can come confidently before God's throne without fear and trembling.

We receive the things we need at this throne. We can receive grace to help in time of need. There are many times in life that a Believer has a "time or need" and grace is needed for testing, correction, and failures. There are times that the enemy will attack but grace is supplied by the almighty God and by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which is able to cover any situation. We must remember that the one on the throne is our loving Father and not a evil judge and executioner.

VII. Jesus our High Priest

The following passages require a greater understanding of the Old Testament than all previous passages. Specifically the reader needs to be acquainted with the Levitical System as described in the Book of Leviticus. The Book of Leviticus is an intricate technical manual for the Priesthood.

A. Hebrews 5:1-3:

Every High Priest was selected to represent men and women before God and offer sacrifices for their sins. The Priest also had to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as the sins of the people. The Priesthood included the following occupations.

1. He taught the Word of God to the people just as Ezra and Nehemiah had done earlier.
2. He offered sacrifices

3. He maintained the Tabernacle or Temple
4. He officiated in the Holy Place
5. He inspected ceremonially unclean persons
6. He adjudicated disputes

There were other duties of the Priesthood that involved the counseling of the individuals in their daily living in their method of application of the Word of God. As an example, during New Testament times, they acted as tax collectors. In these passages, there are three (3) qualifications of a High Priest given.

1. His Character

The Priest must be gentle, patient, and sympathetic with those who go astray through ignorance, sin or weakness. Compassion means "to be merciful toward" This means not only to have mere compassion, but to act with moderation, to bear with each other according to his ignorance, weakness and circumstances. The Priesthood needed to maintain balance just as Pastors today need to have balanced ministries. The Priest was to pity, to be sensitive to others needs, to pardon and to punish. However, when punishment was required it was to be done with gentleness. The Priestly image was that of a father figure.

2. Teacher

The High Priest was also responsible for the instruction of the ignorant. The people, who do not understand, need instruction from someone who does understand.

3. Selection

He must be appointed by God. These qualifications are Messianic prefigures. Christ exemplified all of these characteristics.

The High Priest was chosen from among men so that he could empathize with his brothers. Because he had faults of his own, he could naturally relate to the weaknesses of others. It was for this reason that Messiah had to take the body of a man. He must fully understand the weaknesses and frailties of humanity. By understanding the limitations and weaknesses that humanity is subject to, Christ is able to offer help and guidance. However, the contrast set before us is the sinful against the sinless. This is necessary if we are to be liberated from sin and death. We must have a role-model.

Here the Author speaks of the selective process for the High Priest. The selection of Aaron and his sons from the Tribe of Levi was the choice of God. Unlike the other tribes, Levi's inheritance was to service to God.

B. Hebrews 5:4-10:

The Priest must be called of God, even as Aaron was. It is an honour that no man takes for himself. No one elects himself. It would be presumptuous for any individual to claim Priesthood for himself without first being called and appointed. The precedent was established in the Scriptures long ago. To qualify as a Priest, the candidate must be from the Tribe of Levi and of Aaronic lineage. The only other alternative is set forth in the following passages. You must be a Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Aaron was called and appointed to his office by God. Likewise, Jesus was called and appointed to be a Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Christ did not assume the role of High Priest as an act of free will. God appointed and chose Him for the occupation. His election is recorded in the Book of Psalms. "*You are my Son and I am your Father*" (Ps 2:7). "*You are forever a Priest after the order of Melchizedek*" (Ps 110:4).

A contrast is established between the mundane, temporal and the eternal Priesthood of Christ. The use of the word forever by the Psalmist and our Author demonstrates the eternal office and occupation of Christ as a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Learning a technical occupation is a daunting task. The office and occupation of the High Priest was highly technical. As we mentioned above, the Book of Leviticus was a manual for Priests. To become a High Priest was a life-long pursuit. Before the candidate could become a High Priest he had to serve as a Priest. The priestly occupation began at twenty-five years (25) of age and continued until the age of fifty (50). During this time, he was prepared for his eventual office. No other Biblical role required as much technical skill and training. The High Priest had to possess an extensive knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures. Those who ascended to the office of the High Priest needed to be the prodigy of their generation. However, as we have stated before, the Aaronic High Priesthood was through descent.

While many contemporary scholars like to think of the Aaronic Priesthood as malfunctioning and corrupt, it was the invention and mechanism of God. Through the Priesthood, God was able to maintain a Covenantal relationship with His People, Israel. The Priesthood served as a type and shadow of the Messianic Priesthood and the Believer. The Believer serves as a Priest to the High Priest Messiah. The human spirit, mentioned above, is the Priest of our being and the Lord is our High Priest.

Not every Priest understood his occupation wholly. It took years of practice for the Priest in training to master his profession. This serves to illustrate the Believer's progress towards maturity. Just because an individual is born-again does not mean that he is acting like Christ and living up to his potential. It takes years of training, practice and discipline to master these skills.

Christ will never be succeeded. He is the eternal High Priest. His Priesthood lasts forever. His Priesthood is forever like that of Melchizedek.

C. Hebrews 5:7-10:

In the days of Christ's earthly ministry, He offered up prayers and supplications on the behalf of the people, Israel, and Jerusalem. Christ lived a life of prayer, here on earth. These passages remind us of a specific incident of Christ's prayer in the New Testament. The terminology used in verses 7 through 10 describes the garden scene of Gethsemane.

1. The Garden: John Chapter 17

The great intercessory prayer of Messiah is recorded in the Gospel of John chapter 17. He prays for His disciples both then and now. In brief, He asks for their guarding, holiness and unity.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed until His sweat became blood. Undoubtedly, it was the most agonizing prayer of His life. He makes loud cries and cries great tears as he makes His supplications to the One who holds the power of life and death in His hand.

His prayer was prayed until He resigned His will to obedience which would require His suffering. The suffering mentioned in this passage is indicative of suffering related to death.

Jesus also prayed for Himself in the Garden. The Father had presented the cup and Jesus paid the price, thus purchasing our victory. The cup mentioned in the Garden Prayer is a cup from the Passover Service that they have just attended (Mt 26:39). That cup is called the "Cup of Salvation" or redemption. This is the third cup of the Passover service. This cup symbolized the redemption of the Children of Israel as Pharaoh was destroyed in the Red Sea. In the Garden, Jesus prayed not to have to endure this cup. For the cup to fulfill its symbology, Jesus would have to die. The final cup of the Passover Seder is called the "Cup of Completion." The titles to the four cup of the Passover Seder correspond with the deliverance passages of the Book of Exodus (Ex 6:6-7). Here God makes four specific remarks with regards to the Salvation of Israel from the tyranny of Egypt.

a. I will bring you out

This is the "Cup of Sanctification." Israel was set apart to God for God's service.

b. I will deliver you from bondage

This is the "Cup of Deliverance." The Israelites were delivered from cruel bondage. Likewise, we are delivered from the bondage of sin and death.

c. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm

This is the "Cup of Salvation or Redemption."

d. I will take you to me for a people

This is the "Cup of Completion." Here the words, "all has been accepted" are recited. This reminds us of the words of Christ on the Cross where He cried "it is finished."

After Christ attained the goal, He became the eternal source of deliverance for all of His followers. Some texts read: "And having been made perfect." However, the Greek word "*telos*" is used to describe His perfection, which can be best translated, "goal or target." The goal He achieved was that of becoming the eternal sacrifice for all humanity. This made Him greater than Moses who did intercede for the Israelites. However, God spared Moses life.

Having accomplished the sacrifice of Himself, He became the Eternal High Priest of all humanity.

A fifth cup, (an extra cup) was drunk at the conclusion of the Passover Seder. It was called the "Cup of Elijah." According to Christ this was the "Cup of the New Covenant."

D. Hebrews 5:11-14: Third Warning: Danger of not Hearing.

In these passages, scholars generally see the next warning. However, the warning is more a criticism than a warning. The Hebrews had become sluggish or slow to hear. The writer had more to share with the Hebrews but he knew that the things that he had to say were not for the novice. For whatever reason, the Hebrews had begun to be reluctant to accept the Messianic Message and interpretation of the Scriptures. They had experienced enough time and education to have become teachers. The teachers in New Testament times among the Jews were the Rabbis. This was not an indiscriminate occupation. It required a great deal of education. This education usually began in the late twenties of an individual's life and prepared him for the ministry in his thirties. To receive the title "Rabbi" was not an easy thing. It would be much like earning a Biblical degree today.

In the coming verses, the Author will reprimand them for their lack of understanding in the Messianic fundamentals. However, here he reprimands them for their lack of understanding in the basic understanding of the Torah.

The term "milk" is used for the fundamental teachings of the Old Testament. The fundamentals are for beginners.

The Hebraic method of study and Hermeneutics were very complex. However, the Jews were not just concerned with what their teachers might say in explanation of the Scriptures. They wanted to know the mind of God. As a result, they developed a system of Hermeneutics. There are four basic levels of interpreting the Hebrew Bible. There are other rabbinic systems of interpretation more complex. One Rabbi devised a system of seven rules. Another devised a system of 13 rules. And yet another Rabbi devised a system of 42 rules.

This was what the audience should have been familiar with in their day. These principles should have been applied to the Messianic interpretation of the Scriptures.

We will not concern ourselves with anything more than the four basic levels of Hermeneutics. Interestingly enough, these four levels of Biblical interpretation, match the four Gospels. The Jews had also developed the system of acronyms. They would use this as a tool to remember specific principles or facts. This same principle was used by the early Christians to exalt Christ, as the Savior and Son of God. The Christian symbol of the fish is a result of this application. It stood for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Savior." The Hebrew word for the "Garden of Eden" is "Paradise," or "orchard." In Hebrew it is spelled with four (4) letters *PRDS*. These four (4) letters are indicative of the four (4) levels of Scriptural interpretation.

P	" <i>Pashat</i> ,"	The simple level
R	" <i>Ramez</i> ,"	The hint or the allegorical level
D	" <i>Drosh</i> ,"	The thresh
S	" <i>Sod</i> ,"	The spiritual

1. The simple level is a Grammatik analysis of the text.

When one makes a simple interpretation of the text, we stay within the confines of the text and we do not cross-reference. We deal with only what the words of the text are saying. This is the plain, literal sense of the text, more or less what modern Scholars mean by "grammatical-historical exegesis," which looks to the grammar of the language and the historical setting as background for deciding what a passage means.

This level requires a small sample of the text. We might use the cliché "chapter and verse." The audience or simple level is for the common people.

2. The allegorical level is for those who want to know more than just the fundamental requirements or level of interpretation.

The application level is for the Aristocratic.

This is the opening of the gate on the corral and begins to use cross-references. In cross-referencing, not a word or verse is omitted from the study. Every reference with every word will be looked at and considered.

The questions asked of the text in this level will be as follows:

- a. What is the absolute meaning of this word or phrase?

- b. What is a probable meaning of this word or phrase? (There are those words and phrases that have absolute meanings and then, there are those with probable and possible meanings.)

- c. What is the possible interpretation of this verse? The strength of the word or phrase may suggest possible interpretations.

- d. The passage may lack a definite interpretation. We may conclude by saying "Maybe it means this." (The Scripture may have none of the above and leave only a hint of meaning.)

- e. It is possible that there may be an impossible interpretation. (Sometimes Scriptural interpretation can be gained by understanding its impossible interpretation.)

3. The "thresh and Regal level" is the Homiletical level of interpretation.

It will be the readings of one's own self into the text, with questions such as, "How can the text apply to me and how can I share it with others." This will be in contrast to the direct exegesis of the text. An exegesis is finding the exact and direct meaning of the text. Here the student will not be as heavily concerned with the exact meaning as he will be with how to put the text into action. The question will be how to walk out the Scripture in question. This level of interpretation incorporates the idea that God is actively involved in the interpretation of Scripture within the minds of His people, bringing "Revelation knowledge" to them. God, by the agent of the Holy Spirit, directly reveals the truth of the text to the student for personal application and homiletical explanation. This can be seen from a New Testament perspective in the Book of Romans, where we are told that walking in the Spirit enables us to fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law (Ro.8:4). However, this in no way negates the responsibility for application and understanding the hermeneutic principles.

4. The "spiritual hermeneutic" can be understood by a rabbinic story which tells of the value of understanding the spiritual application of God's Word.

One Rabbi said that each Scripture of the Bible has but one meaning. Another Rabbi retorted that each Scripture has seven meanings. Yet another Rabbi insisted that there are 42 meanings to each passage. A final Rabbi concluded that each Scripture has an infinite number of meanings. The Word of God has infinite abilities because it is the Word that proceeded from the mouth of God. Man is a spiritual being and therefore, is in need of spiritual instruction.

5. The audience level is for the mature and spiritually minded.

This level of interpretation insists that the meaning of the passage is disclosed to superficial means of hermeneutic. Again, the agent of the Holy Spirit is involved in uncovering the hidden meaning of the text. One thing must be understood with this level. The Bible must be used to interpret the Bible. All spiritual interpretations can and must be weighed by other Biblical data. In this fashion, the Holy Spirit can use accumulated Biblical knowledge and bring forth the intended meaning of Scripture. Another key point, with regard to this level of Hermeneutic, is that it is the most advanced level of interpretation known to the People of God. It therefore, requires men of real maturity and wisdom to accomplish this operation. This is not the hermeneutic level for the novice. It takes great wisdom and maturity to know and discern the voice of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit will also use this level of Hermeneutic to accomplish specific tasks.

a. The first task to be accomplished is conviction.

The Holy Spirit will use passage after passage to teach us how to walk pleasing before the Lord. He will accomplish this by showing us our lack.

b. The second task to be accomplished is experience.

This is one reason that the novice will have a limited ability to understand the spiritual application of Scripture. His lack of experience and knowledge disqualifies him from the great depth of wisdom available to the sage. This is not to discourage the novice, but an encouragement to study to show himself approved.

c. The third task to be accomplished is prayer.

Prayer is not just talking to God. It should be viewed as communion with God. If we are able to communicate with God, we are capable of hearing God speak to us. Men of prayer are spiritual men. Spiritual men receive spiritual insight into the Scriptures. They are obedient to the Spirit's voice. Revelation is built upon revelation. Isaiah records it line upon line (Is.28:10). Moses received the Word of God, from God, Himself. Moses undoubtedly was a spiritual man. However, he was also a man of prayer. He communed with God. The same can be said of all the great men of the Bible.

These four levels perfectly match the four Gospels. Mark's Gospel is for the simple. It is a novice or beginner level Book. Luke's Gospel takes the beginner to the next level. His Book is for the Aristocrat. Matthew gives the regal story of Messiah and John is the "other world minded" Disciple who speaks on a spiritual level with regard to the Son of God.

The analogy of milk and meat is self-explanatory. Nevertheless, the Author goes on to talk about genuine maturity. Here, he speaks of the faculties being able to discern good from evil. This is a picture of genuine maturity. The faculties that are mentioned here is the realm of the soul. The soul is rarely given the responsibility of discerning. Discerning is a function of the human spirit. However, those who are mature are able to discern with their soul because they have begun to unify their internal being.

VIII. WARNING AGAINST FALLING AWAY

A. Hebrews 6:1-3: Fourth Warning: Danger of Shrinking Back

Here the Author encourages his audience to press on towards maturity. A "Going on to perfection" speaks that we are not to rest until we are adults capable of exercising and teaching, all senses in righteousness.

To go-on contains the idea of being moved along as a ship driven by the wind. Here the Spirit is the power that moves Believers forward (Ac.2:2-4, 2Pe.1:21, and Ro.8:14). It is the process of the Holy Spirit, within the Believer that conforms us to the image of Christ. We are wasting time if we are constantly relaying our foundation.

The imagery is that of moving forward and leaving behind the things of the past. Paul talked about leaving childhood toys behind. The same principle applies to these passages.

The foundation has been laid already; we do not need to lay it again. Listed below are the six fundamental teachings or lessons where Messiah is revealed.

1. Repentance from dead works

Repentance contains the idea of returning to God. The Hebrew word for repent is "*Teshuvah*." This word means to turn around and head back toward God. Rabbinic teachings concurrent with the New Testament taught that there were four elements of repentance.

a. Regret

Without regret there will be no change. The offender will rationalize his sin and commit it again. Regret is the primary stage of repentance. We must have the attitude of the Patriarch Joseph. Joseph viewed sin as an insult and offense to God.

b. Leaving the Sin

Once we begin to regret our sinful actions we can change our habits. In leaving the sin we must determine not to sin again.

c. Confession

Honesty is of the utmost importance when we pray. God knows our secret sins. When we pray He is not shocked or surprised at what we might say to Him. However, we must remember to pray reverently.

d. Accepting the Future

We must make the resolve within ourselves not to repeat these sinful actions again.

Paul mentions the works of the flesh in his letter to the Galatians. Each of the works of the flesh can be directly related to practices of idolatry. Here the Author is speaking only to Hebrews, as to where Paul was speaking to Jews and Gentiles together. The Gentile was more prone to idolatry. Here the Hebrew understands what the Author is speaking of clearly. Works that lead to death are sins that were punishable by death. Even though we live in the “age of grace,” these sins are considered most heinous to God. They indicate the presence of the evil one or the carnal nature.

2. Faith towards God

The clearest definition of faith is “confidence in God.” The entire 11th chapter is devoted to describing individuals of faith. Faith trusts God regardless of circumstance. It may have been that the Israelites were facing situations that required a stretching of their faith. If this were the case, then the Author is reminding them here of the fundamental teaching of faith. We must trust the sovereignty of God. He is in control and nothing that the enemy of man does can ever frustrate the plan of God. We will reserve the remainder of our remarks on faith for our study of the eleventh chapter of this book.

3. Doctrine of baptisms or instructions about Awashings” and Aritual purity”

It is interesting that the Author labels this teaching as one of the fundamental teachings of Messiah. The teachings concerning ARitual Purity” are an in-depth study of Scripture. However, it is one of the most revealing studies that Christians can undertake. This teaching reveals the sanctifying work of Messiah and the Holy Spirit.

Baptisms and ritual purity affected every individual in the New Testament. It was the basis for a great deal of controversy between Jews and Gentiles. The Gentiles were ruled as unclean by the rabbinic courts. This was the wall that Paul talked about in his letter to the Ephesians. (Ep 2:14-15). The fundamental concept behind ritual purity was how to live a holy life. We are admonished by Pauline writings to not touch unclean things (2Co 6:17). James tells us to not be contaminated by the world (Ja 1:27). These Scriptures developed out of the writers understanding of ritual purity.

There are three (3) basic types of Ritual Immersions.

a. Immersion of the entire body in water

- b. Washing of hands

- c. Washing of the hands and feet

Women who completed their monthly cycle were to wash or, be baptized. Likewise, women who had given birth were to wash. The Leper who had been cleansed was to wash. Those who had come in contact with a dead body were required to be sprinkled with the water and ashes of the red heifer. Those who had come in contact with a person having an issue of blood were required to ritually immerse. The consecration of the Priests required the ritual bath. The Priests had to ritually bath regularly. The High Priest had to ritually wash his body, hands and feet before he could carry out his duties on the Day of Atonement.

The proselyte was to be baptized as a symbol of his new life. This was the basis for Christian Baptism. Christian teaching, as taught by Christ, demonstrated the validity of Baptism (Mk 16:16; Jo 3:5; Mt 3:11 Acts 1:5, 19:1-6). John the Baptist came preaching and baptizing in the name of the Kingdom.

4. Laying on of hands

The doctrine of laying on of hands originated in the Old Testament. The hand is the organ of transfer. When a person wished to transfer an object or gift it was passed to the recipient via the hand. The Priest placed his hands on the victims before making it an offering as a symbol of transfer. Likewise, the one who offered a sacrifice was to lay hands on the sacrificial victim and confessed his sin over it. The Prophets laid hands on their successor.

The following list are some of the basic reasons that individuals practiced laying on of hands:

- a. Healing of the sick;

- b. Consecration and Ordination and transfer of authority;

- c. Imparting of the Holy Spirit and His gifts;

- d. Fathers blessing their children and ancestral blessings;
 - e. Divine initiation or appointment.
5. Resurrection of the dead

In His ministry, Jesus clearly taught that He was the resurrection and the life (Jn.11:25). During His days on earth, He demonstrated His power over death. He raised Lazarus and Jairus' daughter. However, these two individuals lived again, only to die again. Jesus demonstrated His power over death personally by raising from the dead. Unlike those who were raised from the dead in the Scriptures, Jesus would never die again. The resurrection of the dead is the basis of the Jewish and Christian faith. The New Testament clearly teaches that the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead while the Sadducees did not.

Several Old Testament passages served as the foundation for this doctrine. The Prophet Isaiah spoke of the dead living again (Is 26:19). Ezekiel speaks of a resurrection of a valley of dried bones being raised (Ez 37). Likewise, Daniel speaks of the resurrection to judgment (Da 12:2). Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to see that the resurrection of the dead existed in the Old Testament. Paul elaborates on this teaching in his letters because it was not as readily comprehended by the Gentiles. The pagan philosophies of men led them to believe all sorts of things. In His letter to the Corinthians, mentioned above, he gives an abundance of teaching on the subject of resurrection for clarity. That Jesus was raised from the dead never to die again was a seal of those Old Testament teachings and thoughts. This is partially why so many Hebrews became converts to Christianity.

Without a doubt God transcends death. Death was the result of humanity's sin. Death was a part of the enemy's nature. When Adam sinned, he became subservient to death and death reigned over him and every one who is his seed.

The following are some fundamental thoughts on the resurrection.

- a. Recompense

The concept of recompense is twofold. First, it takes into consideration the injustices done to the righteous. The basic rule of life is that if you love you will be loved. However, this basic rule is not a strict fact of life. Often the righteous will suffer and the wicked will prosper.

The second aspect of recompense is that the wicked will be punished for their iniquitous deeds. In the world to come all that is "Awrong" will be corrected and there will be recompense for the righteous and the wicked alike.

b. Immortality

Man's reasoning and spirit tell him that this life is not the end. Even degenerate man has the belief that there is an afterlife. The destruction of death is the ultimate promise given to humanity. The subject of the immortality of the soul is often debated. However, New Testament theology makes it clear that the immaterial part of our being will live forever. Likewise, it will be reunited with our present body to stand before God in judgment.

c. Resurrection

History awaits the final events pertaining to the human body. Redemption must include the redemption of the body as well as the human soul and spirit. There will be an eventual reunion of the body, soul and spirit. This body will be changed from corruption to incorruption. Paul described it best in his letter to the Corinthians by saying "*if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable* (1 Co 15:19).

6. Eternal judgment

As we have mentioned above, there will be a recompense for all the deeds done in the body. The body is no more than a vehicle which houses the human soul and spirit. Man must give an account for the deeds he has committed in his body. The righteous will be eternally rewarded in paradise. The sinful will be punished in hell. Condemnation sentencing is taught in the New Testament. The Lord said "eternal fire is prepared for the devil and his angels." There are a multitude of images used to depict the bliss that will be experienced by the righteous such as, heaven, the Garden and paradise.

B. Hebrews 6:4-6

These verses have been used by opposing theological schools to try to purport their particular point of view of grace and security. However, we must maintain that these schools have neglected the Author's true purpose in these passages. Keeping in context the theme of the entire book, these passages are not about "Abacksliding" they are about defection.

The Hebrews, for some reason, believed that without the sacrifices of the Levitical System, there was no forgiveness of sin. Their fixation on the sacrificial system of the Mosaic Covenant had redirected their focus away from the sacrificial atoning death of Christ. Not only is Christ the eternal sacrifice needed to provide eternal Salvation, He is the High Priest of our faith.

The Hebrew people were enlightened. This means that they gained a genuine revelation of Jesus as Messiah. They understood His sacrificial propitiating work. They tasted the heavenly gift. They had received the eternal Salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus, the Messiah.

They were partakers of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Hebrew people were not pseudo-Believers. The Holy Spirit is the one who does the enlightening and He reveals to us who Jesus is. The Spirit of God shows us that we need God's gift of Salvation. Romans 8:9 says, "*If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of His*" The ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives is very important and must be studied, but even more important is our relationship with the Spirit of God.

They had tasted of the powers of the world to come. It is a sad state when someone has been enlightened, tasted of the heavenly gift, been a partaker of the Holy Spirit and tasted the Word of God; and then turns their backs on their Christian walk. It is hard to imagine waking away from all the goodness, mercy, joy, and love shared through Christ's love.

When men get to the point that they have no desire to repent, they are truly in a poor state physically and spiritually. But remember, no man or angel has power to bring about repentance. It is a gift from God (Ac.11:18, 2Ti.2:25). Man can reach the point where he does not respond any longer to the drawing of the Spirit of God.

"If they fall away" - This phrase is a past tense presented as "having fallen away." They (those who have fallen away from God) have inwardly rejected God, put Christ to shame. An atheist, an infidel, or a denier puts themselves to shame, not Christ.

C. Hebrews 6:7-8:

Here in the next two verses the Author makes a farming illustration. When the ground drinks in the rain, which is the blessings of God, it can become productive. The productivity is a result of the seed within the soil. If the soil produces thorns and thistles then, like the ground Adam was sent to, it is cursed. This Scripture tells us that if our ground produces thorns and thistles, it is worthless. This ground is cursed and finally destroyed in the end with fire. This is strong Scripture! The analogy is clear enough for his readers to understand his meaning. Stay faithful, defection is not an option.

D. Hebrews 6:9-12:

The method of speech that the Author has used to make his case to this point has been somewhat stern, especially the past few verses. Therefore, he reassures his audience that he loved them by calling them "Beloved." This is the only place in Hebrews where the word "beloved" is used. It is used in reference to true Believers.

The Author expresses his genuine confidence in their advances in the Lord. Furthermore, he wants the very best for his Hebrew audience. He wants them to experience the better things of Salvation. As he continues his thoughts, he expresses the benefits of Salvation. God will recompense them for their troubles. Moreover, he shows that his audience is still faithful in God's service.

To this point, he has addressed the Hebrews in mass. Here he expresses his desire for each individual to excel in service to God. He wants them to experience full assurance of their hope to the very end. Biblically, hope means to have full assurance or to have a positive expectation. In this context, he is speaking of joyful and confident expectation of eternal Salvation.

When hope and faith are challenged an individual often becomes lackadaisical and indolent. This is contrary to the Author's wish and expectation for these people. His expectation and desire is that they would imitate their ancestors. The eleventh chapter is often referred to as the "hall of faith." The ancestors, who were faithful and full of faith, are lauded for their exploits. They modeled faith and patience. These are the people that the Author desires his audience to imitate. Especially note-worthy is his use of patience. The audience was being pressured from others. The exact circumstances we do not know. History reveals the oppression of Messianic Jews by non-Messianic Jews and Gentiles at the same time. Those who experienced this dilemma felt that there was no way out. If this were the case, the Hebrews would have obviously felt like abandoning their Messianic faith and returning to their old lives. This is just the opposite of what the Author is trying to accomplish with his letter. His words might have sounded like; "our ancestor faced similar problems and situations, so, keep the faith and keep on going."

E. Hebrews 6:13-19:

Because of the grandeur of God, He could not swear an oath by any other name than His own. When men swear oaths and make covenants, they must use a name higher than themselves. The Book of Hebrews is replete with covenantal oaths and decrees. God backs His promises laying His own reputation on the line. When people make promises, they guarantee them by appealing to some form of authority. Our human nature does not allow us to keep our word faithfully as God does. God cannot break His Word because His Word cannot change; therefore, His promise is unchangeable.

Here we have the establishment of the Covenant with Abraham. God, having sworn by His own Name, wanted Abraham and all humanity to understand that He was unchangeable. God cannot lie; therefore we are encouraged to faith when we receive the promises of God. While some scholars point out that God gave Abraham as many as 60 blessings the following is a brief overview of those blessing:

- a. Abraham was guaranteed prosperity;
- b. Abraham was promised an abundant seed;
- c. Prosperity was promised to Abraham's seed;
- d. Abraham was promised the Land of Israel as well as to his promised seed;
- e. Abraham was promised that he would become a great nation;
- f. Abraham was promised that his name would be great;
- g. Abraham was promised that in him all the peoples of the earth would be blessed;
- h. Abraham was promised that God would be his Shield;

The key to receiving blessings is often patient endurance. A modern cliché is to “have the patience of Job.” Job and Abraham’s patience are exemplary. Both men endured great hardships. However, they were both faithful to the Lord and God blessed them in due season. The Book of Ecclesiastes tells us that there is a time for everything.

The author demonstrates the power of Hope. Hope is the anchor of the soul. The word “hope” means “to have a positive expectation.” When we have a positive expectation, we can endure a great deal of asperity. When the soul would be driven from passion to passion, hope is the anchor that defers the course of action.

We have an example, Jesus who is our High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. He is able to go beyond the veil, into the Holy of Holies. He is the forerunner, or the one who has gone before us to prepare the way. We are reminded of His words to the Disciples in The Book of John chapter fourteen, where He says that He is going to prepare a place for us (Jo. 14:2-4)

IX. MELCHIZEDEK THE PRIEST

Melchizedek is a mysterious Old Testament figure who appears in Genesis 14 as God’s Priest of Salem and a Canaanite king. Abraham paid Melchizedek tithes and was blessed by him. Melchizedek’s identity is shrouded in mystery. His first mention is in the fourteenth chapter of the Book of Genesis. Abraham comes to Salem after his war with the Kings. As he returns, he is met by the King of Sodom and the King of Salem, Melchizedek. The first King wanted something from Abraham. The second King wanted to congratulate him and bless him. Likewise, Melchizedek refreshed Abraham with bread and wine. These two (2) sacred symbols go unexplained here by the Author. This is most likely because his audience did not need these symbols explained to them.

The following is a comparative list between Melchizedek and Messiah.

Melchizedek

Christ

King of Salem

King of Kings

High Priest to Abraham

Our High Priest

Salem means APeace” Prince of Peace

King of Righteousness Lord of Righteousness

Unknown Genealogy The Eternal Son of God

No beginning or ending The Living One

A. Melchizedek:

Facts listed in description of Melchizedek:

1. He was the King of Salem, ancient Jerusalem (Gen. 14:18);
2. He was a Priest of God in Abraham’s day (Gen. 14:18);
3. He met Abraham after a military victory (Gen. 14:18);
4. Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoils (Gen 14:14-18);
5. He was called the king of righteousness;
6. He was called the king of peace (Gen. 14:18);

7. Scripture does not record an heir or his genealogy or his mother or father. Melchizedek's birth or death are not recorded either. The fact that his parents are not listed does not mean that he did not have them. However, this is a type of Christ with no beginning or end.
8. He was a type of Christ, a Priest and a king;
9. He was a great man (Heb. 7:4);
10. Melchizedek was greater than Abraham (Heb. 7:4-7);
11. He Blessed Abraham;

B. Who was Melchizedek?

Melchizedek's identity is a matter of great supposition. Some scholars believe that he was an angel. Others believe he was Enoch. However, most agree and believe that he was Shem, the son of Noah. Shem was said to be the Father of the sons of Eber. This is an odd way of saying that Shem was the ancestor of Eber his grandson. Scholars suggest that Shem started a House of Study, Prayer or a Prophetic School. That Shem is called Father by these individuals would be conducive to the use of the term Father. Again, this is a matter of hypothesis however, most scholars accept this theory.

Noah lived until Abraham was about 58 years of age. According to the genealogy of the Patriarchs, Shem lived longer than Abraham. One scholar suggested that it was possible for Shem to have attended Abraham's funeral.

C. His Genealogy

We have two (2) observations concerning Melchizedek's genealogy.

1. Hebrew Hermeneutic

An interpretive technique used by the ancient Hebrews was as followed. If it was not recorded it did not happen. One Hebrew author who is popular for the use of this fundamental was Philo. Others followed suit and employed his precedent. Because the death of Melchizedek is not mentioned in the Scriptures, the Author implements this hermeneutic approach. His summary was that Melchizedek had no father because his father's name is not recorded. He surmises that he had no mother because her name is not mentioned. Likewise, his birth is not recorded or is his death. This hermeneutic approach was not to be taken literally. It was a figurative approach to the Scriptures to make a point. Here the point is the eternal occupation of our High Priest Messiah.

2. The Absence of Genealogy

Scholars who believe that Melchizedek was Shem point out that the term "Melchizedek" is not a name. The term Melchizedek means "my king is righteous" or "king of righteousness." If this were the title given to Shem then the fact that his title, Melchizedek, is missing from the genealogies of Scriptures as a play on words. This was not an uncommon hermeneutical practice among the ancient Hebrews. Likewise, it would have been a hermeneutical principle that the Hebrew Author's audience would have been familiar with.

D. Melchizedek the High Priest

If Melchizedek was the Son of Noah as mentioned above, he certainly would have known the principles of sacrifice. Likewise, he would have been the most qualified to have done so. When Noah traversed the flood, he brought with him seven of the animals that would later be describes as clean under the Mosaic Covenant. He also brought with him two of every unclean beast. The thought produced by the majority of scholarship is that one of the seven clean animals would be used for a sacrifice. Furthermore, that the greater numbers of clean animals were paired was thought to be a teaching concerning what is and is not good for man to eat.

The name "Shem" means "name." To this very day the Jews, refer to God as "*HaShem*," meaning "the Name." This reference is based upon the thought that was followed by the New Testament writers and also Jesus himself; that if the Name of God is not mentioned, then it could never be blasphemed. This was a rabbinic "fence." Shem was given the name Shem because in his day, men began to call upon the Name of the Lord. Shem represents the righteous line that would produce Messiah. Therefore, Shem possibly being Melchizedek as a prefigure of Messiah is very appropriate.

In our text, verse three (3) Melchizedek is said to be a type of Messiah or Son of God. This is an interesting phrase. Some scholars suggest that the "Sons of God," of Genesis chapter six (6) are in fact the line of Seth from whom Shem descended (Ge 6:2).

The above comments are by no means proofs as to the identity of Melchizedek. Rather, they are scholarly opinions and conclusions.

E. Other Considerations

1. Greater than Abraham

The author and Scripture points out that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham. It was for this reason that Abraham paid tithe to him. Undoubtedly, Abraham believed this and therefore paid his tithe to the Kingly Priest. Furthermore, Melchizedek blessed Abraham with a Priestly blessing.

2. David's Prophecy

David prophesied of the coming Messiah who would be after the order of Melchizedek. (Ps 110:4)

3. The Priesthood of Melchizedek was secured by oath.

In his Messianic Psalm, David records the oath between Messiah and the Lord. The Author differentiates between the Priesthood's of Aaronic and Melchizedek.

F. Hebrews 7:4-10:

The superiority of Melchizedek is shown here. Melchizedek paved the way for Levi and the priestly system to come. He received tithes and issued a blessing to Abraham. Levi paid tithe to Melchizedek through Abraham. This testifies to the superiority of the Priesthood of Melchizedek.

1. Tithe

In some Church circles tithe is a highly controversial subject. We have two brief observations to make here concerning tithe.

a. Abraham paid Tithe

The same argument made to argue that we have been freed from the letter of the Law using Abraham, the gentile, as a model must be applied to the tithe. Here, we intend that Abraham set the precedent for all Gentiles. Because Abraham paid tithe to Melchizedek, a prefigure of Messiah, we should tithe to the Priests of Messiah. Abraham was blessed as a result of paying tithe.

b. New Testament Silence

Some Scholars suggest that tithing does not apply to Christian because it is not commanded in the New Testament. This is not wholly true. Jesus does not condemn tithe but rather upholds it (Mt 23:23; Lu 11:42). However, our point is as follows: The New Testament reinforces some things because they need to be reinforced. Others it does not reinforce because the New Testament Believers clearly understood their obligations. Tithing is one such case. The New Testament Believers understood their obligation to tithe. Therefore, the Author saw no need to belabor the subject.

G. Hebrews 7:11-28:

The Mosaic Covenant must be viewed as a transitional stage of Messianic development. Man must have a definition of sin. Before the Mosaic Covenant, sin was undefined. Man lived by his conscience. He was without the Spirit of God and therefore, incapable of living up to the expectations of God. The Law gave humanity a definition of sin and instruction on how to avoid it.

If it had been possible to achieve the goal of God, there would have been no change in the Priesthood but because we have a transformation in the Priesthood, we also needed a transformation in the Law or Covenant. The transformation of the Priesthood was a transition from a temporary Priesthood to an eternal one. Likewise, it was from an earthly system to a heavenly system. The Priesthood of Christ is now eternal and changeless.

The resurrected life of Christ necessitated change. Because He rose, never to die again, He qualified as an eternal Priest. Undoubtedly, the Melchizedek Priesthood required a higher standard than the Levitical Priesthood. The changing of the Priesthood from generation to generation was no longer necessary.

H. Hebrews 7:18:

The inefficacy of the Levitical Priesthood was not the system but man. The weakness of Christianity is man. We have to keep in mind that the work of the Levitical Priesthood was never complete; sin was put away when the work of Christ was complete.

I. Hebrews 7:19-22:

Paul's letter to the Romans shows the despair of a man who desires to walk in righteousness. Humanity is continually stumbling over himself (Ro 7). The greatest enemy we face is not the adversary. The greatest enemy we face is self. The death and resurrection of Christ secures the promise of something better. The promise of something better secured a New Covenant with better promises. Jesus was the one who reiterated the promise of a New Covenant. God had foretold its coming through the Prophets (Je 31:31-34; 32:36-44). The guarantee of the promise was in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

J. Hebrews 7:23-28:

The Eternal Priesthood of Christ brings eternal Salvation. The "Salvation" of the Aaronic Priesthood did not secure eternal salvation. The Day of Atonement made atonement for previous sins. The Mosaic system did not take into account the future sins of Israel, other than preparing a coming sacrifice. Therefore, the work of the Aaronic Priesthood was endless. There was never a point to say "it is finished." Every new day brought new sin and sacrifice. Under the New Covenant, if we sin, and we will, we have an Advocate with the Father (1Jo 2:1). As a Priest, Christ lives to make intercession on our behalf. The Prophets saw the Intercessory Occupation of the Suffering Messiah (Is 53:12). Messiah's occupation was to make intercession for the transgressors. Paul said that Messiah sits at the right hand of God to intercede on our behalf.