

## Hebrews: the book of better things

### Outline of Hebrews

One of the unifying themes of the book of Hebrews is its emphasis on the better things found in the Christian faith, especially the superiority of Jesus himself over all who preceded him, succeeded him, or competed with him.

1. Hebrews 1:1-4, a better revelation from a better mediator.
2. Hebrews 1:5-2:4, better than the angels of heaven. An emphasis on the unique authority of Jesus. "Therefore" pay attention to Jesus' message.
3. Hebrews 2:5-18, Jesus is a better man, fulfilling man's potential. He is superior to Satan, and is a superior high priest.
4. Hebrews 3:1-6, Moses was faithful, but Jesus is better as the Son and Heir.
5. Hebrews 3:7-19, the need to believe and act on the better message.
6. Hebrews 4:1-13, the better rest in Jesus, who is better than Joshua.
7. Hebrews 4:14-5:10, Jesus a better high priest than Aaron, in a perpetual priesthood like Melchizedek, directly ordained by God.
8. Hebrews 5:11-6:12, the need to learn and grow and produce.
9. Hebrews 6:13-20, no promise is better than God's promise, and the better promise is fulfilled in Jesus.
10. Hebrews 7:1-28, the better—perfect—priest with the better covenant from God.
11. Hebrews 8:1-13, the better covenant and better ministry.
12. Hebrews 9:1-10, the better sanctuary.
13. Hebrews 9:11-28, the better sacrifice that validates the better covenant.
14. Hebrews 10:1-18, the finality and effect of the better sacrifice offered by Jesus.
15. Hebrews 10:19-39, superior access to God through Jesus, and greater responsibility to stand fast, with better help to succeed.
16. Hebrews 11:1-39, the role of faith, its value and some achievements of the faithful, and that today's believer has a better base, promises now fulfilled.
17. Hebrews 12:1-13, encouragement to be better, to be a son through faith and obedience. God's discipline is better than permissiveness.
18. Hebrews 12:14-29, the fifth warning; the better mountain, God's kingdom.
19. Hebrews 13:1-8, instructions for better living.
20. Hebrews 13:9-16, better offerings through Jesus.
21. Hebrews 13:17-25, final instructions, requests, and personal comments.

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### Background Information:

When: The book of Hebrews seems to have been written between about A.D. 62 and A.D. 70, probably the late 60's. This conclusion is based on the fact that Timothy is mentioned as a released prisoner (12:23), and there is no reference to Timothy being imprisoned in either Acts or Paul's epistles, and the fact that the temple and its worship service is spoken of as existing and ongoing (13:10-11). Thus the book seems to be placed between the close of Acts and the fall of Jerusalem.

Who: The book of Hebrews does not name its author, and for this reason Paul is most likely excluded as the author. All of Paul's epistles include his name in the text (note 2 Thess. 3:17). Also, even in English translations the significant differences in style and vocabulary between Hebrews and Paul's epistles are apparent. Among other significant differences, Hebrews primary illustration of Jesus' role and authority is that of the priesthood, and none of Paul's epistles contain the word "priest" or any of its derivative forms. Furthermore, the book of Hebrews is directed toward an original audience that was primarily of Jewish heritage. The language, illustrations, and heritage depicted in the book are all essentially Jewish, hence the title, "Hebrews." Paul acknowledged that the ministry to the Jews was not his (Gal. 2:9, Acts 22:21), and Luke's account in Acts tells us that Paul was viewed with suspicion by many Jews, including some Jewish followers of Jesus (Acts 21:20-22). Since the author of the book was known to the original audience (Heb. 13:23-24) and accepted by them, this too seems to argue against Pauline authorship. Finally, the author of Hebrews does not claim apostleship or a direct experience of Jesus (2:3-4), while Paul emphatically claimed to be an apostle who received his message directly from the Lord (Gal. 1:1,12). If Paul then is excluded as the author of Hebrews, who wrote it? Since the book does not name its author we cannot know with certainty who it was, even though the original audience clearly did. Some have proposed Barnabus as a possible author, and he certainly had the credentials, or perhaps Apollos. We can be certain that the author was a man, a Jewish Christian who had been to Italy in the late 60's, and a friend of Timothy (13:23). He quoted frequently from the Septuagint (Greek) "Old Testament" and wrote in a more "classical" style than any other New Testament author.

Why: The reason for the book is to supply correction in some concepts – to strengthen faith in Jesus and his covenant – and to encourage steadfastness and personal dedication within the body of believers (13:22). Interdependence of Christians on one another is stressed several times: the need to remind, encourage, and teach each other. Concern that persecution would discourage some is also evident (12:7). That some would fall away was an clearly expressed concern (3:12, 6:1-12, 10:26-31, 39, 12:12-17). The solution proposed by Hebrews for human weakness is focusing on Jesus (12:1-3) in all his greatness and encouraging each other to obey and imitate him (3:13-14).

Famous Passages: Best known passages of Hebrews include 1:1-3, 4:12, 10:25, 11:1, and 11:6, and chapter 11-"the faith chapter."

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### I. Hebrews 1:1-4, Jesus, our best representative from God.

What has God done in the past?

How did God bring his communication to mankind to a climax?

What has the Son already done?

What is the Son doing still?

God's word represents his message to us (v.2), what else does God's word do?

What is the Son? (several answers)

How did Jesus provide purification for sins?

Where is Jesus now?

Who is Jesus superior to?

*note: the word "angel" means messenger*

Where did Jesus get his name?

Summarize what these verses tell us 1) about Jesus, 2) about God, and 3) about our relationship to God.

### II. Hebrews 1:5-2:4, Jesus, greater than the angels in every way.

According to 1:5 what is Jesus?

Why is this important?

What are angels to do? (V.6)

Are angels powerful and important? Explain your answer.

How powerful and important is Jesus?

What are some of the terms that describe Jesus' nature and character in 1:8-9?

The Son was anointed "with the oil of joy." Who did that anointing, and when? (See Acts 10:37-39, Luke 3:21-22)

What is the Son of God's relationship to created things in 1:10-12?

In contrast, what are the positions or roles of the Son (1:13) and the angels (1:14)?

As described, who benefits from the work of the angels?

Everything said about the Son of God has been good, positive, and encouraging. Still, it leads to

#### Hebrews 1:1-4

<sup>1</sup>Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. <sup>3</sup>He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup>having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. (NRSV)

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a warning. What should we be careful of? (2:1-3)

What would the “message spoken by angels” have been?

Compared to the system of regulations (violation or disobedience = punishment), how is the better message described?

If the Lord here is Jesus, the Son of God, who are those that confirmed the message of salvation?

What was God doing when Jesus announced and his followers confirmed?

Describe the purpose of the miracles and gifts that are mentioned as part of the original testimony here.

Hebrews opens with the assertion that Jesus culminates God’s revelation to mankind. He himself is both the greatest message, and above all the former messengers sent by God, human or angelic. He is over all creation by virtue of his nature, his character, and his achievements. Glory, honor and power above all others is attributed to Jesus. Therefore, the writer of Hebrews asserts that the message of salvation in Christ is the one message we must not ignore.

**III. Hebrews 2:5-18**, Jesus is already the perfect man, has defeated Satan, and is the best high priest.

When the writer mentions “the world to come” what is he talking about?

Despite the glory God has invested in the angels, what is not really for them?

Quoting from Psalm 8:4-6, what is man’s position in relation to God, in this world, and in God’s plan?

When did God put everything under man’s feet?

Even though God created things that way, what do we see in man’s relationship with created things?

Who is the one man for whom it is already true that he is crowned with glory and honor, with everything under his feet?

Though Jesus is greater than the angels, by his original nature and his crowning achievements (as in chapter 1), what did he temporarily become when he became a man?

What is the basis of Jesus’ crowning achievement, what has he done?

Who potentially benefits from Jesus’ death?

How was Jesus made perfect?

What was the purpose of Jesus suffering? (V.10)

When people are saved through Jesus’ suffering of death, what family do they become a part of?

What does Jesus call the people he saves?

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What does Jesus declare, and who does he praise, and where?

Besides viewing those he saves as brothers, what else does Jesus see his people as? (V.13)

Why did Jesus become a man?

Who did Jesus confront and overcome?

How did he do it?

Note: the NIV refers to the devil as “him who holds the power of death”. The verb though is a progressive tense, “was holding” or “used to hold”. Many versions render this as a past tense to convey the sense, as in the WEB: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;”

What position are men in because of death, apart from Jesus’ victory of the devil?

Why?

Again, reminding us that the gospel is not about angels, who is it about?

To what extent was Jesus, God’s Son, a man?

Another stated purpose of Jesus becoming a man is given in 2:17. What is it?

What words describe the priesthood of Jesus?

Describe Jesus’ priestly role as summarized here.

Being completely human, what did Jesus experience that enables him to help us?

Why is it important for us that Jesus experienced real and difficult temptation?

Hebrews gives us a great shot of encouragement with the assertion that the greatness of Jesus is altogether to our advantage. Don’t ignore his salvation, he shows us our true potential in the promises of God, he saves us from sin death, sets free from slavery, and mercifully helps us in times of temptation and weakness. Jesus is divine, and yet he completely understands human experience, and is our willing helper.

**IV. Hebrews 3:1-6**, Moses was faithful, but Jesus is even greater as the Son and Heir.

Who was this letter written for?

What are we encouraged to do in 3:1?

Note some of the things Jesus has been described as so far.

What was he in 2:10?

And in 2:17?

And now in 3:1?

Whose apostle would Jesus have been? That is, who sent him?

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What did Jesus have in common with Moses?

As great as Moses was, how does he compare with Jesus? And why?

Often in the Bible, the word “house” is a symbol for a family (“house of David”, for example, Luke 2:4). In what sense do you think Jesus is builder of God’s house?

When we read the idea that Jesus is the builder of the house in 3:3, and that God is the builder of everything in 3:4, what aspect of Jesus’ identity are we being reminded of (recall 1:2 and 1:10)?

Moses as a servant did a wonderful work, but what was he testifying of?

Again, the word house often means a family, heirs and descendants. What is God’s house that Jesus is over in 3:6?

As a prelude to the second warning, what is the “if” connected with being God’s house?

It is no dishonor to the angels to speak of Jesus inherent superiority, and superiority of accomplishments. Nor is there any dishonor to Moses to speak of Jesus being faithful as he was, and even more so, and occupying a superior position by virtue of both who he is and what he has done. In fact, Moses was part of the preparation for what Jesus would do. Hebrews will remind us again of the preparatory role of the Old Testament faithful, and will again encourage us to focus on Jesus – not on Moses, or angels, or other witnesses, but on Jesus himself.

**V. Hebrews 3:7-19**, the need to believe and act on the better message (the 2<sup>nd</sup> warning).

The first warning in Hebrews was 2:1-4, “pay more careful attention...” do not ignore God’s great salvation. The second warning begins here, “do not harden your hearts”.

After encouraging us to “hold on to our courage and ... hope” in 3:6, the writer again goes to Psalms. Note, who does the writer attribute as the source of the passage? (V.7)

What was the Psalmist warning against?

When had people heard God’s voice and rebelled?

What did the people that spent forty years in the desert see?

If you saw miracles literally on a daily basis, what effect do you think it would have on you?

In actual fact, what effect did the constant display of miracles (such as manna and the cloud that was over the tabernacle) have on the ancient people of Israel?

How did God feel about the response of the people of Israel in those days?

What did God say about them when they refused him? (V.11)

How did the writer of Hebrews describe the “hard hearts” of Israel? (V.12)

Not having a hard heart isn’t necessarily only my own responsibility. Instead, what are we to do for each other?

When is the right time to encourage a fellow believer?

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We have reference in 3:13 to being “hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.” What would that mean?

How or why would it happen?

In 3:6 and 3:14 we have the phrase, “if we hold”. What are the things to be held on to or held firmly?

What would it mean in 3:14, to “share in Christ”?

Much of Hebrews is about confidence. Why is confidence important for a Christian? (Note 3:14, 4:16, 10:19, 10:35, 13:6)

What kinds of things did the people who came out of Egypt with Moses see and experience?

Nevertheless, despite all they saw and heard, what did they do?

We have 3 words that specifically describe the failure of those who heard but did not enter, one in verse 17, another in 18, another in 19. What are they?

So according to 3:17-19, what kept most of Moses’ generation from enjoying the promises of God?

This section of Hebrews warns strongly against repeating the failures of ancient Israel. That failure wasn’t through lack of knowledge (on their part) or lack of power (on God’s part) but lack of willingness to believe and obey. We are warned against failing in the same way, failing to trust and obey. There is a strong emphasis on being confident in our relationship with God, and an emphasis (which will be repeated) on helping each other stay un-entangled with sin.

**VI. Hebrews 4:1-13**, the better rest in Jesus, who is better than Joshua.

Continuing the theme of aiming toward God’s promised rest, and not letting our hearts grow hard, what assurance do we have in 4:1?

How might a person fall short?

What does the word gospel mean?

Read Numbers 14:6-11

What gospel or good news was proclaimed to Israel in the desert?

Who proclaimed that message and reminded the people of God’s promised rest in Canaan?

What did the people need to do (or not do) in order to receive the promised blessing?

However, what was the people’s reaction to their “good news”?

And how did God view their stubborn unbelief?

Back to Hebrews 4:2, what good news (of rest) have we also had proclaimed to us?

Why was the message useless to them?

What do Christians have, or need to have, to successfully enter God’s rest?

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The verses quoted in 3:7-11 and 3:15 come from Psalm 95. Turn and read the Psalm, and note, what is the opening idea of how we should approach God, and why? (Ps. 95:1-2)

The Psalmist continues by celebrating who God is in 95:3. How does this correlate with the theme of Hebrews?

What aspect of God's work demands our response in 95:4-7?

Who are "we" in 95:7?

When in Hebrews 4:3b-4 we have reference to God finishing his work, that still connects with the message of Psalm 95, which moved from reminding us of God's creative work and care to Israel's failure to follow their shepherd in the wilderness.

So what is the point in Hebrews 4:3-4 of the observation that God's work has been finished since the beginning?

Thus, the idea of rest after labor did not originate with the promise of the land flowing with milk and honey, but is anticipated where in scripture?

The only other mention of the Sabbath in any New Testament letter is Colossians 2:16-17, which describes the Sabbath and other sacred days and requirements of the Law as "a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ." Here in Hebrews what is the Sabbath pictured as a symbol of? (4:3-5, 9-11)

So again, in verse 6, what rest are we talking about entering into?

There are basically two times in reference here. One time is "today". When is today?

What comes after "today", at the time set by God, for those who are not disobedient?

In verse 8, even though Joshua had proclaimed the good news of rest in Canaan, what happened to that generation?

And later, even when Joshua led the next generation into Canaan, did they really find rest? Explain.

The promise of rest has not been revoked (see Matthew 11:28-30). Who is the promise for (Heb. 4:9).

About 300 years after Joshua's time, David still speaks of the promise of entering God's rest, still available for those who listen and believe. Why is it called "God's rest" here?

Why does the writer speak of entering God's rest in 4:10, what is he still comparing it to?

Connecting back to the shadow of the Sabbath again, what did God rest from?

What are we to rest from, in order to enter (not our own but) God's rest?

Is there a contradiction in saying "rest from your own work" in v.10 and then saying "make every effort to enter that rest" in v.11? Explain.

Notice that in verse 11 the injunction is expressed as a plural, a together responsibility, "let us". The expression "let us" is found in the NIV of Hebrews about 15 times, beginning in 4:1 and the



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last one in 13:15. Why would the author use this expression so many times, what is he conveying to us as Christians?

Since verses 10 and 11 both speak of entering rest, what is still being illustrated with the example of the Sabbath, and Canaan?

The warning in Hebrews 3-4 has mentioned the failure of disobedience several times. Disobedience to who and what, as focused on in verse 12?

The word was previously mentioned in 1:3, as doing what?

Note: the word of God is also explicitly mentioned in 5:12, 6:5, 12:5, 12:19 and 13:7

How is the word of God pictured here in 4:12?

What is the point of the description of the cutting and penetrating power of the word?

What can the word do for us?

What can the word do to us?

Is it a good thing or a bad thing that God, by the impact of his word on our lives (whether accepted or rejected) can see right through us in every way? Explain.

Clearly, God knows not only what we do, but what else?

So what is or will be hidden from God?

In the final statement of this warning section, what can we expect to do? (4:13)

In the structure of Hebrews, we can speak of the greater rest that God always had in mind for us people, a rest made possible by his work, and not ours, but requiring our belief and obedience to enter in. The condition of the heart is at issue, hardness being failure, but the word of God can penetrate the heart and provide the judgement of thoughts and actions that will enable our obedience. As with other reminders of the heroes and servants of the past, Joshua was a great spokesman for God, and a great leader of Israel, but was not able to bring God's people into the promised rest. Yet the rest still remains, and we can expect to enter it, by joining together in Christ and in faith to make every effort to enter that rest. We should have an overwhelming longing to join God in his rest that motivates obedience.

**VII. Hebrews 4:14-5:10**, Jesus a better high priest than Aaron, in a perpetual priesthood like Melchizedek, directly ordained by God.

Having reminded us that everything is open before God, and that we will give God an accounting for our lives, we are again reminded of the confidence we have in approaching God, because of Jesus.

What office of Jesus are we reminded of (recall 2:17-18)?

The Old Testament high priest went through the tabernacle or temple to approach God. Where has Jesus gone?

Who is our high priest identified as?

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Since Jesus is our great high priest, what should we do?

Once again, what is stressed about the nature of our high priest? (V.15)

So what is the essential sameness, and the essential difference, between us and Jesus?

Because of who Jesus is, what he has accomplished, and what he now does, what can we have in coming to God?

How is the presence of God described for followers of Jesus in verse 16?

What does that description mean to you?

Again, because of confidence in Jesus Christ, what can we expect to receive when we bring our troubles to the throne of God?

An idea was set forth in 2:17, and is now restated in 5:1. What must a high priest be, or where does a high priest necessarily come from? Why?

So, as already stated, what did Jesus have to be in order to serve as our high priest?

A couple of different functions of a high priest are described in 5:1-2. What are they?

We've already had a warning against being careless or drifting away (2:1-4) and a warning against being hard hearted (3:12-4:11). However, as highlighted in 5:2, who all is the Lord concerned about and trying to help?

What is suggested by the word "gently" (NIV) in dealing with those who are ignorant or going astray?

What do most high priests have to do, to be qualified? (5:3)

What is another qualification for the high priest in 5:4?

Did God call Jesus to be high priest?

What is the evidence the writer offers of God calling Jesus?

Since there is an eternal relationship between Father and Son that predates creation itself (1:2-3, 8-12), what would the Psalm be referring to by saying "today I have become your Father"?

Who was Melchizedek? (See Genesis 14:18-20)

What was apparently the biggest issue Jesus struggled with as a man? (V.7)

How did Jesus deal with his anguish?

We know that Jesus did die a horrible death. Why would the writer say that he was heard, then?

As described, why did God listen to Jesus, and what can we learn from this?

Despite his position, what did Jesus experience, and what did he learn in the process?

Why would it say that a person who never disobeyed "learned obedience"?

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Likewise, Jesus was perfect in the sense of not sinning, so what is meant by saying he was “made perfect” through his obedience and suffering?

What did Jesus become, by his obedience and suffering?

How are we supposed to respond or relate to Jesus?

Looking at Heb 5:1-10, what were the prerequisites to Jesus becoming high priest?

**VIII. Hebrews 5:11-6:12**, the need to learn and grow and produce.

What was holding back the Christians who first received this letter, limiting their ability to learn new things?

What should have happened in their Christian walk?

Instead of making progress toward teaching others, what was needed?

In discussing milk versus solid food, what are we really talking about?

So what would it mean, to say to a Christian, “you need milk”?

How does a Christian mature to consuming “solid food”?

Do you think believers today still may need to be reminded to “grow up” and take more responsibility? Explain.

In an encouragement to go toward maturity, what does the writer say we should move on from? (6:1)

List the things that are mentioned as elementary teachings here.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Are the topics mentioned here important or unimportant? Explain.

And why is it important to “leave the elementary teachings”?

Besides personal effort to practice and grow (as in 5:14), whose approval or assistance seems to be needed in Christian growth and maturity? (6:3)

In 6:4 we move on to the third warning in Hebrews. This is the worst possible alternative, not only being slow to grow and mature, but actually turning away from God.

What does impossible mean?

Note the very strong description in verse 4 to say that we’re talking about someone who really has been a Christian. What are the experiences listed?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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4a.

4b.

What can happen to a person who has genuinely known the Lord, had experience of the word and Spirit of God, and really known something of what God has promised? (6:6)

What does fall away mean?

Finally seeing what is “impossible” from verse 4, here in verse 6, what is it?

What does repentance mean and require?

There is an expression, “you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink.” Similarly, whose power or will are necessary for repentance to occur?

If a person knows the truth but refuses to live by it or conform to it, what can be done for them?

What heinous act is committed by the Christian who knows the truth but rejects it in their life?

Other scriptures encourage Christians to correct and sometimes join in discipline of Christians who persist in sin (1 Corinthians 5:4-5, 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15), in the hope that they will repent and be restored. While the teaching here in Hebrews 6 affirms that some people will fall beyond repentance, can we ever know that for sure about someone else, and not try?

Note that this passage is not at all about God’s willingness to accept a family member back, if they want to return. It is only about those who abandon their faith and never want to return.

In 6:7-8 how is the destiny of those who fall away illustrated?

In the illustration, what is the same for both pieces of land, and what is different?

Once again on the positive, if believers are reading the word here, and considering the warning, then what is the likely outcome? (6:9)

Verse 9 mentions “better things,” and then describes the better things as “things that accompany salvation.” What would such things be?

What is God’s character, or what is it not?

Verse 10 actually mentions some of the better things anticipated in verse 9, so what are some of the things that accompany salvation?

What needs to keep on happening, and for how long?

What does diligence mean (v.11) or what would be its opposite?

We have hope in Christ (previously mentioned in 3:6). What will happen to that hope if we do the “better things” mentioned here?

Reflecting back on the need to grow and mature, what should we not become?

Further along there will be a list of the kind of people mentioned here that we should imitate, what sort of people are they?

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So what are two things we need to develop in order to receive God's promised rest?

If the promise is an inheritance, who is it inherited by, and who is it inherited from?

In Hebrews Christians have been warned against carelessness, ignoring the great salvation made available in Christ. A second warning said, "don't harden your heart" by allowing sin and selfishness to seduce and deceive us. Now a third warning has reminded us that laziness leading to stagnation can result in the disaster of falling away. Failing to grow and be productive in Christ can lead to loss of conviction, loss of interest in serving the Lord, with nothing left that can be said to provoke repentance. However, no one who wants to continue in Christ need fear losing their inheritance, nor does anyone who has lapsed and wants to return need to be afraid of rejection by God. The only people God cannot reach or ultimately help are those who don't want what he offers.

**IX. Hebrews 6:13-20**, no promise is better than God's promise, and the better promise is fulfilled in Jesus.

Who did God make a promise to?

What assurance did God provide with that promise?

The promise referred to is found in Genesis 22:15-18, after Abraham had prepared to sacrifice his son to God. What had Abraham demonstrated at that time (see Genesis 22:18 and Hebrews 11:17-19)?

What did God promise Abraham?

In terms of the children of promise, Abraham is described as being 75 years old when God had first promised to make him a great nation (Genesis 12:1-4). Then he was 100 years old when Isaac was born (Genesis 21:5), and then lived to be 175 years old. Isaac became the father of Jacob and Esau at the age of 60. Thus Abraham lived long enough to see two grandsons into their teen years. Thus, when Hebrews speaks of "waiting patiently" (6:15), how long did Abraham wait, and how much of God's promise would you say he received?

When men make oaths, what is the general purpose?

What do men normally swear by?

The timing of God's oath, after Abraham had obeyed him by offering Isaac as a sacrifice, suggests that God had a reason for being even more emphatic in confirming his promise to Abraham at that time. According to Hebrews 6:16, what did God want to make clear?

Not even the sacrifice of the first born son and heir could stop God's promises being fulfilled. So what could?

Can God's promise be changed?

What about the oath that he added to the promise?

In these two things, and in general regarding God's character, what is it impossible for God to do?

The real point here is more contemporary and personal than a promise two thousand years old at the time Hebrews was written. What is the real point for us in these verses?

Hope has been mentioned now in 3:6, 6:11, and 6:18-19. What is this hope?

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Since the hope is described as “offered to us”, where does it come from?

If we “take hold of the hope,” then where are we anchored?

What is an anchor for?

And so, what is our hope good for?

What is the place Jesus has gone described as?

In the material tabernacle Moses built, what was in the inner sanctuary behind the curtain? (See Exodus 26:31-34)

Simply put, only the high priest was ever allowed to enter the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle Moses built, and then only after the proper sacrifices on the Day of Atonement (see Leviticus 16). On whose behalf would the high priest go behind the curtain (Leviticus 16:15)?

For whose sake has Jesus gone to the inner sanctuary in heaven?

Since Jesus “went before us” what does that suggest that we can or will do?

In fact, what is our hope described as doing? (Heb 6:19)

The high priest under the Law of Moses took the blood of atonement to the “mercy seat” or “atonement cover” on the Ark of the Covenant. When Jesus went behind the curtain, where did take the blood of atonement (ie, his own blood)? See 2:17, 4:14, 16.

God’s promise to Abraham was irrevocable. What about the priesthood He bestowed on Jesus?

Hebrews sets forth the idea that Jesus is God’s chosen high priest, reminds us of how vitally important it is to keep learning and practicing and teaching what we understand, so that we will grow and understand more. Then we have the assurance that God’s part in achieving our success is secure beyond any doubt. What he promised Abraham he set in motion, and fulfilled. What he has done through and for Jesus, in our behalf is also unstoppable and unchangeable.

**X. Hebrews 7:1-28**, the better—perfect—priest with the better covenant from God.

What two “offices” did Melchizedek occupy?

Where had Abraham been before he met with Melchizedek?

At that time, who gave whom a blessing?

And at that time, who gave whom a tithe or tenth of what he had?

What does the (Hebrew) name Melchizedek mean?

And what does the Hebrew phrase “king of Salem” (salem = shalom) mean?

Since Melchizedek was certainly a man (don’t forget 5:1-4), in what sense was he without father or mother, as compared to Abraham or compared to the priests who served in the temple of Israel?

## Hebrews: the book of better things

Again, Melchizedek certainly was born and died, but we know nothing of those events or the years of his life. In what way does the lack of information about his origin or the extent of his life illustrate the Son of God?

In what sense does Melchizedek remain a priest forever?

What about Jesus, how is the Son of God a priest forever?

Since no man among the Hebrews was more honored than the patriarch Abraham, what status does that suggest for Melchizedek, since Abraham gave him the tithe?

In the age when the book of Hebrews was written, who received a tithe from other Jews?

Abraham's great grandson Levi was ancestor to Aaron who fathered the priests of Israel. So, when Abraham honored Melchizedek, who in a sense was honoring the former priest king? (V.9-10)

If symbolically Levi honored Melchizedek through Abraham, and all other Israelites honored Levi's descendants through tithes given to the priests, then who all symbolically acknowledged God's chosen priest?

In the rhetorical question of 7:11 what is shown to be needed, besides more Levite priests?

And what did not come through the priesthood of Levi's heirs, or the Law that accompanied it?

If Jesus' priesthood had been in the order of Aaron, instead of the older order of Melchizedek, then what would still be in force?

In order to change the priesthood, what else of necessity had to change?

In fact, could Jesus have been a priest under the Law? (V.13-14)

Why or why not?

Clarifying the argument that Melchizedek symbolized Jesus, how is Jesus' priesthood distinctive as to lineage and length of life?

What sort of life does Jesus have (v.16)?

If Jesus has fulfilled the commission of the Psalm, being a priest in the order of Melchizedek, then what has happened to the priesthood initiated at Sinai in the Law (v.17-18)?

We can find other passages that affirm that the Law given through Moses was as good as any law could be. Even so, how did it fall short (v.18-19)?

What Jesus has brought about is not described here as a better law, but a better what (v.19, and recall 6:18-19)?

And again, what is emphasized about what Jesus has accomplished for us in 7:19?

There was a former emphasis on the oath that accompanied God's promise to Abraham. Now another oath, equally unchangeable, is brought to our attention. What had God sworn about Jesus?

## Hebrews: the book of better things

In 6:17 the promise to Abraham is guaranteed with an oath. Here though, what is the guarantee of the better covenant in 7:22?

Why didn't the Levite priests serve endlessly?

Since Jesus already overcame death (recall 2:14-15), how long does his priesthood endure?

Since he is always priest, what are we again reminded of regarding his service in our behalf (7:25)?

How can we come to God, and what can we expect if we do?

So, Jesus is mentioned as doing two things for us in 7:25, what are they?

Note the characteristics ascribed to Jesus in 7:26. What are they?

Why do these traits make Jesus the kind of high priest we need?

In contrast to the sons of Aaron, what did Jesus never need to do, and what did he need to do exactly once?

What is the unique and all sufficient sacrifice Jesus offered?

Reflecting on one of the basic reasons the Law itself was weak (7:18), what sort of men carried out its requirements (v.28)?

Reminding us again of Jesus' status as Son of God, rather than son of Levi or Aaron, what has Jesus achieved (v.28)?

The writer of Hebrews has carefully built a case for seeing Jesus as supreme in every way, so that we can see his adequacy as the one and only high priest we need in dealing with God, and his covenant as the one and only means of access to God. Jesus is not somewhat better than angels, he is superior in every way. Likewise, his covenant is not somewhat of an improvement over what was given through Moses, it is better in every way and completely adequate for our salvation, and ongoing access to God with a the supreme intermediary, Jesus himself, representing us day by day.

**XI. Hebrews 8:1-13**, the better covenant and better ministry.

“Such a high priest” refers back to the conclusion in chapter 7. What sort of high priest is Jesus?

Where did Jesus go and what did he do (v.1)?

What would it mean, to sit at the right hand of the throne?

What “office” of Melchizedek does this correspond to?

What else is Jesus doing (v.2)?

There was still a temple in Jerusalem at the time Hebrews was written, but what earlier structure did the writer use to illustrate the priest's service?

The tabernacle set up in the desert of Sinai had represented the dwelling of God among the Israelites. Who set up the true dwelling of God?



## Hebrews: the book of better things

In Heb. 1:10, 2:3, and 7:14, who is referred to as “Lord”?

Most likely then, who is “the Lord” who set up the true sanctuary? (Consider also John 14:1-4)

What is required for a high priest to fulfill his service?

Before Jesus ascended into heaven he had explained several reasons for his departure (see John 14-16). What is one reason expressed here in Heb 8:4?

How was the function of the priests on earth established (v.4)?

No matter how grand the temple Herod remodeled was (see John 2:20, Mark 13:1), what was its true nature (8:5)?

Offering us an insight into why the tabernacle is used as an illustration, rather than the rebuilt temple of the first century, where had that design come from?

How much freedom did Moses have to modify or improve on the design God revealed to him?

So, the ministry of the Levite priests was “prescribed by the law” and they served at a sanctuary that was to follow a specific pattern given by God. How does Jesus’ priesthood compare (8:6)?

Not only is Jesus’ priesthood superior, what else is?

The old covenant had promised “rest”, peace and prosperity in the promised land if Israel would keep God’s covenant. What promises is the new covenant founded on?

In 8:7-8 we are reminded of why a covenant based on law will always be flawed. No matter how good the law, what weakens it, where is the flaw?

Quoting from Jeremiah 31 in the next few verses, what had God promised at a time when Judah was on the verge of destruction?

How did God describe the new covenant in his promise (v.9)?

Again, what had always been the problem with the covenant of the Law (v.9)?

Instead of laws written on stones, what was God’s plan for the new covenant? (see also Deut. 4:13 and 2 Corinthians 3)

How do God’s commands get into people’s minds and hearts?

Under the Sinai covenant, what did it take to be part of the covenant people?

Was it possible to be under the covenant but not know the Lord?

Under the covenant of Christ, what is required to be part of the covenant people?

In the Christian covenant, would it make sense to say to a fellow believer, “know the Lord”? (v.11)

Why or why not?

Who are the covenant people in v.12?

## Hebrews: the book of better things

In rather strong language, how is the covenant of the Law described in v.13?

Even though temple practices had not yet ended when Hebrews was written, what prediction was made about the old covenant?

Paul also wrote of the fading glory of the covenant written on stones (2 Cor 3), versus the increasing glory of the ministry of the Spirit. In a literal way, the functions of the priesthood and the ability to keep the covenant of commandments ended in 70 a.d., a few years after this letter was written, when the Jerusalem temple was destroyed. Since that time it has not been possible to keep the law, and the required rituals have been allegorized into symbolic observances and human traditions that cannot meet the requirements of the old covenant. The solution to the need that the old covenant was never able to meet, even with the temple and the offerings, the need of being sinless before God, has however been met in the better promises of the better mediator of the better covenant who serves in the better sanctuary at the right hand of the majesty in heaven.

### **XII. Hebrews 9:1-10**, the better sanctuary

Our previous section ended with the idea of an old covenant, flawed by human failure, that was obsolete and disappearing, while a new and superior covenant had been brought into being by a better high priest. That theme continues with a focus on the sanctuary where God is approached.

How many rooms did the tabernacle have?

What were the rooms called?

What divided the rooms?

What furniture pertained to the first room, the Holy Place?

What furniture pertained to the second room, the Most Holy Place?

Even though the golden altar sat in front of the curtain in the first room, its smoke was to envelope the ark in the second room, and so the altar was described as belonging to the inner sanctuary (see 1 Kings 6:22). The ark also had three other things associated with it, what were they? (v.4)

What was on the stone tablets? (See Deut. 9:10)

Remembering the discussion of the old and new covenants in chapter 8, how are the stone tablets identified or described here? (v.4, and see Deut. 9:9-11)

And what sat over the ark, with the stone tablets inside?

Note the word Glory in v.5, reminding us that God chose to reveal some of his glory to Israel, enthroned between the golden cherubim. God had used these things to an end, namely bringing Christ and his kingdom into the world, but he had truly used them in some incredible ways.

Not discussed here, but why was it important that the atonement cover, where God was enthroned among the Israelites, and where the blood of atonement was sprinkled each year, was over the top of the stone tablets of the covenant?

As previously indicated (in 8:5), there was a pattern in the arrangement of everything in the tabernacle. The pattern included the priestly functions. What regularly happened? (v.6)

## Hebrews: the book of better things

What happened just once a year?

Who all could enter the Most Holy Place, and under what circumstances?

We're told that the Holy Spirit was using these limitations of access to make a point about this whole kind of approach through regulations and offerings. What was the point in v.9?

Why is it important that a worshiper of God have a clear conscience?

The suggestion here is that a clear conscience doesn't come from never sinning, because everyone is guilty of sin, but from knowing real forgiveness, which can't come through the things listed in v.10. What are these things that won't do the job?

But what had come, so that the limited pattern might be replaced?

The study of the tabernacle, with its precious materials and careful craftsmanship and rules of handling can yield numerous insights into the character of God, and what he desires in the hearts of true worshipers. Those things were truly a shadow, an advance glimpse, of what God would for us (that we could never do for ourselves) through Christ. The discussion of the blood of Jesus that follows will make the contrast between the old, great as it was, and the new, better in every way, even sharper.

**XIII. Hebrews 9:11-28**, the better sacrifice that validates the better covenant.

Having asserted that the regulations, priesthood, and equipment associated with the old covenant were until God provided the better answer which they foreshadowed, who has now come bringing fulfillment?

Consistent with the theme of Hebrews, what is said about the "tabernacle" where Jesus went as high priest?

How many times did Jesus enter, or ever need to enter, the real Most Holy Place where God is?

Instead of animal blood, what did Jesus enter with?

Instead of atonement for a past year of the sins of the nation of Israel, what did Jesus bring about, through his blood?

What could the blood and ashes of the old covenant sanctify?

Again, what is the cleansing agent in v.14?

Who worked with Jesus to bring about his sacrifice of himself?

Who did Jesus offer himself to?

The sacrifices of atonement under the law had to be animals without flaw. What about Jesus?

While the sacrifices and rituals of the law could provide the outward cleansing God required of his people, what does Jesus sacrifice accomplish?

Because of Jesus, what are we able to have and do?

What is the purpose of Jesus mediation, and the purpose of the new covenant (v.15)?

## Hebrews: the book of better things

Not only does Jesus provide redemption for those who believe in him after he gave himself for our sins, but for who else (v.15)?

So when God promised cleansing and forgiveness under the old covenant, with its inadequate animal sacrifices, what was he always planning to make the cleansing real?

What causes a will or testament to become legally binding (v.16-17)?

So what did the blood of the animals under the old covenant foreshadow?

After God had spoken (the ten commandments) from the mountain, and Moses wrote down those words and other regulations God had given, what did Moses do to validate the covenant and the people's commitment to it? (v.19-20, and see Exodus 24)

Later, what else was sprinkled with blood?

Under the law what was required for nearly all purification, and for forgiveness of sins?

If the copies or shadows under the law were sanctified with animal blood, what had to happen for the heavenly reality of an enduring covenant and eternal purification?

Jesus didn't go into the tabernacle (or temple) that men had built. Where did he go, and why is he there? (v.24)

Again there is a strong emphasis on the uniqueness of what Jesus has done, once and for all. What has he done, never to be repeated or supplemented?

How many times did or will Jesus enter into the world to take away sin?

How many times does any human ordinarily live and die?

What will happen the next time Jesus appears?

So Jesus has appeared in this world exactly how many times so far, and will appear exactly how many more times?

What has Jesus already taken care of, and won't be doing again when he next appears?

Though his next appearance is for judgment, what does that mean for his people? (v.28)

Note, how are Jesus' followers described in v.28? Why?

Jesus self-sacrifice has been described here in terms of its uniqueness, sufficiency, and finality, and also in terms of its necessity for all who have ever lived, both before and after the cross. As described, the covenant of commandments was sufficient for those who put their trust in it only because God already intended to present the sacrifice that would meet their needs, his own son.

**XIV.** Hebrews 10:1-18, the finality and effect of the better sacrifice offered by Jesus. What was described as a "shadow" in Heb 8:5?

And what is described as "shadow" here in 10:1? (See also Colossians 2:16-17)

What is the law unable ever to do?

## Hebrews: the book of better things

Since the worshipers were not cleansed once and for all by the sacrifices under the law, what did the sacrifices do instead, each year?

In verse 4, what is impossible?

Consider, if the law could not ever make its practitioners perfect, and the blood of animals could never take away sins, what was the point?

Because of (“therefore” in v.5) the inadequacy of the law and sacrifices in dealing with sin, what happened, as God had planned and promised?

The quotation from Psalms suggests that the sacrifices weren’t for God, he didn’t want or need them. So why would he have commanded them?

Again, who came to do what needed to be done, that the law and sacrifices looked forward to, but could not do?

What did the Christ come to do (v.9)?

In v.9 what is set aside by Christ?

And in v.9 what is established?

What does the will of God that Christ established accomplish, that the law and sacrifices could not?

By what means is holiness accomplished?

Whereas the old covenant sacrifices, and their cleansing, were not once and for all, what about Jesus’ sacrifice of his own body?

How is Jesus contrasted with the priests who served under the law in vv11-12?

Having accomplished the whole purpose of sacrifice in his one offering, and being glorified to reign at God’s right hand, what is Jesus waiting for now? (v.13)

In 10:14 the writer speaks of something that is accomplished, and something that is in process. What is accomplished for the beneficiaries of his sacrifice?

And what is in process for those same people?

Jesus’ sacrifice is sufficient to enable us to stand unblemished before God. What processes might be involved in making us holy? (Recall passages such as 2:1, 2:17-18, 3:13, 4:16, 5:14, etc.)

As indicated in the prophecies quoted again in 10:15-17, rather than an annual reminder of sin, what do we have in the new covenant?

If the sins have been truly forgiven, what is no longer needed?

These verses have emphasized the sufficiency of Jesus’ sacrifice to meet our need for forgiveness, whoever we may be. One answer for all people of all times, the body and blood of Jesus who is exalted to the right hand of God and working toward the final rest for God’s people when every enemy has been brought low.

## Hebrews: the book of better things

**XV. Hebrews 10:19-39**, superior access to God through Jesus, and greater responsibility to stand fast, with better help to succeed.

The fourth warning of Hebrews is embedded in this section, the warning not to keep on sinning. It is surrounded by the assurance of the amazing cleansing we have in Christ that enables incredible access to God, on the one hand, and a reminder of past commitment to Christ at great cost that should encourage continued dedication to him in all circumstances on the other.

From previous references to the shadow tabernacle, what should be found in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly dwelling?

How can we come into that place, that presence (what attitude)? (v.19, and recall 3:14)

By what means can we go there?

Why is this assurance so important for us?

What is our living way through the curtain that once separated us from God?

If the living way is his body, where does that put us (what is our involvement in his body)?

How is Jesus described in v.21, and how is this to our benefit?

What does Jesus have charge of?

In entering the Most Holy Place, who are we approaching?

How should we be equipped to come before him?

Those who are in Christ have had a physical cleansing or washing of the bodies, what is that?

There is more here than mere ritual washing with water (9:10), because what is sprinkled (9:14), and where is it sprinkled, at the time of cleansing (10:22)?

Again we are reminded of the importance of a clear conscience in approaching God (10:22, 9:9, 9:14). What does it take to truly provide a clear conscience?

We've previously been encouraged to hold on to the hope that is anchored behind the curtain (6:18-19). What does it mean to hold it unswervingly?

And what would it mean to profess hope, or to profess this particular hope?

What's the basic reason we can enter God's presence with confidence and keep on professing our hope (v.23)?

Back to the one-another needs we saw in 3:13, what do we need to do for one another (10:24)?

What does the word "consider" suggest for each of us about our approach to group meetings?

And what is it we're supposed to be considering?

Who all needs to be spurred on toward love and good works?

The NIV uses this word "spur". Where are spurs usually used, and why?

## Hebrews: the book of better things

Do we necessarily always want or like what we need from our brothers, to get us to be productive in Christ?

Nevertheless, what must we not give up?

The word habit here is used in reference to not meeting, instead of meeting. What is a habit, and how would a Christian develop of not-meeting-habit?

Again, "let us" do what? (10:25)

In stark contrast to the value of encouraging and spurring one another on, what must we not do in v.26?

Notice the statement about sacrifice we had in 10:18. Is no further sacrifice for sin a good thing, or a bad thing?

Now in 10:26, what if one who has been cleansed and knows rejects that one sacrifice and chooses to live in sin. Is no further sacrifice for sin a good thing or a bad things?

As has been stressed in the three previous warnings of this book where is there go apart from Christ, who else is there to turn to?

Anyone who chooses the bondage of sin over Christ has the same expectation, what is it?

How are those who stand condemned described or identified in 10:27?

Rejection of the Law of Moses was a terrible thing, with what consequence?

If we reject and mock not the Law, but Christ himself, what should we expect?

What are the grievous acts ascribed to the person who rejects Christ by continuing in sin after having been washed? (v.29)

This warning is not about erring or slipping, not about struggling to do right and sometimes failing to do so. We've been assured repeatedly that Jesus is a sympathetic high priest who understands our weaknesses, and gives us help, and mediates for us. So what is this about?

When all is said and done, if not redemption in Christ, then what?

Not only will those who never came to Christ face judgment, but who will God judge (v.30)?

We've already had assurance of what we need to be able to stand before God clean and with a pure conscience. What is it?

Without that, what could we expect at judgment?

What attributes are ascribed to God in dealing with his enemies in vv26-31?

However, what past evidence provides assurance of better ongoing performance for the believer?

Just what had some of those Christians experienced because of their profession of faith?

Why is it important to not only put up with persecution ourselves, but to stand up with others who are persecuted?

## Hebrews: the book of better things

What could motivate joy in suffering and loss (note we are still talking about better things, v.34)?

So doing what v.26 warns against would amount to what, in verse 35?

The confidence that brings us boldly to the throne of grace, what will it produce or receive?

What do we need to do... and keep on doing... in v.36?

What will the outcome be?

Despite an interval of many years of human experience since it was first written, exactly what should our continued expectation be? (10:37)

When he comes, what will there be time for?

How can we live when the Lord appears?

At Mt. Sinai, the hearers of the voice from the mountain shrank back. What does God want from us (which connects back to 10:19)?

How are the two camps of God's opponents and God's redeemed summed up in 10:39?

One might say that the worst thing anyone can do is draw back from God. He wants a people who will trust him and joyfully enter his presence. Jesus has made it possible for us to be such a people. Choosing sin, or anything else over God or as a barrier to keep God at a distance is the worst kind of disaster. This section of Hebrews has put Christian assembly before us as a command, and necessary preparation for the coming day of the Lord, a necessary discipline for keeping one another on track and engaged in doing God's will. Clearly, Christians need the church, the body of Christ, one another, to succeed in holding on to hope and overcoming sin, so that we can continue to confidently approach God with a clear conscience.

**XVI. Hebrews 11:1-39 (and including 12:1-3)**, the role of faith, its value and some achievements of the faithful, and that today's believer has a better base, promises now fulfilled.

This is probably the best known section of Hebrews, sometimes referred to as the "Faith Chapter." We have numerous examples of people who did persevere in their faith (as encouraged at the end of chapter 10), sometimes at great personal cost, and now provide a testimony of many witnesses (recall 10:28), all pointing toward Christ, the greatest example of faith (12:1-3).

### Old Testament Heroes of Faith

Hebrews 11:1-3, the role of faith

What does faith do for us, what is its value and purpose?

What is one thing that we can only know or understand by faith?

Why?

Are there other things we can only understand by faith?

Explain.

Hebrews 11:4, the example of Abel

How is Abel remembered as an example of faith? (Note: the brief record of Abel's life, found in Genesis 4:1-8.)

What did Abel do that God viewed favorably?



## Hebrews: the book of better things

How was Abel's offering better than his brother's?

What happened to Abel and why? (See Genesis 4:1-8)

According to Hebrews 11:4, what was the distinctive thing that really set apart Abel's offering?

How was Abel described, and again, why?

Even though Abel lived near the very beginning of the world, what is he still doing?

How does Abel speak "by faith"?

Hebrews 11:5-6, the example of Enoch

What remarkable experience did Enoch have, because of his faith? (The short account of Enoch's life is in Genesis 5:18-24.)

All in all, what do we know about Enoch?

What do you think it means when Genesis says "Enoch walked with God"?

As we read in Hebrews 11:5, where did Enoch go?

And what was Enoch commended for?

How did Enoch please God?

What is impossible?

What do we need to come to God?

Why is it important not only to believe God is real, but also to believe he rewards those who seek him seriously?

Hebrews 11:7, the example of Noah

Noah's story is found in Genesis 5:28--9:29

As we see in Hebrews 11:7, what motivated Noah to build an ark?

What was Noah's reason for building the ark?

In a sense, Abel's faith cost him his life. What did Noah's faith cost him?

What did each of those men gain from faith, despite the apparent cost?

Hebrews 11:8-19, the example of Abraham and Sarah

Abraham's story is found in Genesis 12-25

What was the first noteworthy act attributed to Abraham's faith?

Where did Abraham live, after God called him?

What was his life like there?

## Hebrews: the book of better things

Two more generations of Abraham's family are mentioned as having the same way of life, who were they?

What did Abraham and his descendants have to hold on to?

What was Abraham's goal, and how is it different than the goals people often have for their lives?

As noted in Hebrews 11:11-12, besides leaving his homeland and becoming a nomad because of his faith in God, what else did faith accomplish in the lives of Abraham and Sarah?

Note also that in the footnote of the NIV, or the rendering of these verses in the NKJV, Sarah is also commended for her faith:

Heb 11:11-12 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.<sup>12</sup> Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude — innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. (NKJV)

Who did Abraham and Sarah look to for the fulfillment of their dream of many years, themselves, or God? Why?

Because they continued to believe and trust God, what was accomplished for them and through them? (11:12)

Hebrews 11:13-16, the faith perspective

Of all the promises God made to Abraham, promises that shaped his life choices, how many did Abraham actually see fulfilled in his life?

What was Abraham's attitude about this world, and what was his goal?

How does God in turn feel about people like Abraham?

And what has God prepared for Abraham, Abel, Noah, and all?

Hebrews 11:17-19, the cost of faith

How had God tested Abraham?

What had Abraham done at that time by faith?

What was the potential loss, from a human point of view?

What had Abraham concluded, because of his faith?

What did Abraham receive, in a sense, because of his faith?

Hebrews 11:20, the blessing of Isaac

What act of faith is attributed to Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah?

## Hebrews: the book of better things

How would blessing his sons Jacob and Esau be a show of faith on Isaac's part?

### Hebrews 11:21, Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh

When Jacob himself was an old man and dying, what did he do that was noteworthy for faith?

In that process of blessing sons and grandsons, who were those fathers depending on to bring about the blessings?

So in blessing his grandsons, how did Jacob show his faith?

### Hebrews 11:22, Joseph's faith

Joseph had an event filled life that demonstrated faith again and again. What episode in his life are we reminded of here?

How did Joseph's long range funeral plans show faith?

### Hebrews 11:23, Moses' parents faith

When Moses was born, what did his parents do because they believed in God's purposes?

His parents had some idea that he was special, so who or what did they disobey in their faith?

Saving little Moses is presented here as an act of great boldness on the part of Moses' parents. Where did that boldness come from?

### Hebrews 11:24-28, Moses' own faith

As a man, what decision did Moses make for himself?

Who did he identify with, and what would that cost him?

Why would it have been a sin for Moses to continue living the life of a prince in Egypt?

Though Moses would not have known just how God was planning to bring redemption through Christ, by his choice, whose side was he on and why?

Do most people choose mistreatment with God's people or the short term pleasures of sin?

And do most people choose disgrace for Christ or the treasures of the dominant culture?

Are we willing to accept disgrace for Christ and mistreatment with God's people?

In the story of Moses at Sinai after the incident of the golden calf (Exodus 32-34) it becomes apparent that Moses had a grasp of greatness of God's glory, and of life after death and eternal rewards. What was he seeking, by faith?

When Moses left Egypt at the head of the Israelite mob, he was threatened with execution by the greatest ruler of the age with the mightiest army in the world. Was he afraid? Why or why not?

What else did Moses do by faith, and what did it accomplish? (11:28)

## Hebrews: the book of better things

### Hebrews 11:29-30, Israel's best moments, when faith prevailed.

What huge victories, 40 years apart, were accomplished for Israel by faith, and not by their own numbers or might?

### Hebrews 11:31, Rahab's faith

Who was Rahab? (See also Joshua 2:8-11, 6:22-25, and consider Matthew 1:5)

What saved Rahab's life? (2 answers)

### Hebrews 11:32-38, the multitude of other faithful witnesses

In general terms, who are the people listed in 11:32?

What sort of things were accomplished for them or through them, because they trusted God?

What personal transformations did these people experience? (v.34b)

Does faith still make weak people strong and ineffective people effective, or was that just in former times? Explain.

What are some of the miracles people experienced by faith in these verses?

What are some of the hardships endured through faith in these verses?

Again, in v.35, what perspective motivated these people of faith?

In encouraging perseverance in Hebrews 10:32-34, the Christians of the first century were reminded of some of the personal hardships they had experienced. What had happened to faithful people in other generations?

What does the phrase in v.38, "the world was not worthy of them," mean?

### Hebrews 11:39-12:3, the true outcome of faith and its best example

What did Abel, Abraham, Joseph, and the various others receive for their faith?

What was still missing or waiting?

Who had God actually planned something better for?

For both Old Testament saints and New Testament saints, what is key to being made perfect? (Recall 9:15)

How do Abraham and the others mentioned in Hebrews 11 serve us?

What should we do because of their testimony?

How does an athlete "run with perseverance"? How about a Christian?

Who should we focus on in our running of the race?

While Abraham and the others are "witnesses" for faith, what is Jesus?

What did Jesus do by faith?

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Where is Jesus because of his faith?

How should Jesus' struggle affect for our attitudes?

Who “wrote the book” on faith, and made it completely effective?

So then, who is the greatest example of faith?

Presented with many witnesses to the value of faith, all pointing toward the ultimate example of Jesus himself, we are encouraged to trust Jesus completely and imitate him without getting tired or giving up. Others have kept the faith, looking forward to the gift of God in Christ Jesus. Looking to them, and then being directed especially to Him, we too can prevail in any and all challenges and every circumstance, by faith in God through Jesus Christ.

**XVII.** Hebrews 12:1-13, encouragement to be better, to be a son through faith and obedience. God's discipline is better than permissiveness.

Recall that in 11:40 the Old Testament saints were referred to as being “made perfect” only “together with us.” In 12:2, what or who is key to perfecting our faith?

In 12:1, what hindrance(s) are to be discarded?

If life is a race, how should we run it?

Recalling where Jesus has been described as being, where is our focus if we fix our eyes on Jesus?

Why did Jesus accept the suffering of the cross?

What would the phrase mean, “the joy set before him”?

What aspect(s) of the cross are emphasized in 12:2?

In 10:24 what were we to consider?

Now in 12:3, what are we to consider?

Why is it so important to fix our eyes on Jesus and to consider him?

Since we have reference to perseverance, not growing weary, and not losing heart, what are we supposed to expect about living a life of faith?

How was sin described in 12:1?

And what must we do with sin in 12:4?

How far might the conflict go when we resist sin?

In summary of the teaching in 12:5-11, why do Christians have to expect and accept hardship and suffering?

When life gets hard, what should we think may be happening?

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What does it show, when God disciplines us?

Discipline includes punishment, but is not only punishment. What else might be included in discipline?

How should we respond to God's discipline? (v.5, 9)

What is the desired outcome of hardship and suffering in the lives of believers (12:10)?

Generally speaking, is discipline a pleasant process to undergo?

What does it produce though, and when?

So rather than giving up when there is a struggle, what are Christians supposed to do?

Would you say this is a solo activity or a together effort in 12:12-13?

When there is hardship or suffering we want to endure and prevail, and what else do we want to do in those hard times for others who are struggling?

Having reminded us of the challenges and sometimes tremendous sacrifices made by people of faith who we admire, and Jesus most of all, we are also reminded that faith may demand commitment during suffering from us as well, and helping others who are hurting or wounded. In all of this, we can still be assured that a loving process of training for holiness is being pursued by our heavenly Father.

### **XVIII. Hebrews 12:14-29**, the fifth warning; the better mountain, God's kingdom.

Once again we are enjoined to "make every effort" to achieve our goal (recall Heb 4:11), and to "see to it" that no one misses out (recall Heb 3:12). This passage includes the 5<sup>th</sup> stern warning of Hebrews, and again the warning is couched in terms of the greater covenant and the greater relationship now brought into being by Christ.

What two things are stressed as needing our utmost effort?

Is it always easy to "live in peace" with others? Explain.

How would you briefly define or describe holiness?

How important is it to live a holy life?

What do we need to watch out for, in ourselves and for each other? (v.15)

What might be a "bitter root" in the life of a Christian?

Who is affected when a "bitter root" grows? Why?

Besides the kind of attitude and relationship issues that might comprise "bitter root(s)", what else are we to guard against? (v.16)

Two different incidents in Esau's life are briefly reviewed here (from Genesis 25:29-34 and Genesis 27:1-40, esp. 34-38). What did Esau lose and miss out on?

How did Esau regard his inheritance rights (and what was more important to him)?

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What do people sometimes “sell” God’s grace for now?

Though Esau sold his inheritance rights as eldest son, what did he still want to obtain?

If we read the story of Jacob receiving his father’s blessing in Genesis, we see that Esau was disappointed and angry, but his anger and disappointment could not change what had happened. His father Isaac was disturbed about Esau’s loss, but couldn’t change the terms of what had been promised. What are we likely to accomplish in obtaining God’s grace by means of these same kinds of feelings? (Recall the warning in v.15)

What mountain and what events are the basis of the illustration in 12:18-21? (See Exodus 19)

In the midst of the signs mentioned, what did the voice from the mountain speak? (Exodus 20)

What was the reaction of the people who heard the voice?

How stern had the warning against approaching the mountain been?

In contrast to that physical, touchable mountain (that they were not to touch), what sort of mountain have Christians come to? (v.22)

Rather than a physical and geographic location, what is the nature of this “place”?

Several descriptive phrases are used to connect ideas of fulfillment and relationships in the new covenant of Christ. What was Mount Zion formerly, that has bearing on the idea of the church?

What was the physical city of Jerusalem, and then what does that tell us about the heavenly city (that “you have come to”)?

Whose city is this we’ve come to?

Who do we find in this city? (Several answers in vv 22, 23, 24)

What is the prevailing attitude in this assembly, of which Christians are a part?

Where is the citizenship of those who are the church?

Whose church is this?

How does this contrast with the preceding warning and reminder of Esau’s failure?

As we’ve been told, we have (confident) access to God by means of Jesus’ blood and priesthood. How does this fact, “you have come to God,” contrast with the reaction mentioned in regard to Mt. Sinai?

In the heavenly company of the angels and the church we also have the “spirits of righteous men made perfect.” Considering 11:40 and 9:15, who are these perfected spirits?

Once again, what is the defining or descriptive word for the covenant Jesus has brought in to being? (v.24)

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While Abel's blood still "speaks" because of his faith (11:4), what "speaks" a better message?

What is the better message or word of Jesus' blood?

The grand description of the place of the redeemed in 12:22-24 is still part of the warning begun in 12:14. So, what more are we to "see to" in verse 25?

How could we refuse or turn away from Jesus who warns us now from heaven?

A voice shaking the ground at Sinai was an awesome sign, but what kind of shaking is still coming?

How extensive or cataclysmic is the event the prophets foretold that we're being reminded of?

What is going to be removed, and what is going to remain?

What is it we are receiving, by means of our mediator of a new covenant?

How should we respond to the realization of what God is doing for us and giving to us?

Are there unacceptable ways to "worship God"? Explain.

How is God's nature pictured here, and what's the point?

Even though this section of Hebrews consists of a stern warning to live right and keep the right attitude toward God and toward our fellow human beings, it also contains an awesome description of how God views the church and the value he places on it, which should inspire us as we "make every effort" to live his way, and "see to it" that we (individually and collectively) don't lose what Jesus has provided, and magnificent and unshakable kingdom centered upon God himself.

### **XIX. Hebrews 13:1-8, instructions for better living.**

Having reminded us of the awesomeness of the God we approach in the previous verses, what actions and attitudes are we instructed to continue and remember?

What kind of love is it Christians are to share?

You never know who an unexpected guest or traveler might be... such as?

By mentioning "undercover angels", what was the writer intending to stir in us?

How should we feel about the trials and sufferings of others?

What is the right attitude toward marriage, no matter what the values of the culture?

A unique physical relationship between husband and wife is pure in marriage. What about any other sexual contact outside of marriage?

We have a "don't" and a "do" in verse 5. What are they?

What is the basis for being content with what we have?



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Once again encouraging Christian confidence, what premise are we reminded of in 13:6?

The book of Hebrews was apparently written in the 60s of the first century, in some respects the second generation of the church. As such, what were the Christians of the era (and now) to remember?

By the time this was written, what had probably happened to some of those first preachers and teachers of the gospel, the first generation of leaders?

As with the more ancient heroes of faith in chapter 11, what is to be considered and in regard to the human leaders we've actually known?

What is perhaps the most important thing to imitate about those who've taught us in the Lord?

And once again, while human leaders live and die and give a useful but imperfect example, who can we always rely on in every way, and why?

Living a Christian life calls for brotherly love and caring and sharing. It requires moral uprightness and fidelity, and a mind set on the eternal values of knowing God rather than the materialism of the age. But we are assured God is present with us to aid and guide and protect, and that he has provided human leaders to teach and direct, and most of all, we have the unshakable reality of Jesus Christ, our redeemer and atoning sacrifice and perpetual advocate before the Father.

### **XX. Hebrews 13:9-16, better offerings through Jesus.**

In the first century, and today, what kind of teachings could potentially misdirect Christians?

When the writers says don't be "carried away" what does that suggest about the appeal "strange" (strange = foreign, not of the Christian faith) teachings may have?

Following rules, such as dietary rules, may provoke certain positive feelings, but what is a better resource for strong hearts?

As stated here in v.9, what is the real value of special or ceremonial dietary rules or foods? Why?

Making it clear that again he is writing about turning back toward Jewish traditions, what contrast is brought back to our attention in v.10?

What would you understand the "altar" to be that Christians eat from, that Levitical (tabernacle) priests have no right to? (Consider John 6:33, 35, 41, 47-58)

Reminding us of the predominate comparison in the book, Christ's priesthood in the new covenant and the priesthood that originated at Sinai, what aspect of the Day of Atonement is emphasized here? (v.11)

How is Jesus likened here to the atoning sacrifice? (v.12)

We were told before that Jesus endured pain and shame to achieve victory (12:2-3), and what are we encouraged to do as well?

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Jesus made it possible, by his blood, for people to be holy (v.12), but what are we called to bear if we belong to him (v.13)?

What might the cost have been for a Jew to become a Christian, accepting the finality of Jesus' blood sacrifice?

And what may the cost have been for a gentile to embrace the Christian faith?

As with the Old Testament people of faith, (who experienced rejection and alienation in this world) what is it we are looking for?

Since the final sin offering has been presented by Christ, what remains for us to give in sacrifice to please God? (v.15-16)

So what does God want us to say, to talk about?

And what does he want us to do?

We have in the closing words of Hebrews reminders to stick with the teachings that originated with God, conveyed to us by Christ, through his apostles (Hebrews 1:1-3, 2:1-4), and nothing foreign to that source. We are reminded that the power behind our salvation isn't rules or rituals but the grace of God, accepted by faith, and that we have a unique relationship with God through Christ that no law or other system can achieve or share in. The importance of accepting the exclusion and separation that Christ experienced is also emphasized, with the affirmation that what we say and do in service through Christ is of great value, and pleasing to God.

### **21. Hebrews 13:17-25**, final instructions, requests, and personal comments.

Continuing with final practical instructions for the family of God, what are we commanded to do in v.17?

Is there any difference between obeying and submitting?

The instruction is supported with some validating reasons. What are some benefits of obeying church leaders?

Who benefits from submitting to church leaders?

What did the writer ask for?

The writer earlier asserted that the sacrifice Jesus made can clear our conscience, but what goes into continuing to have a clear conscience?

What did the author especially hope for, in connection with the prayers he requested?

In this epistle the covenant of Christ has been called better (7:22), superior (8:6), and new (8:8, 13, 9:15, etc.). How is it described here in 13:20?

In what sense was the blood of Jesus key to his own resurrection?

Jesus has been pictured as mediator and revelator, as king and high priest, and sacrifice, and

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various other roles in which he is the best example and best answer. What else is he described as in 13:20?

Jesus the Good Shepherd layed down his life for the sheep (John 10). Jesus the Great Shepherd rose from the dead and is our eternal guide and protector. Jesus the Chief Shepherd will also appear to judge and reward the unfaithful and the faithful (1 Peter 5:4).

In this prayer in 13:20-21, what was the writer asking in behalf of other believers?

So where do we get what we need to do God's will?

Who is working in the child of God, and to what end?

Once again, through whom are we able to do what pleases God?

What should Jesus receive, and for how long?

Obviously, some of the teachings regarding the law and the first covenant might have been difficult for those who received them, and the 5 stern warnings may have been distressing as well. So what does the writer appeal for in v.22?

Showing us that this writer was a close contemporary of Paul, and moved in the same general circles, who is mentioned in v.23?

What had Timothy apparently experienced in the recent past when this was written?

What area was the writer in at the time of writing?

Previously were were encouraged to remember leaders who first taught us about Christ, and then to obey current leaders in the church, now what else in v.24?

What do you think might be included in greeting our leaders, and greeting the Lord's people?

Peter and Paul often opened their letters with "grace and peace". How does this one end?

Hebrews 13 included basic reminders of moral and social responsibilities in the framework of the Christian covenant, an admonition to accept humiliation as part of the experience of being Christ-like, and directions for getting along with each other and facilitating the work of church leaders with cooperation and good will. The prayer in verses 20-21 is a powerful affirmation of the better things we enjoy in the covenant of Christ, with God's equipping and Christ's guidance in doing what God wants us to do. Hebrews powerfully affirms that through Christ, and within his new covenant, we have what God was always working toward in his dealings with all who came before Christ, the final answer to the problem of sin and the means of confident reconciliation with the God of peace, and assurance of a secure eternal destiny, if we want it.