

HEBREWS

1:1-4 (A) Who wrote this epistle?

It is not known who the writer is precisely, but he had been imprisoned as 10:34 (KJV) shows. (CP 10:34).

(B) What do we learn from what is said here?

The divinely inspired writer here is highlighting the superiority of Jesus over the Old Testament prophets and angels. They were merely instruments used by God to reveal Himself to His people, whereas Jesus was God, the Son. When He spoke it was God speaking. He was not just a mouthpiece for God, like the prophets. The entire universe and all that is in it was created by Jesus (CP V2, 10; 11:3; Jn 1:3, 10; Ro 4:17; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16-17; 2Pe 3:5; Rev 3:14; 4:11). Jesus is the person in whom God gave His final revelation to the human race. He is the supreme and definitive word of God in the New Testament (CP Jn 1:17-18; 14:9; Col 1:15; He 1:3A; Rev 19:13). Jesus is the total concept of deity who in Himself expresses all that God is. The word *declared* in Jn 1:18 means that all that Jesus is and does, interprets and explains who God is, and what He does.

Jesus not only created all things, but He holds them all together, and in their proper relationship to each other, by His word (CP He 1:3B with Col 1:17). *Upholding all things by the word of His power* in He 1:3B (KJV), means the same things as Col 1:17 teaches: Jesus maintains the coherence of all that He created by His word. As we learned in Ro 4:17 and He 11:3, all things were called into being by the word of God, and they are all sustained in all their parts by the same word. The oceans are held within their boundaries; rivers run down to the sea; heavenly bodies are held in their orbits; everything in nature reproduces after its kind; night follows day; there is a proper sequence of seasons; harvests follow plantings, etc. God's word has the power within itself for its own fulfilment (CP Isa 55:10-11). After Jesus had purged our sins through His atoning death He now sits at the right hand of God (CP Psa 110:1; Tit 2:14; He 7:27; 10:12; Rev 1:5). What the writer of Hebrews is underlining in 1:1-4 is that absolutely nothing, neither prophets nor angels, has greater authority than Jesus (CP V4-14).

1:5 What is the teaching underlying what God said here?

The teaching underlying what God said here is that Jesus was never eternally God's Son, as so many Christians believe - He became the Son at His incarnation, when He took on human form (CP Psa 2:7; Ac 13:33; He 5:5). Psa 2 is a messianic Psalm - it prophesies the coming of Jesus as God's Messiah and quotes 2 Sam 7:12-17 (CP Psa 2:1-12 and 2 Sam 7:12-17 with Gen 49:10; Nu 24:17; Isa 7:14; 9:6-7; Mt 1:18-25; Lu 1:26-35; 2:11; Jn 1:14; Ga 4:4; Php 2:5-8). Every one of those scriptures teach that Jesus had a beginning and therefore He could not have been the eternal Son of God because eternity is timeless. It has no beginning or end.

Before He took on human form at His incarnation, the person we now know as Jesus, had no beginning. He

was not begotten; He did not come into being; He was not the Son of God - He was God (CP Nu 21:4-9 with 1Cor 10:9; Psa 45:6-7; Isa 6:1-5 with Jn 12:37-41; Mic 5:2; Jn 1:1-2; 3:13; 8:56-58; 17:5; Ac 20:28; Ro 9:5; Php 2:5-8; Col 2:8-10; 1Ti 3:16; Tit 2:13; He 1:8-12; 2Pe 1:1-2; 1 Jn 1:1-2; 3:16; Rev 1:8, 11, 17-18; 2:8; 3:14; 21:6; 22:12-13). Those scriptures all teach that the pre-incarnate Jesus always existed as God. He was an equal member of the Godhead from all eternity (CP Isa 52:12). Jesus was a spirit being and carried out the divine plan of creation (CP Psa 90:2; 102:25-27; Jn 1:3, 10; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16-17; He 1:1-2, 10; 11:3; Rev 3:14). For a more detailed study on this subject see comments on Mt 1:18-21, 3:16-17; Lu 1:35(B), Jn 1:1, 5:16-23, 12:41, Ac 13:33, 20:28, Php 2:5-8, Col 2:9; 1Ti 3:16, He 5:5, 1Jn 5:6-9, Rev 1:8.

1:14 How do angels minister to the needs of believers?

The phrase *sent forth* here denotes sending out as messengers - like apostles - to minister to the needs of believers (CP Psa 91:11-12; 103:20-21; Mt 4:11; 18:10). We learn from these scriptures that angels are always watching the face of God so as to hear His command to help believers when needed (CP Gen 19:1-22; Dan 3:28; 6:16, 19-22; Lu 16:22; Ac 5:19-20; 12:6-11). In He 1:14 the author is summing up the function of angels as to that of Jesus. Jesus is the highest dignity, a co-ruler with God, whereas the angels are merely servants appointed to minister to believers (CP V4-14; 2:5).

2:1 Why are Christians exhorted here to give more earnest heed to New Testament truth and warned against letting it slip away?

Because Jesus, who introduced New Testament truth, is superior to the prophets and the angels who introduced the Old Testament. This is a warning against indifference. If those under the old covenant, who had less privileges, were punished for every sin, those under the new covenant who have the greater light in Christ, will be punished also for each sin. The greater the privilege, the greater the punishment for disobedience or neglect (CP V2-4 with Lu 12:47-48; He 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22). This proves that salvation is not an unforfeitable possession in this life. (See also comments on He 3:7-11, 4:11-12, 6:4-6, 10:26-31, 2Pe 2:20-22)

2:6-8 Who testified this and to whom does it refer?

This was testified by King David in Psa 8. It refers to the human race, not Christ, as so many Christians believe (CP Psa 8:3-6). David was contrasting the greatness of God's created universe here with the insignificance of man. Man - in this context, Adam - was created a little lower than the angels, but was given dominion over the whole earth and all that was in it, until, as we learn from He 2:8, he lost that dominion when he fell from grace (CP He 2:8 and Gen 1:26-30 with Gen 3:17-19). But now, as He 2:9 teaches, Jesus regained that dominion. He was also made lower than the angels for a little time, but was

crowned with glory and honour, and exalted on high and given pre-eminence over the angels through the blood of His cross (CP He 2:9 with Psa 72:8-15; Php 2:5-11). Because Jesus experienced death in every human's place, all of creation, including angels, are subject to Him. The angels will be His servants in the world to come (CP He 2:5).

2:10-13 *How are we to understand this passage?*

What the writer of Hebrews is saying here is that it was entirely in keeping with the righteous character of God, who created and upholds all things, to make Jesus suffer and die to put away sin and bring salvation to the many (CP Jn 3:16; Ro 3:21-26; 2Cor 5:21; He 5:8-9). Jesus and the many He has saved share a common humanity. They are all members of a common family, acknowledging a common Father, God (CP Psa 22:22; Isa 8:18 with Jn 1:12; 1Jn 3:1-2).

2:14-18 *What do we understand from what is said here?*

We understand from this that Jesus became flesh and blood in common with humans in order to die, that through dying and being raised up to life again, He could defeat Satan, who held the power of death over the human race. When He rose from the grave Jesus conquered death. He defeated Satan and broke his dominion of death over the human race and made it possible for repentant sinners to be released from the fear that death held for them (CP V 14-15 with Jn 14:19; 1 Cor 15:54-55; Col 2:13-15; 2 Ti 1:10; 1 Jn 3:8).

Jesus did not take on Himself the nature of angels at His incarnation, but the nature of man - the seed of Abraham (CP He 2:16 with Ga 3:13-16, 28-29). Jesus did not provide for the salvation of fallen angels in His expiatory death, but that of fallen man. That is why He became flesh and blood in common with humans. By taking on the nature of humans Jesus demonstrated His mercy to mankind and His faithfulness to God by satisfying God's requirements for sin and thus obtaining complete forgiveness for all who come to God through Him (CP Jn 1:29; 3:16-17; 1 Jn 2:2; 4:10). It should be noted here that although Jesus died for the sins of all mankind, as Jn 1:29 and 1 Jn 2:2 teach, His salvation can only be appropriated by those who believe in Him, as Jn 3:16-17 and 1 Jn 4:10 teach.

The genuineness of Christ's humanity is demonstrated by the fact that He was tempted on all points as we are. But He resisted the temptations and is therefore able to identify with and help believers in their temptations (CP He 2:18 with 4:14-16; 7:25-28).

3:1-6 *What do we learn here?*

After having been shown that Jesus is better than the prophets and the angels, we now learn that He is also superior to Moses. Moses was an Old Testament type of Christ as the prophet of God (CP De 18:15-19; Ac 3:19-26; 7:37). Moses was also a type of Christ in that all who followed him were baptized into him in

the cloud, which was the Divine Presence, and in the sea (CP Ex 13:21-22 and 14:21-22). The Israelites were thus brought under obligation to the law, to Moses, and to the covenant. So too all who follow Christ are baptized into Christ and unto His body, the church, by the Holy Spirit (CP 1 Cor 10:1-2 with Ro 6:1-6). Moses was also a type of the faithfulness of Christ, but, as great and highly revered as Moses was, Jesus is infinitely greater and to be revered more so (CP He 3:1-4 with Zech 6:12-13). Even as God had spoken to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend, and had given him the Old Testament law, Moses was only a part of God's household of faith, whereas Jesus was the creator of that household (CP He 3:6; Ex 33:11; Nu 12:6-8; Neh 9:13-14 with 2 Sam 7:8-16; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pe 2:4-5). Moses was faithful primarily as a testimony to that which was to come in Christ (CP He 11:24-29). Moses was the highest ranking servant in God's household, but he could never hold the position of Son, which is Christ's alone (CP He 3:5 with Jn 8:35).

3:7-11 *Where in scripture does the Holy Spirit say this and what do we learn from it?*

The writer of this epistle is quoting Psa 95:7-11 here, citing the Holy Spirit as the ultimate author (CP Psa 95:7-11). This refers to the Israelites having to wander in the wilderness for forty years for provoking God after He delivered them out of Egypt. Because of their unbelief and continual rebellion against Him, God would not let them enter into His *rest* - the promised land, Canaan - which He had given to them for an inheritance, (CP He 4:2 with Nu 14:22-23; Psa 78:40-42, 56-58). This is a warning also to New Testament Christians against hardening their hearts toward the Holy Spirit, and forfeiting their salvation (CP He 3:12 - 4:1, 11; 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 12:14-16; 2 Pe 2:20-22). *Rest* for New Testament Christians refers to the quiet abode of those who will dwell with God in heaven - the eternal life that God has provided in Christ.

What befell the generation of Israelites who died in the wilderness is an Old Testament type of what will also befall New Testament Christians who fail God's grace (CP 1Cor 10:5-12 and Jude 5 with He 3:12 - 4:1, 11). We learn here that as, despite all their blessings, an entire generation of Israelites died in the wilderness because of unbelief and so failed to enter their promised land, so New Testament Christians for their part are exhorted to take warning lest they fail also. 1Cor 10:6, 11 teaches us that what befell the Israelites is a type of what can befall us if we do not heed the warning. The words *examples* in V6 and *ensamples* in V11, both mean type, or figure. The history of the failure of the Israelites is summed up for us in Psa 78 (CP Psa 78:1-72). See also comments on He 4:11-12, 6:4-6, 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22.

In closing here it is interesting to note that during their forty years wandering in the wilderness, not one of the Israelites got sick. Their clothes and their shoes never wore out, and their feet did not swell (CP De 8:2-4; 29:5; Neh 9:21; Psa 105:37).

4:1-3 *What does this warning to New Testament Christians refer to?*

The writer is warning New Testament Christians here to beware lest they fail to enter into eternal life with Jesus, as the Israelites failed to enter into the promised land of Canaan - God's *rest* in the Old Testament because they ceased to persevere in faith and obedience to God. Only those who hear the gospel message and act on it can enter into the rest - eternal life - that God has provided in Christ (CP Psa 78:40-42, 56-58; 95:7-11; Ro 11:17-24; 1 Cor 15:2; He 3:6-19; 12:15). In light of the terrible fate awaiting those who fail to enter into the eternal state, believers must earnestly strive to enter in (CP Mt 7:13-14, 21-27; Lu 13:24; Eph 2:12; 3:13-14). He 4:9-10 teaches that entering into the eternal state means ceasing from the labours, sufferings and persecutions in this life, and participating in God's own rest - the Sabbath (CP V 9-10 and Rev 14:13 with Gen 2:1-2 and Ex 20:8-11).

The Sabbath was an Old Testament shadow or type, of which Christ is the New Testament fulfilment (CP Col 2:16-17). The Sabbath was instituted by God for the Israelites as a memorial of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt under Pharaoh. It was a day of rest; a cessation from labour (CP De 5:12-15). In the New Testament, according to **Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Of The Bible**, *Sabbath* means "the repose of christianity (as a type of heaven):- rest". It is fulfilled for New Testament Christians by faith in Christ (CP He 12:22-24). Christ gives rest to all who come to Him. (CP Mt 11:28-30).

4:7-10 *What is the writer referring to here?*

Jesus in V8 (KJV), should have been translated *Joshua*, for he is the one referred to here. What the writer is saying is that Canaan, the promised land into which Joshua led the Israelites, was not the final rest which God has prepared for those who love Him. Otherwise God would not have needed to offer another opportunity to enter into His rest at the time of King David (CP Psa 95:7-11). This rest is the spiritual rest available to all who trust in Christ, and those who do enter in have ceased from their labours, just as God ceased from His on the seventh day. He 4:3 teaches that the rest is based upon a finished work which God purposed before the foundation of the world (CP He 4:3-4).

4:11-12 *What do we learn from this?*

We learn from this that it is the word of God - the scriptures - which determine who will enter into the rest that God has provided in Christ (CP 4:1-3). God's word has an incisive and penetrating quality that lays bare any insincerity or lack of diligence on the part of all who profess to be Christians. It penetrates to the innermost recesses of their spiritual being and reveals all the thoughts and intents of their heart (CP Jn 8:47; 12:47-48). The human heart is totally exposed to the eyes of God, and one day all those who profess to be Christians but do not practice their profession of faith, will have to give an account to God for the way they have treated His word (CP He 4:13 with De 18:18-19;

Ac 3:22-23; He 12:25). See also comments on He 6:4-6, 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22.

4:14-16 *What is the throne of grace?*

The throne of grace is God's throne in heaven - where Jesus sits at God's right hand - from which all mercy and grace are dispensed to New Testament Christians (CP Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; He 1:3; 8:1; 10:12, 19-22; 12:2; 1 Pe 3:22). Grace is dispensed from the throne of grace through Christ's intercession for Christians with God (CP Ro 8:33-34; Eph 2:18; 1Ti 2:5-6; He 7:25; 9:24; 1Jn 1:9; 2:1). The throne of grace in the Old Testament was typified by the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant, upon which the blood of the sin offering was sprinkled on the day of atonement (CP Lev 16:11-16). The mercy seat emphasises that forgiveness of sins is possible only by God's grace and mercy on the basis of His justice satisfied through the shed blood of Jesus, who was the true mercy seat (CP Lev 17:11 with Ro 3:24-25; 5:11; Col 1:20; 1 Jn 2:2). See also comments on He 7:25, 8:1-2, 8:6, 9:1-10.

5:1-4 *What do we learn from what is said here?*

Here the writer of Hebrews is contrasting the Old Testament High Priest with Jesus, the High Priest of the New Testament. This is a continuation of He 4:14-16 (CP 4:14-16). The difference between Jesus and the Old Testament High Priest was that the Old Testament High Priest was a sinner himself, and had to offer up sacrifices for himself and his household as well as for the people, whereas Jesus was sinless (CP He 5:3; Lev 4:3; 16:6, 11 with 2Cor 5:21; He 7:26-28; 1Pe 1:18-19; 2:21-22; 1Jn 3:5).

5:5 *To what does this refer?*

(CP also He 1:5). This refers to Christ's incarnation - when He took on human form at His birth. God spoke these words over Him at His baptism which fulfilled the prophecy in Psalms 2:7 (CP Psalms 2:7 with Mt 3:16-17). Psalm 2 is a messianic Psalm. It predicts the coming of Jesus as God's Messiah, and quotes 2 Sam 7:12-17 (CP 2 Sam 7:12-17). These scriptures clearly refute the teaching in the church that Jesus is the eternal Son of God. Eternity is timeless - it has no beginning or end, yet it is plainly evident from these scriptures and numerous others that Jesus had a beginning (CP Psalms 2:1-12 with Gen 3:15 and 49:10; Nu 24:17; Isa 7:14; 9:6-7; Mt 1:18-25; Lu 1:26-35; 2:11; Jn 1:14; Ga 4:4; Php 2:5-8). These scriptures all teach that Jesus had a beginning.

Jesus was not eternally the Son of God - He was God (CP Nu 21:4-9 with 1Cor 10:9; Psalms 45:6-7; Isa 6:1-5 with Jn 12:37-41; Mic 5:2; Jn 1:1-2; 3:13; 8:56-58; 17:5; Ac 20:28; Ro 9:5; Php 2:5-8; Col 2:8-10; 1Ti 3:16; Tit 2:13; He 1:8-12; 2 Pe 1:1-2; 1Jn 1:1-2; 3:16; Rev 1:8, 11, 17-18; 2:8; 3:14; 21:6; 22:13). These scriptures all teach that the pre-incarnate Jesus always existed as God. He was an equal member of the Godhead from all eternity (CP Isa 52:12). Jesus was a spirit being and carried out the divine plan of creation (CP Psalms 90:2; 102:25-27; Jn 1:3, 10; Eph

3:9; Col 1:16-17; He 1:1-2, 10; 11:3; Rev 3:14). See also comments on Mt 1:18-21, 3:16-17; Lu 1:35(B), Jn 1:1, 5:16-23, 12:41, Ac 13:33, 20:28, Php 2:5-8, Col 2:9; 1Ti 3:16, He 1:5, 1Jn 5:6-9, Rev 1:8.

5:6 Who was Melchisedec?

Melchisedec was priest/king of Salem, ancient Jerusalem (CP Gen 14:18-20; Psa 110:4; He 7:1). Melchisedec was an Old Testament type of the eternal priesthood of Christ, and of His eternal existence (CP Gen 14:14-20; He 5:6-10; 6:20; 7:1-3, 15-17). Melchisedec was also a type of Christ in that he had no recorded father, mother, birth, or death. As a divine being Jesus had no father, mother, birth or death (CP Mic 5:2; Jn 1:1-2; Col 1:17; He 1:8-12; 7:1-3). See also comments on He 6:11-20, 7:1-10.

5:7-9 Is this teaching that Jesus prayed to be saved from physical death?

No, Jesus did not fear physical death. Scriptures teach that He looked forward to dying (CP Jn 2:4; 10:11, 15; 12:23-24; 13:1). Jesus knew that He would be raised up to life again (CP Psa 16:10 with Ac 2:25-28, 31; Mt 20:18-19; Mk 9:31; 10:33-34; Lu 9:22; 13:32; 18:33; Jn 11:25). But, as the time to die drew near Jesus experienced extreme mental anguish and despair. He dreaded what was going to happen (CP Mt 26:36-44; Mk 14:32-36; Lu 22:39-44). Jesus' agony in the garden had nothing to do with the fear of dying though, for He had resolutely set Himself to die (CP Isa 50:6-7; Mt 20:28; Mk 10:32-34, 45; Lu 9:51; Jn 12:27; 15:13). Out Lord's agony in the garden was because He knew that within hours the full cup of divine fury against sin would be His to drink; He would bear the punishment for sin by being separated from God (CP Isa 53:10-12 with Psa 22:1; Mt 26:36-44; 27:45-46 (Mk 15:33-34); 2Cor 5:21). See also comments on Mt 26:36-44, 27:45-46 and Lu 22:44.

5:12-14 How are we to understand what is said here?

The word *milk* here refers to the very simple rudimentary truths of the gospel - the first principles of christianity and basic faith that new believers are taught (CP 6:1-2). The Jews here addressed here are like babes in Christ, immature in their spiritual thinking. Even though they had been exposed to the word of God for a considerable time they had not matured at all spiritually (CP 1Cor 3:1-2). *Solid food* refers to deep truths of the word (CP Php 1:9-10). Mature Christians are trained by the word to discern truth from error and holy behaviour from unholy (CP 2Ti 3:16-17; 1Th 5:21). He 5:12-14 is for our admonition also. God expects every believer to be a teacher concerning the gospel (CP De 6:6-7; Mt 28:19-20; Col 3:16; 2Ti 2:2; 1Pe 3:15). God has a purpose for every believer in the body of Christ, but if they do not grow in grace in the knowledge of God, He cannot fulfil His purpose for them.

6:4-6 Is this teaching directed to believers or to those who have

been exposed to the gospel but rejected it as some teach?

While this is a warning to the Hebrews of that era against reverting to their previous Old Testament ways and losing their salvation after having been made partakers of God's saving grace, this is for our admonition also. It is a solemn warning to every believer in every age against apostatising, or departing from the faith and going back into deliberate and wilful sin (CP Eze 18:24 - 26; 33:12-13, 17-18; He 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22). Apostatising is not to be confused with backsliding. Apostates have blasphemed the Holy Spirit and can never be renewed unto repentance, but backsliders can. (CP Mk 3:28-29; 1Jn 5:16 with Hos 14:4). As long as a backslider retains his faith in Christ and His atonement he can be renewed to repentance, but apostates cannot, because they no longer believe in Christ and the atonement. In rejecting this truth apostates are treating Christ with contempt and in effect are crucifying Him afresh and exposing Him to public disgrace. As far as they are concerned Christ was worthy of death. They have rendered their hearts so hard toward Him that they are impervious to the ministry of the Holy Spirit and are irrevocably lost. And just as ground that only bears briars and thorns after soaking up the rain that falls upon it is burned, so too apostates who have been recipients of God's saving grace and rejected it will be cast into the eternal fire of hell (CP He 6:7-8 with Mt 3:10; 7:19; Jn 15:1-6).

There are many in the church who contend that once saved believers can never lose their salvation, and therefore He 6:4-6 is not directed to believers, but to those who have been exposed to the gospel and rejected it. That is not correct however, because only believers have tasted the things of heaven and been part of the work of the Holy Spirit. And only believers have experienced the goodness of God's word and received a foretaste of eternal life. And finally, only those who had faith in the first place can depart from it (CP He 3:1, 14; 10:32). Believers choose for themselves if they want to stay saved (CP Josh 22:15-18; 1Sam 15:11; 1Ki 9:6-9; 2Chr 24:2, 17-22; Mt 24:10-12; 1Ti 4:1-5; 2Ti 4:1-4; He 2:2-3; 3:12 - 4:1; 10:26-27, 29, 38; 12:25). See also comments on He 3:7-11, 4:11-12, 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22.

It is interesting to note that the Greek word translated "fall away" in He 6:4-6 is **parapipto**, not **apostasia** as in 2Th 2:3 (CP 2Th 2:3). It is hard to understand why **apostasia** which means "depart" has been translated here to mean falling away from the faith, when the whole context in which it is used is not about apostasy at all like He 6:4-6, but the coming again of Christ to take all the saints of God back to heaven with Him at the first resurrection - when the church will also depart from the earth (CP 1Th 4:13 - 5:11; 2Th 2:1-8). Surely, if God had meant 2Th 2:3 to refer to a falling away from the faith He would have used **parapipto**, not **apostasia**, to avoid confusion. **Apostasia** should have been translated "departure", referring to the "catching away" or "rapture" of the church, not a falling away from the faith or apostasy, as it has been translated (see also comments on 2Th 2:1-3).

6:11-20 *What do we learn from what is said here?*

We learn from this that persevering faith will enable all who have laid hold of God's salvation promise in Christ to inherit eternal life (CP 4:1, 3; 9:15; 10:36-37 with Mt 24:12-13; Mk 13:13). Hope for the fulfilment of God's salvation promise is the anchor of the soul. This hope is embodied in Christ Himself who sits at the right hand of God in Heaven as our eternal high priest, ever living to make intercession for us (CP Ro 8:34; He 7:25-26; 8:1-2; 9:11, 24; 10:19-21; 1Jn 2:1). Christ's eternal priesthood was marked by the character of the Old Testament priesthood of the high priest Melchisedec. He is an Old Testament type of the eternal priesthood of Christ. He was beyond ancestral limitations, having no recorded genealogy, and no beginning or end was ascribed to his priesthood (CP He 5:6, 10; 6:19 - 7:3). See also comments on He 5:6, 7:1-10.

7:1-10 *Does this teach as some claim that the tithe Abraham paid to Melchisedec makes tithing obligatory for New Testament Christians?*

The scripture is used by some in the church to teach that as Abraham was the antecedent of all New Testament Christians and paid a tithe to Melchisedec, it is incumbent on New Testament Christians to tithe. The argument is that Abraham was the representative payer of all his seed to come. Not everyone agrees with this teaching however. Rather they believe that the tithe Abraham paid to Melchisedec had special symbolic implications related to establishing Christ's eternal priesthood. They believe this is borne out by the writer of Hebrews when he contrasts Christ's eternal priesthood with the temporary Levitical priesthood (CP Gen 14:18-20 with He 5:6-10; 6:17-20; 7:11-28; 8:1-13; 9:1-15). Clearly tithing as an obligation to be observed by New Testament Christians is not being taught here at all. Melchisedec is the subject not Jesus, and tithing. It is mentioned only in the context of demonstrating the superiority of Melchisedec over Abraham and Levi in the first place, and Christ's eternal priesthood over the temporary Levitical priesthood in the second place, which makes the New Testament superior to the old. This is the whole argument of the book of Hebrews (CP He 7:19, 22; 8:6; 9:15). It has nothing whatever to do with New Testament tithing. In fact the New Testament does not stress tithing at all, but rather invites Christians to give generously in response to the needs of others and as an expression of their love for God (CP 1Cor 16:1-2; 2Cor 8:1-15; 9:1-15; Ga 6:6-8; Jas 2:13-17; 1Jn 3:16-19). For a more detailed study on this subject see comments on Mt 23:23, 2Cor 8:1-7, 9:1-5, 9:6; Ga 6:7-8.

7:14-17 *What is the underlying teaching here?*

The underlying teaching here is that Jesus' priesthood is eternal, not on the basis of His ancestry, but, as V16 teaches, because He lives for ever "...after the power of an endless life," (KJV). He ever lives to make

intercession for the saints (CP Ro 8:34; He 7:21-28). See also comments on He 7:25.

7:18-19 *What does this mean exactly?*

This teaches that the Old Testament law has been completely abolished. Christ abrogated it by fulfilling it (CP Mt 5:17; Ro 10:4). Under the old covenant no one could be saved because it could not offer a sacrifice that would pay for sin (CP Ac 13:38-39; Ro 3:19-26; 7:5-6; 8:1-4; Ga 2:16). The old covenant was weak and unprofitable and therefore had to be replaced with a better covenant under which people could be saved (CP He 7:11-12, 22-25; 8:6-8; 9:11-15; 10:1-10, 16-23). It is interesting to note here that the abolishing of the old covenant was foretold by the veil Moses wore to cover his face after he came down from God on Mt Sinai with the Ten Commandments. The veil represented the fading glory of the old covenant (CP Ex 34:29-33 with 2Cor 3:13-14). The New Testament replacing the old was also prophesied by Jeremiah (CP He 8:7-13 with Jer 31:31-34). See also comments on Ro 10:4, 2Cor 3:6, 3:12-16, Ga 4:21-31, Eph 2:15-16(A), He 8:6.

7:20-21 *What was God's purpose in making Jesus a high priest with an oath?*

The proposition put forward here is that since God established Jesus' eternal priesthood with an oath, it is a surety of a better covenant that will never fail (CP V22 with 2Cor 3:6). *Letter* in 2 Cor 3:6 refers to the old covenant - the letter of the law. Paul is distinguishing between the old and the new covenants here. No one could satisfy the letter, or demands of the law under the old covenant, and so it condemned them to death. However, the new covenant is a covenant of grace, entered into through Christ's atoning death, which has made possible for all who believe on Christ that which was impossible under the law (CP Ac 13:38-39; Ro 3:19-26; 7:5-6; 8:1-4; Ga 2:16). See also comments on 2Cor 3:6.

7:25 *What does this teach?*

This teaches that Christ, as the high priest of the new covenant, can save completely everyone who comes to God through Him. He lives forever for the purpose of continually making intercession on their behalf with God (CP Ro 8:33-34; Eph 2:18; 1Ti 2:5-6; He 9:24; 10:19-22; 1Jn 2:1). Believers need never fear that they will be eternally damned if they sin. If they confess their sins they will be forgiven (CP He 4:14-16; 1Jn 1:7-9). It must always be remembered though, that Christ does not remain an advocate and intercessor for those who refuse to confess and repent of their sin, and who are no longer in fellowship with God (CP He 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22; 1Jn 1:5-8; 2:3-6; 3:10). See also comments on He 4:14-16.

8:1-2 *What does the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man refer to here?*

This refers to heaven itself, God's dwelling place. Heaven is designated in scripture as the true tabernacle, and it is in this sanctuary that Jesus is

seated at God's right hand and officiates as high priest. This is where He entered in bearing His own blood after His death on the cross (CP 9:11-12, 24; 10:19-20). The example and shadow, or type of the true tabernacle in the Old Testament was the earthly tabernacle that Moses built, and the sanctuary where Jesus now officiates was typified by the Holy of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat, upon which the earthly high priest sprinkled the blood of the sin offering on the day of atonement, were situated (CP 8:5 with Ex 25:1, 8-10, 17-22; Lev 16:11-17). The "example and shadow of heavenly things" (KJV), in He 8:5 does not mean that there are actual buildings in heaven which were copied in the earthly tabernacle, but that the heavenly realities were adequately symbolized and represented in the earthly tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat etc. These were the "figures of the true" spoken of in He 9:24. (See also comments on He 4:14-16, 7:25, 8:6, 9:1-10.

8:6 *Why is the New Testament better than the old?*

The New Testament is superior to the old and replaces it because the Old Testament was faulty (CP V7-13). The Old Testament was only ever intended to be temporary (CP Jer 31:31-34). This proves that God always intended to replace the Old Testament with the new. The Old Testament could not save anyone. It could only point to the Saviour, Jesus (CP Ga 3:16-24 with Jn 1:17; Ac 13:39; Ro 10:4; He 7:19-22). Everyone who gets saved under the old covenant is saved through the sacrificial blood of Jesus under the new covenant, not by the sacrificial blood of the animals under the old covenant (CP Ac 17:30-31; Ro 3:24-26; He 9:15; 1Jn 2:2). See also comments on Ro 10:4, He 4:14-16, 7:25, 8:1-2, 9:1-10.

8:10-11 *What does it mean here that no man will teach his neighbour or brother?*

This is quoted from the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah (CP V8-13 with Jer 31:31-34). It means that there will be no need for intermediates such as the Old Testament priests and scribes to teach men about God under the new covenant. The Holy Spirit will lead them in all truth (CP Jn 14:25-26; 16:12-15; 1Cor 2:13-16; 1Jn 2:20-21). The Old Testament priesthood together with the law will be abolished (CP He 7:11-12, 18-22; 10:9-16). Under the new covenant every believer will become a priest of God (CP 1Pe 2:5, 9). None of this is teaching that Christians have no further need for teachers. God has set teachers in the church and they will remain there until His purpose for the church in the earth is fulfilled (CP Eph 4:11-15; He 13:7, 17). It should be noted in closing here that 1Jn 2:20 is not teaching that Christians know everything; that there is nothing left for them to learn, but simply that they know all things necessary to salvation, and they do not need to be taught by those who seek to deceive them (CP V18-27). See also comments on 1Jn 2:27.

9:1-10 *What do we learn from this?*

This is a brief description of the earthly tabernacle Moses built as a representation or type of the true heavenly tabernacle into which Jesus entered bearing His own blood, after His death on the cross (CP 8:1-5; 9:11-12, 24; 10:19-20). A detailed description is found in the Old Testament books of Exodus and Leviticus (CP Ex 25:1, 8-10, 17-40; 26:31-35; Lev 16:11-17). This was the earthly shadow or example, of the heavenly reality. Every part of the tabernacle was typical of the nature of God, the coming redemption, the sinfulness of man, the means of pardon through grace, and the full reconciliation of man to God. The sanctuary, or Holy of Holies, where God dwelt in the earthly tabernacle, typified God's dwelling place in heaven (CP He 8:1-5). The Ark of the Covenant testified to God's presence in the sanctuary. It contained the Ten Commandments and was a continual reminder of the covenant between God and Israel (CP Ex 25:21; He 9:4). The Ark also contained the manna which God gave to the children of Israel to eat in the wilderness, which foreshadowed Jesus as the true bread of God from heaven (CP Ex 16:4, 16-18, 33 with Jn 6:31-35).

The Ark of the Covenant also contained Aaron's rod that budded and bore almonds, which testified that God had chosen Aaron to be the first high priest of the earthly tabernacle, a type of the priesthood of Jesus (CP Nu 17:1-10 with He 5:1-6; 7:1-3, 11-17, 22-24). The mercy seat covering the Ark of the Covenant, upon which the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sin offering every year on the day of atonement, typified the heavenly throne of grace where Jesus now sits at God's right hand (CP He 4:14-16; 9:24; 10:19-20). The mercy seat emphasises that forgiveness of sins is possible only by God's grace and mercy on the basis of His justice satisfied through the shed blood of Jesus, who was the true mercy seat, or propitiation for sin which is what mercy seat means (CP Lev 17:11 with Ro 3:24-25; 5:11; Col 1:20; 1Jn 2:2). Finally, in He 9:8 we learn that the Holy Ghost signified by the fact that the high priest had to enter the Holy of Holies every year to make atonement for sin by sprinkling the blood of the sin offering on the mercy seat, that the earthly tabernacle was merely a shadow of the realities in Christ. The Old Testament priests could not provide direct access to God for His people through the blood of animal sacrifices. It is only through the blood of Jesus, the supreme sacrifice, that a way was made that leads directly to God (CP Ro 5:1-2; He 9:7-9 with 8:5; 10:1, 12-14, 19-20). See also comments on He 4:14-16, 7:25, 8:6.

9:2 *What is the significance of the showbread here?*

It is not known for sure what the showbread represents - the bible does not say, but there are two views held by Christians. One is that it represents the twelve tribes of Israel, called to be the children of light - the table on which the showbread lay had to be positioned in the Holy of Holies where it would reflect the light from the candlestick (CP Ex 25:23, 30-31; 26:35 with Mt 5:14-16). The other view is that the loaves symbolized the fact that on the basis of the sacrificial atonement of the cross, believers are nourished by God in the person of the supreme sacrifice, Christ, who is the true bread of life (CP Jn 6:31-35; 1Pe 2:5).

9). The first view is most likely the correct one because the true bread of life is already represented in the Holy of Holies by the manna in the Ark of the Covenant (CP Ex 16:32-36; He 9:4). However, neither view is relevant to salvation, so whichever one we hold to, let us agree to disagree with the other in love.

9:11-12 *See comments on He 8:1-2*

9:14 *Who is the "eternal spirit" referred to here?*

Most Christians believe this is the Holy Spirit, but there are also many who believe it refers to Christ's own "eternal spirit" (in the sense of an endless life (CP 7:16)). They believe that this contrasts with the transitory life of the animal sacrifices which, having no will of their own, were not able to agree with the act of sacrifice, whereas Christ offered Himself with His own consent, assisting and empowering the sacrifice. That is why His blood is more efficacious for sinners than the blood of animal sacrifices. And that may be so, but the real point of He 9:14 is the efficacy of Christ's blood, not through which spirit it was offered, and that should be all that concerns us. God's justice was satisfied and His righteousness vindicated only by Christ's sacrificial death and the shedding of His blood (CP Ac 13:38-39; Ro 5:1-2). Only Christ's blood can purge the conscience from dead works. *Dead works* refer to acts not done out of love for God in the repentant sinners old way of life, hence they are fruitless and sinful (CP Ro 6:23; He 6:1).

9:15 *What do we learn from this?*

This teaches that Christ died not only to save sinners under the new covenant, but under the old covenant as well (CP Ac 17:30-31; Ro 3:24-25; 1Jn 2:2). Everyone who took part in the sacrificial system under the old covenant was vindicated by the sacrificial death of Jesus under the new covenant. "Those who are called" looks back to them (see also comments on He 8:6).

9:16-17 *What does it mean that where a testament is there must also be the death of the testator?*

This teaches that a will or testament becomes effective only when the one who made it - the testator - dies (CP V15 with Mt 26:28; 1Cor 11:25). This explains why the Old Testament had to be ratified with blood (CP Ex 24:5-8 with He 9:18-23). As the eternal God who brought Himself into the world in the person of His Son, Jesus is the testator of the New Testament destined to die and ratify it with His blood (CP Jn 1:1 with Gen 3:15; Isa 53:1-12).

9:24 *See comments on He 8:1-2, 9:1-10*

9:27 *What do we learn from this?*

We learn from this that there is no further opportunity for salvation after death. As someone is when they die, that is how they will remain throughout eternity (CP Rev 22:11-14). Sadly though, despite what these

scriptures teach, many in the church still believe that sinners do get another chance of eternal life after death, due to their misunderstanding of 1 Pe 3:18-20 (CP 1Pe 3:18-20). Many in the church believe that the spirits in prison here are the spirits of humans being given another chance of eternal life. But that is not correct. Human spirits are always qualified as such in scripture; they are never just called *spirits* (CP Nu 16:22; 27:16; 1Cor 14:32; He 12:23).

The spirits in prison are fallen angels - the angels God cast down to hell and bound in chains. They rebelled against God and sinned in the days of Noah precipitating the flood that destroyed everyone on earth except Noah and his family (CP Gen 6:1-8, 11-13, 17 with 1Pe 3:18-20; 2Pe 2:4-5 and Jude 6-7). *Hell* in 2Pe 2:4-5 is translated from the Greek word **tartarus**, which means a prison for fallen angels. Mt 12:38-40 also teaches this (CP Mt 12:38-40). *Heart* in V40 (KJV), means a vault or cell, by implication a prison. The angels' *first estate* in Jude 6 (KJV) is their original status in God's order - the exalted position they held in heaven above earthly humans (CP Ps 8:4-5; He 2:5-7). *Their own habitation*, which they left, was their heavenly abode; the *strange flesh* they went after were earthly women, and the sin they committed was fornication (CP Gen 6:1-4).

The word *preached* in 1Pe 3:19 should have been translated *herald* or *proclaim*. The Greek word used here is **kerusso**, which means to herald or proclaim as a town crier, whereas the Greek word for *preach*, associated with the gospel for salvation, is **euaggelizo**. We learn from this that Jesus was not giving the spirits in prison a second chance at eternal life, but that He was making a proclamation to them. Scriptures do not teach what the proclamation was, but the general consensus among Bible Scholars is that Jesus proclaimed to the spirits in prison His victory over death and Satan on the cross, which is outlined for us in Col 2:14-15 and He 2:14-15 (CP Col 2:14-15; He 2:14-15). Christ descended into hell between His death and His resurrection as both Eph 4:9-10 and 1 Pe 3:18-20 teach (CP Eph 4:9-10 and 1 Pe 3:18-20 with Ps 16:10; and Ac 2:25-32). See also comments on Mt 12:38-40, 1Pe 3:18-20.

He 9:27 and Rev 22:11-14 also clearly refutes the teaching that there is an intermediate state after death called purgatory, to which the soul and the spirit of the righteous go to be purged of sins not yet forgiven while awaiting entry into heaven (CP Also Lu 23:39-43; 2Cor 5:8). Nor is there such a thing as reincarnation or transmigration - the passing of the soul into another body after death (CP Lu 16:19-31). This is called the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. We learn from it that the righteous go straight to heaven when they die and the unrighteous go straight to hell (see also comments on Lu 16:19-31). The only ones who will not die in the church age are the saints still living when Jesus comes again to take all the saints of God back to heaven with Him at the first resurrection (CP Jn 14:1-3; 1Cor 15:51-58; 1Th 4:13-18). See also comments on Eph 4:9.

9:28 *What does it mean here that Christ shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation?*

This refers to Christ's second coming, not as a sin-offering to die again for sinners like He did at His first coming, but to defeat His enemies and set up His millennial kingdom - *unto salvation* - for those who put their faith in Him (CP V25-28 with 2Th 1:7-10).

10:5-7 *When did Christ say this?*

This is quoted from Psa 40:6-8 (CP Psa 40:6-8). This is not teaching that God wants obedience before sacrifice, as some think, although sacrifice is contrasted here with obedience to the will of God. But the worth of Christ's offering of Himself does not lie simply in obedience to God's will. It is that Christ's offering of Himself is the true and final offering for sin, because it is the sacrifice, which according to prophecy, God desired to be made (CP He 10:8-13). The word "above" in V 8 refers back to V5. The writer shows the incompetence of animal sacrifices to satisfy the will of God. It is only when Christ offers Himself as the sacrifice that God takes away the Old Testament and replaces it with the new. This is the argument of the book of Hebrews. It is only Christ's sacrifice of Himself that satisfied God's justice and provided permanent sanctification, or the setting apart of believers from sin, for God (CP He 7:22-25; 9:11-12, 24-26; 10:14). See also comments on He 7:25, 8:6, 9:1-10.

10:14 *What does it mean that Christ has perfected forever them that are sanctified?*

The writer here is contrasting the completeness of Christ's sacrificial death under the new covenant which brings salvation to all who believe on Him, with the incompleteness of the animal sacrifices under the old covenant, which could save no one. And whereas the animal sacrifices had to be offered repeatedly, Christ had only to offer Himself once. Everything essential to salvation was included in the one offering which atoned for the sins of all mankind, past, present, and future (CP V1-12; 7:18-19, 22, 27; 8:6-13; 9:15, 25-26; 1Jn 2:2). *Them that are sanctified* are believers.

10:17-18 *How are we to understand this passage of scripture?*

This passage continues on from V15-16 where the author quoted Jeremiah's Old Testament prophecy (V15-17 with Jer 31:33-34). Here Jeremiah prophesies the advent of the new covenant and the forgiveness of sins. The author of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah's prophecy and states that where sins and iniquities are forgiven, there is no more offering for sin. This means that Christ's death atoned for all past, present and future sins. Christ died unto sin once for all, and dies no more (CP Ro 6:9-10; He 7:27-28; 9:24-28; 10:1-18). There is no more need of the constantly repeated Old Testament sacrifices. The New Testament in Jesus' blood is superior to, and takes the place of the Old Testament sacrifices.

10:19-20 *What is the new and living way by which one can enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus?*

By His sacrificial death Jesus has opened up a way for believers into the presence of God that was not possible under the old covenant. It is a new way because it was only possible under the new covenant, and it is a living way because Jesus lives for evermore, seated at God's right hand to make intercession for believers (CP Jn 14:6 with Eph 2:14-22; He 7:19, 24-25). "Through the veil, that is to say His flesh", refers to when Jesus died on the cross, the veil in the earthly tabernacle that symbolically separated men from God's presence split in two, signifying that the way was now open for all who believed in Christ to have direct access to the throne of God, to obtain mercy and grace in their time of need (CP Ex 26:31-35; Lev 16:15-17 with Mt 27:50-51; He 4:14-16; 9:7, 11-12).

10:22 *What water is referred to here?*

The water referred to here is symbolic. It is used figuratively of our bodies having been cleansed by the word of God. God's word is the water of life. It is the "pure water" with which our bodies have been washed (CP Psa 119:9; Isa 12:3; 55:1-7; Jn 3:5; 4:5-14; Eph 5:25-26; Tit 3:5; Rev 21:6; 22:17). *Pure* means being cleansed (CP Mt 5:8; 1Ti 1:5; 3:9; Tit 1:15; Jas 1:27; 1Pe 1:22; Rev 15:6). Many bible commentators see the water in He 10:22 as being normal water to bathe in; which cleanses us physically. But that is not correct however because of the context in which the word is used (CP He 10:14-23). What is being discussed here is the throne of grace and the spiritual attitude believers need to exhibit when entering into God's presence. This clearly teaches that the water has a spiritual, rather than a physical meaning. (See also comments on Jn 3:5, Tit 3:5).

10:24-25 *How are we to understand this?*

Here Christians are being exhorted to remain in fellowship with each other in their local assembly as the day of Christ - His coming again to take all the saints of God back to heaven with Him - draws nearer. The purpose for this is so they can stir each other up to love, and to exhort each other to fulfil their ministries and functions in the church. Scriptures stress the importance of belonging to a local church. They teach us that it is not possible to be a Christian independent of the rest of the body of Christ, because God has ordained a place, a purpose and a function in the body for every Christian that no other Christian can fulfil (CP Ro 12:4-8; 1Cor 12:14-27; Eph 4:15-16). God has set us in the body to suit His purpose, not ours, and if we refuse to join ourselves to a church we are refusing to join ourselves to Christ, because He is the church (CP 1Cor 12:12). It is folly for anyone to assume that they can be intentionally separated from the body of Christ and still be a member of His body. A body is an organised whole made up of parts and members, and nothing can function as a member if it is dismembered from the body, and neither can members of the spiritual body, the church, function if they become dismembered from it. The lives of Christians are inextricably woven together in Christ, and for anyone to isolate themselves from the body of

Christ is a contradiction, because every Christian is a member of the body (CP 1Cor 12:12-14)

10:26-31 *Does this mean that once-saved Christians can lose their salvation if they wilfully sin?*

Yes, contrary to what some Christians believe, once-saved believers can apostatise and lose their salvation. Salvation is not an unforfeitable possession in this life. It only becomes an unforfeitable possession at the end of this life if one is sowing to the spirit (CP Eze 18:24-26, 30; 33:12-13, 17-18, 20; He 6:4-6; 2Pe 2:20-22). The statement in He 10:26 that "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" means that as Christ is the only sacrifice for sins, if we reject Him and His atoning sacrifice and revert to our preconversion ways, then we must suffer the punishment (See also comments on He 3:7-11, 4:11-12, 6:4-6; 2Pe 2:20-22).

10:35-37 *How are we to understand this passage of scripture?*

Here the author of Hebrews is admonishing the Jewish Christians not to give up on God after having endured so much for their faith. This admonition is for us today too. We are nearer to the time of Christ's return than ever before and our future life with Jesus in the world to come. Believers must never give up on Christ, but wait patiently for His return, regardless of any persecutions they may be suffering. Only those who endure to the end will be saved (CP V38-39 with Mt 10:32; Jas 1:12). See also comments on He 10:38, 11:1, Jas 1:22-25.

10:38 *What does it mean that the just shall live by faith?*

The *just* are those whom God has justified upon the basis of, and in answer to, their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Many of the Hebrew Christians were abandoning their faith in Christ to save them, and were going back to the Old Testament sacrificial system. This is to warn them, and by extension, us too, that it is only by remaining in Christ that one can be saved (CP V22-39; Ac 10:43; 13:38-39; Ro 1:16-17; 3:19-26; 5:1, 6-11; 2Cor 5:21; Ga 3:11; Eph 1:6-7; 2:1-9). See also comments on Ro 1:16-17, 3:19-23, 3:24-26, 5:1, 10:4, 10:6-11, Eph 2:8-10, He 11:1.

11:1 *How are we to understand what is said here?*

We understand from this that faith is the confident assurance of receiving that which we ask for and being certain of things we cannot see. Faith apprehends as a real fact what is not revealed to the senses. It is the present assurance of a future reality (CP Ro 8:24; 2Cor 5:7 with Mk 11:22-25; 1Jn 5:14-15). The writer of Hebrews illustrates the efficacy of faith by using examples of Old Testament saints (CP He 11:4-40). We cannot study all the Old Testament saints here, but we can study three of them. Let us look at Noah first (CP He 11:7; 2Pe 2:5 with Gen 6:7-8, 13-14, 17-18, 22). Faith and obedience are inseparable. Noah did all that God commanded him

to do by faith. He acted in faith to build the ark after being warned by God of things unseen - the flood to come. Noah built the ark confidently expecting the flood on the strength of God's word. By acting in faith when building the ark, Noah announced the condemnation of the human race to destruction "...by which he condemned the earth" (He 11:7). Noah condemned the conduct of the rest of humanity by the contrast which his own faith presented. Not only did Noah condemn the human race by his faith, but he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith (see also comments on 2Pe 2:5).

Now let us look at Abraham (CP He 11:8-12 with Gen 12:1-5; 15:1-6, 18). Abraham believed in God implicitly and it was this faith that was credited to him for righteousness (CP Ro 4:1-5, 9-25 with Ga 3:5-6). Abraham was not declared righteous for anything he did but because of his absolute faith in God. Abraham believed all that God said, and he did all that God told him to do. Abraham did not know where God was taking him when he told him to leave his home, his kindred, and his country in Gen 12:1-5, he just obeyed in faith. By faith Abraham knew that he was only a pilgrim on earth and that he was only sojourning in Caanan, the earthly promised land. By faith he knew that Caanan was not the end of his pilgrimage; that it merely pointed to "a better country, that is, an heavenly", where God had prepared an eternal city for all those who would be justified by faith in Jesus (CP He 11:14-16). The city of God is New Jerusalem, where all the saints of God, Old Testament and New Testament alike, will go to live with Jesus for all eternity (CP Rev 3:12; 21:2-3, 9-10, 22-27).

Abraham was able to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice to God in faith, knowing that if he died God would raise him up again to fulfil what he had promised (CP He 11:17-19; Jas 1:12; 1Pe 1:7 with Gen 22:1-18). He 11:19 teaches that as far as Abraham was concerned, Isaac was dead, and so became resurrected figuratively - Abraham received Isaac back from the dead as it were, even though he had not been slain. Christians should take careful note of how Abraham responded to God by faith, because like Abraham, every believer in Christ is called by God to leave their home, their kindred and their country, in the sense of being separated from worldly things, to follow Jesus. They are also called by God to offer up the things they love the most to follow Jesus (CP Mt 10:37-39; 16:24-26; Mk 8:34-38; Lu 14:25-27, 33).

Finally, let us now look at Moses (CP He 11:23-29 with Ex 2:2-20; 12:1-3, 6-7, 12-13; 14:13-16, 21-31(ref also Ac 7:20-44)). Moses' parents showed faith in God to save Moses from the death the king commanded for all male Israelite babies, by hiding him for three months and then placing him in a basket in the river, so that Pharaoh's daughter found him and kept him as her own. As a man, Moses himself by faith refused the privileges of the Egyptian royal household and turned his back on Egypt. He valued identifying with God's suffering people far greater than the wealth attached to being Pharaoh's grandson, because he was looking ahead to the reward in Christ. Moses afterwards wrote of Christ and prophesied His coming (CP Jn 5:45-47; Ac 26:22-23; 1Pe 1:7-12 with Gen 3:15, De 18:15, 18-19). Moses' faith was

such that he obeyed God as though he could see Him. This was the basis for his faith and it is the example we all should follow (CP 2Cor 4:16-18). Moses instituted the passover feast and sprinkled the blood of the slain passover lamb on the doorposts and lintels in faith, knowing that the death angel would pass over their houses and not kill the Israelites. This foreshadowed Christ's death on the cross for the forgiveness of sin (CP Jn 1:29; 1Cor 5:7). Moses also parted the Red Sea by faith to enable the Israelites to escape from the Egyptian army. He knew God would save them. The Israelites walked through on dry land. The Egyptians all drowned. God closed the waters of the Red Sea back over them.

The Old Testament saints all died in faith without receiving the final promised blessings of the new covenant in Christ. But they looked forward to it, knowing that their earthly life was only temporary and that a permanent heavenly home awaited them (CP He 11:13, 27, 39; 13:14).

Few words are more central to the Christian message than faith. In the first instance, in the matter of salvation, the Holy Spirit works through God's word to awaken in sinners a response of faith to believe in Jesus and be saved. They rest their faith on the reliability of God's word for their salvation and all the salvation benefits Christ has purchased for them with His blood (CP Ro 10:8-17).

Faith implies total reliance upon God and complete obedience to His word (CP Jn 3:16-18). The word *believeth* in V16 means chooses to obey. Thus whoever chooses to obey Christ shall be saved. Those who choose not to obey Christ will be forever lost. It is pointless us saying we love God if we do not keep His word (CP Jn 14:15, 23 with 1Jn 2:3-5). God is the object of our faith (CP He 11:6). This scripture describes the convictions that are part of saving faith. It teaches that firstly we must believe in the existence of God and secondly that He rewards those who diligently seek Him - they can surrender God's promises back to Him for their fulfilment (CP 1Jn 5:14-15). This teaches us that if we ask anything according to what God's word says, He will give it to us. *Will* here means word. We do not have to ask for it on the basis of *if it be thy will Lord*, but *according to thy word Lord*. If we know God's word then we know His will and we will not ask for anything that is not in line with His word. This stresses the importance of God's word always abiding in us. If it is and we are also abiding in Him we will always get what we ask for (CP Jn 15:7-8). God is glorified in His promises being fulfilled in our life.

Faith means abandoning all trust in our own resources and laying hold of all that God promises in Christ (CP Isa 53:4-5; Mt 8:16-17; Ga 3:13-14; Eph 1:3; Php 4:19; 1Pe 2:24). We will study some of these scriptures in more detail shortly. They are such important faith-building scriptures that we need to read and re-read them until they are so settled in our spirit that we know them off by heart and at any given time we can speak them out in faith over any of life's circumstances that threaten our peace. They all prove bodily healing, prosperity, and victory over all of life's situations in Christ's atonement on the cross, as well as salvation of our souls. But the important thing we must always

remember is that none of God's promises can be appropriated unless the conditions are complied with first. God's whole plan of redemption is framed around the law of sowing and reaping. This is not teaching that if anyone is sick it is a result of sin in their lives, but if there is sin it has to be dealt with first for the sickness to be healed (CP Psa 66:18). We can only take out of the kingdom what we first put into it (CP Isa 53:4-5). *Griefs* and *sorrows* in Verse 4 mean sicknesses and pains. Jesus bore our sicknesses and our pains on the cross so that we would not have to bear them in our earthly life (CP Mt 8:16-17). He died for our sins so that we would not have to die for them (CP Ro 6:23).

In Mt 8:16-17 Matthew asserts that Isaiah's prophesy (Isa 53:4-5) was being fulfilled in the healings Jesus rendered to the sick. This is not teaching that Jesus completely fulfilled Isaiah's prophesy during his ministry on earth and therefore there is no bodily healing in the atonement, as many believe. It teaches that by contemporaneously healing the sick and forgiving their sins Jesus was demonstrating that bodily healing is an integral part of His atonement. In 1Pe 2:24 Peter attests to our healing as being an established fact accomplished by the stripes Jesus bore for us (CP Mk 2:1-12; Jn 5:1-14). These scriptures clearly prove what Mt 8:16-17 and 1Pe 2:24 teach, but there are many Christians who still do not know this truth and as a result cannot exercise faith to believe for their healing. It stresses once more the necessity of being thoroughly grounded in God's word. The more we are grounded in God's word the more our faith in Him to perform His word builds up (CP Ga 3:13-14). This is yet more proof of what the salvation benefits of the Cross of Christ includes. The curse Christ died and redeemed us from includes every imaginable sickness and disease as well as poverty, loss of peace, desolation of the land, drought, being debt ridden and eternally damned, etc. The curses are all listed in De 28:15-68. There is no need to read them here because we are no longer under the curse, but we do need to read them sometime to know just what Christ has delivered us from. It is more important for the purpose of this study that we familiarise ourselves with the blessings God has blessed us with in Christ, to build up our faith. Just as our healing is an established fact in Christ as Peter attests to in 1Pe 2:24, so are all the blessings of God as Paul attests to in Eph 1:3.

Faith is the assurance of God's faithfulness (CP Nu 23:19; De 7:9; Psa 31:19; 89:34; Jer 1:12; Ro 3:3-4; 1Cor 1:9; 10:13; 2Ti 2:13; Tit 1:2; He 10:23). God is not unreliable, fickle or changeable. By His very nature He is faithful and loyal to His promises (CP Mal 3:6; He 13:8). God is faithful in all His ways and if His promises are not being fulfilled in our lives, we had best examine ourselves to find out why and make it right with God as quickly as we can (CP 2Cor 13:5). This is not said to condemn us, but if it could not happen it would not be in the Bible. If we know that there is no unconfessed or unrepented sin to hinder God's promises being fulfilled then we just stand in faith and believe for them to come to pass - do not give up on God. Faith receives as fact what is not revealed to the senses (CP 2Cor 5:7; He 11:1 with Mt 17:19-20; 21:22; Mk 9:23; 11:22-24). To be able to operate on this faith level requires that we be totally consecrated to the service of God and completely yielded to the authority of Jesus

and His word. Faith is the fruit of our consecration and yieldedness. Acting out our faith is simply taking God at His word and doing it.

Faith is believing in the infallibility of God's word (CP Josh 21:45; 23:14; 1Ki 8:56; Isa 55:10-11; Ro 4:17). God's word binds Him to fulfil what He promises. He exalts His word even above His name (CP Psa 138:2). All we have to do is meet the conditions. Faith is choosing boldly and unswervingly to believe what God has said. We must believe totally in the testimony of scripture, and in so doing we release the creative power of God's word over all the circumstances of life. Faith without works is dead because faith is acting upon what we believe. If we say we believe something but do not act upon it that is dead faith (CP Jas 2:14-26). This does not contradict Paul's teaching that we are justified by faith alone and not by works (CP Ro 4:1-25; Eph 2:8-9). Paul is referring to initial justifying faith whereas James is referring to the faith we demonstrate by our works after salvation. Christianity demands works of believers (CP Mt 5:14-16; 16:27; Eph 2:10; 1Ti 6:17-19; 2Ti 3:16-17; Tit 1:15-16; 2:6-7, 11-14). Christians are not justified by works, but because we are justified by faith we do the works. This proves our Christian consecration to God's service. There is no contradiction whatever in Paul's and James' teaching. James simply teaches that merely believing in God is no proof that we are justified by faith because even demons believe in God (Jas 2:19), but they are not justified by faith and going to heaven. Every act of obedience to God's word is an act of faith and works combined to maintain our justification before God. Our works are acts of faith, meaning that they spring from faith or are combined with faith. Faith and works cannot be separated. The works we do flow from our faith (CP Tit 3:8).

As we learnt earlier in this study, Abraham demonstrated his faith by his works. He believed God and he acted on that belief and proved his faith. Had he not obeyed God it would have demonstrated that he had no faith in God or His word (CP Ge 22:1-18). Abraham's faith was made perfect in God's sight by his works - being prepared to sacrifice Isaac as an act of obedience to God. God expects the same of every one of us who say we believe in Him and His word. If we do not act out what we say we believe then we are in fact repudiating God's word (CP Jas 1:22-25). This teaching together with Jas 2:14-26, is directed to those in the church who profess faith in Christ and His blood atonement believing that is all that is necessary for salvation. These scriptures clearly highlight the error in that thinking. James teaches that faith such as that is dead and it will produce neither salvation nor anything else that is good (CP Jas 2:14). The answer to the question here of course is no. The only faith that saves is that which is demonstrated by works, as Jas 1:22 teaches.

This is a very important teaching for the church and carries with it a grim warning we must all heed. It is futile proclaiming faith if our actions mirror unbelief. We are only deluding ourselves if we believe we please God yet are not walking in faith and trusting implicitly in His word (CP Ro 14:23; He 3:12, 19; 4:1-2, 11; 11:6). If it were not possible for Christians to come short of spending eternity with Jesus there would be no

need for the exhortation, "Let us therefore fear..." in He 4:1. It is spoken in the light of the possibility that some of us will fall short of everlasting life. Neither would there be any need for the comparison to be made between the Israelites and the Christians regarding the gospel in He 4:2. If there is no possibility of Christians forfeiting their salvation, such warnings as these are vain, but scriptures clearly teach that God has obligated Himself only to bless those with faith as He 11:6 and Jas 1:25 teaches us (CP Josh 1:8; Psa 1:1-3; 119:9, 15-16, 48, 78, 148; 143:5). These scriptures impress upon us the need to thoroughly immerse ourselves in God's word. The more we do the more revelation we receive of the integrity of the word and the security of God's promises (CP Ro 10:17). The more we hear the word the more our faith builds up. The Holy Spirit quickens to us scriptures as faith building revelations, and we understand better what the scriptures are teaching us (CP Josh 21:45; 23:14; 1Ki 8:56; 2Cor 1:19-20). We learn from these scriptures that not only has not one of God's promises ever failed throughout all the ages, but that they are still valid for today to be appropriated by all who are in Christ Jesus. 2Cor 1:19-20 teaches us that there is not one promise of God that is no to a Christian. Every promise is yes - just waiting to be appropriated by faith by all who meet the conditions. This is a revelation of the integrity of God's word and the security of His promises, but it will only ever become a reality to those who act upon it because of their faith in God to perform His word. Faith can only come by being completely surrendered to God and open to being taught by the word like King David in the Psalms we just read.

Faith acts on God's word. We have all been given a measure of faith (CP Ro 12:3). It only remains for us to exercise that faith by acting upon what we say we believe of God's word. Remember, the works that combine with our faith to maintain our justification before God are simply acts of faith which are required of all believers. What we receive from God will only be what we claim of His promises by faith. Christians should never sit under any teaching that could repress or undermine in any way their faith in the power of God's word to fulfil itself. These teachers invariably use Job and Paul to make their point. They teach that because God would not heal Job or Paul then we cannot always expect healing either. That teaching is not correct, but it has been perpetuated by teachers in the church, and it has caused many Christians to abandon the very promises of God that are meant to give them faith to believe that it is God's will to heal them.

We are all familiar with the book of Job, but just to summarize it, Job did not know that it was the devil afflicting him. He thought it was God, and because he did not have a complete revelation of God, he made two statements about God at the onset of his trials that have been taught, and accepted by many Christians as being God's word, yet they are both incorrect (CP Job 1:13-22; 2:7-10). Now compare these statements with the revelation of God James had (CP Jas 1:17). Job's statements are also used by some to teach that this is how God chastens His children, but that is not how He chastens us at all (CP 1Cor 11:31-32). This is how we are chastened by God: by judging ourselves and being convicted of sin in our lives, and confessing it before God. Chastening means correction. It does not mean

that we are afflicted with boils, or forfeit all our possessions, or have all our family die, like Job. Chastening refers to the activity directed toward the moral and spiritual nurture and training of a child, to influence conscious will and action. It means to instruct, to educate, to correct. There is a vast difference between the true meaning of the word and what we have been led to believe it means, which has utterly undermined countless numbers of Christian's faith to believe implicitly in God's word. Job really highlights the New Testament truth that believers undergoing persecution and fiery trials must remain steadfast in faith (CP Jas 1:2-4; 1Pe 5:8-10). Job's steadfastness and patience enabled God's purpose to prevail over Satan. That is the main teaching in the book of Job (CP Jas 5:10-11).

Now, concerning Paul. Paul had a thorn in the flesh, which has been taught was some form of sickness or disease he suffered from, yet the Bible clearly teaches that it was not sickness at all (CP 2Cor 12:1-10). Paul's thorn in the flesh was a messenger of Satan - a demon, sent to buffet him - to cause extreme hardships to befall him lest he be overcome with pride because of what he had seen and heard in heaven. Paul did not suffer from sickness at all. Nowhere in the Bible does it teach that Paul was ever sick. Paul knew the power of God in him - we only have to read Acts 28 to know that sickness in any form would have no power over Paul (CP Ac 28:1-10). Paul did not pray to God to be healed of sickness. He prayed that the demon would be removed from him, but of course God would not remove it because He had instigated its presence in the first place, which is what 2Cor 12:8 clearly teaches. How could Paul labour more abundantly than the false teachers he had to contend with in the church at Corinth if he was always sick, as we have been led to believe (CP 2Cor 11:22-23). Paul's thorn did not hinder the faith of Publius and the others who got healed on the Island of Melita (or Malta) in Acts 28, so why should we let it hinder our faith for healing today.

Healing is not only about restoring health to the one who is sick. It is also a sign to awaken others to a consciousness of the presence and the power of God, and to raise their faith in Jesus. Over 5,000 got saved as a result of one man being healed in the Bible - the crippled beggar at the Gate Beautiful (CP Ac 3:1 - 4:4). Every believer in Christ is empowered to do what Peter and John did here and it is incumbent upon us to manifest that power if God is to be glorified by our works in the earth as Jesus commands (CP Mt 5:14-16). Jesus placed great importance upon the works that He did because they glorified God (CP Jn 9:1-7). Jesus made the point that regardless of the origin of his blindness, God would be glorified in the man's healing. The disciples erroneously thought, as a lot of people still do, that the blindness was from God, but as Jesus shows here, God is not glorified in sickness - He is glorified in health. In the broad sense, sin was responsible for the man's blindness, but it was not personal sin or the sin of his parents - it was the sin of Adam which brought with it all manner of sickness into the world.

There is not one teaching anywhere in the Bible that God is glorified in sickness, yet there are many Christians who believe that He is. This represses their

faith for healing. We are obliged to ask them the question that if God is glorified in sickness why did Jesus go around healing every one who was sick? Twenty-three times in the New Testament we are told that He healed all who were sick. We need to know these scriptures to satisfy ourselves that Jesus did heal all of them, and we can do likewise if we will but exercise our faith (CP Mt 4:23-24; 8:14-18; 9:35; 11:5; 12:15; 14:14, 35-36; 15:30; 19:2; 21:14; Mk 1:32-35; 39; 3:10; 6:5, 56; Lu 4:40; 5:15, 17; 6:17-19; 7:21-23; 9:11; 17:17; Ac 10:38). We learn from Ac 10:38 that all sickness is of the devil. Could God ever be glorified in any of the devil's works? If God is glorified in sickness then when Jesus went around and healed all who were sick He was disobeying God, yet Jesus said that He was only doing the work God had told him to do (CP Jn 5:19-20, 36). Now, if we believe that Job and Paul both prayed for healing and were refused by God, then this means that faith does not come by the word of God alone as scriptures teach, but that it comes by praying until a special revelation comes to us that it is God's will to heal us. This is a false teaching. It is the exact opposite to what Ro 10:17 and numerous other scriptures teach us.

Let us go back to the book of Acts for a few moments to where the crippled beggar got healed at the Gate Beautiful to see what it teaches about acting out our faith (CP Ac 3:1-13, 16). We find that, contrary to popular opinion, there is no suggestion whatsoever here that this beggar believed in Jesus, that he even knew Jesus for that matter, or that he had faith for his healing. As a matter of fact Peter and John did not even preach the gospel to him. Peter simply spoke the desired end result over the man's situation in life and God did it. Peter's faith was never in himself to do it - it was in God, and this is how it should be with us too. Do not think of failure, because the outcome does not depend on us. It depends on God. Yet we struggle with faith as though it depends on us. Many Christians do not act out their faith because of their fear of failure, yet if they would but speak God's word over the situation in faith they would have the same result Peter had at the Gate Beautiful, and David had with Goliath (CP 1Sam 17:37, 45-51).

Let us go back to Jas 2 (CP Jas 2:17-26). The seriousness of what James teaches about faith and works here is lost on a great many Christians because they do not fully comprehend it. Yet they profess faith in God and the atoning work of Christ. But if we say we believe in God yet do not act out His word, the Bible says we are liars (CP Jn 14:15 with 1Jn 2:4). We all like to think we have faith, but if it is only an imitation of the true heartfelt faith the Lord desires of us it will not get us to heaven, as is made very clear in Jas 1:22-25 and 2:17-26. Faith is not only the way to life (CP Eph 2:8). It is also the way of life for the Christian (CP Ro 1:17). At our conversion to Christ we are placed by God into a life of faith which we must continuously be exercising from then on (CP Eph 2:10; Tit 2:11-14; Jas 2:26). There is no question that we have faith. It was wrought in us by the Holy Spirit to believe in Christ for our salvation in the first place (Ro 10:8-17). Also, we have been given a measure of faith for our Christian walk (CP Ro 12:3). What we have to address here is how to act out that faith in our walk as God would have us do. We rested our faith on the reliability

of God's word for our salvation - why can we not accept it the same way after we are saved?

The gospel of Jesus is a very simple teaching if we will just accept it at face value. It is not a hard word to obey - it is us who have made it hard (CP Lu 5:1-6). This is a beautiful teaching on how faith works. Because Jesus said it, Peter did it. Simple is it not? Peter simply obeyed what Jesus said to do. Notwithstanding that he had already tried and failed in his own flesh, Peter acted on the Lord's word and it worked, and it will work for us too if we will only act upon it like Peter did. Peter surrendered the Lord's word back to him to fulfil it and He did (CP V5). Peter said "...nevertheless - (notwithstanding what my sense knowledge tells me) - at your word Lord, I will let down the net." In that simple act of obedience Peter was acknowledging Christ's dominion and authority over all things, even the fish and the sea (CP Psa 8). Cannot we also acknowledge Christ like this and simply obey His word like Peter did? If we can rest our faith on the reliability of God's word for our salvation, can we not believe Him for all the other benefits salvation includes? Salvation is an all-inclusive package. Its Greek root *soteria* also means health, healing, welfare, prosperity and victory, as well as deliverance from sin and its spiritual consequences, and this is confirmed right throughout scripture (Psa 103:1-6, 10-12; 107:1-43; Isa 53:4-5; 54:14-17; Mt 8:16-17; Ga 3:13-14; 1Pe 2:24). There are many more scriptures of course but these will suffice as most of them already are a part of this study (CP Psa 103:1-6, 10-12; 107:1-7).

Let us see now what some of the works are that God has ordained us to do. First and foremost, we are to believe on Jesus - that means we are to believe in Him and His word implicitly (CP Jn 6:28-29). Second, we have to be totally surrendered to Jesus and consecrated to the service of God (CP Mt 7:21-27). Works are also confessing God's word over our circumstances in life, which includes our daily confession (CP Mk 11:22-24). Works are all our acts of faith whereby God is glorified (CP Mt 5:14-16). Our works confirm our love for God and for each other (CP Jas 2:15-17 with 1Jn 3:16-19). Preaching the gospel, casting out demons, healing the sick are also works of faith in obedience to God's word (CP Mk 16:15-18). Jesus said here in V17 "These signs shall follow them that believe." He did not say "These signs shall only follow the church leader, the preacher or anyone else in public ministry", but the ordinary, everyday, tall, short, fat, thin, old, young, male, female, black, white, Jew, Gentile believer. They might become church leaders and preachers, etc, eventually, but they are ordinary believers in the first instance, and they are the ones Jesus promised that signs would follow. Whoever fits the description of any of the above believers will have signs following them if they will but act out their faith. Remember, we do not do these works in our own power. It is God's responsibility to fulfil His word once we speak it out in faith (CP Mk 16:19-20). We only have to take God's word at face value and do it like Peter did to see the fruit it will produce in our life. The more we do it, the more fruit it will produce.

Believers cannot afford to be satisfied just to be saved. God has delivered us from sin and its effects upon us in order that we might enjoy the way of life He has

designed for us (CP Col 1:9-14). But it must be a life of continuously exercising our faith. God wants us to reign as kings with Him in this life. We are not meant to be sick or defeated by our circumstances. There is no glory for God in that as we have seen throughout this study (CP Ro 5:17). Good health, healing, prosperity, and victory for the Christian is for now, or all the scriptures we have been studying here are meaningless (CP Isa 54:17; Ga 3:26-29). This is irrefutable proof that the abundant life Jesus promises us in Jn 10:10 is for this life, not the next as so many would have us believe. If we truly believe in the finished work of the cross we can never settle for less than the best God has provided for us in His perfect plan of salvation through the precious blood of Jesus. The sad thing is that the great majority of Christians are still standing at the foot of the cross waiting for Christ to be taken down. Their consciousness is fixed on the Christ who died, not on the Christ who lives - who is seated at the right hand of God in heaven. They have not yet accepted all the salvation benefits He has purchased for us with His blood. They do not understand that the empty cross represents our victory in Christ now. It is ours to possess and enjoy, and reveal to the glory of God in this life, not in the hereafter. (See also comments on Jas 1:22-25, 2:14-26).

11:35 *Who were the women who received their dead raised to life again?*

There are two women of faith named in the Old Testament who received their dead raised to life again. The first was the widow of Zarephath, whose son died and was raised to life again by Elijah (CP 1Ki 17:17-24). The second was the Shunammite woman, whose son died and was raised to life again by Elisha (CP 2Ki 4:8, 12-37).

11:39-40 *What does this mean?*

All the Old Testament saints died in faith without receiving the final promised blessings of the new covenant in Christ (CP V13). But they were saved by Christ's redeeming sacrifice of Himself on the cross (CP V2 with Ac 17:31; Ro 3:24-26; He 5:9; 9:15).*that they without us should not be made perfect* (KJV), means that both Old Testament and New Testament saints alike are saved by Christ's sacrificial death (CP Jn 1:12-13; Ro 4:4-5, 16; Eph 2:8-9; 2Ti 1:8-10; He 10:14). See also comments on Ac 17:30, Ro 3:24-26, 4:1-5, He 10:14.

12:1 *(A) How are we to regard these witnesses - are they looking down on us from heaven as some teach?*

This is referring to the Old Testament saints of Ch 11 who died in faith, but it is not teaching that they are spectators, observing all that we do from heaven, as some believe. Rather, it means that the godly examples they set during their lives on earth bear witness to the value and blessing of living faith. Their past life of faith encourages us to live a life of faith also (CP 11:4-40).

(B) How is "every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us" (KJV) defined?

Every weight here means everything that gets in the way of our Christians walk. If we are hanging onto anything that does not help us to advance the cause of Christ we must get rid of it, whatever it is (CP Mt 10:37-39; 16:24-26; Lu 14:25-33). The sin which doth so easily beset us refers to any evil tendency in our life. Some believe it refers to a specific sin to which every believer has been addicted. Others believe that it refers to the sin of unbelief in this context, in contrast to faith, which was the subject of Chapter 11. But any sin can easily beset us if our mind is not focused directly on Christ as the originator of faith (CP He 12:2). The faith-filled Christian walk demands perseverance and patient effort on the part of Christians. It is likened to a race in which Christians are running, which they could never hope to win if they are encumbered by any excess weight, especially sin, that impedes their progress (CP 1Cor 9:24-27; Php 3:13-14; Col 3:1-11; 2Ti 2:4; 1Jn 2:14-17).

12:2 What does it mean exactly that Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith?

Jesus is the originator of faith, as distinct from simply being the cause. Of the "cloud of witnesses" whose lives testify to the reward of the life of faith in Chapter 11, Jesus stands as the chief witness, for He is the one who in the pre-eminence of His faith, far surpasses the faith of everyone else. Jesus in His own person raised faith to its perfection and so set before us the highest example of faith. That is what "He is the author and finisher of our faith" means. Jesus is also the originator of life (CP Ac 3:15); and the originator, or beginning of God's creation (CP Rev 3:14)

12:5-11 Where is this exhortation found in scripture and how does the Lord chasten Christians?

This exhortation is found in Proverbs (CP Pr 3:11-12). The object of God's chastening of Christians is that they might be made partakers of His holiness (CP He 12:11). The word *chastening* refers to activity directed towards a child to influence conscious will and action. It means to instruct, to educate, to correct (CP Ps 94:12; 1Cor 11:31-32; Php 2:13; 2Ti 3:16-17; Rev 3:19). God chastens Christians by His word. God's word judges us; it convicts us of sin and causes us to repent of the sin and confess it before God (CP Ps 32:5; Pr 28:13; 1Jn 1:9). This clearly refutes the teaching that God chastens Christians by inflicting sickness or calamity upon them, or allowing them to be overcome by their circumstances in life, or to suffer persecution as a test of their faith. God's chastening of Christians has to do solely with redirecting their paths from sin to holiness (CP 1Cor 11:27-28; 2Cor 13:5; He 12:1-4, 12-15). God's chastening of Christians has nothing to do with them being persecuted for their faith. Persecution comes from Satan, not to test our faith, but to destroy it, if it were possible (CP Jas 1:2-4; 5:10-11; 1Pe 1:6-7; 5:8-10). These are trials of our faith, not God's chastening. Christians are warned throughout scripture that they will suffer persecution for their faith as a norm of

Christianity, but not as an instrument of God's chastening (CP Mk 10:29-30; Jn 15:18-21; 1Th 3:1-5; 2Ti 3:10-12; 1Pe 4:12-14; 1Jn 3:13). See also comments on 1Cor 11:31-32.

12:12-15 What is the teaching here?

Christians are being exhorted here to reinvigorate themselves spiritually and walk in the way God has ordained for them to be partakers of His holiness (CP V9-11 with Pr 4:25-27; Eph 1:4). Strong Christians must never exhibit any spiritual slackness so that weaker Christians may be encouraged and strengthened in their faith (CP Isa 35:3-4). Any root of bitterness in He 12:15 refers metaphorically to any Christian apostatising and failing God's grace, and inducing others to do the same (CP De 29:18; He 3:12-13). Many in the church believe that He 12:15 is about bitterness, but it is about apostasy. There are also many in the church who believe that the book of Hebrews is directed to non-Christians, but that is not correct either. It is directed to Christians, as these passages clearly prove. Only Christians can lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily besets them, and only Christians can run with patience the Christian race (CP He 12:1). Only Christians can consider Jesus, and look to Him as the originator of faith and the one who raised it to perfection (CP V2-4). Only Christians can recognise and submit to God's chastening as true sons in order to partake of His holiness (CP V5-11). And only Christians can follow peace and holiness and meet other terms of blessing lest they fail God's grace (CP V12-15). See also comments on He 6:4-6.

12:16-17 What is the story behind what the writer says here about Esau?

(CP Gen 25:27-34; 27:30-40). The reason why Esau was rejected is because "he found no place of repentance". He was remorseful because of what he had done, but not repentant in the sense that he was not sorry for what he had done because it was wrong. Esau is used here as a warning to Christians against rejecting God after having been recipients of His good things (CP He 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22). Esau was an example of a "profane person" - one who lacks all relationship and affinity to God. Esau's birthright was God's blessing upon the firstborn, but as we learned in Gen 25:34, Esau despised it, and in despising it, he despised God. He wanted God's blessing, but he did not want God.

12:18-24 What does "the mount that might be touched" refer to and how do we define Mt. Zion?

The mount that might be touched is Mt. Sinai, where God manifested Himself to Moses and gave him the old covenant law. *Might be touched* simply means that Mt. Sinai was a real mountain. Anyone or anything that literally touched it was killed (CP Ex 19:10-24; 20:18-21; De 4:11-13). Mt. Zion is the spiritual mountain where God reigns - the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem (CP He 12:22 with Isa 2:2-3; Rev 14:1). In He 12:18-24 Mt. Sinai symbolizes the law of bondage under the Old Covenant, whereas Mt. Zion symbolizes the blessings of God through Christ's

shed blood under the New Covenant (CP Ga 4:21-31). The contrast between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion in He 12:18-24 is a warning to believers not to reject Christ (CP V25-29 with 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22).

12:24 *What blood of Abel is referred to here?*

There are two views among Christians concerning this scripture. One view holds to the blood being that which Abel shed when his brother Cain killed him (CP Gen 4:1-11). In this view the blood of Abel cries out for vengeance, in contrast to Christ's sprinkled blood, which graciously forgives (CP Ro 5:1; Col 1:20). The second view is that the blood is that of the animal sacrifice Abel offered up to God, which was inferior to the blood of the supreme sacrifice, Jesus (CP Gen 4:1-4 with He 11:4; 1Pe 1:2). This view is chosen above the other because it conforms to the teaching throughout scripture of the superiority of Christ's blood, and the new covenant, over against the blood of animal sacrifices, and the old covenant (CP Mt 26:28; Ac 17:26; Ro 3:21-26; 5:6-11, 18; Eph 1:3-7; 2:13; Col 1:12-14; He 8:6; 9:11-26; 10:1-18; 1 Pe 1:18-19; 1 Jn 1:7-9; Rev 1:5).

12:26-29 *What is the writer referring to here and when will it take place?*

The writer is quoting the Old Testament prophet Haggai here (CP Hag 2:6-7). We learn from this that the present form of heaven and earth is not eternal. They will be completely destroyed by fire and replaced by a new heaven and earth. This will take place at the time of the great white throne judgement at the end of the millennium - the thousand years reign of Christ (CP He 1:10-12; 2Pe 3:7, 10-13; Rev 20:11; 21:1). The only thing that will survive in its present form will be the kingdom of God (CP He 12:27-28). See also comments 2Pe 3:1-7.

13:3 *What is this telling us to do?*

This is exhorting believers to identify with those in prison who are being persecuted for their witness for Christ, remembering that they themselves are liable to the same treatment (CP Ro 12:15; 1Cor 12:20, 26). Believers must not only pray for those suffering persecution, but also do everything possible to meet their practical needs as well as provide relief for their families (CP Ga 6:10; Jas 2:13-16; 1Jn 3:17-19 with Mt 25:31-46). Believers can also write letters of encouragement to those in prison, and letters of advocacy to those who have imprisoned them.

13:4 *What does it mean that the marriage bed is undefiled?*

The physical and emotional pleasure of sexual intimacy within marriage is ordained by God and held in honour by Him. Through marriage the husband and wife become one flesh according to God's will (CP Gen 2:21-24; Eph 5:31). Sexual activity within marriage is pure, but is strictly forbidden outside of marriage. Adultery, fornication, homosexuality, impure desires and degrading passions are grave sins and those who commit them will be eternally damned (CP Pr 6:27-33; Mk 7:20-23; Ro 1:18, 24-32; 1Cor

6:9-10, 13-18; 7:1-5; Ga 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-5; Col 3:5-6; 1Th 4:3-7; Rev 21:7-8). Many Christians believe that sexual intimacy between male and female Christians committed to marrying each other is acceptable, but that is not correct. God explicitly prohibits anyone "uncovering the nakedness" of another person unless they are lawful husband and wife (CP Lev 18:6-20; 20:11-12, 17, 19-21; Pr 5:18-20). Uncovering the nakedness of another person means being sexually intimate (see also comments on 1Cor 6:15-20, 7:1-2, Ga 5:19-21).

13:5-6 *How are we to understand what is said here?*

This is teaching that godliness with sufficient material blessings to meet our everyday needs should make us content with life. Money and the abundance of material things do not give life meaning, and thus cannot bring real happiness (CP Psa 37:16; Pr 15:16; 30:7-9; Ecc 5:10-17; 6:9; Jer 45:5; Lu 12:13-15; Ro 12:16; Php 4:11-13; 1Ti 6:6-10). The word *conversation* in He 13:5 (KJV), means manner, or way of life. The Christian's way of life has to be without the desire for more than that which will satisfy their everyday needs. This is what Jesus meant in Lu 12:15 when He said that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions. Covetousness and financial fear are overcome by a contentment founded upon the assurance of God's constant presence (CP He 13:5 with Gen 28:15; De 31:6-8; Josh 1:5; 1Chr 28:20). What God is saying in effect in these scriptures is that "there is absolutely no way whatsoever that I will ever, ever leave you". Believers can be content in every situation because of this promise and we can boldly respond to our circumstances as He 13:6 says "... the Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man can do to me".

Believers also have God's promise throughout scripture to provide for their needs (CP Ex 23:25-26; Psa 23:1; 34:9-10; Mt 21:22; 2 Cor 9:8; Php 4:19). See also comments on Mt 6:24, 19:23-26, Lu 12:13-15, 12:16-21, 12:33-34, 16:19-21, 1Cor 10:14-22, 2Cor 12:4; 1Ti 6:6-10.

13:8 *What does it mean here that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever?*

In this context it means that because Christ never changes, there has to also be a consistency in the Christian's walk of faith. This refers to V 7 which exhorts believers to appreciate those who instruct them in the word of God, and to follow the example of their faith (CP V7, 17; 1Th 5:12-13). See also comments on 1Th 5:12-13; He 13:17.

13:10 *What is the altar referred to here?*

In this context the altar is a place of sacrifice. It speaks metaphorically of Jesus Christ as the true altar of every believer (CP He 9:11-22). "To eat of the altar" means to appropriate to one's self the benefits of Christ's expiatory death. *They have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle* (KJV), refers to those who trust in the Old Testament rituals. They are excluded

from partaking of the benefits of Christ's expiatory death. No one can partake of the benefits of Christ's expiatory death unless they accept Him as their saviour (CP Jn 3:16 with Ro 9:30-33; 10:1-4). See also comments on Ro 9:30-33, 10:1-4, 10:6-11, He 8:1-2, 8:6, 9:16-17, 10:5-7, 10:14, 10:19-20.

13:11-13 *What are we to understand from what is said here?*

Here the writer of Hebrews compares the sacrifice of animals in the Old Testament and that of Christ in the New Testament. As the carcasses of the animal sacrifices were burned outside the camp, so too Christ was killed outside the city gate (CP Lev 4:21; 16:27 with Jn 19:16-18). The animal sacrifices and their blood which was taken into the most holy place in the earthly tabernacle to atone for the sins of the people in the Old Testament, typified the atoning work of Christ on the cross for sinners in the New Testament (CP Lev 16:11-19 with He 9:11-24; 10:1-14, 19-20). Jesus shed His sacrificial blood outside the city gate in order to sanctify - set apart for God's service - all who believe on Him. Therefore believers are exhorted to "go forth unto Him outside the camp". This means believers are to reject the corrupt world system and its practices, and be prepared to bear the contempt and abuse and shame that Jesus bore (CP Mt 5:11-12; Lu 6:22-23; 1Pe 4:14). The world is not the believer's home - theirs is an everlasting home in heaven (CP Eph 2:6, 19; Php 3:20; He 12:22). See also comments on He 4:14-16, 9:1-10, 12:18-24, 13:14.

13:14 *What is the city that believers seek to come?*

This city is New Jerusalem, the city of God which God promised to the Old Testament saints, and Jesus promised to the New Testament saints. New

Jerusalem will be the habitation of all the redeemed of God, from Abel to the very last soul saved in the Great tribulation (CP Rev 21:24-27 with Psa 93:2; 103:19; Isa 2:1-4 (also Mic 4:1-3); 65:17-19 Jn 14:1-3; Ro 11:26; He 11:8-16; 12:22-23; Rev 3:12; 6:9-11; 7:1-8, 9-17; 14:1-5; 15:2-4; 20:4-6; 22:1-5). It should be noted here that New Jerusalem is also identified in scripture as the Bride of Christ (CP Ga 4:24-26 with Rev 19:7-8; 21:1-2, 9-10). For a more detailed study on this subject see comments on Ro 7:4, Eph 2:15-16 (B), 4:13, 5:25-32, Rev 19:7-9, 21:2, 9-10.

13:17 *What does it mean exactly that Christians are to obey those that have the rule over them?*

The writer here is exhorting believers to maintain a yielding disposition and remain open to the persuasion of church leaders who lead and guide them into Godliness (CP V7; 1Th 5:12-13). Leaders are accountable to God for believers' spiritual well-being (CP Ac 20:28; 1Cor 4:1-2). It is to their advantage that believers co-operate with their leaders. It makes the leader's job a joy, not a burden. This does not imply blind, unquestioning obedience to everything leaders say. Believers' obedience and faithfulness must always be on the basis that leaders remain faithful and loyal to God, to scripture, and to God's purpose for the church. Leaders are not autocratic rulers to lord it over God's people, but servants of the church on behalf of Christ (CP Jer 23:1-2, 28-31; Eze 34:1-10 with Mt 23:8-12; Mk 9:35; 10:42-45; Lu 22:24-27; 1Pe 5:1-4). Believers are not to passively accept every teaching in the church at face value, regardless of who teaches it. It can only be accepted in the light of scripture (CP 1Th 5:21 with Ac 17:10-11; 2Pe 1:16-19; 1Jn 4:1). See also comments on 1Th 5:12-13; He 13:8.