

Hebrews



THRU the BIBLE

NOTES & OUTLINES WITH

J. Vernon McGee

EPISTLES



Hebrews

WRITER: Paul (?). Although the Authorized Version has the heading, “Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews,” there is still a question as to authorship. The American Revised Version corrects this and gives the heading, “The Epistle to the Hebrews.” In spite of the fact that the Pauline authorship cannot be confirmed in a dogmatic fashion, there is abundant evidence that Paul was the author. Both internal and external evidence support the authorship of Paul. The writer had been in bonds (10:34); he wrote from Italy (13:24); his companion was Timothy (13:23). The writing is Pauline and, in my opinion, Peter identifies Paul as the writer (2 Peter 3:15, 16; cf. 1 Peter 1:1).

DATE: Hebrews 10:11 reveals that it was written before the destruction of the temple by Titus in A.D. 70.

THEME: Coleridge said that Romans revealed the *necessity* of the Christian faith, but that Hebrews revealed the *superiority* of the Christian faith. This thought is expressed in the use of the comparative word “better,” which occurs 13 times. Here are some other words that express the theme:

“Perfect”—occurs 15 times (cognate words)

“Let us”—occurs 13 times

“Let”—occurs five times

Two verses, likewise, convey this “better” way:

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. (Hebrews 3:1)

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. (Hebrews 12:3)

OUTLINE:

I. **Christ better than Old Testament economy, Chapters 1– 10** (*Doctrinal*)

A. Christ is superior to prophets, Chapter 1:1-3

B. Christ is superior to angels, Chapters 1:4–2:18

1. Deity of Christ, Chapter 1:4-14

2. Humanity of Christ, Chapter 2

First Danger Signal: Peril of drifting, Chapter 2:1-4

C. Christ is superior to Moses, Chapters 3:1–4:2

Second Danger Signal: Peril of doubting, Chapters 3:7—4:2

D. Christ is superior to Joshua, Chapter 4:3-13

E. Christ is superior to the Levitical priesthood, Chapters 4:14–7:28

1. Our great High Priest, Chapter 4:14-16

2. Definition of a priest, Chapter 5:1-10

Third Danger Signal: Peril of dull hearing, Chapter 5:11-14

3. *Fourth Danger Signal: Peril of departing, Chapter 6*

4. Christ our High Priest after order of Melchizedek, Chapter 7

a. Christ is perpetual Priest, vv. 1-3

b. Christ is perfect Priest, vv. 4-22

c. Christ in His Person is perpetual and perfect Priest, vv. 23-28

F. Christ as our High Priest ministers in superior sanctuary by better covenant built upon better promises, Chapters 8–10

1. True tabernacle, Chapter 8:1-5
2. New covenant better than the old, Chapter 8:6-13
3. New sanctuary better than the old, Chapter 9:1-10
4. Superior sacrifice, Chapters 9:11—10:18
5. Encouragement, Chapter 10:19-25
Fifth Danger Signal: Peril of despising, Chapter 10:26-39

II. Christ brings better benefits and duties, Chapters 11–13
(Practical)

A. Faith, Chapter 11

B. Hope, Chapter 12

1. The Christian race, vv. 1, 2
2. Believers are now in contest and conflict, vv. 3-14
Sixth Danger Signal: Peril of denying, Chapter 12:15-29

C. Love, Chapter 13

1. Secret life of believers, vv. 1-6
2. Social life of believers, vv. 7-14
3. Spiritual life of believers, vv. 15-19
4. Special and personal benediction, vv. 20-25

COMMENT:

I. Christ better than Old Testament economy, Chapters 1– 10 (Doctrinal)

A. Christ is superior to prophets, Chapter 1:1-3

W. 1, 2—There is no introduction. Sir Robert Anderson suggests a reason why Paul did not open with the phrase, “Paul, an apostle to the Gentiles.” He was not an apostle to the nation of Israel (Hebrews), but they were “his brethren according to the flesh.” The principal reason that Paul omitted his name was that he was not popular among Hebrew believers or non-believers after he met the Lord Jesus Christ on the Damascus road. His name was like waving a red flag in front of a bull. Eusebius, in the fourth century, was the first to question the Pauline authorship.

Note series of contrasts:

“Sundry times”—(not a time word) rather, many utterances; *many separate revelations; diversity*

“Divers manners”—(through promises, law, ritual, dreams, visions, history, poetry, prophecy) *many ways, processes*

“In time past”—dispensation of Law

“In these last days”—dispensation of grace

Diversity vs. Unity (Person of Christ)

Processes vs. Finality (“This is My beloved Son, hear Him”)

Prophets vs. The Son

“Spoken unto us by his Son” is literally, *To us God spoke in Son*. “God spoke to us in One who has the character that He is a Son” (Bishop Westcott).

“The fathers” (see Romans 9:5). Who are the fathers? Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, et al.

“Prophets”—Israel had great regard for the prophets, built monuments to them. They were agencies of revelation. (The Bible does not argue the existence of God. Neither does it argue the fact of revelation.)

“In Son”—identified in 3:1 and also by seven inexhaustible statements that follow:

1 - **Program** for the future—“heir of all things.”

“Heir” (Luke 20:14)—although the world did not accept Christ, He is the predestined Lord of the universe.

2 - **Purpose** in everything—“by whom also he made the worlds [ages].” This gives purpose, optimism, and meaning to everything. This is the answer to the futility of Schopenhauer, the pessimism and meaninglessness of life in modern philosophy.

V. 3

3 - **Person** of God—“the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.”

“Brightness” is *outshining; effulgence*.

“Express image” is *steel engraving, the very image of His person*. God has said everything He has to say in Christ. He has no P.S. “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9).

4 - **Preserver** of all things—“upholding all things by the word of his power.” He not only created all things by His word, but He holds everything together. The universe would come unglued without His constant supervision. He is not an Atlas holding up the earth passively or a little Dutch boy with his finger in the dike. He is actively engaged in maintaining all of creation.

5 - **Pardon** for our sins—“when he had by himself purged our sins.” We have at this point only arrived at Bethlehem, His incarnation. He was born to die.

6 - **Provision** for the present—“sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” This is the message of Hebrews (see 4:14-16—“we have a great high priest”).

B. Christ is superior to angels, Chapters 1:4–2:18

1. Deity of Christ, Chapter 1:4-14

7 - **Praise** for the future—“so much better than the angels” (v. 4). Angels were prominent in their ministry to Israel in the Old Testament. The Law was given by the agency of angels (Psalm 68:17; Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19). Cherubim were woven into the veil of the tabernacle, and cherubim were fashioned of gold for the mercy seat. There was no representation of God in the tabernacle. There are 273 references to angels in the Bible. They were messengers, identified with the very throne of God.

Following are eight quotations from the Old Testament (six are from Psalms) that the writer uses to show that they teach the superiority of the Son over angels:

V. 5—Psalm 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14

V. 6—Psalm 97:7; Deuteronomy 32:43 (Septuagint)

V. 7—Psalm 104:4

W. 8, 9—Psalm 45:6, 7

W. 10-12—Psalm 102:25-27

V. 13—Psalm 110:1 (quoted in the New Testament more than any psalm). Psalms teach the deity of Christ. There is a more complete picture of Christ in the Psalms than in the Gospels.

W. 4-7—Christ is Son—angels are servants.

W. 8, 9—Christ is King—angels are subjects.

W. 10-13—Christ is Creator—angels are creatures.

A fivefold superiority:

1 - Sonship, v. 5

2 - Worship, v. 6

3 - Heirship, vv. 7-9

4 - Kingship, vv. 10-12

5 - Rulership, v. 13

2. Humanity of Christ, Chapter 2

First Danger Signal: Peril of drifting, Chapter 2:1-4

There are six danger signals in Hebrews, which are warnings to the people of Israel that they fail not to enter into the full blessings that God has provided through Christ. God warned the nation at Kadesh-barnea if they failed to enter into the land of Canaan. (This is the first of six highway markers to warn the reader.)

V. 1—Because the revelation they had received was superior to the Old Testament dispensation and came from One superior to angels, they were to pay particular attention, as their responsibility was greater.

“Let them slip” is *should drift past them*, indicating neglect—that is all. Neglect in any area of life is tragic. In a higher realm—hearing the gospel message and doing nothing about it—is infinitely more tragic. What must I do to be lost? Nothing.

V. 2—Angels brought important messages both of judgment and of good news: to Lot, a message of the impending doom of Sodom and Gomorrah; to Moses, a call at the burning bush. An angel executed the judgment on the night of the Passover in Egypt. The Law was given by the disposition of angels. An angel spoke to Balaam. Hezekiah was given a message by an angel concerning Assyria. In the New Testament, the angel Gabriel came both to Zacharias and to Mary.

V. 3—“How shall we escape?” The Welsh preacher began his sermon, “Friends, I have a question to ask. I cannot answer it, you cannot answer it, even God cannot answer it.” Then he gave this as his text.

“At the first began to be spoken by the Lord”—the Lord said, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10; see also Matthew 16:21; 20:28).

“Them that heard him” were apostles.

V. 4—These were the apostolic gifts that confirmed the message at the beginning.

CHAPTER 1—Exaltation of Christ, higher than angels

Angels are the norm

CHAPTER 2—Humiliation of Christ, lower than angels

Christ is the revealer of God—the representative of man.

W. 5-9—Person of the man Christ Jesus: Christ will subdue the world (v. 5). Christ was humiliated when He became man (Philippians 2:6-8). Man lost his dominion at the fall; Christ regained it at the cross. This is God’s original purpose with man (vv. 6-8); cf. Psalm 8:4-6.

V. 9—(Key of chapter 2):

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God, should taste death for every man.

“Taste”—not only the fact of death but the experience of what death is.

Humanity of Jesus	Not a man in whom God did something
	Not a religious genius
	Not a martyr to a cause
	Not a good example

Christ's humiliation accomplished two things:

1 - Got glory and honor to the person of Christ

2 - Procured man's salvation; made man's salvation possible

Christ took humanity to heaven. There is a *man* in the glory.

V. 10—God's heavenly purpose: "Bringing many sons unto glory." "Perfect" (Greek *teleiosai*) is to carry to the goal; consummate.

V. 11—"Sanctified" in Hebrews is not associated with the work of the Holy Spirit but with Christ. It is not purification but consecration; not condition but position.

V. 12—Psalm 22 is the psalm of the cross (see v. 22).

V. 13—See Isaiah 8:17, 18.

V. 14—His incarnation is real and genuine—"children of men."

V. 15—He brought salvation and deliverance from death.

V. 16—Christ left heaven, came past the angels, to fallen man.

V. 17—"In the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7). It was a real likeness to men, "closest where the traces of the curse of sin were more apparent—in poverty, temptation, and violent and unmerited death" (Vincent).

He is without sin. He became a High Priest that He might make propitiation (reconciliation; a mercy seat) for the sins of the people. Christ as High Priest is the subject of this epistle.

V. 18—He is able to have compassion and help those who are tested, for He endured the same.

C. Christ is superior to Moses, Chapters 3:1–4:2

CHAPTER 3

V. 1—Subject of this epistle.

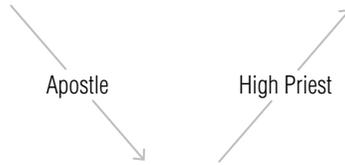
"Holy" is *set apart*.

"Brethren" refers to the Hebrews, those to whom the epistle is addressed (see Romans 9:3).

"Partakers" are companions ("fellows" of 1:9).

"Heavenly"—the Hebrews were an earthly people.

“Apostle and High Priest”—Christ came to this earth as an Apostle; He went back to heaven a High Priest.



V. 2—Moses was faithful (see Hebrews 11:24-29).

W. 3, 4—Christ is better than Moses. After showing His superiority to angels, it must be shown that Christ was better than Moses. Several years ago, the president of a conference of Jewish rabbis said that Moses was the greatest Jew who had ever lived. Since undoubtedly this was also in the minds of the Hebrews to whom Paul was writing, he shows the superiority of Christ:

The Builder of the house has more glory than the house.

Christ is the Creator; Moses is a creature.

W. 5, 6—Christ is a Son; Moses is a servant.

Christ is Apostle and High Priest; Moses was called to be both an apostle and high priest, but Aaron was made high priest (Exodus 4:14).

Moses was faithful as a servant in the house; Christ was faithful as a Son over the house.

Second Danger Signal: Peril of doubting, Chapters 3:7—4:2

W. 7-11—This is a quotation from Psalm 95:7-11. Israel in the wilderness is the warning. Because they doubted God, they never entered the land of Canaan.

“As the Holy Spirit saith” (v. 7)—the Holy Spirit is the Author of the psalm. David may have been the human author.

“Wilderness” (v. 8) is the place of death, unrest, aimlessness, and dissatisfaction.

“Heart” (vv. 8, 10, 12)—their problem was not intellectual; it was heart trouble.

“Rest” (v. 11)—Scripture presents a fivefold rest:

1 - Creation rest

2 - Entrance into Canaan

3 - Rest of salvation (Matthew 11:28)

4 - Rest of consecration (Matthew 11:29, 30)

5 - Heaven

V. 12-19—This is a warning against unbelief. Lack of faith can rob a believer of the enjoyment and satisfaction of salvation. He can even die a wilderness Christian (v. 19). The secret of the Christian life is *trust and obey*.

Types in the Old Testament:

1 - Egypt—sin

2 - Wilderness (Red Sea)—salvation

3 - Promised Land (Canaan)—satisfaction

CHAPTER 4

V. 1—“Let us” is one of the key expressions. There is a great deal of “let us” in Hebrews, but this is no mere “salad” epistle. The rest of Canaan is still available.

“Should seem to come short” is *lest anyone of you think he has come too late for it*.

V. 2—The message was heard but not believed.

D. Christ is superior to Joshua, Chapter 4:3-13

V. 3-11—“Rest” occurs eight times in this section. This rest is compared to the Sabbath rest of creation. God’s rest was the satisfaction of looking upon a creation and seeing that it was good, complete, and perfect. We are to rest in the perfect work of salvation that belongs to the new creation. This is the work of Christ for the sinner. God is satisfied with what Jesus did for the sinner—we are to enter into this satisfaction (v. 10).

V. 8—“Jesus” (KJV) is Joshua. Joshua led them into the land of Canaan, but he could not give rest.

V. 9—Key verse of this section—Sabbath rest.

W. 12, 13—Some expositors consider the “word” here to be Christ. We believe it is primarily the written Word.

“Quick” (KJV) (Greek *zon*) is *living*.

“Powerful” (Greek *energes*) is *energizing*.

“Two-edged” means that it cuts inward and outward; penetrating.

“Soul and spirit”—soul and spirit are sometimes used synonymously (see 1 Corinthians 2:9-12).

“Joints and marrow” (see Psalm 32:3).

“Discerner” is *critic*.

V. 13—Isaiah cried, “Woe is me! For I am undone ...” (Isaiah 6:5); and the publican cried, “God be merciful ...” (Luke 18:13), meaning, *Provide a mercy seat for me*.

E. Christ is superior to the Levitical priesthood, Chapters 4:14–7:28

1. Our great High Priest, Chapter 4:14-16

Christ is our High Priest (3:1). The pagan notion of priesthood colors our thinking. A pagan priest bars the approach to God, claiming mystical powers, and denies the finished work of Christ and the priesthood of all believers. All of us need a Priest—we have a lack and we need help. All have “hang-ups.” Christ is that Priest. Job cried for a daysman.

V. 14—“We have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens”—Christ was not a priest on earth. He became a priest when He ascended to heaven. He died down here to save us; He lives to keep us saved.

“Profession” is *confession*.

V. 15—“Touched with the feeling of our infirmities” is better translated, *touched with the experience of our weaknesses*.

“Like as we are” is literally *according to likeness*.

“Yet without sin” is *sin apart*.

V. 16—“Boldly” is with liberty, frankness, and perfect ease.

“Throne of grace” is mercy seat, formerly the throne of judgment.

1 - “Mercy” is negative (past)

2 - “Help” is positive (future)

In 1 John it is communion between Father and sons (sin breaks communion). Here it is a son needing help.

2. Definition of a priest, Chapter 5:1-10

This is the subject of Hebrews. The Jew would find it difficult to accept Christ as priest.

	1 - Prophet—past
Threefold office of Christ:	2 - Priest—present
	3 - King—future

V. 1—Definition of a priest:

“Taken *from among men*”

“Ordained *for men*” (on behalf of men)

“*To God*”

A priest goes from men to God; a prophet comes from God to men (see Exodus 7:1). The priesthood is not for *lost* sinners but for *saved* sinners. Aaron was not a priest until after Sinai. (Redemption took place at the Red Sea.)

“For sins” (plural, not singular)—He keeps the way open for men.

V. 2—“Compassion on the ignorant” refers to sins of ignorance (see Leviticus 4:2). “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man . . .” (Proverbs 14:12). “All we like sheep have gone astray ...” (Isaiah 53:6). Aaron was compassed with infirmity; Christ was touched with the feeling of our infirmity. He is a perfect Mediator. Aaron might condone those who had committed the sins that he also had committed; he might condemn those who committed sins that he himself did not commit. Christ can show mercy—not condone or condemn.

V. 3—There is no counterpart of this in Christ.

V. 4—This is the second requirement for a priest. He must be acceptable to God.

V. 5—When Christ was here on earth, He never intruded into the Holy of Holies. The quotation here is from Psalm 2:7 and refers to Christ’s resurrection.

Christ is a Son; Aaron is a servant.

V. 6—Melchizedek:

Genesis 14—history of Melchizedek

Psalm 110—prophecy of Melchizedek

Hebrews—interpretation of Melchizedek

In Genesis, the book of genealogies, there is no genealogy of Melchizedek. Nowhere is Christ said to be superior to him. Who was Melchizedek? Both G. Campbell Morgan and Lewis Sperry Chafer said that he was the preincarnate Christ.

Christ's priesthood is after Melchizedek, not after the Aaronic priesthood (Psalm 110:4).

V. 7—It is recorded that Christ wept on three occasions: (1) At the grave of Lazarus; (2) over Jerusalem; (3) in the Garden of Gethsemane. Why? Apparently, in the Garden of Gethsemane Satan attempted to slay Him before He went to the cross—in an effort to refute the Old Testament prophecy as to the manner of His death.

“And was heard in that he feared” is rendered *was heard on account of his godly fear*. Fear in itself is not a sin.

V. 8—He did not have to learn to obey (John 8:29). He was not disciplined by suffering, but it was as a human experience to help Him sympathize with other human beings.

“Became obedient unto death” (Philippians 2:8).

V. 9—“Perfect”—He reached the goal: attained full maturation.

V. 10—“Called” is *saluted* and refers back to Melchizedek.

Before discussing Melchizedek further, he must put up another warning signal.

Third Danger Signal: Peril of dull hearing, Chapter 5:11-14

V. 11—Christ as a priest after Melchizedek is a difficult subject that requires sharp spiritual perception. His readers had a low SQ (spiritual quotient).

“Hard to be uttered” means that it was difficult to make them understand; literally, *hard of interpretation to speak*.

V. 12—“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers (*by reason of the time you have been under instruction*), ye have need.”

“First principles” (Greek *stoikeia*, atoms) means *primary elements*.

W. 13, 14—“Full age” is full grown, maturation (see 1 Corinthians 3:1, 2; 1 Peter 2:1, 2). A baby cannot eat meat, but an adult can enjoy milk.

3. Fourth Danger Signal: Peril of departing, Chapter 6

V.1—*Leaving the word of the beginning concerning Christ* is the literal translation. It means for a builder to leave the foundation and go up with the scaffolding; or for a child in school to depart from ABCs to work on his A.B. or Ph.D. It is preparing believers for a trip up to the throne of God.

“Let us go on”—not horizontal but perpendicular.

“Perfection” is *maturity; full age* (5:14).

There are six foundational facts in the Old Testament which prefigured

CHRIST IN RITUAL, SYMBOL, AND CEREMONY:

1 - “Repentance from dead works”—“Not by works of righteousness which we have done” (Titus 3:5).

2 - “Faith toward God”—Old Testament ritual presented a faith in God by approaching Him through the temple sacrifices, not through Christ as High Priest.

V. 2

3 - “Doctrine of baptisms”—there were many washings in the Old Testament ritual.

4 - “Laying on of hands” was an Old Testament ritual.

5 - “Resurrection of the dead” as taught by the rabbis—in contrast to the resurrection of believers.

6 - “Eternal judgment” as taught by the Old Testament.

W. 4, 5—These are genuine believers—dull but not dead. They need milk—the unsaved need life.

“Impossible” for men, not for God.

THE FOLLOWING ARE MARKS OF THE SAVED, NOT OF THE LOST:

1 - “Once enlightened”

2 - “Tasted of the heavenly gift”

3 - “Partakers of the Holy Spirit”

4 - “Tasted the good word of God”

5 - “[Tasted] the powers of the age to come”

V. 6—"Fall away" (Greek *parapesontas*) is not apostasy. It means to fall down, stumble, err. Literally it is *and having fallen away*, a participle (there is no "if"). Peter fell down, but he was not lost—neither was John Mark.

"Repentance" has to do with fruit-bearing—"Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8).

"Crucify ... afresh" refers to Jewish believers returning to the Old Testament sacrifices.

W. 7-9—Fruit-bearing refers to the same fruit as in John 15:5, 6.

"Rejected"—see 1 Corinthians 9:27.

V. 9—This is the key verse to the entire passage—"things that accompany salvation"—*things that are connected with salvation* (Vincent).

W. 10-12—"Work and labor of love" is not salvation, but the fruit of salvation. (See author's detailed exposition of this in "Is It Possible for a Saved Person Ever to be Lost?")

V. 13—"For" closely relates this verse to the preceding passage. Abraham is our example. God made promises many times but "swore" only one time.

V. 14—See Genesis 22:15-18 and Hebrews 11:19.

V. 15—"Patiently endured"—a new assurance came through trusting God ("full assurance of hope" [v. 11]).

V. 16—Men take an oath on something greater than they are. God did not swear by sun, moon, or stars.

V. 17—God wants His own to have a fresh and renewed assurance about the Word of God.

V. 18—"Two immutable things"—(1) the death and resurrection of Christ; (2) His ascension and intercession.

V. 19—"Anchor" refers to "the hope set before us" (v. 18).

V. 20—"Forerunner"—Aaron represented the nation Israel before God, but he was not a forerunner. Christ leads us into the very presence of God (see 1 Corinthians 3:20-23; 2 Corinthians 4:15-18).

4. Christ our High Priest after order of Melchizedek, Chapter 7

a. Christ is perpetual Priest, w. 1-3

V. 1—"For" refers us back to 6:20. Melchizedek is a type of Christ. In the historical record he is called "king of Salem" and "priest of the most high God" (Genesis 14:17-24).

V. 2—The name "Melchizedek" means *my king is righteous*. He was king of Salem (Jerusalem), which means *peace*. (See Psalm 85:10; Jeremiah 23:6; Ephesians 2:14.) He was not a priest according to the Mosaic Law, but was priest of the "most high God" (see Deuteronomy 32:8). He was king—Adam had been given dominion but lost it. Notice that he brought forth bread and wine (Genesis 14:18), which are symbols of the Lord's Supper and also of God's goodness in creation.

V. 3—"Without father, without mother" means that there is no record of his parentage in the Genesis genealogies.

"Without descent" is without genealogy or pedigree. It is an inspired omission. In the Mosaic system, no one could serve as a priest unless he was descended from Aaron (Ezra 2:61, 62). The Aaronic priesthood was bound by death (Numbers 20:23-29).

"Continually" (this is the key word)—there is no historical record of the end of Melchizedek's priesthood.

b. Christ is perfect Priest, w. 4-22

V. 4—Abraham had given Melchizedek a tenth of the spoil (Genesis 14:20). This was before the Mosaic Law.

W. 5-10—Levi was in the loins of Abraham because he was descended from Abraham. This shows that Melchizedek is greater than the Levitical priesthood.

You and I are in Adam (Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22).

You and I are in Christ (Romans 8:1; Ephesians 1:1).

W. 11, 12—Aaron's priesthood belonged to the Mosaic Law. Christ has delivered us from the Law. The purpose of the priesthood is to bring perfection—to restore and continue the relationship to God. The Levitical priesthood was powerless.

W. 13, 14—The priesthood had to be changed since Christ did not come from Levi.

V. 15—See v. 11 and Psalm 110.

V. 16-19—Contrasts of two priesthoods:

Law vs. Power (*Law restrains—power enables*)

Commandment (*external*) vs. Life (*internal*)

Carnal (*flesh*) vs. Endless (*eternal life*)

Changing vs. Unchanging

Weakness and unprofitableness vs. Nigh to God

Nothing perfect vs. Better hope

V. 20, 21—See Psalm 110.

V. 22—“Better testament” is *new covenant*.

c. Christ in His Person is perpetual and perfect Priest, w. 23-28

V. 23—Death interrupted the Levitical priesthood.

V. 24—“This man” is Christ.

V. 25—This is the key verse of this section and the center of the gospel. Christ is not dead, but living. Emphasize the death and resurrection of Christ—but go on from there (see Romans 8:34; Revelation 1:18). He died down here to save us; He lives up there to keep us saved. He is able to keep on saving us.

“To the uttermost” is *all the way through; completely; perfectly*.

“Intercession” is *intervention*. “We shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:10).

V. 26—“Became us” (KJV) is the essential fitness to meet our need—Christ is just what we needed.

“Holy” in relation to God.

“Harmless” is *free from malice, craftiness, or cleverness*.

“ undefiled” is *free from moral impurity*.

“Separate from sinners”—He is like us, yet He is unlike us.

V. 27—This underlines the value of the sacrifice.

V. 28—Christ is the final word in priesthood.

F. Christ as our High Priest ministers in superior sanctuary by better covenant built upon better promises, Chapters 8–10

1. True tabernacle, Chapter 8:1-5

V.1—A near literal translation is: *In consideration of the things which are spoken, this is the focal (chief) point. We have such (7:26) an high priest who sat down in the heavens (10:11, 12) on the right hand of the majesty.* This is the high-water mark in Hebrews.

V.2—“True”—true in the sense of original, *genuine*. In His person, Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. In His ministry, Christ is a priest after the order of Aaron.

V.3—A priest must offer gifts and sacrifices; Christ must offer gifts and sacrifices.

V.4—Christ was not a priest on earth. He did not belong to the tribe of Levi which served in the earthly tabernacle. Christ did not offer gifts and sacrifices on earth. *He* was the sacrifice (the Lamb of God).

V.5—The tabernacle on earth was a “shadowy outline” (Moffatt). The wilderness tabernacle was a picture of the tabernacle in heaven. Christ serves in the real tabernacle. In this epistle, stress is placed upon the ascension of Christ rather than the resurrection. Here we have a better sacrifice, a better priest, and a better tabernacle. He died down here to save us; He lives above to keep us saved.

2. New covenant better than the old, Chapter 8:6-13

V.6—There are two covenants. Christ is the Mediator of the better covenant because it contains better promises.

V.7—The first covenant was not adequate, which created a necessity for a better covenant.

V.8—There was nothing wrong with the covenant—the people were to blame. “Finding fault with them,” not *it*.

“New covenant” (see Jeremiah 31:31-34).

V.9—The people broke the first covenant. It did not enable them to perform what it demanded.

V.10—The new covenant will be written upon their hearts—not upon tables of stone—so that they will be able to obey it.

V.11—It will be a global covenant, known worldwide.

V.12—There will be full forgiveness of sin, complete pardon.

V. 13—The old covenant is outmoded. It will be supplanted by a new covenant with Israel in the future (Jeremiah 31:31-37). The church is a beneficiary of the new covenant.

3. New sanctuary better than the old, Chapter 9:1-10

V. 1—“Earthly sanctuary” is sanctuary of this world—literal and visible, in contrast to the sanctuary in heaven.

V. 2—The tabernacle, not the temple, is used to present the spiritual. The floor plan of the tabernacle is given with the furniture (see author’s book, “The Tabernacle: God’s Portrait of Christ”).

W. 3, 4—“Golden censer” is altar of incense. This was in the holy place in the tabernacle. The veil had been rent in two, and Christ, our intercessor, had passed into the heavens. The altar of incense, which speaks of prayer, belongs properly in the Holy of Holies. The three items in the ark are listed also.

V. 5—The writer cannot dwell upon the tabernacle because it is not the subject—the priesthood is the subject.

W. 6-10—The way to God was actually blocked by the three entrances and compartments. Only the high priest could enter into the Holy of Holies. It was a temporary, makeshift arrangement. The service of ritual and ordinances was given for a brief time. Now Christ can bring us to God, but only *He* can bring us there (John 14:6).

4. Superior sacrifice, Chapters 9:11—10:18

CHAPTER 9

V. 11—“Good things to come” should be *that have come to pass*.

“More perfect tabernacle”—not of this creation. The better tabernacle does not belong to this natural creation as to materials or builders.

Is there a literal and real tabernacle in heaven? The tabernacle in heaven is spiritual but real (8:2); it is literal but real (9:9). (Compare v. 23, “patterns” are *types*. See also Revelation 11:19 and 15:5.)

V. 12—This is a superior sacrifice for the genuine tabernacle. Did Christ present His blood in heaven? I think that He did.

W. 13, 14—If the blood of animals could remove ceremonial defilement, surely the blood of Christ can take away the guilt of sin.

“Heifer” (see Numbers 19:9)—the blood of Christ cleanses the conscience, not the flesh.

V. 15—Christ is now the Mediator of the new covenant.

V. 16, 17—Here the reference is to a will that was made by a man who has died. It was no good as long as he lived.

W. 18-22—“Blood” occurs six times in this section. This reveals the place and power of the blood in the Old Testament ritual. “Without shedding of blood is no remission” is the axiom of the Old Testament. The blood is important in the New Testament. “There is power in the blood of the Lamb.”

V. 23—“These” (see v. 19)—heavenly things needed cleansing because sin originated in heaven. (See v. 11.)

V. 24—Christ has not entered into a handmade and man-made sanctuary. It is spiritual but real. He lives in heaven to keep us saved. He is there for us. He died on earth to save us.

V. 25—The high priest entered with blood not his own. He entered often.

V. 26—Christ appeared once in the end of the age and offered Himself.

V. 27—If Christ had failed to save in His death at His first coming, there would be nothing afterward but judgment. He is not coming back to die. Christ died but was not judged. Rather, He took our judgment here, and He will be Judge there.

V. 28—This is not the Rapture, but His coming as Sovereign to judge the earth. Believers will not come into judgment.

CHAPTER 10

V. 1—“For”—the writer continues the theme of the superior sacrifice. Shadow” (Greek *skian*) is *hazy outline*.

“Image” (Greek *eikona*) is *likeness*.

Old sacrifices were shadow, not substance. (You cannot live in the shadow of a house, you need the house.)

V. 2—Old sacrifices required repetition. They never accomplished remission of sins. “He who is obliged to take a medicine every hour to keep life in him cannot be said to be cured” (Govett). “Consciousness of sins”—not cleansing.

W. 3, 4—“Remembrance”—each sacrifice was a *calling to mind* of sin, not a removal. Christ said, in instituting the Lord’s Supper, “This do in remembrance of me.” When we “remember” Him, we are recalling the One who has blotted out our sins and remembers them no more (8:12).

W. 5-8—This is a quotation from Psalm 40:6-8; cf. Isaiah 50:4, 5.

“A body hast thou prepared me” is in the Old Testament, “Mine ears hast thou opened” (Psalm 40:6; see also Exodus 21:1-6). A slave had his earlobe pierced if he had married a woman in slavery and chose to stay in slavery with her. Christ was crucified in a body that He might redeem the church.

V. 9—It is God’s will to remove the animal sacrifices and to sacrifice Himself.

V. 10—By the will of God we are consecrated through the offering of Christ. This is positional sanctification.

V. 11—The priests stood (servile attitude). It was a constant repetition of daily offerings, never completed.

V. 12—Jesus sat down; His work was finished—“*one sacrifice for sins forever.*”

V. 13—Psalm 110:1—this is the second coming of Christ to the earth.

V. 14—One offering does what many offerings could not do. If Christ cannot save you and keep you, then God has no way to save and keep you.

W. 15, 16—The Holy Spirit is God (Lord, v. 16). This is a repetition of 8:10-12 from Jeremiah 31:33, 34—Jeremiah spoke by inspiration.

V. 17—This is the essential part of the quotation.

V. 18—“Now”—the sacrificial system began with Abel and ended with the death of Christ.

This concludes the doctrinal section.

5. Encouragement, Chapter 10:19-25

Practical—Privilege—Responsibility

V. 19—This is an invitation to the unsaved and believers to enter and enjoy the benefits.

“Having” (v. 21) is the present tense of the blessed life.

V. 20—“New” is *freshly slain*—the sacrifice of Christ never becomes old. Luther said, “It seems but yesterday that Jesus died on the cross.”

“Through the veil”—when Christ dismissed His spirit, the veil of the temple was torn in two (Mark 15:24-38).

V. 21—We have a High Priest.

V. 22—“Full assurance” rests upon having our (1) “hearts sprinkled” (with blood)—the applied sacrifice of Christ; (2) “bodies washed with pure water”—the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit.

IN THREE VERSES, “LET US” OCCURS THREE TIMES:

	1 - Draw near in faith (God)
V. 23	2 -Draw near in hope (self)
VV. 24, 25	3 - Draw near in love (others)

“Provoke” (Greek *paroxusmon*) is literally *with a view to incitement*. “Privileges perceived and not practiced become paralysis” (Dr. Morgan). We are sanctified with other Christians.

“Saint” is not used in the singular, always in the plural—*communion of saints*.

“The day approaching” refers to the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D.

Fifth Danger Signal: Peril of despising, Chapter 10:26-39

(Most solemn warning of all [v. 14 is the key].)

V. 26—“Sin wilfully” is to go back to the sacrifices after Christ had come, acting as if He had not died for sins or attaching no value to His death (2 Peter 2:21). Unbelief is willful sin (1 John 3:9). These are not Christians.

V. 27—There is nothing between the sacrifice of Christ and His coming but judgment. He is not coming to die again.

V. 28—The Mosaic Law exacted the death penalty (see Numbers 15:30, 31; Deuteronomy 17:2-7). Sins then were not as great or extensive as rejecting God’s provision of salvation through Christ. There is no comparison.

V. 29—“With which he was sanctified” refers to Christ, the Son of God. “Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh” (6:6). To treat the death of Christ as inadequate to settle the sin question and to go on as if He had not died is to treat the blood of Christ as a despised thing. Privilege creates responsibility.

V. 30—God has a sovereign right to judge—which He has not surrendered. (See v. 23; cf. 1 Peter 4:17, 18.)

V. 31—This is for Christians (see 2 Corinthians 5:11).

V. 32, 33—This is a personal word to Hebrews.

V. 34—“Compassion on me in my bonds” should be *compassion on the prisoners*.

“Substance” is *possession*. The writer refers them to their own past experiences.

V. 35—“Confidence” is *boldness* (see v. 19).

V. 36—“Patience”—“Tribulation worketh patience ...” (Romans 5:3, 4).

V. 37—Scripture says that the Lord will not tarry, He will surely come.

V. 38—This is a quotation from Habakkuk 2:3, 4, quoted also in Romans and Galatians.

Romans—“The just”

Hebrews—“shall live” (faith and patience go together [6:12])

Galatians—“by faith”

V. 39—“Draw back” is *take in sail*. The believer is like a sailor who should let out the sail—“Let us go on.” Here the thought is that a believer could reef the sails—become stranded because of discouragement, depression, or some other stumbling block.

II. Christ brings better benefits and duties, Chapters 11–13

(*Practical*)

A. Faith, Chapter 11

V. 1—“Substance” (Greek *hupostasis*) is a scientific term, opposite of hypothesis or theory; it is a chemical that settles at the bottom of a test tube. Dr. A. T. Robertson translates it *title deed*. It is the foundation, the Word of God.

“Evidence” (Greek *elegchos*) is a legal term; it is evidence that is accepted for conviction.

V. 2—“Elders” has three meanings:

1 - Old men

2 - New Testament officers in the church

3 - Old Testament saints—heads of house or tribe.

Another rendering is: *For by such faith as this the forefathers received witness.*

V. 3—"Worlds" (Greek *aiónas*), literally *the ages*, is a period of time of significant character (see 1:2). It is a time-space period with a fourth dimension of purpose.

"By the word of God"—God spoke (energy), creating matter. Matter is not indestructible but is changed back into energy.

V. 4—Abel represents the worship of faith (Genesis 4:1-5). He was the first martyr to faith. Abel's sacrifice signified that without shedding of blood is no remission of sin.

V. 5—Enoch represents the walk of faith (Genesis 5:21-24).

V. 6—We come to God only by faith. ("Come" occurs seven times in Hebrews.) Believe two things: (1) God exists; (2) God is available.

V. 7—Noah represents the witness of faith.

W. 8-10—Abraham represents the obedience of faith. "Obeyed" is the key word.

W. 11, 12—Sarah represents the power (strength) of faith.

W. 13-16—This is the optimism and expectancy of faith.

W. 17-19—Isaac represents the willingness of faith; Isaac was a grown man, not a baby boy, when Abraham offered him on the altar. Abraham believed in the resurrection.

W. 20, 21—Isaac and Jacob represent the future of faith.

V. 22—Joseph represents the fulfillment of the promises of God.

W. 23-28—Moses represents the sacrifices of faith.

V. 29—Crossing the Red Sea was by the faith of Moses.

V. 30—Joshua represents the foolishness of faith—it seemed absurd to march around Jericho.

V. 31—Rahab represents the unlikely place of faith.

W. 32-38—Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel represent faith in action.

W. 39, 40—These are not necessarily heroes of faith, but this is what faith has done in the history of man under different circumstances in different periods through different individuals. Faith has no merit in itself; merit is in the object of faith—"He that cometh to God must believe that he is" (v. 6).

B. Hope, Chapter 12

1. The Christian race, vv. 1, 2

V. 1—"Wherefore"—this connective welds together what has preceded in chapter 11.

"Witnesses" are not spectators, but they witness by their lives (in their day and way) that to live by faith is practical and real.

The Christian life is likened to a Greek race. (Christ is the way to God. Along the way, the Christian as a soldier is to stand, as a believer he is to walk, and as an athlete he is to run. One day he will fly—space travel to the New Jerusalem.) There is the negative aspect of the race—"lay aside."

"Every weight" may not be wrong in themselves, but a Christian must sacrifice them because they are unnecessary weights. "He ... that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33; see also Matthew 10:37, 38).

"And sin which doth so easily beset us" is a *specific encumbrance* (Vincent). Here it is unbelief, the opposite of faith.

"Patience" is endurance combined with an eagerness to win.

V. 2—There is the positive aspect to the race—this epistle was written to keep the believer "looking unto Jesus." He is the chief and all-important witness.

"Author" is *leader* or *captain*.

"Finisher" is *perfecter of faith*—even of the Old Testament saints. Jesus is at the right hand of God, having finished redemption.

2. Believers are now in contest and conflict, vv. 3-14

V. 3—"Consider him" (see 3:1). Jesus had been on the same race course of life that we are on, and He knows the hurdles and experiences. He knows and understands the struggle against evil men ("contradiction of sinners").

V. 4—The temple had not been destroyed at this time. It was destroyed in A.D. 70—and then there were martyrs.

V. 5, 6—God chastens His children:

1 - Despise not

2 - Faint not—God disciplines as an act of love

V. 7 3 - Endure chastening

V. 8—An undisciplined person is not a genuine believer—he is illegitimate.

V. 9—A natural father should discipline his children for their good, and the child will respond.

V. 11—Chastening is not pleasant at the time.

W. 12-14—Be encouraged; go on following a straight path.

Sixth Danger Signal: Peril of denying, Chapter 12:15-29

V. 15—“Looking diligently” has to do with the direction. A believer must keep his eyes on Jesus, not on men. Otherwise there is danger of bitterness which affects others also.

V. 16—“Profane”—not in the abuse of language but, rather, against God (*pro* is *before* or *against*; *fanus* is *temple*). It means against the temple; *godless*. Esau despised his birthright, counting it only worth a pittance.

W. 18-21—Mt. Sinai represents the old covenant. A believer is not brought back to the legal system of the old covenant (see Exodus 19).

W. 22-24—“Ye are come” indicates position. A believer is brought to the new covenant:

1 - “Mt. Zion,” the heavenly city	New Jerusalem
2 - “City of the living God”	
3 - “Heavenly Jerusalem”	
4 - “Angels”	
5 - “General assembly and church of the first-born”—New Testament church	
6 - “God, the Judge”—the Lord Jesus Christ	
7 - “Spirits of just men made perfect”—evidently a reference to Old Testament saints	
8 - “Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant”	
9 - Blood of Jesus—better than Abel’s blood	

V. 25—This is a warning against refusing to hear the voice of Jesus through the Holy Spirit (see John 16:7-15).

W. 26, 27—Privilege creates responsibility. God has nothing more to say. The Word of Jesus is final. There is danger of not hearing Him. He is shaking the world that men might see some things unshakeable.

V. 28—This is an exhortation based on the privileges we have. We are identified with a kingdom that cannot be moved. We have grace to serve God in an acceptable manner.

V. 29—This is a solemn reminder.

C. Love, Chapter 13

1. Secret life of believers, vv. 1-6

V. 1—“Brotherly love” is *brother-love*—not love like brothers, but because they are brothers.

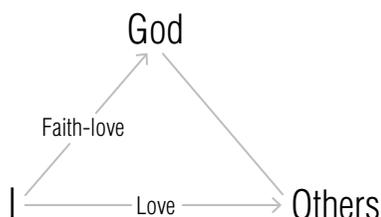
V. 2—“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers”—stranger-love; *hospitality*. “Some” is a reference to Abraham (Genesis 18).

V. 3—Remember the needy and those in trouble. Show love to those in need. The church is a body; when one member suffers, all suffer.

V. 4—Asceticism is condemned; lust and laxity are condemned. Sex is to be exercised in the marriage relationship.

V. 5—“Conversation” (κῶν) is *manner of life*. This is the basis of real contentment. Response of faith to the Word of God (Genesis 28:15; Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua 1:5; Isaiah 41:17).

V. 6—See Psalm 118:6.



This is the secret of a happy life.

2. Social life of believers, vv. 7-14

V. 7—Spiritual leaders are to be obeyed. Be loyal to teachers of the Word.

V. 8—Jesus Christ is the same in His character (Person). He is not the same in place and performance—2000 years ago, He was a babe in Bethlehem. He performed miracles in Capernaum then, but not today.

V. 9—Believers are not to be taken in by every new teaching. Diet and ceremonies do not establish believers.

V. 10—Here is a comparison between what Israel had under the old covenant in contrast to the better things of the new. Believers have an altar, not the Lord’s Supper, not a material altar with a local address.

V. 11—“Burned” is *consumed*—this is a sin offering.

V. 12—Jesus died outside the city—He was the sin offering.

W. 13, 14—We are to go to Him. We are on the way to the heavenly Jerusalem. This is real separation. “Let us” go to Him.

Hebrew—one who has crossed over.

1 - Euphrates—old life gone

2 - Red Sea—new life possible

3 - Jordan—new life to be lived

4 - Going to Jesus—new life, new living, new hope

3. Spiritual life of believers, vv. 15-19

V. 15—Sacrifices of a believer:

1 - Person (Romans 12:1)

2 - Purse (2 Corinthians 8:1-5)

3 - Praise—sacrifice costs something

V. 16 4 - Performance—doing good

V. 17—(See v. 7.) The teaching of the Word of God is to be obeyed.

W. 18, 19—Evidently the readers knew the writer.

4. Special and personal benediction, vv. 20-25

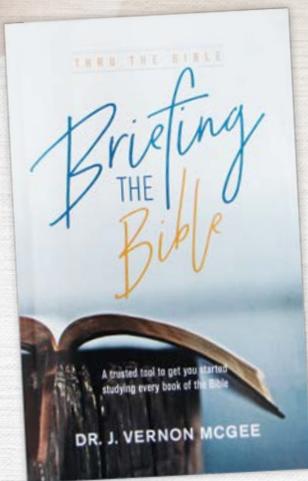
W. 20, 21—A glorious benediction.

V. 22—A gentle word if it is from Paul.

V. 23—Could this be Paul? I think so.

V. 24—The writer was in Italy. So was Paul.

Get all of Dr. McGee's Notes & Outlines under one cover



It's available in *two free formats*—a *printed paperback book** with Dr. McGee's full outlines and abbreviated notes for each book of the Bible or a *downloadable e-book* with the outlines and full-length notes.

Request your free printed copy, purchase extras for friends and family, or **download the free e-book** at TTB.org/BriefingTheBible

*one per household; offer available in U.S. and Canada only



THRU the BIBLE

with *J. Vernon McGee*

Connect with THRU the BIBLE

 Box 7100, Pasadena, California 91109-7100
P.O. Box 25325, London, Ontario, Canada N6C 6B1

 1-800 65-BIBLE (24253)

 TTB.org

 BibleBus@ttb.org

   /ThruTheBibleNet

 /TTBRadio