

*Law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, though these also are descended from Abraham. But this man, who does not have his descent from them receives tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. In the one case, tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.*

*“See how great this man was, to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth....”* - The stature of Melchizedek, and therefore that of Christ, is further enhanced by the acknowledgment of his priesthood by none other than the father of the Jewish nation himself, *“Abraham the patriarch.”* The use of the definite article *“the patriarch”* serves to stress the primacy of Abraham. He is not merely one of a series of patriarchs. He is the foremost, the first. All of the others descend from him. *“See how great this man was”* is a dramatic exclamation of amazement. Abraham was the most revered figure in the entire history of the Jewish people. And yet the foremost of the patriarchs, the founder of the nation, the man who was willing to sacrifice his only son at the command of the Lord was willing to defer to Melchizedek- *“gave a tenth of the spoils.”* In the Hebrew text the noun for tithe comes first to give it particular prominence and emphasis. This is, of course, the second reference to Abraham’s tithe in the paragraph. Verse 2 had already stated - *“and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth of everything.”* The *“everything”* of the previous reference is here specified as *“the spoils”* won in the victorious battle over the Canaanite kings which Abraham has just concluded. Under ordinary circumstances, one might have expected that Melchizedek would have been inclined to support his fellow monarchs against the interloper from Mesopotamia. However, what bonds Melchizedek and Abraham is their common allegiance to *“the Most High God.”* They share a common faith and it is that faith which makes this episode all the more remarkable.



*“Melchizedek’s Blessing of Abraham”  
Tintoretto*

The formal terminology of the tithe which occurs here signals not only the amount but the

quality of the gift. The tithe was required to be the ***“first fruits”*** - that is, the very best of whatever was being given. *“Melchizedek’s superiority is demonstrated both by the quality of the gift he is offered and the dignity of the one who offers the gift.”* (Cockerill, p. 307)

***“And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office....”*** - The particular point toward which this talk of tithes was leading is now specified in the comparison of the tithe which Melchizedek received from Father Abraham and the tithes received have received throughout the history of the Levitical priesthood. The text describes contrasting nature between the Melchizedek tithe and the Levitical tithes in three areas - (1) genealogy - ***“those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office”***; (2) the authority by which the tithes are collected - ***“have a commission in the Law to take tithes from the people”***; and, (3) the identity of those from whom the tithe is collected - ***“from the people, that is, from their brothers, although these are also descended from Abraham.”***

***“But this man, who does not have his descent from them...”*** The Melchizedek side of the comparison follows the same pattern in citing three basic points of contrast - (1) genealogy - ***“But this man who does not have his descent from them”***; (2) the identity of the one from whom the tithe was collected - ***“received tithes from Abraham;”*** (3) his authority to bestow a blessing upon Abraham - ***“and blessed him who had the promises.”*** Melchizedek’s superiority is thus demonstrated by the fact that he did not merely obtain a legitimate priesthood by virtue of genealogical descent, as did the Levites, for ***“He is without father or mother or genealogy.”*** Nor was his competence to receive a tithe mere compliance with a legal requirement, like that of the Levites. Abraham spontaneously presented his tithe as a voluntary acknowledgment of the legitimacy of Melchizedek’s priesthood. As a true priest



***“Melchizedek’s Blessing Of Abraham”***



of ***“the Most High God”*** Melchizedek was competent to pronounce a blessing even upon a figure as exalted as the patriarch Abraham ***“who had the promises.”*** Although Abraham was the recipient of the messianic covenant and had been promised that through his Descendant all the nations of the earth would be blessed the royal priesthood to which he had been consecrated by God Himself place him in the superior position. This is certainly the most profound of the three contrasts and is accordingly reserved for the final position in the listing. No Levitical priest would ever have dared to presume sufficient status to pronounce a blessing upon Father Abraham because of the relationship between the giver of the blessing and its recipient. ***“It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.”*** The fact that Abraham accepted a blessing from the Priest/King demonstrates that he considered Melchizedek to be his superior. That proposition elevates Melchizedek to unparalleled heights. St. John Chrysostom observed that the most impressive lesson here is actually the immense superiority of Christ and Christianity over Judaism and the worship of the Temple. For Melchizedek is merely the prototype. If he is superior to Abraham and the Levitical priesthood, how much more superior is Christ Himself:



***Melchizedek Blessing Abraham”***  
***Unknown 15<sup>th</sup> Century French Master***

*“Now consider, Paul says, ‘how great this man is to whom even the Patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.’ Up to this point he has been applying the type; henceforth he boldly shows Melchizedek to be more glorious than the Aaronic priesthood. But if he who bears a type of Christ is so much better, merely than the priests, what should one say of the reality. You see how superabundantly he shows the superiority...Have you seen the superiority? Have you seen how great is the interval between Abraham and Melchizedek, who bears the type of our High Priest? And he shows that the superiority has been caused by authority, not necessity. For the one paid the tithe, which indicates the priest; and the other gave the blessing, which indicates the superior. This superiority passes on also to the descendants.” (Oden, X, p.106)*

***“In the one case, tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives.”*** - The superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedek, the

prototype of Christ, the perfect High Priest to that of the Levitical priesthood is further demonstrated by the relative duration of their priesthoods. The descendants of Levi are mortal men. Their ministry, and their reception of the tithes required by the Law, only continue throughout their brief life spans. However the messianic prototype Melchizedek was not only said to have been ***“without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days”*** but also without ***“end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.”***

*“So far as the record of Scripture is concerned, Melchizedek has no end of life and his unique priesthood has no successor. But what is true of Melchizedek in a limited and literary sense is true absolutely of the One who serves His people as High Priest in the presence of God.”* (Lane,A, p. 170)

***“Resembling the Son of God, he continues a priest forever.”*** These startling words were as previously noted, drawn from Psalm 110:4, a psalm of the Messiah. The Messiah will overcome death, rise from the grave, and live forever. Accordingly, this is a priesthood unlimited by time which will continue throughout all of eternity.



***“Abraham Receiving The Blessing Of Melchizedek”***  
***Dalziel***



***“One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, pays ties through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.”*** - The author offers his concluding argument with the concessive expression p ***“One might even say”***, thereby acknowledging that in this point he is exercising a bit of literary license. To contend that Levi, the son of Jacob and therefore the great-grandson of Abraham. At the same time Levi was the father of the tribe which would be designated as the priests of the Hebrew nation hundreds of years later. Since Levi was of the genealogical line of Abraham the tithe which Abraham paid can, the author suggests, be figuratively understood as having been paid by Levi himself. To contend that Levi ***“was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him”*** is surely a dramatic metaphor, well beyond the bounds of any actual or literal significance. The point of the assertion is:



***“Abraham And Melchizedek” - Il Poppi***

*“Abraham, as a representative of all of his descendants, including Levi, by means of the concept of corporate solidarity, contained in his body the seed of all his offspring. Levi, who, centuries later, would receive tithes from the people, paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham, since he was considered by the author to be ‘still in the body of his ancestor.’ For the author of Hebrews, since Levi was considered to be still in the body of his ancestor, actions taken by Abraham were actions taken by Levi as well.”* (Allen, p. 418)

All of this may seem particularly obtuse in a culture which emphasizes personal individuality to the virtual exclusion of any significance to family descent of group membership beyond the immediate family. However, in Bible times these affiliations were profoundly important in defining personal identity, responsibility and loyalty.

*“The corporate solidarity that bound Israel to the patriarch implied that Levi was fully represented in Abraham’s action. Therefore, Levi’s status relative to Melchizedek was affected by Abraham’s relationship to that personage. Consequently, the superiority of Melchizedek over the Levitical priesthood is not merely theoretical, but has a basis in history....Although Levi was yet unborn when Melchizedek met Abraham, the tithe that Abraham gave Melchizedek was a gesture that anticipated the subordination of Levi and the Levitical priesthood to the priesthood like Melchizedek’s that would be*

*inaugurated at God's appointed time.” (Lane, A, p. 170-171)*

However indirectly the author's point may have been made, his intent was to emphasize even more decisively, the superiority of Christ, the High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek, over the Levitical priesthood of Judaism, through Levi, the patriarch of the tribe from which Judaism's priesthood was derived.

In this fascinating segment of the Epistle, the enigmatic figure of Melchizedek, drawn from the Abraham narratives of Genesis, has been reintroduced as a prototype of Christ, that is, a figure who displays characteristics or features which will be perfectly fulfilled in the messianic ministry of Jesus. Hebrews does not indulge in the wild speculation which was typical of both Judaism and early Christianity's treatment of Melchizedek. Instead, the focus here is consistently and clearly on the similarities between Melchizedek and Christ and what the ancient Priest/King can teach us about the identity of the Christ.

### ***Verses 11-14***

***Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the Law, what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the Law as well. For the One of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests.***



***“Abraham And Melchizedek” - 16<sup>th</sup> Century Bible Woodcut***



***“Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood...”*** - What follows is linked to that which has preceded with the conjunction ***“Now.”*** We are to understand by this linkage that the assessment of the relative merit of the Levitical priesthood and that of Christ is based upon the previous assertions about Melchizedek. Melchizedek himself is no longer the focus, but the perfect divine High Priest whom he prefigured. The original validity of the Levitical order of priests is that it was defined and established in connection the Law, that is, the Torah, given to the nation through Moses at Mount Sinai - ***“for under it the people received the Law.”*** Given the status of the Levitical priesthood as a divine institution, the question is then posed as to why another priesthood of a fundamentally different nature had become necessary - ***“If perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood... what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than the one named after the order of Aaron?”*** The question is clearly rhetorical, since the text provides the answer for its own question as it puts the question forward. A new priesthood was necessary because the old order had failed to attain ***“perfection.”*** And what is ***“perfection”***? Lutheran commentator Franz Delitzsch offers this definition:

*“Perfection, moral and religious perfection, is the establishment of complete, unclouded and enduring communion with God, and full realization of a state of peace with Him, which, founded on a true and ever valid remission of sins, has for its consummation eternal glory; in one word, it is complete blessedness.”* (Delitzsch, I, p. 350)

The entire structure of the worship of Judaism in the sacrificial worship of Tabernacle and subsequently Temple, embodied this concept. The reconciliation of the sinner with God, the qualification of the sin to enter into the presence of the holy and righteous God, through the animal sacrifices whose life blood was poured out upon the altar of burnt offerings in the Court of the Priests before the Sanctuary. The imperfection of the system is indicated by its need for endless repetition of these sacrifices and the substantive inadequacy of these inferior animals as valid substitutes for the sins of human being. This point will be made



***“Aaron Offering The Sacrifice Of The Day of Atonement” - Barry Moser***

specifically later in the Epistle in Chapters 9 & 10:

*“But when Christ appeared as the High Priest of the good things that have come...He entered once for all in the Holy Places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For it the blood of goats, calves and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God...For since the Law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are offered every year, make perfect those who draw near...For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”* (Hebrews 9:11-15; 10:1-4)



*“The Sacrifice of the Old Covenant” - Peter Paul Rubens*

Furthermore, the entire system, while designed to impress upon both the people and the priesthood the need for real substitutionary atonement, was entirely anticipatory, awaiting its completion and fulfillment in the once for all sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross. The Levitical priests were mortal men who themselves were sinful and therefore subject to death. These priests, particularly the High Priest, were authorized by their consecration to approach God in the limited manner prescribed at Sinai and mediate limited access to God through offering the specified sacrifices for their own sins and those of the people. These rituals were all predicated upon the once for all sacrifice of the Son of God which as to take place in the future. It was therefore impossible for them to achieve the ultimate goal of **“perfection”** in the full forgiveness of sin and restoration of complete access to God. *“Only the Son, not the Levitical priests could provide ultimate access to God through a definitive removal of sin.”* (Cockerill, p. 315)

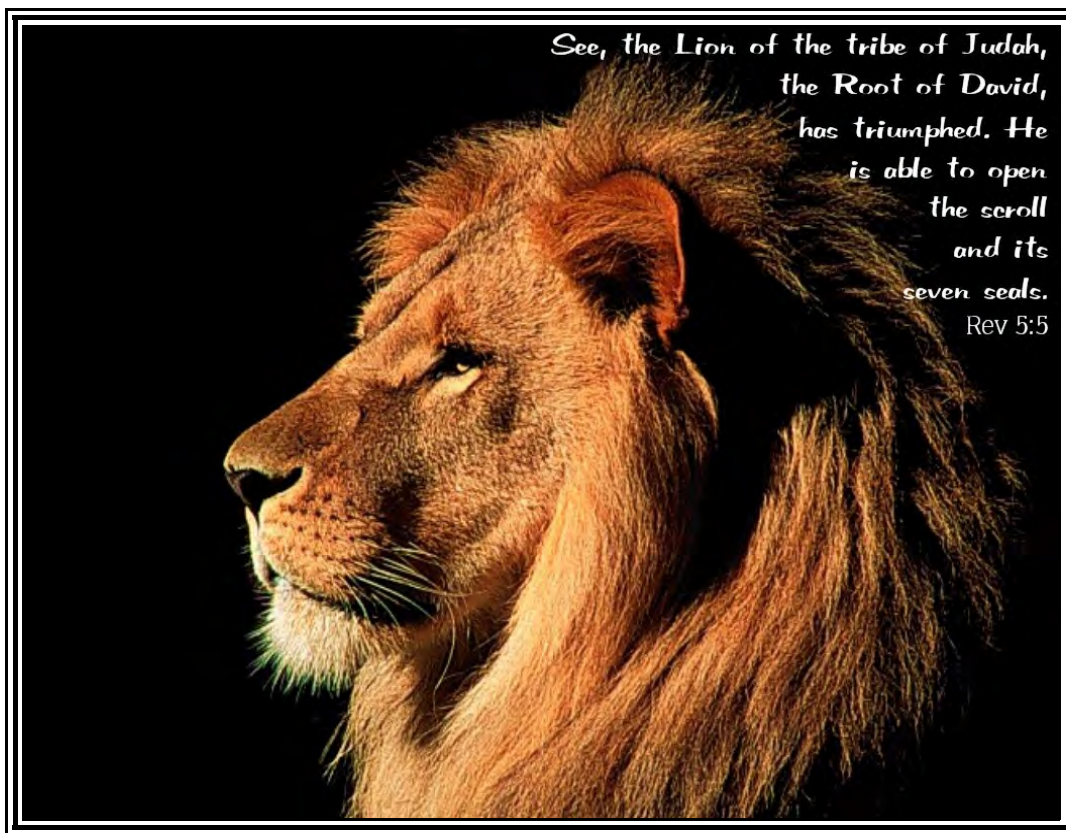


Thus the necessity for replacement/fulfillment of the priesthood of Aaron with an entirely different category of priest - ***“for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek rather than one named after the order of Aaron.”*** The point here is not the unfaithfulness or corruption of the Aaronic High Priesthood, although such things were present in abundance throughout history. Rather, the focus here is on the nature of the priesthood itself. Even if it had been performed flawlessly, without exception across all the centuries, it would still have been unable to attain ***“perfection”*** because of its nature, and its role within the plan of salvation for humanity. This phrase stresses that categorical difference between the two priesthoods using the contrast between ***“the order of Melchizedek”*** and ***“the order of Aaron.”***

***“For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the Law...”*** - Since the Aaronic priesthood was a core component of the Law given at Sinai, the imperfection of the Aaronic priesthood suggests a similar imperfection in the Law itself. The fact that Psalm 110 prophesied the coming of the Messiah as an everlasting priest of the Order of Melchizedek as a replacement for the Aaronic priesthood points to a similar replacement for the Law itself.

*“Before the coming of Christ, God’s people could not live under the law without the priesthood as a means of approaching God through atonement. Thus, the fate of the priesthood and that of the law were inextricably bound to one another...The prophesied change of priesthood (Psalm 110) anticipated a radical alteration of the relationship between the law and the people of God...fulfillment in Christ reveals what the law was always intended to be - not a means of approaching God, but a God instituted type and foreshadowing of the sufficient means of atonement and approach that would be provided by Christ.”* (Cockerill, p. 317)

***“For the One of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar.”*** - The necessity ***“change in the Law”*** in order to implement ***“a change in the priesthood”*** is demonstrated by the fact that the messianic High Priest of whom the Psalm had spoken was not a member of the tribe of Levi but of the tribe of Judah. The selection of a high priest from anywhere other than the clan of Aaron within the tribe of Levi was a clear violation of the Law. To make the shocking nature of this change more vivid, the verbal image ***“from which no one has served at the altar”*** is used to characterize the priesthood. God alone has the prerogative of altering the Law since it was God who established it. The fact that God has overturned the legal requirements for His High Priest in this way reinforces the inadequacy of the former covenant in both Law and priesthood. Jesus was a descendant of King David, and therefore a member of the Tribe of Judah. - ***“For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah and that Moses said nothing in connection with priests from that tribe.”*** The expectation that the Messiah would arise from the Tribe of Judah and the House of David was universal within Judaism based upon



*The Messiah - Lion Of The Tribe of Judah*

the prophecies. Jacob's blessing of his twelve sons in Genesis 49 made that expectation inescapable:

***“Judah is a lion’s cub. From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down, he crouched as a lion, and as a lioness, who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes to him and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”*** (Genesis 49:9-10)

From Scripture's beginning to its conclusion, the language reverberates. In the Vision of the Seven Seals, one of the elders introduces Christ to St. John in this way: ***“And one of the elders said to me, ‘Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.’*** (Revelation 5:5) Once again, in this way through the meticulous use of the psalm, a subtle parallel is being drawn between the Priest/King Melchizedek and the Priest/King Jesus. Psalm 110 is a “royal Psalm,” that is, a psalm of David, addressed to the ruling monarchs of his house. Other than the reference to the priesthood of Melchizedek cited in Verse 4, the balance of the Psalm refers to the enthronement of a king at the right hand of God who will be granted victorious power over the kings who attempt to destroy him. The combination of all of these strands here is a masterful assertion of the identity of Jesus Christ the Priest/King prophesied in the Psalm. The author dryly notes - ***“in connection with that tribe, Moses***



*said nothing about priests.”* The allusion here is most probably to Moses’ blessing of the Tribe of Levi which specifically bestowed the priesthood upon his descendants:

*“Give to Levi, Your Thummin and Your Urim, to Your godly one, who You tested at Massah, and with whom You quarreled at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and mother, ‘I regard them not’; he disowned his brothers and ignored his children. For they observed Your Word and kept Your covenant. They shall teach Jacob Your rules and Israel Your Law; they shall put incense before You and whole burnt offering upon Your altar. Bless, O Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; crush the loins of his adversaries, of those who hate him, that they rise not again.”*  
(Deuteronomy 33:8-11)

## Verses 15-22

*This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent; but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of Him, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced through which we draw near to God.*

*“This becomes all the more clear when another priest arises....”* - The promise of a new priesthood which would accomplish the **“perfection”** which the Aaronic priesthood had been unable to achieve has now been set forth. At the same time the Levitical priesthood has been deliberately linked with the replacement of the Sinai Law upon which that priesthood had been originally established, thereby indicating that the priesthood was also temporary and was abolished along with the covenant established at , based on the messianic promise of Psalm 110, the inspired author now proceeds to assert the infinite superiority of the new priesthood. He begins with the confident assertion that this superiority is **“even more evident”** when the differences between the old and the new are specifically examined.



*“Moses With the Sinai Tablets of the Law”*

*“The quality of the Son as priest makes both the extent and the certainty of this change in priesthood and Law ‘exceedingly more clear.’ Since the extent of the change is proportionate to the quality of the new, it can be nothing less than an ‘abolition’ (vs.18) of the old as a means of approaching God, and a ‘bringing in’ (vs.19) of the new.” (Cockerill, p. 321)*

This point is made by returning to the figure of Melchizedek and demonstrating how Christ, the new High Priest who ***“arises in the likeness of Melchizedek,”*** is, like His Old Testament prototype, in an entirely different category than the failed and inadequate Aaronic high priesthood. That which Melchizedek was symbolically, Jesus is in genuine reality. The specific nature of the quality of the Melchizedekian priesthood will be defined in the verses which follow.



*“The Death Of Aaron” - James Tissot*

***“Who had become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.”*** - The contrast begins with a comparison of the qualification for priesthood in the two different systems, Entry into the priesthood of the old order took place on the basis of nothing more than ***“a legal requirement concerning bodily descent.”*** Mosaic Judaism was defined and established in the Torah. That institution is spelled out in Numbers 18:

***“So the Lord said to Aaron, ‘You and your sons and your father’s house shall bear iniquity connected with the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear iniquity connected with your priesthood. And with you bring your brothers also, the Tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may join you and minister to you, while you and your sons with you are before the Tent of the Testimony. They shall keep guard over you and over the whole***



*Tent, but shall not come near to the vessels of the Sanctuary, or to the altar, lest they and you die. They shall join you and keep guard over the Tent of Meeting for all the service of the Tent, and no outsider shall come near you. And you shall keep guard over the Sanctuary and over the altar, that there may never again be wrath on the people of Israel. They are a gift to you, given to the LORD to do the service of the Tent of Meeting. And you and your sons with you shall guard your priesthood for all that concerns the altar and that is within the veil. And you shall serve. I give you your priesthood as a gift, and any outsider who comes near shall be put to death.”* (Numbers 18:1-7)



*“The Consecration Of Eleazar To Take The Place of His Father Aaron As High Priest Of Israel” - - William Hole*

The Levites qualified for their priestly role in the worship of the nation simply on the basis of their identity as members of the Tribe of Levi. The necessity to provide for a succession of priests through the generations of that tribe was the consequence of the mortality of its members. They were all subject to death and therefore had to be replaced by their sons after them throughout the generations. This truth reveals the inherent weakness of the Sinai priesthood. Death continued to prevail, not only throughout all the people, but even among the priests themselves. The actions of the cultic rituals and sacrifices had to be endlessly repeated because both the priests and those on whose behalf they mediated kept right on dying.

The other *“priest who arises in the likeness of Melchizedek”* is superior to the Levitical priesthood in every way. His priesthood is not founded upon *“a legal requirement concerning bodily descent.”* The priesthood Jesus is established by the direct affirmation

and oath of God Himself. The author cites Psalm 110 to document his assertion. This is the key Old Testament text in this entire segment: *“For it is witnessed of Him, ‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.’*” (Psalm 110:4) The word here rendered as *“witnessed”* refers to the sworn testimony of a witness in a courtroom. It is the oath of God upon which this priesthood stands. *“Bodily descent”* is not an issue for the Messianic High Priest, for He possesses *“the power of an indestructible life.”* Unlike the mortal priests of old, this High Priest has died and risen from the dead. His resurrection is the irrefutable proof of an *“indestructible life.”* Melchizedek was figuratively described as without end

because we know nothing of his death.

***“He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he remains a priest forever...In one case, tithes were received by mortal men, but in the other case by one of whom it is testified that he lives.”*** (Hebrews 7:7:3,8)



***“The Risen Christ” - Vasnetsov***

That which had been foreshadowed in the obscure ancient priest/king has now been literally accomplished in the Messianic High Priest. The ***“indestructible”*** character of the life of Christ *“describes the new quality of the life with which Christ was endowed by virtue of His resurrection and exaltation to the heavenly world, where He was formally installed in His office as High Priest.”* (Lane, p. 184) The adjective goes considerably farther than a mere assertion of longevity. Even the possibility of destruction is eliminated by the fact of the resurrection and certifies the unique character of the priesthood which He alone, as the risen One is capable of conducting. The resurrection is the key to it all:

*“The power of life that the resurrection of Jesus demonstrated that His priesthood is not limited by the temporal, transitory character*

*of the old priesthood, based upon physical descent; it is undergirded by a power that overcame mortality and corruption and consequently is beyond the reach of mortality and corruption. The acknowledgment that Jesus is a priest ‘like Melchizedek’ implies that He is a priest by virtue of His resurrection.”* (Lane, p. 184)

The contrast with the ineffective priesthood of the old order could not be more devastating.

*“The Levitical priesthood was governed by by hereditary descent where genealogy was paramount. But as human beings, all priests who served in the Levitical line were limited by their mortal existence. All Aaronic priests eventually died...The author’s application of Psalm 110:4 to Jesus is one of the foundation blocks of the argument of Hebrews 7.”* (Allen, p. 425)

***“For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and***



*uselessness...*” - The writer’s language is blunt. “*A former commandment,*” that is, the entire Law of the Torah, with particular focus upon the Levitical priesthood, is abrogated. The translation - “*set aside*” - while accurate - does not express the full force of the Greek. The verb is a technical legal term for the annulment of a decree or the cancellation of a debt. The reason for the cancellation of the ancient priesthood is “*because of its weakness and uselessness.*” The language is extremely strong, almost contemptuous. Because of its inherent flaws, sinful, mortal priests who were compelled to resort to endless repetition of the rites and sacrifices and inadequate animal offerings which were incapable of accomplishing the perfect atonement for sin which was their goal, the system was inherently incapable of providing access to the holy and righteous God that was its purpose. Thus it was useless. It simply could not do what it was designed to do. That priesthood and its system of ritual sacrifice had never been intended by God as the real solution to the problem of human sin. It was never anything more than an extended object lesson, so to speak, designed to impress upon the people the hopelessness of their situation and their absolute need for a perfect High Priest, who was capable of offering Himself as the perfect, once for all sacrifice of Himself for the redemption of all the sins which mankind had ever committed and removing the guilt eternally so that access to God could genuinely be secured. In that sense, the text refers to the Sinai covenant as the “*former commandment.*”

*“It was provisional, temporary, and transitory, but also typical of the permanent and effective yet to come. The revelation of the effective new priest has demonstrated the reason for the abolition of the old...The quality of the new Priest has put the quality of the Law’s complete ineptitude, as a means of*



*“Christ The Great High Priest Offering His People Forgiveness In The Eucharist”*

*relating to God beyond all doubt...That whole system of approaching God did not achieve God's purpose for the priesthood because it did not cleanse God's people from sin and thus could not enable them to draw near to God...nonetheless it remains valid as a Scriptural type now fulfilled in Christ...Simply put, the old did not work. The new does. It actually enables the faithful to draw near to God."* (Cockerill, p. 325-326)

To cling to the old way now that the perfect sacrifice had already been offered by Jesus was the ultimate exercise in futility and foolishness. Even worse, to abandon Christ, in order to return to the weakness and uselessness of the past was to condemn one's self to damnation.

***(For the Law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.***" - The priesthood and Law of the old covenant were not merely annulled, they were replaced by their perfect fulfillment in the great High Priest and His once for all sacrifice. This new covenant constitutes ***"a better hope."*** ***"Hope"*** points toward the future and ultimate fulfillment in Christ, through whom we will live in God's righteous presence - ***"draw near to God"*** throughout all eternity.



***"Aaron At The Altar" - Barry Moser***

*"Restoration of fellowship with God has been the divine purpose and the often unrecognized longing of humanity since its loss in Eden...Faithful believers have a direct access to God unexperienced even by the high priests before Christ. They have an access that by perseverance will culminate in their eternal dwelling with Him. All God's people have the high priestly privilege of entrance into the Most Holy Place, though only Christ is the High Priest who mediates this privilege...This relationship is enjoyed in many ways but particularly in prayer and worship."* (Cockerill, p. 237)

This access language is something which any religious Jew would understand as it had been the matrix of centuries of worship in Tabernacle/Temple. At the Burning Bush Moses had been warned: ***"Then He said, 'Do not come near. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'***" (Exodus 3:5) At the confirmation of the Sinai covenant the Elders





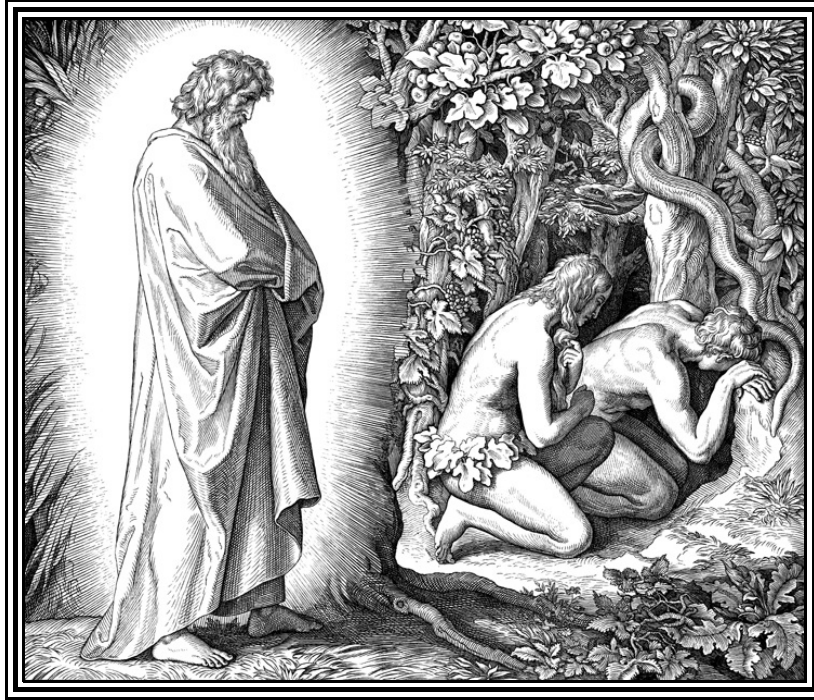
*"The Idolatry Of the Canaanites" - 17<sup>th</sup> Century Dutch Bible Engraving*

of Israel had received a similar warning: ***"Moses alone shall come near to the LORD, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with them."*** (Exodus 24:2) When Nadab and Abihu, the rebellious sons of Aaron, dared to approach the Lord on their own initiative, their punishment was death: ***"Then Moses said to Aaron, 'This is what the LORD has said; 'Among those who are near Me, I will be sanctified, and before all the people, I will be glorified.'"*** (Leviticus 10:3) God used the same language when He described the role of the priests to the prophet Ezekiel: ***"The chamber that faces north is for the priests who have charge of the altar. These are the sons of Zadok, who alone among the sons of Levi may come near the LORD to minister to Him."*** (Ezekiel 40:46) Those Levites who had engaged in the worship of Baal and the idols of the Canaanites were banned from coming near the Lord in the rituals of the Temple. The image of distance was used to describe both the faithlessness and the worship of the priests:

***"But the Levites who went far from Me, going astray from Me after their idols, when Israel went astray, shall bear their punishment. They shall be ministers of My Sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the Temple, and ministering in the Temple. They shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people. Because they ministered to them before their idols and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the House of Israel, therefore, I have sworn concerning them, declares the LORD God, that they shall bear their punishment. They shall not come near to Me to serve Me as priest, nor come near any of My holy things, and the things that are the most holy, but they shall bear their shame and the abomination that they have committed."***

(Ezekiel 44:10-14)

The use of this familiar language here effectively conveys the truth that the ministry of Christ, the great High Priest has truly accomplished its goal. *“The accent in the present passage falls upon the certainty of the ‘drawing near’ which is the legacy of the Christian as the result of the absolute effectiveness of the priesthood of Christ.”* (Lane, I, p. 186)



*“Adam And Eve Hiding From God” - Carolsfeld*

John Owen defines how the hope of the Christian under the new covenant is indeed **“better”** than that of the Hebrews under the former covenant in this typically thorough manner:

*“Apart from Christ, without Him, all of mankind is inconceivably distant from God. That distance is the worst possible kind as the result of mutual hostility. The cause of that separation is voluntary on our part and has imposed upon us the most abject misery. All self-deception and flattery to the contrary notwithstanding, this is the natural condition of every man who does not know Christ by faith. Every unbeliever is cut off from God by a vast distance. Since God alone is the fountain of all goodness and blessing, every unbeliever, as the prophet says, ‘**is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.**’ (Jeremiah 17:6) He is cut off from the gentle dew and cleansing showers of grace and mercy, far distant from God’s love and favor, as Adam and Eve were cast out of Paradise without any hope within themselves of ever returning. The flaming sword of the Law flashed in every direction to bar their way back to the Tree of Life. But no matter how far from God they may be, they are not far enough to escape the curse of His wrath and the misery which*



it brings. They may flee wherever they chose, or call down the great rocks of the mountains upon themselves. They may conceal themselves in the dark shadows of their own ignorance just as Adam did among the trees of the Garden. Even if they seek momentary relief in the pleasures of sin, the grim reality remains **“the wrath of God abides upon them.”** Even in their own minds they are far from God, alienated from Him as His enemy, caught in the deceptions of Satan, with whom the great falling away began. The infinite condescension and grace of God is demonstrated by the fact that He would deign to establish a way back for those who have deliberately cast themselves so far away from Him. Why should God have any interest whatsoever in these desperate fugitives? At our very best, before the fall, He had no need of us, much less in the useless depraved state to which we have reduced ourselves....And yet, amid the ruin of His perfect creation, He promised Adam a way of deliverance and restoration! This is the **‘grace’** and **“love of God”** which Scripture magnifies - far beyond human comprehension or expression! (John 3:16)...God brought us into inconceivable nearness to Himself in the union of God and man in the person of His Son. Every part of the plan of salvation, restoring to God those who were far off because of sin, reflects God’s wisdom and grace. But taking our human nature into union with Himself is glorious to the point of astonishment! This miracle brought us inconceivably closer to God than we were in our original creation - even closer than the angels shall ever be! **“O LORD, our LORD, how majestic is Your name in all the earth; You have set Your glory above the heavens!”** (Psalm 8:1) It is God alone who enables us to draw near to Him in any and every way in our worship! He was the blessed hope of the saints under the old covenant, and He is the Life of the saints under the new covenant.” (Owen, 5, p. 480)



*“The High Priest Before the Ark In Solomon’s Temple*

The continuation of the **“hope”** language from Chapter 6 - which was also introduced with the moving close to God perspective used here - **“To hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain were Jesus has gone.”** (Hebrews 6:18-19) - serves once again to express the twofold nature of our faith as an anticipation of that which is to come in eternity after Jesus returns and the access to God in Christ which we already possess at this moment in the present:

*“‘Hope’ looks toward the eternal reward. This new provision in Christ provides not only present but ultimate entrance into God’s presence. As ‘hope’ it is as sure as the promises of God (6:11,18) for those who persevere in the faith. With such a glorious hope guaranteeing both a present and an ultimate access to God, who would not want to persevere? None need imitate the wilderness generation of their forefathers and fall by the way (3:7-4:11). All can join the company of the faithful (11:1-12:3). Although the pastor will soon describe the same reality as ‘a better covenant’ (vs.22), he wants his hearers to remember that it is an unshakeable ‘hope’ - all-sufficient for their perseverance.”* (Cockerill, p. 327)



**“And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this One was made a priest by the One who said to Him: ‘The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, You are a priest forever.’ This makes Jesus the Guarantor of a better covenant.”** - The concept of the certainty and superiority of Christ’s High Priesthood because it is based upon a holy **“oath”** - again, previously described in Chapter 6, as the foundation for our confidence to persevere in the faith (Hebrews 6:13-18), in connection with the oath which God had sworn by Himself to Abraham - is reiterated here with another reference to Psalm 110. As noted, the Levitical priesthood did not involve either an oath given by God or an oath taken by the priest. It was simply a matter of tribal descent - **“for those who formerly were made priests were made such without an oath.”** The importance of the oath from God which is the basis for the permanent High Priesthood of Christ is fundamental in understanding the difference between the two



priesthoods for the writer. The point is that these two priesthoods were not merely a lesser and a greater form of the same thing. They were entirely different in nature. It had previously been stated that the oath had been sworn to Abraham was designed to indicate ***“more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of His purpose, He guaranteed it with an oath.”*** The absence of such an oath for the Aaronic/Levitical priesthood signified its temporary nature, indicating that at some point in the future it would be completed and fulfilled by a superior counterpart. That fulfillment and replacement has occurred in the High Priesthood of Christ, the permanence of which has been indicated by an unchangeable oath from God.

*“When the priesthood of Christ was introduced, God actually presented to the Church that in which they were to place their complete trust, through which He would do anything and everything which needed to be done for their peace and salvation. Nothing else was to be expected in the future. Therefore, God in His infinite wisdom and grace, confirmed the priesthood of Christ with the highest and most distinctive evidence of permanent confirmation. In this way, He demonstrated that this gift of His will and grace was to be absolutely unchangeable. Furthermore, if we were to spurn this priesthood we would perish forever. Accordingly, every part of Scripture, from beginning to end, directs our undivided attention to Christ alone as our ultimate hope and salvation.”* (Owen, 5, p. 486)



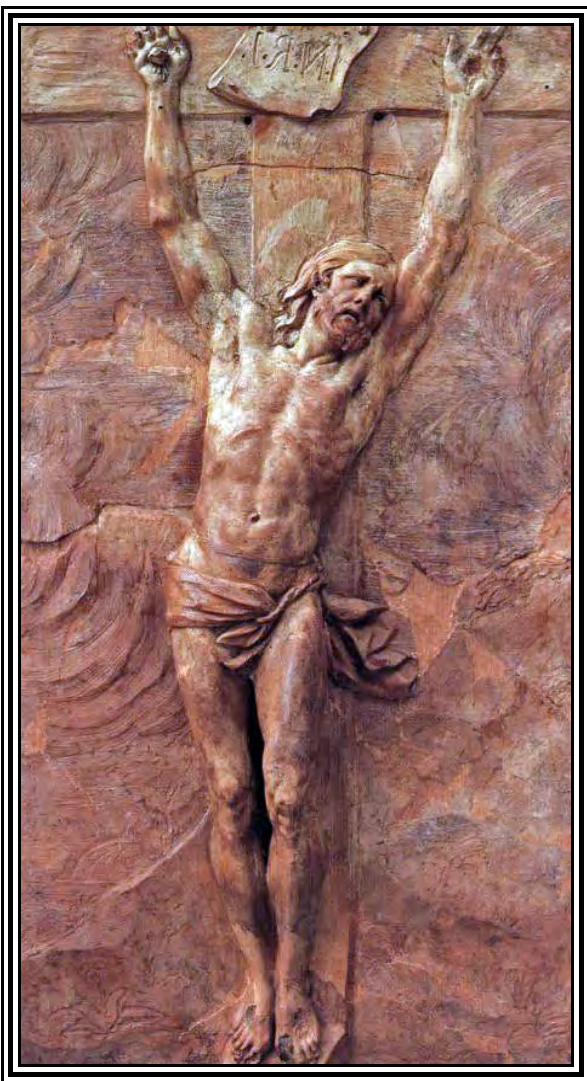
***“Christ Our Eternal High Priest”***

***“This makes Jesus the Guarantor of a better covenant.”*** - The use of the personal name ***“Jesus”*** is rare in Hebrews. Its appearance here serves to make the summary declaration all the more emphatic. It is the human name of the divine Son of God and points the reader toward His perfect life, innocent death, and victorious resurrection. Obviously the term ***“covenant”*** must be of critical importance in this Epistle, given its assignment of comparing Judaism and Christianity with the assertion of the absolute superiority of Christianity. The word occurs frequently throughout the New Testament, but over half of its uses are here in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Commentator John Ellingsworth offers this comprehensive definition of the New Testament’s usage of the word ***“covenant.”*** ***“Covenant”*** is:

*“A free manifestation of divine love, institutionalized in an ‘economy’ whose*

*stability and consumption are guaranteed by a cultic ratification, the sacrificial death of Christ, and whose aim is to make men live in communion with God, to impart to them the treasure of grace and the heavenly inheritance.” (Ellingsworth, p. 388)*

The point to his readers is that they are not abandoning a covenant with the God of their fathers. Instead, they are simply exchanging the old covenant for a new covenant which is its fulfilment and completion. This had been God’s plan and purpose from the beginning. In this instance the point of comparison is the quality of the covenant. The new covenant is **“better”** than its inferior predecessor. The identification of Jesus as the **“Guarantor”** of the better covenant reflects the language of the preceding discussion of the importance of God’s oath which had certified the unchangeable priesthood because **“He guaranteed it with an oath.”** Christ is the key! Everything in and about the new covenant depends upon Him. Because, as both true God and true Man, His priesthood is everlasting, this covenant can never change or be replaced. As **“Guarantor”** of the covenant Christ is not only witness to this arrangement, He is the actual implementor of the covenant by His own death and resurrection.



*“The surprise created by ‘Guarantor’ calls attention to the pastor’s purposeful use of this important term. Since the unalterable oath of God has established the Son as Priest, He is not merely the ‘Mediator,’ but the ‘Guarantor’ of God’s ‘better covenant.’ On the basis of God’s own oath, the Son absolutely guarantees that God’s people can be cleansed of sin and come into God’s presence, because He is the One at God’s right hand who mediates these benefits...The exalted Son at God’s right is the eternal Son who through His obedient life and self-offering as Jesus has become the One who guarantees the effectiveness of the new way of approaching God. He has achieved the effective priesthood inherent in His divine Sonship only through His incarnation and death.” (Cockerill, p. 330)*

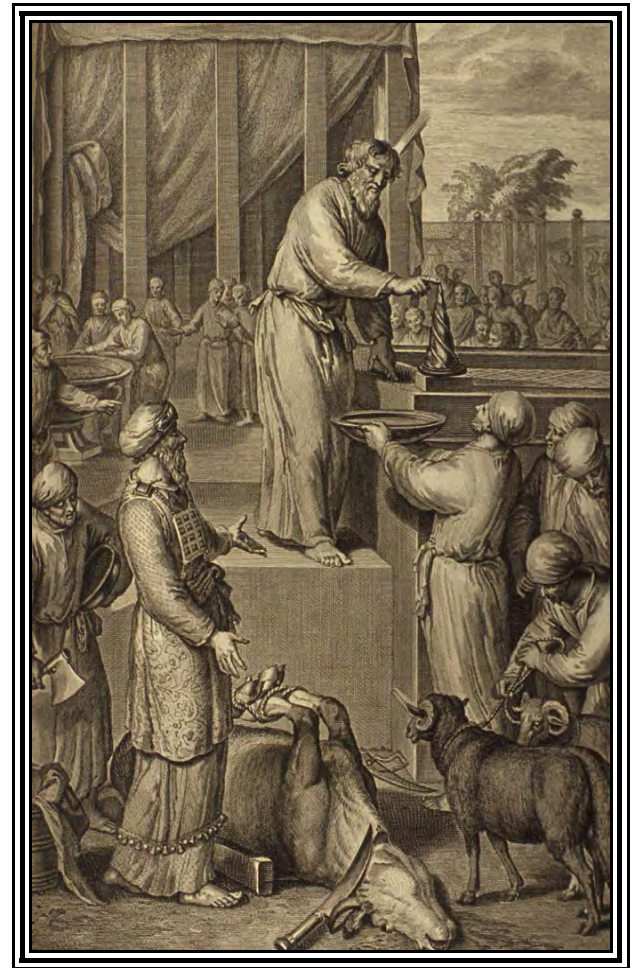
The chapters to follow will specifically detail the manner in which all of this is to be accomplished through that which Jesus, true God incarnate as a man will do. **“The better covenant”** is Christ from beginning to end. The old covenant yearned for His coming and now He has come.



### Verses 23-25

*“The former priests were many in number because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but He holds His priesthood permanently because He holds His priesthood forever. Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost, those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”*

*“The former priests were many in number because they were prevented by death...”* - The writer returns to the contrast between the human mortality of the Levitical priests to which he has previously alluded in Verses 8 & 16 - (*“In the one case, tithes are received by mortal men, but in the other case, by One of whom it is testified that He lives...One who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.”*) to demonstrate the absolute superiority of the priesthood of Christ to that of the descendants of Aaron. When Aaron was ordained and consecrated as Israel’s first High Priest, his sons were ordained and consecrated with him, thereby anticipating the succession which would necessarily occur upon his death. The concern for proper succession among the sons of Aaron runs throughout the narratives in Exodus in which the priesthood is established:



*“The Consecration Of Aaron And His Sons”  
Gerhard Hoet*

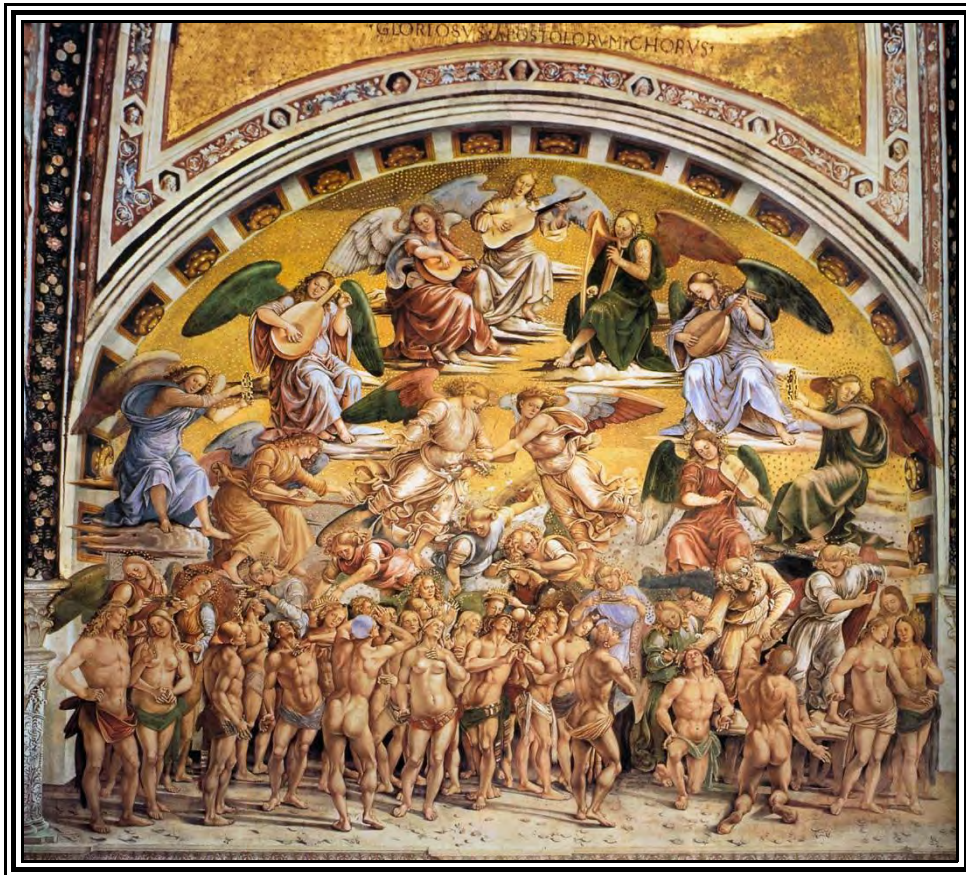
*“Then bring near to you Aaron your brother and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel to serve Me as priests - Aaron and Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar...It shall be for Aaron and his sons a perpetual due from the people of Israel, for it is a contribution. It shall be a contribution from the people of Israel from their peace offerings, their contribution to the LORD. The holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him; they shall be anointed in them and ordained in them. The son who succeeds him as priest, who comes into the Tent of Meeting to minister in the Holy Place, shall wear them seven days...I will consecrate the Tent of Meeting and the Altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve Me as priests.”* (Exodus 28:1; Exodus 29:29,44)

Succession, however, introduces an element of uncertainty and unreliability into the Aaronic

priesthood. If their high priests are constantly changing with the demise of each incumbent, one can never be certain of the availability of a faithful successor to fill the vacancy created by the death of his predecessor. In fact, the succession of the High Priest promptly did become problematic because the jealousy and rivalry among the sons of Aaron, resulting in the death of Nadab, Abihu (Numbers 26).

The mortality of the Aaronic priests thus necessitated that they be numerous in order to provide for that succession - ***“The former priests were many in number because they were prohibited by death from continuing in office.”*** This, of course, was not the case with the priesthood of the Order of Melchizedek occupied by Christ who was not subject to death - ***“But He holds His priesthood permanently because He holds His priesthood forever.”*** This fundamental reality obviously makes the priesthood of Christ more reliable and certain than that of the mortal men in the ever changing priesthood of the sons of Aaron.

*“In Verse 16, the writer had declared that Christ was a priest ‘by virtue of the power of an indestructible life.’ He now provides a further explanation of that statement. Because He continues forever, He has a priesthood that is ‘permanent.’ In contrast to the Levitical priests whose ministries were continually disrupted by death, there is no limitation to the ministry of a priest who lives forever. The eternity of the Son qualifies Him to exercise a ministry*



***“The Resurrection On The Last Day” - Luca Signorelli***



*that is permanent and final. The unequivocal statement that nothing can infringe upon Christ's priesthood includes the subsidiary notion that it passes to no successor." (Lane, I, p. 199)*

Psalm 110 had affirmed that great High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek would ***"be a priest forever."*** (Vs.4) This is the crucial defining factor of the priesthood of Jesus and the foundation for the unique effectiveness of that priesthood which sets Christ apart from every other High Priest in history. John Calvin noted in his commentary on the epistle: *"There is no death that can prevent Christ from performing His office. Therefore He is the only and the perpetual priest."* Medieval theologian Peter Lombard asserts that it is qualifying factor which can only apply to Jesus make Him the only possible fulfillment of the promise of a perpetual High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek: *"He is the one and only priest and this could not be unless He were immortal, just as under the Law the priest had to be many because they were mortal."* (Hughes, p. 269) The old priesthood needed the regulation of the Law chiefly to define and govern the succession. The Law is superfluous in regard to Christ because there is no succession involved.



***"Christ Our Great High Priest"***  
***Russian Orthodox Icon - Radetsky***

*"The multiplicity of such priests in a long succession over the centuries was necessitated by the fact that as sharers of our common mortality, they were prevented by death from continuing in office; the inevitability of death, by which - sooner or later - every individual priesthood was terminated meant also the inevitability of the passage of the priesthood from one man to another and from one generation to another. Hence, the necessity of legislation to regulate the line of priestly descent. By contrast, Christ has no place in this legal line of succession, because He is not a member of the priestly tribe of Levi. His priesthood must therefore be of a different, far superior order because of its permanence." (Hughes. P. 268)*

***"Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost, those who draw near to God..."*** - Two

crucial verbs are used in Verse 25 to characterize that which is accomplished by the High Priestly ministry of Christ which He ***“holds permanently because He continues forever.”*** The linking word ***“consequently”*** indicates that these two accomplishments are the direct result of the permanence of Christ’s High Priestly ministry - ***“to save”*** and ***“to make intercession for them.”***

*“Most important of all, the truth that He who is our Mediator and High Priest ‘continues forever’ carries with it the inescapable consequence that He is able for all time and in all completeness to save those who putting their whole trust in His priestly offering of Himself on their behalf, draw near to God through Him. How could we hope to draw near to the eternal God through a priest who is dead or subject to death (As is the case with every other priest and indeed with every other creature)? How can we who draw near to God through Christ fail to be eternally secure in view of the fact not only that He lives but also that as our ever living priest He never ceases to make intercession for us in the heavenly sanctuary? With Him as our Intercessor, supporting us with His strength and surrounding us with His love, there is no force that can daunt or overpower us.” (Hughes, p. 270)*



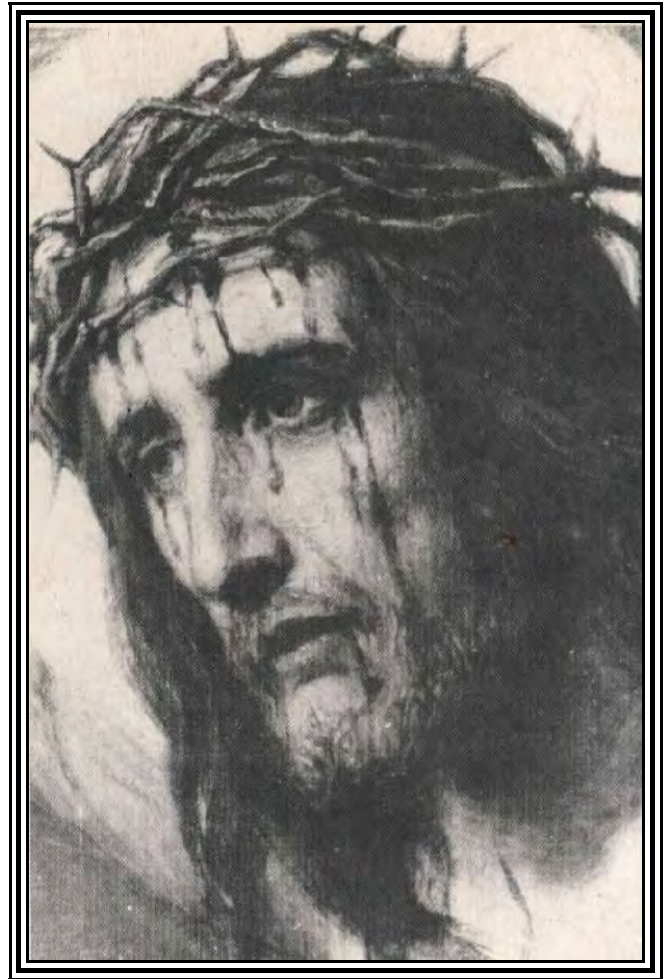
*“The Risen Christ” -Rubens*

The first of the two verbs, ***“to save”*** is typically used in the Epistle to refer to the gift of eternal life with Christ in heaven by grace through faith. Thus the ministry of the angels is described in 1:14 as ***“ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation.”*** The same future connotation of the verb is present in 5:9 - ***“And being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, being designated by God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.”*** This verb is directly linked to the Day of Judgement and the beginning of heavenly life everlasting in 9:28 - ***“And just as it was appointed for man to die once and after that comes judgement; so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him.”*** This meaning, however is not exclusive in Hebrews. In this



instance, for example, the verb is in the present tense, indicating that the saving in question is already in process and that the community of believers has already begun to take part in the salvation which Christ has accomplished on their behalf *“as a result of the obedience and sacrificial death of Christ and His subsequent exaltation to the right hand of God in heaven/”* (Lane,I, p. 189) That **“great salvation”** becomes the source of encouragement and strength for Christian who daily confront temptation in their effort to remain faithful to Christ and to His Word.

***“Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation.”*** (Hebrews 2:3-4)



***“Christ The Man Of Sorrows”***

A similar emphasis is evident in the stern warning of 6:4-5,9 -

***“For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance...Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, be feel sure of better things - things that belong to salvation.”***

In this way, the permanent priesthood of Christ is not merely a wondrous goal to be achieved upon the last day, but a present reality were serves to encourage and strengthen the believer in his daily struggle against the devil, the world, and his own sinful nature.

The text places particular emphasis upon the totality and the completeness of the salvation which the great High Priest has accomplished for every believer. The ESV’s rendering of the Greek as ***“to save to the uttermost”*** catches the sense of the original very well. Absolutely everything which had to be done to accomplish the forgiveness of sins for fallen mankind has been. There is nothing whatsoever lacking in any way. Christ the High Priest

of the Order of Melchizedek has done it all. The Temple imagery of gradually approaching God through an ever more exclusive series of spaces is maintained by the description of believers as ***“those who draw near to God through Him.”*** This is the characteristic language of Old Testament worship which would have resonated perfectly for the epistle’s Hebrew recipients. Franz Delitsch expresses the all-encompassing sense of the language.

*“Belonging here to ‘to save’ it includes the eternity of the salvation; but its meaning is by no means exhausted by such reference. Christ is able to save in every way, in all respects, unto the uttermost, so that every want and need, in all its breadth and depth, is utterly done away. This all-embracing salvation is guaranteed to all those who through Him, that is, those who in faith make use of this way of access which He has opened, and which remains open in Him; nay, more, this very access to free and joyous communion with God, made by the removal of the barrier of sin, is in itself, the all-including commencement of that perfect salvation.”* (Delitsch, I, p. 371)

The same sense of ongoing, absolutely reliable action is indicated in the tense of the second verb - ***“since He always lives to make intercession for them.”*** There is nothing whatsoever that is capable of interrupting or preventing Christ’s ministry of intercession on behalf of His people before the father ***“since He always lives.”***

*“With His exaltation to heaven, Jesus became the permanent intercessor for His people. His ministry involves an active advocatory role in the presence of*



***“The Intercession Of Jesus At God’s Right Hand” - De Grebber***



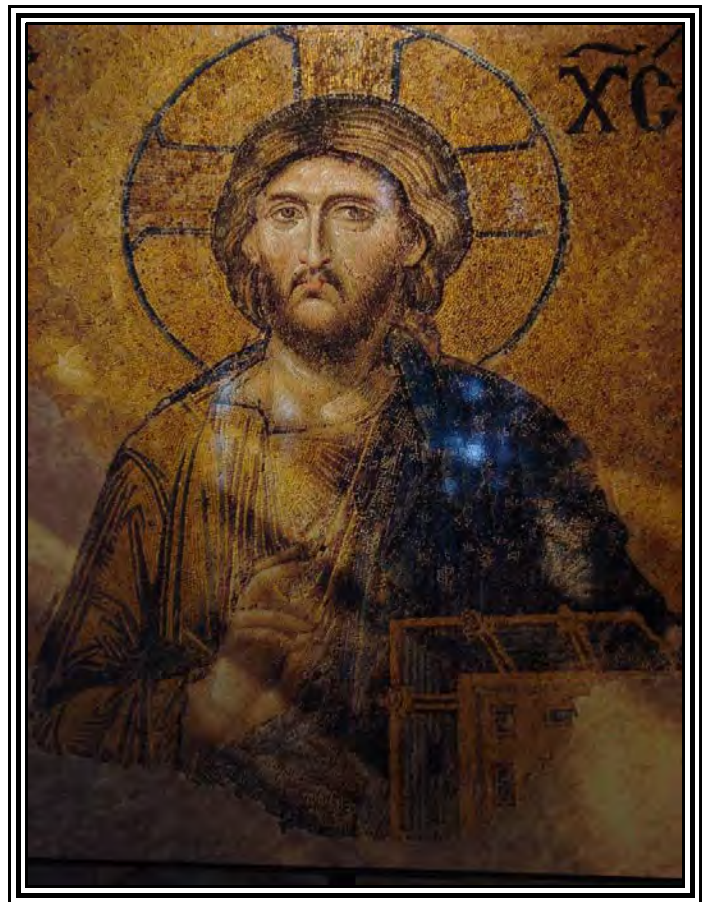
*God on behalf of those oppressed by sin. The direct result of His intercessory activity is the sustaining of the people and the securing of all that is necessary for the ultimate salvation mentioned in the previous clause.” (Lane, I, p. 190)*

St. Paul asserts the same intercession in the Epistle to the Romans as the unassailable basis for Christian confidence. Many commentators link the two texts together as the remnant of an early confession of faith:

***“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies, who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the One who died, more than that who was raised - who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword? As it is written, ‘For Your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors thru Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor ruler, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:31-39)***

All of this fitting together in a perfect symmetry of salvation, offering the believer the full assurance that he need not be distracted nor discouraged by the lies and deceptions of the devil. God has placed every component in His plan of salvation in the ideal position so that the believer can rely upon it with unshakeable confidence.

*“His once completed self-offering is utterly acceptable and efficacious. His contact with the Father is immediate and unbroken; His priestly ministry on His people’s behalf is never ending, and*



***“Mosaic Of Exalted Christ” - Hagia Sophia***

*therefore the salvation which he secures to them is absolute.” (F.F. Bruce, p. 271)*



*“The Holy Trinity”*

### **Verses 26-28**

***“For it is indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, since He did this office once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the Law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.”***

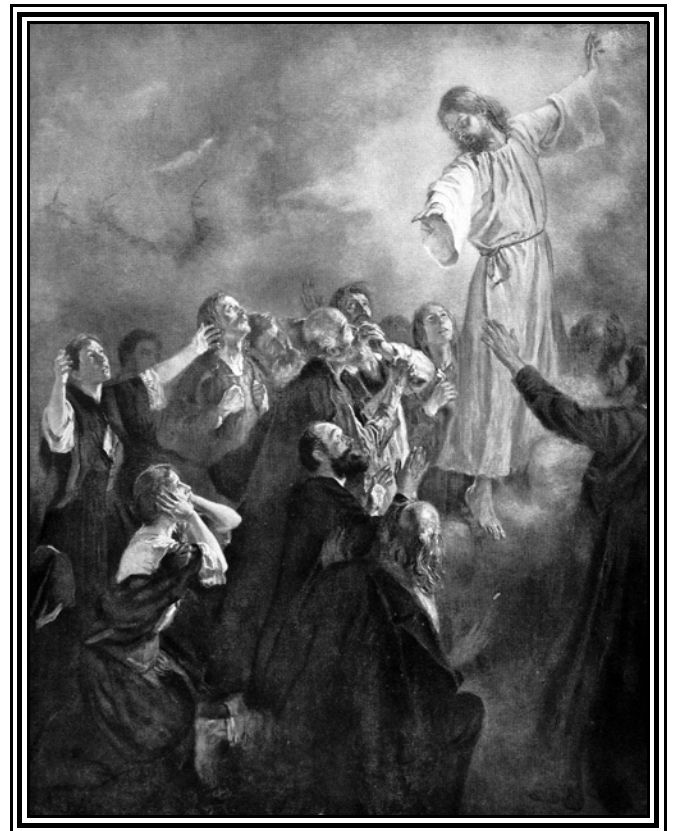
***“For it is indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest....”*** - The author celebrates not merely the appropriateness of such a perfect high priest, as the English translation here suggests, but the fact that such a high priest was exactly what we needed and is ideally qualified to carry out the task to which He has been assigned by the Father within the plan of salvation. His character and identity precisely matches the Job Description, we might say today, of the position. In all of this, particularly the intercession of God the Son before God the Father, we catch a glimpse of the inner workings of the divine Trinity.

*“This intercession will last as long as the final redemption of God’s people -*



*that is - the utter effacement of sin and death and sorrow - remains unaccomplished. Its foundation of right is the atoning sacrifice once for all made here upon the cross; its continual motive is that sharing of compassion into which Love Incarnate choose to enter by sharing in our weakness and sorrow; its method of procedure is not a mere presentation of Himself by the Redeemer before God, but an eloquent intercession on our behalf by each individual among His redeemed in every single case of need; and finally its outcome is a perpetual maintenance of our relation of grace toward God, a a perpetually renewed removal of every hindrance and shadow cast by sin. This priestly work of Christ, now carried on in the unseen world bears the same relation to His redeeming work formerly accomplished for us on this earth, as the world-preserving power of God bears now to His creative activity in the beginning. And inasmuch as the work of redemption accomplished here consisted in various intertwining acts of the triune God, so we need not wonder if we find the same mysterious reciprocity of inwardly divine but outwardly manifested activities continued to the time of the final redemption.”* (Delitsch, I, p. 372)

The text immediately proceeds to define why the high priesthood of Christ is perfectly fitted to accomplish the ministry of salvation and intercession for which it was intended by God - **“holy, innocent, unstained, separate from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.”** The first three adjectives are very similar in meaning. Each, with slightly different nuances, describes a state of sinlessness. **“Holy”** describes the inner character and a state of absolute separation from sin. It is often used in a cultic context in regard to worship as in the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Piety and purity are the emphasis here. **“Innocent”** means free from evil or guile of any kind. There is nothing whatsoever about Him that could be subject to criticism or blame. **“Unstained”** the absence of any moral taint or corruption. The combination of these three similar descriptive terms *“Is that Jesus is free from anything that would in any way defile, prohibit, or disqualify Him from priestly service.”* (Allen, p. 430) He is also **“separate from sinners.”** The phrase has elicited some debate. The traditional understanding, given the phrase which follows, would seem to be best,

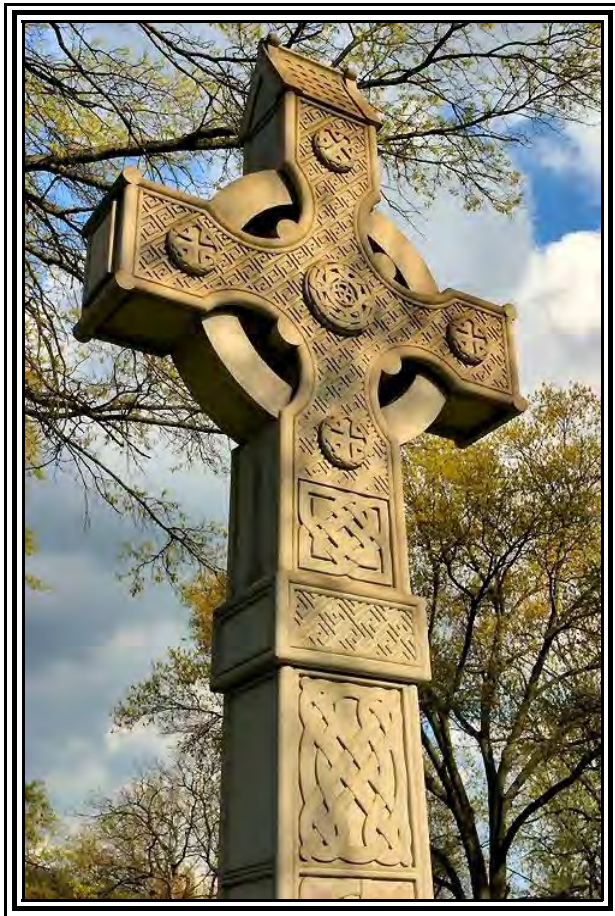


**“The Ascension Of Christ” - Rethel**

understanding the words as a reference to Christ's ascension to the presence of God in heaven which removed Him from the realm of sin which He had humbled Himself to endure during His life upon this earth. The series concludes with the affirmation of Christ's glorious exaltation to the right hand of the Father in heaven which places Him in the position to serve as the ideal intercessor on behalf of mankind - ***"and exalted above the heavens."***

*"We are finally told that He who is our Melchizedek has been exalted above the heavens...The language embraces the triumph of Christ's resurrection, ascension and glorification, and it portrays the supreme perfection of our ever-living High Priest in the sanctuary above. The height of the glory to which He has been exalted far surpasses all possibilities or ordinary experience and human description...The truth of the transcendental glory of our ever-living high priest guarantees to us the existential reality of His person and work, for it assures us that He is no just a figure of the past, but also of the present and the future, indeed of eternity (Hebrews 13:8) The power of His all sufficient atoning work is available without diminishment to us today as it was to believers of the first century, and it is so because He who died for us is alive from the dead and enthroned on high. Were He merely a figure of past history, overtaken and held by death, we would have no mediating high priest for us today. But Christ, alive and supremely exalted as He is, is truly our contemporary and our present Lord."*

(Hughes, p. 275)



***"He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily..."*** - The priests of Aaron's line were, one and all, sinners themselves and every bit in much in need of the same forgiveness and mercy as the ordinary Israelites on whose behalf they offered their sacrifices. Nowhere was this more evident than in the sacrifices of the great Day of Atonement in which the presentation of the sacrificial blood was sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat of the Ark twice, once for the High Priest himself and then a second time for the people. The new High Priest, as the previous sentences have affirmed, was perfectly without sin and therefore not in need of the same sacrificial cleansing as his counterparts in the rituals of Tabernacle and Temple. He was Himself both High Priest and sacrifice, thus, in an entirely different and superior category to the





*The Temple - Its Furnishings And Its Priests” - Jan Luyken*

successors of Aaron. The language of the text here addresses the entire sacrificial system from the daily rituals and sacrifices to the pinnacle of all the sacrifices in the unique service of Yom Kippur where the offering of blood was literally repeated **“first for his own sins and then for those of the people.”** His personal freedom from dependance upon benefits of the sacrifices enabled Him to **“offer up Himself” “once for all.”** This conclusive resolution of man’s subjection to the curse of sin required no repetition because the perfect High Priest became the perfect sacrifice by an act of His own free will.

*“When Christ our High Priest offered sacrifice, He did this ‘once for all.’ This all important affirmation not only attests to the eternal completeness and efficacy of this ‘one sacrifice for sins forever’ (KJV) but also confirms the negation and abolition of every other sacrificial system. The advent of what is final and eternal leaves no further place for what is temporary and inadequate. Henceforward, the expression ‘once for all’, or, within the context the equally emphatic term ‘once’ becomes a keynote in the great theme which our author is now developing. The contrast between the Levitical order and the order of Melchizedek could not be more marked; the former comprising a numerous succession of mortal and sinful priests offering over and over again a multitude of sacrifices, a system by its very nature stamped with imperfection*

*and impermanence; the latter comprising but one priest, one because of the spotless sanctity of his ever-continuing life, who offered up but one sacrifice; one because of its all sufficient fulness, susceptible, therefore of neither addition nor repetition, the sacrifice, moreover, not of some uncomprehending beast, but of Himself, the beloved Son of God, who by reason of His incarnation was able to offer up Himself in our stead. 'As four things are to be taken into account of every sacrifice,' writes Harveus, 'namely, what is offered, to whom it is offered, by whom it is offered, and for whom it is offered, He who is our one true Mediator, reconciling us to God by a sacrifice of peace, remained one with Him to who He offered, became one with those for whom He offered, and as the person who offered was one and the same with what was offered...so great a sacrifice is this sacrifice, that although it is one and once offered, it suffices to eternity.'"* (Hughes, p. 278)



*"King David the Psalmist"*

***"For the Law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the Law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever."*** - The ***"weakness"*** has already been carefully defined in terms of the sinfulness and mortality of all of the Aaronic high priests. The inferiority of ***"the Law,"*** that is, the Sinai institution of the Aaronic priesthood, as necessarily focusing on the issues of succession among these mortal priests and their own dependence upon the sacrifices which they offered - has also been dealt with to ***"the Word of the oath"***- a reference to Psalm 110:4 - ***"The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind. You are a priest forever after***

***the order of Melchizedek."*** The Psalm was, in fact, written much later than Exodus and Leviticus which revealed the Law, thus the reference here to ***"the word of the oath which came later than the Law."*** This summary statement concludes with the observation that the flawed priesthood of the old order has been replaced by the divine ***"appointment of a Son who has been made perfect forever."*** Modern commentators note with bemused amazement, the author of Hebrews straightforward identification of the words of Psalm 110 as the Word of God. Thus, for example, Dr. David Allen of Southwestern Theological Seminary in Dallas, marvels:



*“Verse 28 teaches us something about the author’s view of the Old Testament Scriptures. The oath in 7:28 refers back to 7:20-22 where Jesus, unlike the Levitical High Priests was appointed by God as High Priest according to Psalm 110:4. Psalm 110:4 was the content of the oath for the author. God is the implied agent behind the oath in 7:20-22. In 5:10, the agent declaring Jesus high priest is God. In 7:21, Psalm 110:4 is presented by the author as words spoken by God. Finally in 7:28, Psalm 110:4 itself is the agent that appoints Jesus, the Son, as the high priest....All of this assumes that Psalm 110 is the word of God and God Himself.” (Lane, p. 432)*



*“Christ At The Right Hand Of the Father”  
13<sup>th</sup> Century Altar Panel - Westphalia*

## ***Hebrews Chapter 8***

*(1) Now the point in what we are saying is this; we have such a great High Priest, one that is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, (2) a Minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. (3) For every high priest is set up to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary also for this priest also to have something to offer. (4) Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since*

*there are priests who offer gifts according to the Law. (5) They serve a copy and a shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." (6) But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old, as the covenant He mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. (7) For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.*

*(8) For He finds fault with them when He says:  
"Behold the days are coming," declares the Lord,  
when I will establish a new covenant with the House of Israel  
and with the House of Judah,*

*(9) Not like the covenant that I made with their fathers  
on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.  
For they did not continue in My covenant,  
And so I showed no concern for them," declares the Lord.*

*(10) "For this is the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those  
days," declares the Lord.*

*"I will put My laws into their minds and write them on their hearts,  
And I will be their God,  
And they shall be My people.*

*(11) And they shall not teach each one his neighbor  
and each one his brother, saying, "Know the Lord,"  
for they shall all know Me,  
from the least of them to the greatest.*

*(12) For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,  
and I will remember their sins no more."*

*(13) In speaking of a new covenant, He makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

## ***Hebrews 8:1-2***

*Now the point in what we are saying is this; we have such a high priest, One who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a Minister in the holy places, in the true tent, that the Lord set up, not man.*

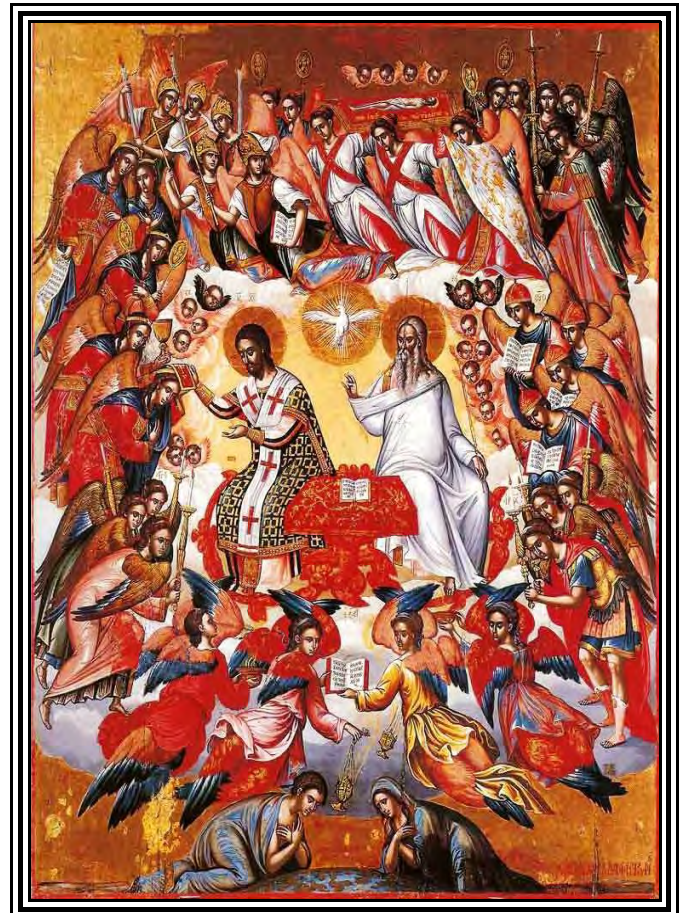
*"Now the point in what we are saying is this...." - Chapter 7 had ended upon a triumphant note summarizing the superiority of our great High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek in just a few short words. In effect the closing sentence of Chapter 7 sums up the entire content of the Epistle to this point. That message will now be further explained and expanded. Phillip Hughes quotes a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Vincentian priest to express the beauty and significance of these words:*



*“Thus, this Verse condenses and recapitulates within the briefest possible compass the main theme of the Epistle up to this point. Teodorico describes the three verses, 26-28, as ‘ a hymn to the High Priest, as though an outburst of the joy of humanity which has at last found the High Priest qualified to understand its weaknesses and to come to its aid; so far above us and so near to us; Himself in need of no cleansing, and able to cleanse and expiate all our guilt; so different from the Levitical priests, and so much more effective in the function of His sacerdotal mediation.’ ” (Hughes, p. 280)*

All that has come before is the foundation in fact for the conclusions and affirmations which are now put forward. The opening phrase of Verse 1 - **“Now the point in what we are saying is this...”** indicates that the relevance and practical significance of the identity of our great High Priest will now be set forth so that we may more fully appreciate the wondrous blessing which He is and the power which His identity provides for our confident hope in living as Christians who believe that we have a Mediator before the Father, who, was both true God and true man can intercede on our behalf like none other. His perfect priesthood continues forever throughout time and eternity, not merely on earth but **“at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven.”** These were the promises of the messianic Psalm 110 and they have all been perfectly fulfilled in Christ.

The religion of Judaism, in Tabernacle and Temple, with its elaborate system of sacrifices was designed to hold before Israel, and thru Israel to hold before the world the fundamental truth of substitutionary atonement. A price had to be paid in blood, that is, the life of an innocent victim had to be given as the substitute for guilty mankind to accomplish reconciliation between the righteous and holy God and sinful mankind. The former system had accomplished this task, however imperfectly it had been recognized by the Children of Israel. Every sacrifice of the old order was a sermon on the impending perfect sacrifice of Christ. Blood had to be shed in order for sin to be forgiven. Ultimately that innocent blood could only be shed by the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.



*“There are not only aspects of discontinuity*

*“Christ At The Right Hand of God “*



***“The Perfect Sacrifice Of The Great High Priest With  
Melchizedek, Abraham, and Isaac”***

*but also typological affinities between the old system of the sanctuary set up under Moses and the eternal order of Melchizedek established in Christ; for the old order, imperfect and temporary though it was, did more than cry out for the provision of an order that would be effective and abiding; it was also designed to teach that the way of atonement was the way of sacrifice and substitution and to arouse the hope that in due course God Himself would send the perfect victim for the removal of all sin. The affirmation of the two verses now before us constitutes the point of this central section of the Epistle.”* (Hughes, p. 281)

This portion of the letter reveals the crucial significance for every believer of the divine appointment of ***“a Son who has been made perfect forever.”*** (Hebrews 7:28) and who has thus become ***“the Source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him”*** (Hebrews 5:9). The great task of human salvation could not have been accomplished by anyone other than a man who was the Son of God.

*“The pastor would have his hearers grasp the implications of who this High Priest now is - the sum of what He has always been, and what He has now become. He is the eternal Son, who through His obedient, incarnate life offered Himself in death and is now seated at God’s right hand, fully able to meet their deepest need.”* (Cockerill, pp. 345-346)



Using the familiar language of Tabernacle/Temple, the Epistle will now explain the significance of Christ's perfect offering of Himself, and the manner in which that offer has won for every believer full and free forgiveness and salvation. The perfect, once for all, sacrifice which He alone could offer could not be made upon the altar of an earthly sanctuary, as were the sacrifices of the old covenant.

The text moves immediately to the point of the crucial difference between the sanctuary of the former covenant and that of the new covenant - ***“One who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a Minister of the Holy Places in the true Tent that the Lord set up, not man.”*** The Messianic promise of Psalm 110 and the Prophet Jeremiah's promise of a New Covenant to replace the flawed former covenant are cited to demonstrate the crucial significance of the heavenly sanctuary for this High Priest as the affirmation. The central question addressed in this segment are *“Who? Where? What?”*

*“Christ's self-offering is the center,...especially, the great ‘once for all’ Day of Atonement sacrifice that removes sin. However, when sin is removed, there is no hindrance to approaching God. Thus, Christ's self-offering is also a sacrifice of high priestly consecration that authorizes Him to enter God's presence in the heavenly sanctuary on behalf of God's people. Furthermore, when sin is taken away, a forgiveness and obedience promised by the New Covenant becomes a reality. Thus, Christ's offering is a covenant making sacrifice that establishes Him as the new and effective way to approach God. By definitively removing sin by His great Day of Atonement sacrifice, He now ministers all benefits to God's people as their heavenly High Priest and the Mediator, Guarantor of a new and ‘better’ covenant. Everything depends on recognizing who He is, being joined to Him by faith, and thus appropriating the blessings which only He can afford.”* (Cockerill, p. 348)

From the beginning of the Letter the session of the Son of God at the right hand of the Father in heaven has carried the priestly character of intercession on the basis of immediate access: ***“After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having***



***“Icon Of Christ Seated At the Right Hand Of God”***



*"Christ At the Right Hand Of God In Heaven"*

*become as superior to angels as the Name He has inherited is superior to theirs."* (Hebrews 1:3-4) Psalm 110 had emphasized the divine invitation for the Son to take His rightful place at the right hand of His Father in heaven: ***"The LORD says to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies your footstool... The LORD is at your right hand, He will shatter the kings on the Day of His Wrath."*** (Psalm 110:1,5) The expanded reference here to ***"the Throne of the Majesty in Heaven"*** is intended to underscore the exalted status the High Priest/King of the Order of Melchizedek and to magnify the divine authority and sovereignty of the Son's position. The ***"throne"*** is symbolic of the royal power of a King, the emblem of his reign and rule. When a human king loses his power he is said to be *"dethroned."* Classical Christian art often depicts the heavenly throne of God as a bench upon which both Christ and the Father are seated with the Dove of the Spirit hovering above them. This divine throne is ***"in heaven."*** The Greek text actually says *"in the*

*heavens,"* using the plural to stress its glory and status as much as possible. These facts are of the greatest significance at this very moment for the believers struggling against sin, death and their own sinful nature here on earth.

***"The High Priest who has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens"*** is not a reference limited to exaltation or to session.. It is a comprehensive description of the present reality available for the faithful. The One who is seated in the place of all authority as the only effective High Priest is the eternal Son who achieved His position by offering His obedient, incarnate life up in death as an effective sacrifice for the sins of humanity." (Cockerill, p. 351)

The phrase ***"the throne of the Majesty in heaven"*** reflects the reverent Hebrew reluctance to speak the sacred Name of God. ***"The Majesty"*** becomes the circumlocution which refers to God without mentioning His sacred Name.

This messianic High Priest's posture - ***"who is seated at the right hand of the throne"*** - deftly combines both his priestly and royal functions. Unlike any of the high priests of Israel this perfect High Priest is also a King. The priests of the former Levitical priesthood



did their work standing up. There were in chairs in the Holy of Holies, except the holy Ark itself as the throne of God. The sacrifices were always performed by a standing priest. The permanence and power of this one High Priest is expressed by the fact that He may be seated at the right hand of God, for His work is done and He may now rest from His labors. The same contrast will be set forth in Hebrews 10:11-14

***“And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God, waiting for that time until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet. For by a single offering, He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”***

The prophet Zechariah had foretold the coming of this perfect High Priest who would rule over the true Israel of God forever as High Priest and King and be seated upon a royal throne, clothed in the Majesty of a King, from which position he will reign over the Israel of God forever:

***“Take the silver and gold and make a crown and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua, son of Jehozadak. Tell him this is what the Lord Almighty says; ‘Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the Temple of the Lord. It is he who will build the Temple of the Lord and he will be clothed with Majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.’”***  
(Zechariah 6:11-13)

***“A minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.”*** - The term ***“minister”*** (Greek - *“leiturgos”* -from which the English word *“liturgy”* is derived) literally means *“to serve.”* The etymology of the word in secular Greek is a combination of two terms which mean *“to work for the people.”* The word was used most frequently in a political context to describe those who had achieved a level of personal wealth which enabled them to take on works of public service at their own expense. *“Citizens with an income above a fixed level had by law to accept these public services at their own expense, or else they could do so voluntarily, whether for motives of*



***“Christ Upon His Heavenly Throne”***

*patriotism, or vainglory, or both.*” (Kittel, IV, p. 216) As the religious texts of Judaism came to be composed or translated more frequently into Greek during the Hellenistic era the meaning of the noun changed drastically, moving from politics to theology. “*Leitergos*” became the characteristic word used in the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, and throughout Jewish theological writings written in Greek to denote the work of the High Priest and his fellow priests in the rituals and services of the Temple.

*“The term ‘minister’ enhances the dignity and authority of the High Priest...In the Hellenistic world, ‘ministers’ were public servants or benefactors who contributed to the community’s well-being. The priestly service for this minister provides untold benefits for the people of God...bringing them into the very Sanctuary in which He serves. As a minister of the heavenly ‘Sanctuary,’ He is high above God’s angelic ‘ministers’ (1:7,14) sent to do God’s bidding.”* (Cockerill, p. 352)

The concept that the Temple and Tabernacle replicate the heavenly sanctuary of God is not original to Hebrews. It is cited frequently in the Old Testament. The Psalmist declared:



*Russian Icon Of Christ Enthroned At The Right Hand of God In Heaven*

*“In the Lord I take refuge...The Lord is in His holy Temple, the Lord’s throne is in heaven; His eyes see, His eyelids test the children of men...For the Lord is righteous; He loves righteous deeds, the upright all behold His face.”*(Psalm 11)

*“I love You, O LORD my Strength. The LORD is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer, My God, my Rock in whom I take refuge, my Shield, and the Horn of my Salvation, my Stronghold. I call upon the LORD who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies...In my distress, I called upon the LORD, to my God I cried for help. From His Temple, He heard my voice and my cry to Him reached His ears...He bowed the heavens and came down, thick darkness was under His feet; He rode on a cherub and flew, He came swiftly on the wings of the wind.”* (Psalm 18)

*“Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His Name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness...and in His*



***temple all cry ‘Holy!’ The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as King forever! May the LORD give strength to His people! May the LORD bless His people with peace!’ (Psalm 29)***

Isaiah’s magnificent Throne Room Vision of God presents the Lord seated upon His heavenly throne, surrounded by the glory of the seraphim a scene so completely overwhelming that the prophet’s sense of unworthiness led him to fear for his life.

***“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the Temple. Above Him stood the seraphim, each had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew, and one called to another and said; ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!’ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the House was filled with smoke. And I said, ‘Woe is me, for I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.’ Then one of the seraphs flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar and he touched my mouth and said, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.’” (Isaiah 6)***

The Book of Micah is introduced with similar language which depicts the Lord as coming forth from His heavenly Temple to render His righteous judgement upon the earth:



***“Isaiah’s Vision Of The Lord Enthroned Within His Heavenly Temple”***

***“Hear you peoples, all of you pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it, and let the LORD God be a witness against you, the LORD from His holy Temple. For behold, the LORD is coming out of His place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth.” (Micah 1)***

The prophet Habakkuk compares the lifeless idols of the heathen with the one true God who lives and dwells within His holy temple, commanding the worship of all humanity for the day is coming when the glory of the Lord which now fills the temple of His presence in heaven will fill all the earth with judgement.

***“Behold, is it not from the LORD of hosts that people labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing. For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea...What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it. A metal image, a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols! Woe to him who prays to a wooden thing. Awake; to a silent stone, Arise! Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and there is no breath in it at all. But the LORD is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him!” (Habakkuk 2)***



***:Christ Enthroned In Heaven”***

Accordingly, the idea of a temple and a throne in heaven which are the prototypes and models of their counterparts in Jerusalem on earth would have been most familiar to the recipients of this letter.

The ministry of the great High Priest had to take place in the true ***“holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.”*** The concept is repeated in Chapter 9:11-14, following a detailed description of the arrangements and furnishings of the sanctuaries built on earth by Moses and Solomon.

***“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands - that is, not of this creation) He entered once for all into the Holy Places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of His own***





*“Christ In The Heavenly Sanctuary”*

***blood, thus securing eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons, with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”***

The essence of the difference between the earthly sanctuaries and their heavenly originals is the reality that the heavenly sanctuaries are those which ***“the Lord set up not man.”***

The replica sanctuaries on earth reflect the imperfection of the human priesthood which ministered within them. The repeated imperfect sacrifices offered there could not accomplish the ultimate forgiveness of sin and access into the presence of the Lord because they too were nothing more than replica’s of the true sacrifice of the perfect God/Man once for all upon the cross. Thus the theme imperfection in the earthly replicas of their heavenly counterparts runs through the entire contrast between the old and the new covenants of atonement.

*“There is indeed a sanctuary, but it is not on this earth (he is saying to them) and a priesthood, but it is fulfilled in Christ our glorious High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek. They are not to fix their expectations on mundane shadows, but on the heavenly reality. Jesus our Forerunner has opened for us the way, hitherto barred, into the Sanctuary of God’s presence and favor. The eternal rest which the Israelites in the wilderness failed to achieve belongs to us who trust in Him (4:1ff.). For He who is now enthroned above is still ours. His ascension was indeed a return to the glory from which He had first descended, but it was a return with a difference. He left as the Son of God. He*

*returned as the Son of God, and also, by reason of the incarnation, as the Son of Man. He left as Lord. He returned as Lord, and also, as Minister on our behalf in the presence of the Father. He left as King. He returned both as King and also as High Priest and Intercessor for those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren (Heb. 2:11). He left as Sovereign. He returned also as Savior. He who sustains the whole of creation is now also the pioneer and the guarantor of our redemption (Heb. 11-3; 2:10; 12:2).” (Hughes, p. 283)*



*“Christ Our Royal High Priest”*

### ***Verses 3-7***

***“For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the Law. They serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to construct the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.’ But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old, as the covenant that He mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.”***

***“For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices....”*** - The essential role of the priests in general and the high priest in particular is to offer sacrifices on behalf of the



people whom he represents as priest. This obvious truth had previously been stated in Hebrews 5:1 - ***“For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.”*** The difference in the nature of the sacrifices of the two different high priests is indicated by the terminology of the verse. The Aaronic priests - ***“offer gifts and sacrifices”*** in the plural to describe a constant, ongoing series of offerings. The High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek will also offer ***“something”*** but in this instance the term is singular to designate one perfect offering which will accomplish its task once for all.

*“That Christ’s offering is limited to a single offering is indicated by the singular pronoun ‘something.’ There is no suggestion that He offers a plurality of gifts and sacrifices, for to do so would be incompatible with the unique and total sufficiency of the one sacrifice He offered on the cross. Nor may it be concluded that in some sense He re-offers or re-presents this one sacrifice in the heavenly sanctuary, for this too would conflict with our author’s insistence not only that His sacrifice of Himself was done once for all in contrast to the repetitious offerings of the Levitical system, but also that it took place here on earth, on the cross, ‘outside the camp.’ Jesus’ present ministry in heaven is intercession, not offering and so it was in the past that He had to have something to offer.” (Hughes, p. 291)*



***“The Tabernacle And Its Worship” - Jan Luyken***

The fact that the tense of the verbs throughout this segment which describe the gifts and sacrifices of the Levitical priests are in the present tense also suggests that they were still going on at the time the Epistle was written. This would indicate that Hebrews must have been written prior to A.D. 70 and the destruction of the Temple by the Romans which brought about the termination of the sacrifices.

***“Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all since there are priests, who offers gifts according to the Law. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.”***

- The concept of the Temple on earth as a mere reflection of the true Temple in heaven is extended here to apply specifically to the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial offerings which they make. They and their offerings are also nothing more than a reflection - ***“a shadow and a copy of the heavenly things.”*** The earthly ministry of the Tribe of Levi was nothing more than a fleeting ***“shadow and a copy”*** of the reality which could found only in Christ. It was designed by God to set before Israel, and through Israel before mankind the concept of substitutionary blood atonement which would be realized completely in the innocent sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross for the sin of all of the sons of Adam.



***“The Construction of the Tabernacle According To The Plan Revealed To Moses” - Luyken***

Christ is the real High Priest and He has made the once for all offering of His own precious blood upon the cross. The authenticity of Christ’s priesthood and the perfect effectiveness of His offering is demonstrated by the fact that His ministry continues now in heaven while the futile activities of the Levitical priests continue on earth, despite the fact that the true Messiah has come and the perfect offering has been made. Earthly priests operate under the priesthood which had been established and defined by the Law given to Moses at Sinai. As has been previously been asserted, that Law does not and cannot apply to Jesus as the great



High Priest. Therefore, the writer correctly notes - ***“if He were on earth, He could not be a priest.”*** Neither He nor the substance of His priesthood comply with the regulations and stipulations of the Law. He is not a Levite, but a son of the tribe of Judah and therefore unqualified to be an earthly priest. His priestly ministry contradicted and rejected the empty ritualism of the corrupt earthly priesthood. All of this indicates the fact that He is not, and could not be, a part of the earthly priesthood if He was to accomplish His mission of atonement.

*“Our author has already explained why there is no place for another priesthood on earth in 7:11 ff.. The earthly order is the order of Levi, as required by the Mosaic Law. Christ did not belong to the Tribe of Levi, but to the Tribe of Judah, ‘and in connection with that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests.’ (7:14) It follows, therefore, that His priesthood belongs to a sphere that is not earthly. This connection in no way stultifies the priestly character of the Son’s incarnation in order that He might offer His humanity in sacrifice*

*here on earth, for the cross in turn was a means to a further end, namely the restoration of our humanity, and its exaltation with Himself to the glory which is now His. He who has gone to heaven is the One who first came from heaven., the true sanctuary in which He now appears in the presence of God is heaven itself (9:24), and the abiding sphere of His priesthood is heavenly and eternal, not earthly and temporal. Thus, from the very beginning, the gaze of the believer has been fixed, not on the earthly shadow, but on the heavenly reality; for this life is the time of pilgrimage, not rest, and this present world, prior to the renewal of all things, is the realm of all that is transitory, and is thus no fit place for Him who is our High Priest forever.”* (Hughes, p. 292)

***“For when Moses was about to erect the Tent, he was instructed by God, saying, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you upon the mountain.’”*** - The design of the Tabernacle - and subsequently the Temple in Jerusalem by Solomon - did not originate in the imagination of man. Hebrews cites Exodus 25:40 and the terminology which God used in His instructions to Moses to prove that the design was a revelation from

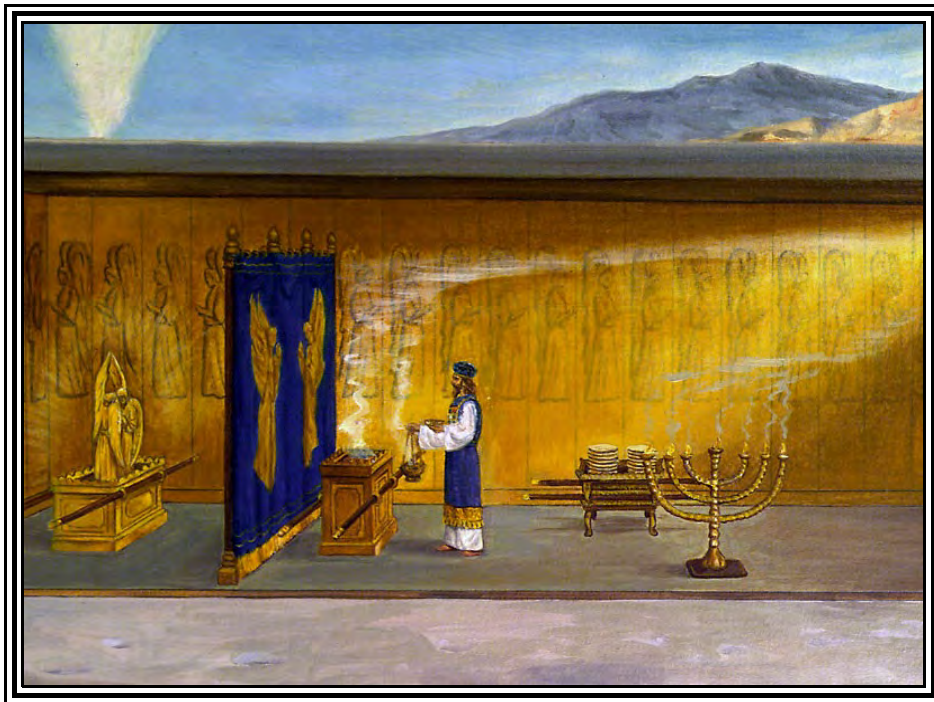


***“Christ the Eternal High Priest In Heaven”***

God of the heavenly reality - ***“the pattern which was shown you upon the mountain.”*** The charge which God placed upon Moses was to allow no deviation from that heavenly pattern whatsoever. That heavenly design was intended to teach:

*“Thus the earthly Tabernacle which Moses erected was constructed according to the pattern revealed to him on Mount Sinai. Both its origin (the mind of God) and the truth it prefigured (the true tent vs.2) were heavenly, not earthly. It was the shadow cast by the reality. And as Moses was instructed by God, the wilderness sanctuary was not the result of mere human planning and construction. It was designed to display in a typical manner, the deep truths concerning the need of man and the grace of God. There was, as Calvin says, a real spiritual meaning in everything; but at the same time he adds, ‘there is no cause for us to be excessively curious and to seek some sublime mystery in every nail and in other similar details, as Hesychius and a good many other ancient writers labored to do. ‘ As we learn that we are to worship God only in the manner that He ordained, so also we are to acknowledge that there are no religious symbols except those which conform to Christ...For the author of Hebrews, his overmastering concern is with the soteriological significance of the divinely appointed tabernacle and its ceremonial for fallen mankind, and the achievement in Christ of that eternal reconciliation which the levitical system could never achieve.”* (Hughes, p. 293-294)

The incomprehensible details of that which was revealed to Moses upon the mountain are not our concern here. Rather the evangelical insight of the absolute superiority of the



***“The High Priest Before The Tabernacle Curtain”***



ministry of Christ to that of its counterpart through the Levitical priests with the earthly Tabernacle/Temples in which they were called to serve. Thus does our author proceed immediately to a forthright assertion of that superiority in the verses which follow.

***“But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old, as the covenant that He mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.”*** - The contrast between the earthly

and the heavenly, the former and the present, is expressed with the introductory phrase ***“But as it is.”*** The past is the past. Our concern with what was is limited to the extent that it illuminates and explains that which has replaced and fulfilled it in the great ***“ministry”*** of Christ. The term ***“ministry”*** to characterize

Christ’s accomplishment of the plan of salvation reiterates the terminology of Verse 2 - ***“a Minister in the Holy Places”*** - in reference to Christ’s high priestly presence in the heavenly sanctuary at the right hand of the divine majesty. In both instance the use of this word serves to connect the High Priestly role of Christ with that of His imperfect human predecessors. Christ has ***“obtained”*** this ministry by His victorious achievement of everything which was necessary for man’s salvation - His perfect life, innocent suffering and death, and triumphant resurrection on the third day. He has earned the right to this glorious ministry - ***“much more excellent than the old.”*** The perfect tense of the verb - ***“has obtained”*** indicates that this task has been completely accomplished.

It only stands to reason that the difference between the two ministries would also be reflected in the difference between the two covenants themselves. ***“Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant He mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.”*** The repetition of the term ***“better”*** - in both instances placed in the most prominent position in the respective phrases in the Greek text - serves to stress the substance and the degree of the contrast. The new is better than the old in every possible way. The inherent superiority of the new covenant, the author contends, is the consequence of the fact that ***“it is enacted on better promises.”*** The new covenant’s superiority is conclusively demonstrated by the fact that it has conclusively accomplished that which its predecessor was unable to accomplish. The specific content of the ***“better promises”*** which the writer has in mind will be specified in the extended quotation of those



***“Christ the Exalted High Priest”***

promises from the prophecy of Jeremiah which now follows. The obvious fact is that ***“If that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.”*** The very fact that a new covenant was promised and has come to be in Christ is proof positive that the old covenant was incapable of accomplishing the task set before it. *“Because the New Covenant provides these benefits - unobtainable through the Old - the New is ‘better’ - that is, effective.”* (Cockerill, p. 363) The flaw of the Old Covenant was not in the Covenant itself. It accurately and fully presented the demands of God’s righteous Law and offered life to those who would perfectly obey that Law. However, flawed sinful mankind was incapable of such perfect obedience. The shortcoming of the Old Covenant lay in it’s inability to justify and renew those who did not keep the Law perfectly - namely the entire human race. The New Covenant, in contrast, met that need with the promise of God’s grace demonstrated in the sacrifice of His Son who would pay the penalty which humanity was incapable of paying with His own precious blood.



*“Christ Exalted In The Heavenly Sanctuary”*

### ***Hebrews 8:8-13***

***For He finds fault with them when He says: “Behold the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the and to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in My covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant which I will make with the House of Israel after those days, declares the Lord; I will put My laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know Me from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember***



***their sins no more. In speaking of a new covenant, He makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”***

***“For He finds fault with them when He says...”*** - The apostle promptly documents his assertion of the faultiness of the former covenant was a quotation from the Old Testament. The pronoun ***“He”*** - twice repeated in the phrase refers to God as the author of the Old Testament. This is his consistent practice throughout the letter (cf.8:13;2:12; 4:3.4.7;5:5,6; 10:30; 11:18; 3:7; 10:5,15). This practice reflects the unchallenged belief of Judaism and Christianity that the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament were written by God Himself through plenary verbal inspiration, that is to say - each and every word of the prophets who wrote them was directly inspired by God. Thus the author here does not feel compelled to justify or explain his direct attribution of, in this instance words from the Book of Jeremiah, to God.

It is essential to note the circumstances in which the prophet Jeremiah had been called to be God’s spokesman to the nation of Judah. Jeremiah’s prophecy was written in a time of catastrophe and collapse as the long delayed judgement of God came crashing down upon Judah and Jerusalem. This judgement was not arbitrary, nor should it have been unexpected. God had unmistakably enunciated the curses which would be the consequences of Judah’s continued apostasy, defining those curses specifically in terms of the original covenant which God had established with their fathers at Sinai:

***“The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ‘Hear the words of this covenant and speak to the men of Judah and of Jerusalem. You shall say to***



***“Nebuchadnezzar Leading His Army Through the Ishtar Gate of Ancient Babylon to Invade the Kingdom Of Judah”***

*them, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man who does not hear the words of this covenant, that I commanded your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Listen to My voice, and do all that I command you. So shall you be My people, and I will be your God, that I may confirm the oath that I swore to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is at this day.’ Then I answered, ‘So be it LORD.’ And the LORD said to me, ‘Proclaim all these words to the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, Hear the words of this covenant and do them. For I solemnly warned your fathers when I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, warning them persistently, even to this day, saying, Obey My voice! Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone walked in the stubbornness of his evil heart. Therefore I brought upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did not.’ Again the LORD said to me, ‘A conspiracy exists among the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers who refused to hear My words. They have gone after other gods to serve them. The House of Israel and the House of Judah have broken My covenant that I made with their fathers. Therefore, thus says the LORD, Behold, I am bringing disaster upon them that they cannot escape. Though they cry to Me, I will not listen to them. Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry to the gods to whom they have made offerings, but they cannot save them in their time of trouble. For your gods have become as many as your cities, O Judah, and as many are the streets of Jerusalem are the cities that you have set up to shame, altars to make offerings to Baal.’” (Jeremiah 11:1-13)*



*“The Plunder of Fallen Jerusalem By The Babylonians” - Luyken*



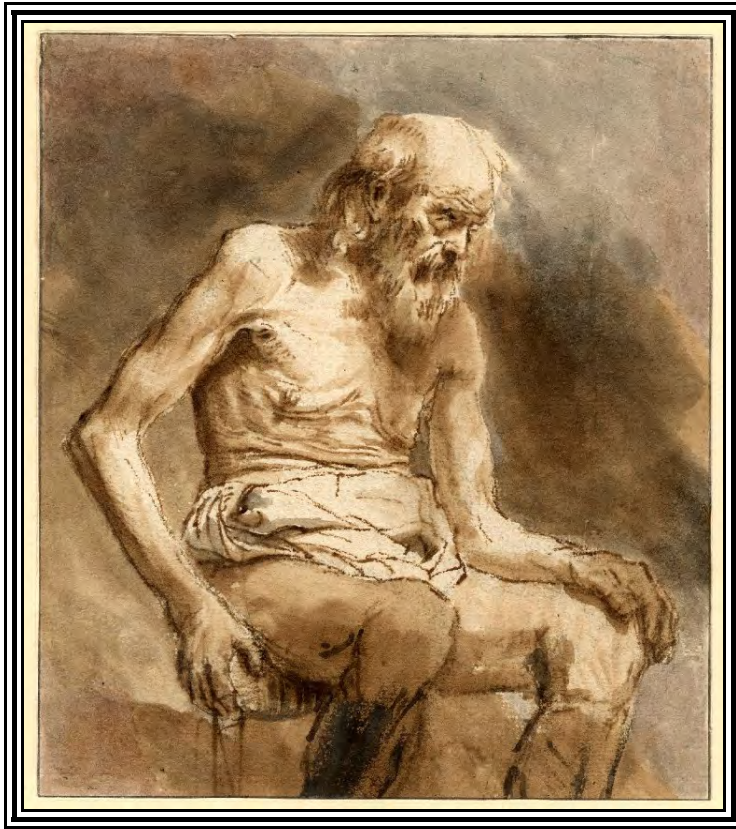


*“Jeremiah At The Fall Of Jerusalem” - Kaulbach*

The hordes of the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar were the instrument of God’s covenant curse upon Judah and Jerusalem. They plundered and destroyed the sacred Temple and carried off the golden furnishings of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies as the trophies of their victory to rest in the pagan temple of Marduk, the chief idol of their great city.. In the midst of all this, God had promised His people a new covenant despite the obvious failure of the original covenant as the consequence of their flagrant disobedience.

*“Jeremiah’s own day was, in fact, a day of disruption and disaster, and this in itself was recognized as a condign (fully deserved) judgement upon the people because of their wilful disobedience for the covenant which they had engaged themselves to observe; for to spurn the blessings which the covenant promises is to invite the cursing which it threatens. Jeremiah’s prophecy, therefore, was like a shaft of light, penetrating the darkness of desperate apostasy and focusing on a future time when God would be truly loved and obeyed.” (Hughes, p. 300)*

The quotation which follows does not specifically criticize the former covenant. Instead it describes in detail **“a new covenant”** which God promises to establish with His people. That need for that promise of a new covenant clearly implies the inadequacy of the covenant which is to be replaced - **“For if the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second.”** The former covenant had failed to restore humanity to harmony with her Creator. The root cause for that failure was, in the first instance, the



*“The Prophet Jeremiah”*

obstinate refusal of the chosen people to comply with the terms of the covenant and refrain from the worship of idols. And yet, at the same time, ultimately the new covenant was not established because the people broke the old covenant,. The former covenant had always been intended to be anticipatory and temporary. It was designed to play an important role in the resolution of the sin problem by designating Israel to serve as the custodians of the promises and prophecies which would identify and define the Messiah, and to be the nation from whom the promised Messiah would come. The religion God revealed to Israel was to provide ***“a copy and shadow of the heavenly things”*** (Hebrews 8:5) as did the Tabernacle and Temple. But they

were not the reality. They only exhibited the concept of substitutionary atonement in their animal sacrifices. The new covenant would actually accomplish that atonement, the reconciliation of creatures and Creator, because God would fulfil the covenant Himself in the person of His divine Son. Man would then be saved by grace through faith rather than by means of compliance with legal requirements.

*“Hebrews 8:8-12 contains the quotation of Jeremiah 31:31-34. Jeremiah 31:31-34 plays a crucial role in the New Testament. In addition to Hebrews 9:15; 10:13; and 12:24, it is referenced by all three Synoptic writers as well as by Paul concerning the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:20; Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; 1 Corinthians 11:25). Paul makes two additional references to it in Romans 11:27; and 2 Corinthians 3:6.” (Allen p. 446)*

***“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will establish a new covenant...”*** - The Jeremiah text is introduced with the conjunction ***“For”*** in the Greek text to link the prophet’s words to the preceding paragraph. The quotation begins with God’s announcement of ***“a new covenant”*** at an unspecified point in the future - ***“the days are coming”*** Those days will be fundamentally different than the time of turmoil and terror in which Jeremiah had been called to serve. They will be different because God Himself will act to make them different. Despite the failure of fallen Israel and Judah, the Lord will take the initiative to fulfil his purpose for the salvation of His people. This future age will be a



time of grace and blessedness. This will be a covenant both initiated and implemented by God Himself - ***“I will establish a new covenant.”***

*“I will establish a new covenant, He says. God is its author and its operator, bringing it into being and making it effective in the lives of His people. This new covenant, unlike the covenant made with the people through Moses, would be of grace, not of works; radical not external; everlasting, not temporary; meeting man’s deepest need and transforming his whole being, because from beginning to end it would be the work of God, not of man.”* (Hughes, p. 300)

This is the only instance in which the phrase ***“a new covenant”*** appears in the Old Testament. This ***“new covenant”*** will be established with both ***“the House of Israel and the House of Judah.”*** The unusual combination of both the southern and northern kingdoms together indicates that the division of the nation of Israel into two separate rival kingdoms in defiance of the will of God as the consequence of the corruption and greed of the House of David in the time of Solomon and his arrogant son Rehoboam will be undone by the action of the Lord. He will reunite His covenant people once again in accord with His promises to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And that was to be only the beginning for the God of grace was to reach out in love to all of humanity:

*“The new covenant would bring together those who had been divided by bitterness and hostility; it was to be established with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah. The promise of the reunion of Judah and Israel was to be symbolical of the healing of every human breach and the reconciliation of all nations and persons in Christ, the Seed of Abraham in whom all the peoples of the earth are blessed and united ((Ga. 3:8F., 16,27), because ‘He has broken down the dividing wall of hostility’(Eph. 2:14). What God accomplishes through Christ is nothing less than the reconciliation of the world to Himself (1 Corinthians 5:19ff.)* (Hughes. P. 300)

The general thrust of the entire promise is that God must act because of the failure of His people to remain faithful to the covenant to which they had committed themselves at Mount Sinai. That covenant had been intended as a crucial component in God’s intent for the salvation of humanity since the creation.

***“Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.”*** - The responsibility for the failure of the former covenant goes all the way back to its establishment at the time of the exodus - ***“The covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.”*** The rebellion and disobedience, the ingratitude and rejection of the Children of Israel is certainly nothing new. The author had made this point previously in Chapters 3 and 4:

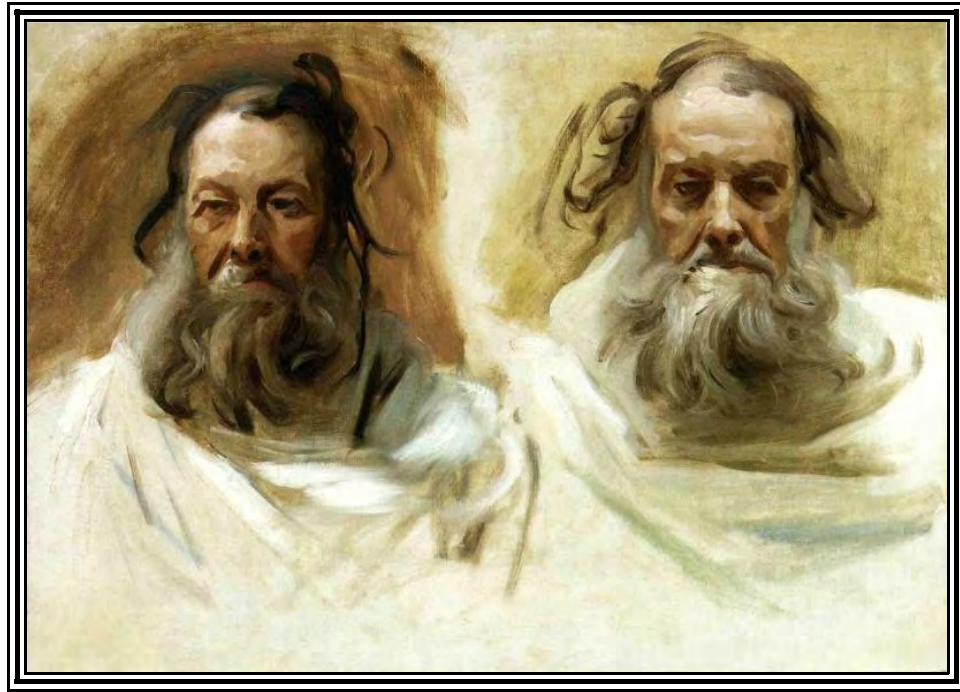
***“Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion on the day of testing in the wilderness when you fathers put Me to the test and saw My works for forty years..Therefore I was provoked with that generation and said, They always go astray in their heart; and they have not known My ways. And I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest...For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt, led by Moses? And with whom was He provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?” (Hebrews 3:8-11; 16-19)***



***“The Exodus From Egypt” - Roberts***

The image of Israel being taken by the hand as God led them forth from bondage invokes the image of helpless children who are protectively led by a loving parent, thereby emphasizing the ingratitude of those who consistently spurned the love of their heavenly Father to follow the path of disobedience and sin. The Hebrew Christians to whom this epistle is addressed are the spiritual descendants of those very beneficiaries of the children who God led by the land. The admonition of Hebrews is that these children of God not make the same fatal mistake which their forefathers had made before them.





*"The Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah" - Sargeant*

***"For they did not continue in My covenant and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. -*** The chronic disobedience of the Children of Israel - ***"they did not continue in My covenant"*** - ultimately resulted in the nullification of that covenant. From the very beginning, while Moses was still upon Mount Sinai with the Lord receiving the terms of the covenant, Israel had already lapsed into idolatry at the base of the mountain with the Golden Calf, and that unfaithfulness remained an unbroken pattern throughout the history of the nation. The incisive phrase with which God described His response thru Jeremiah - ***"I showed no concern for them"*** - perfectly described the cancellation of God's side of the covenant. As one commentator aptly notes, this is *"an understatement all the more ominous for its brevity."* (Cockerill, p. 367) The New English Bible translates these words most appropriately as *"Therefore I abandoned them."* The blessing, guidance, and protection which He had promised to provide would not be forthcoming. The implicit warning to the Hebrew Christians being tempted to apostasy is that should they abandon the New Covenant to revert to the Old the same judgement would fall upon them. The contrast between the failure of the disobedient wilderness generation and the encouragement of the present generation to imitate the faithfulness of the heroes of the past which is forthcoming in Chapter 11 provides the perfect context in which to define the essential difference between the old and the new.

***"For this is the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those days, declares the Lord..."*** - The nature and identity of the New Covenant is clearly spelled out. God is the initiator of this covenant - ***"I will make..."*** The God of the New covenant is the same God who had established its predecessor - ***"not like the covenant I made with their fathers."*** *"The God who establishes the new is the same God who made the old. Since God*

is the Author of both, each is good and glorious, though the goodness and glory of the latter far surpass the goodness and glory of the former.” (Hughes, p. 301) ***“The House of Israel”*** in the New Covenant will not be limited to a particular nation. Instead it will be perfectly inclusive reaching out to embrace all nations as our Lord had declared in His Great Commission: ***“Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”*** (Matthew 28:19)

*“God Himself makes the new covenant with the people who belong to the Messianic Age. That is, Jew and Gentile as believers make up ‘the House of Israel.’ The era of the Old covenant, characterized by the exclusiveness of the Nation of Israel, has made way for a new age in which all nations are included. Who belongs to the House of Israel? All those people, says God, in whose hearts I will put My laws and upon whose hearts I will write them.”* (Kistemaker, p. 226)

This New Covenant will be established, Jeremiah promised, in the Messianic End Times, after the flaws of the Old Covenant had been fully revealed. The terminology here - ***“after those days”*** echoes the language of Verse 8 - ***“Behold the days are coming, declares the Lord.”*** The coming of the Messiah, the perfect High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek, who will offer Himself once for all as the sacrifice to atone for the sins of humanity will transform everything.



***“God Speaking To Jeremiah”***

***“I will put My laws into their minds, and write them upon their hearts...”*** - The same Law which had been the agent of condemnation under the former covenant will be perfectly fulfilled by the Messiah whom God will send in the Person of His own Son and that Law which had condemned will now become the standard by which the believer is enabled to live according to the will and purpose of God. Even those who lived in the days of the former covenant trusting by faith in the grace which the Messiah would win for them are included in the salvation of the New Covenant: ***“All those, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”*** (Hebrews 11:39)

St. Paul explained the distinction between the



good and perfect Law of God and the sinfulness of man in Romans 7, observing that the Law is not the problem, but the sinful nature of man which rejects and refuses to conform to the Law. The righteous truth of the Law reveals the hideous reality of sin.

***“So the Law is holy and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. For if I do not do what I want, I agree with the Law, that is good. So now it is no longer I that do it, but the sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.”*** (Romans 7:12-20)



***“Moses With the Tablets of the Law”***

*“And it is the same law that is associated with both old and new covenants. Though the Christian believer is not justified by the works of the law, but by the law-keeping and self-offering of Another on his behalf, yet the law of God is the standard of holiness required of him, only now he is enabled to love and obey the commands of God which before he hated and disobeyed and when his obedience falls short of perfection the righteousness of Another is credited to him by grace through faith.”* (Hughes, p. 301)

***“Their minds”*** and ***“their hearts”*** represent man’s inner being. The Law of God will no longer be simply an external force which accuses and condemns. Instead, as the believer in Christ is born again to live by faith in His Lord and Savior the personal desire to live in a manner consistent with the will of God expressed in His Law becomes a part of the new identity with which he has been blessed by grace through faith.

*“The law which formerly was external and accusing now becomes internal, an element of the redeemed nature, and a delight to fulfill; and the new covenant is the sphere, not of abandonment, but of unceasing fellowship with God, who,*

by virtue of the perfect atonement of Christ, our Law-Keeper, is merciful toward their iniquities and who will remember their sins no more. In the new creation, then, the people of God rejoice in the constant benediction of His presence, and delight to do His will, and this means that they will all know Him from the greatest to the least....The promise, 'I will put them into their minds and write them on their hearts' is fulfilled in the experience of Christ...Our love for Christ is demonstrated precisely in the keeping of His commandments..Loving obedience, accordingly should be one of the distinctive marks of genuine Christianity. As the Law is a signpost to the will of God, so the concern of the Christian should always be to honor God by walking joyfully in the way of His will." (Hughes, p. 300)



*"Moses Upon Mount Sinai" - E.M. Lillien*

***"And I will be their God and they shall be My people."*** - This is the characteristic language of the Old Testament to describe the relationship which God desired with humanity. ***"I will take you to be My people, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God who has brought you out from under the burden of the Egyptians."*** (Exodus 6:7); ***"I will make My dwelling among you and My soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and be your God and you shall be My people."*** (Leviticus 26:12); ***"But this command I gave them: 'Obey My voice and I will be your God and you shall be My people. And walk in the way that I command you that it may be well with you.'"*** (Jeremiah 7:23)

That wondrous relationship was, however, always conditional upon

Israel's obedience to the Law of God. Moses drew the contrast between an external obedience of compulsion and an eager willing obedience which was the expression of love and trust for God most forcefully with an allusion to the rite of circumcision in his farewell address to the Israelite nation recorded in Deuteronomy as he urged the Children of Israel to ***"circumcise the foreskins of your heart"***:

***"And now, Israel what does the Lord your God require of you but to fear the LORD your God, and walk in all His ways; to love Him, to serve the LORD***



***your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD which I am commanding you this day for your good? Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth and all that is in it. Yet, the LORD set His heart in love on your fathers, and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn, for the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God... You shall fear the LORD your God and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him, and by His Name you shall swear. He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven. (Deuteronomy 10:12-22)***

***“You have declared today that the LORD is your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes and His commandments and His rules, and will obey His voice. And the LORD has declared today that you are His treasured possession, as He has promised you, and that you are to keep all His commandments, and that He will set you in praise, in fame, and in honor high above all nations that He has made, and that you shall be a people holy to the LORD as He has promised.” (Deuteronomy 26:16-19)***

Under the New Covenant, the believer will experience an intimacy with God which has not been known by the fallen heirs of Adam since our first father's banishment from the Garden of Eden.

***“And they shall not teach each one his neighbor and each one his brother saying, ‘Know the Lord, for they shall all know Me from the least of them to the greatest.’”*** - Furthermore the New Covenant shall be superior to its predecessor in the nature and extent of the people's knowledge of God. That enhanced knowledge became reality with the incarnation of the Son of God and His presence upon the earth among His people. This was the very thought with which the Epistle to the Hebrews had begun, contrasting the piecemeal incomplete revelation of God through the prophets across the centuries with the once for all conclusive disclosure of God in the perfect High Priest who is His Son:

***“Long ago, in many times and in many ways God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the Heir of all things and through whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purifications for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is***

*more excellent than theirs.”* (Hebrews 1:1-4)

The introduction to John’s Gospel makes this contrast with astonishing majesty as it tells of the Word by whom and things were created in the beginning taking on physical form and living on earth among His people. ***“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us for a time and we beheld His glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*** (John 1:14) John’s use of the verb *“tabernacled”* in the verse reinforces the contention of Hebrews that the earthly tabernacle/temples were only copies and shadows of the genuine realities in heaven. This intimate knowledge brought about by the incarnation of Jesus and His accomplishment of the plan of salvation which achieve its full perfection in heaven when the Lord returns to take His people home. In the culminating vision of the Book of Revelation, St. John returns to the Old Testament verb *“tabernacled”* to draw together the disclosure of God’s presence in the worship of the Israelites as the preview of the completed presence of God among the saints of every time and place in heaven.

***“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold! The dwelling place of God is with man, and He will dwell with them, and they will be His people and God Himself will be with them as their God. And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.’”*** (Revelation 21:3-4)



***“Christ The Perfect High Priest In The Heavenly Jerusalem”***

In addition the Torah for the nation of Israel also included detailed civil and ceremonial laws to govern to govern the Israelites political and religious life. These laws were designed to



facilitate Israel's role as the custodians of the messianic promise, to maintain their distinct national identity, and to exemplify the essence of the messianic concept in the substitutionary atonement of the sacrifices and services of the religion which God bestowed upon them. All of this became unnecessary and obsolete with the coming of the Messiah. The independent existence of the nation had long since passed and Judaism had mutated into a monstrosity of Pharisaic legalistic rules and regulations.

*"No longer does the law hedge in one particular nation and shut it off from others with a high wall of legal restriction. No longer is law the stern taskmaster to watch the boy on his way to and from school. All the scaffolding is removed. In the Christian Church, the unchanging moral features of God's law which define the holiness without which no man shall see God are directly implanted in the hearts of believers by the Spirit and the Word and thus constrain them to walk in God's ways. We use the law as our rule, yet not in its multifarious legislative detail that have temporary use and purpose only, but as an aide to guide and to express our will to do God's will for Jesus' sake. God's true children of the Old Testament experienced the same thing but were never weighted down with regulations and restrictions which the Pharisees even multiplied by adding their 'commandments of men' with the result that on the whole 'the people did not remain in God's testament.' (Vs.9)" (Lenski, p. 267)*

Jeremiah was certainly not the first or the only prophet to foretell that the messianic age would be a time of enhanced knowledge of God. Isaiah promised a time when the knowledge of the Lord would cover the earth and all the nations would come to the Descendant of Jesse:

***"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from His roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding; the Spirit of counsel and might; the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD... They shall not hurt or destroy on all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. In that day, the Root of Jesse who shall stand as a signal for the people - of Him shall all the nations inquire, and His resting place shall be glorious."*** (Isaiah 11:1-2,9-10)

The prophet Habakkuk confidently promised the same universal knowledge of the true God: ***"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea... But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him."*** (Habakkuk:2:14,20)

***"For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."*** -

Four times throughout the prophecy of Jeremiah God says ***“I will”*** in reference to the New Covenant to indicate that He alone will initiate and implement its terms. The Lord now concludes that litany of promises with the final and ultimate ***“I will.”*** The fundamental concern has always been the forgiveness of sins. While the national covenant with Israel was designed to play a critically important role in God’s plan for the forgiveness of sins as the keepers of the Book and the nation from which the Messiah would come. Its rules and regulations were intended to maintain the nation as a separate and distinct entity and despite the constant unfaithfulness and idolatry of the people it accomplished those goals. But at those point, those goals were obsolete.

The Old Covenant was never intended, in and of itself, to accomplish personal forgiveness. That is certainly not to say that no sinners were forgiven throughout the time of the Old Covenant. From the time of the original Fall into sin forgiveness has always been available for individuals by grace through faith in the Savior whom God would provide, or subsequently, had provided. The Old Testament is replete with affirmations of personal forgiveness by God’s grace. Many of the most beautiful of those descriptions of God’s forgiveness are found in the hymns and prayers of the Book of Psalms and the writings of the prophets.

***“Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit...I acknowledged my sin to you and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgression unto the LORD, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin...Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD. Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy all you upright of heart.”***  
(Psalm 32:1-5, 10-11)

***“Incline Your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my life for I am godly, save Your servant who trusts in You. You are my God. Be gracious to me, O LORD, for to You I cry all the day. Gladden the soul of Your servant, for to You, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. For You, O LORD, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon You. Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer. Listen to my pleas for grace. In the day of my trouble I call upon you for you answer me.”***  
(Psalm 86:1-7)

***“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me. Bless His holy Name. Bless the LORD, O my soul forget not all His benefits, who forgives all your iniquities and who heals all your diseases...The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will He keep His anger forever. He does not deal with us***





***“King David the Psalmist”  
Gert Honthorst***

***according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquity. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to His children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him. For He knows our frame, He remembers we are dust.”*** (Psalm 103:1-14)

***Out of the depths I cry to You, O LORD! O LORD, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to my pleas for mercy! If You, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O LORD, who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits and in His word I hope.”*** (Psalm 130:1-5)

***“Who is a god like you, pardoning iniquity, and passing over transgression for the remnant of His inheritance? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”*** (Micah 7:16-19)

But forgiveness, as such, was not the point of the national covenant. That ultimate problem could be resolved only by the sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross which would be the

decisive event of the New Covenant and signal the arrival of the final age of human history.

*“Such a final forgiveness is based upon the final sacrifice of Christ which inaugurated the new covenant. Jesus’ statement at the Last Supper (Luke 22:20), as well as Hebrews 8:1-10,18, both establish that Jesus’ sacrifice for sin accomplished precisely what the New Covenant required, and that His death on the cross was, in fact, the inauguration of the New Covenant.”* (Allen, p. 453)

Classic 19<sup>th</sup> Century Lutheran Bible commentator R.C.H. Lenski categorizes the difference between the two covenants in regard to forgiveness in this way:

*“The Sinaitic testament should not be conceived as a mere set of laws that resulted in transgression while the new testament is gospel and thus filled with pardon. Then the old would really be no testament at all. If it is claimed that Jews had to keep the law in order to be saved, then none were saved before Jesus came. The Sinaitic laws of ritual are full of forgiveness...The difference does not lie along this line. Christ’s expiation on the cross was just as effective for contrite sinners who lived before Calvary as it is for those who live after Calvary, before Christ entered the Holy of Holies in heaven, as well as after He entered it. The difference lies in this fact: the old testament was given to a nation. It was thus that this nation ever and again proved obdurate; ‘they did not remain in My testament’ (vs. 9). When this old Mosaic testament was brought to them because of their transgressions (Galatians 3:17-19) they did not let even its threats and its judgements halt them and keep them true. The new testament is not intended for a nation. All that is national, temporal, preparatory, as far as preserving one nation as God’s people is concerned*



*“The Babylonians Plundering The Temple” - Tissot*



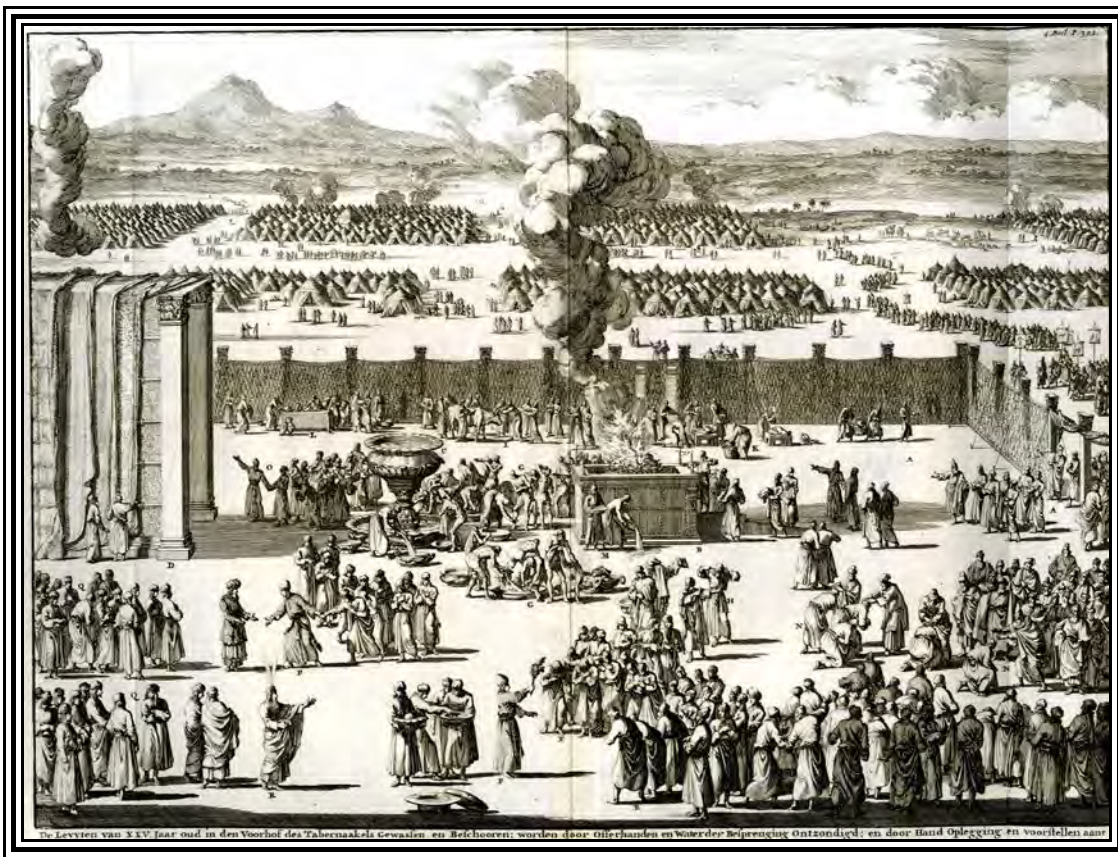
*has disappeared. The new testament is intended for all men, no matter in what nation they may be found, who by contrition, repentance and holy obedience do remain in this testament and thus do obtain all that its testamentary provisions convey: enlightenment, holiness, and above all, forgiveness.”* (Lenski, p. 270, f.)

***“In speaking of a new covenant, He makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”*** - The writer now returns to his original contention that if the Old Covenant had been capable of accomplishing the task ***“there would have been no occasion to look for a second.”*** (vs.7) Jeremiah’s promise of a ***“new covenant with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah”*** (vs.8) unmistakably demonstrates the inadequacy of the former covenant. Remember that the problem to which the Epistle is addressed is the temptation facing Hebrew Christians to revert to the Old Covenant by returning to Judaism. The writer scorns that covenant as ***“obsolete.”*** The word describes that which is out of date and irrelevant to current circumstances; that which is of the past and of no use in the present or the future. The point becomes all the more caustic when we remember that the ***“speaking of a new covenant”*** to which he refers had already occurred nearly hundred years ago.

Nonetheless the Lord uses the present tense to express God’s action - ***“He makes the first one obsolete.”*** It did not become obsolete in the first century A.D. It was already obsolete in 587 B.C. at the now distant point in ancient history when the judgement of God had brought about the destruction of the Israelite nation. That judgement was the historical indication of the end of the former covenant. The nation had failed. The Temple was gone. The sacred Ark would never be seen again, nor was it needed any longer. In the six hundred years that had passed since the promise of the New Covenant that obsolescence had only accumulated and compounded.



***“The Final Babylonian Assault Upon The Ramparts of Jerusalem”***



*"The Blood Sacrifices for the Dedication of the Tabernacle" - Jan Luyken*

## ***Hebrews Chapter 9***

*(1) Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. (2) For a tent was prepared, the first section in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. (3) Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, (4) having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant, covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. (5) Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.*

*(6) These preparations having been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties. (7) But into the second only the High Priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. (8) By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the Holy Places is not yet opened, as long as the first section is still standing (9) (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered, that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, (10) but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.*

*(11) But when Christ appeared as high priest of the good things that have come, then*



*through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) (12) He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of His own blood, thus securing eternal redemption. (13) for if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of a heifer sanctify for the purification of the flesh, (14) how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

*(15) Therefore, He is the Mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. (16) For where there is a will involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. (17) For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is still alive. (18) Therefore, not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. (19) For when every commandment of the Law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves, and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, (20) saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you. (21) And in the same way he sprinkled both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. (22) Indeed, under the Law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*

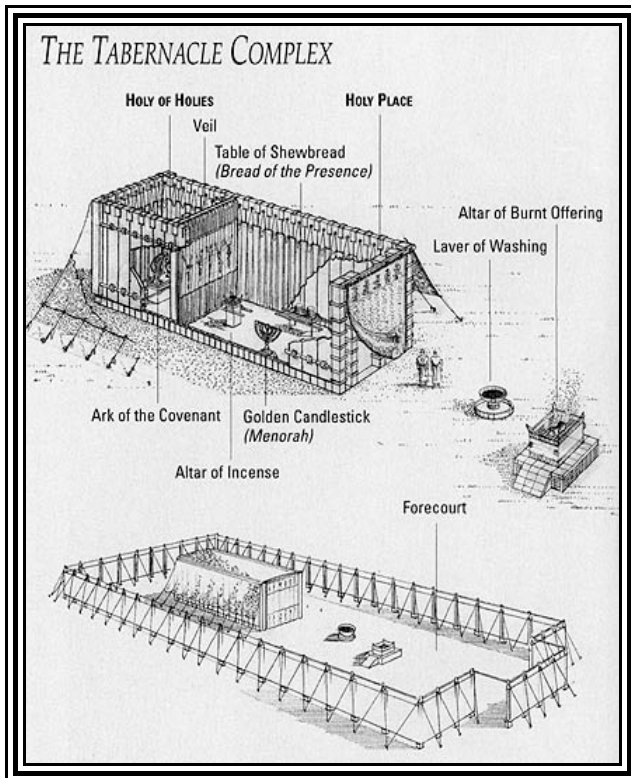


*“The Interior of the Tabernacle And Its Furnishings”*

### ***Hebrews 9:1-5***

*Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table, and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. Behind the second section was a*

*second section called the Most Holy Place, having the golden Altar of Incense, and the Ark of the Covenant, covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the Mercy Seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail."*



***“Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness.”*** - The segment which follows draws the contrast between the blood sacrifices of the Sinai covenant and the once for all sacrifice of the sinless Son of God as the redemption price for the sins of the world in the New Covenant. This discussion opens with a description of the Tabernacle as the place where the rituals and sacrifices of the Sinai covenant occurred. The Tabernacle and its interior furnishing are briefly described in the opening paragraph.

The noun ***“covenant”*** does not appear in the Greek text of the opening phase which literally reads in the original - *“even the first had regulations for worship.”* The result of

this omission has been some confusion over the referent of ***“the first.”*** The disconnect is caused by the arbitrary insertion of chapter and verses divisions in the original text. Without the intrusion of the Chapter 9 heading this Verse is more clearly connected to the covenant discussion of the preceding verses. Most English translations, like the ESV in this instance, insert the word ***“covenant”*** to correctly clarify the meaning of the original.

The reference to the Old Covenant’s ***“instructions for worship”*** stress the fact that the worship of Israel was a divine institution that was not devised by man. This fact made it possible for their worship to reflect the purpose of God and anticipate the fulfillment of that purpose in Christ. The author will return to those instructions after his description of the physical location in which the worship took place. *“God did not leave the regulation of worship to the invention of the Israelites. Along with the design of the Tabernacle, God also gave Moses the detailed ordinances for divine worship. In other words Moses passed on to the Israelites God-ordained regulations for worship.”* (Hendrickson, p. 236)

Puritan commentator John Owen notes the unique centrality of ***“regulations for worship”*** within the Sinai covenant and the chronic tendency of the Children of Israel to spurn these laws of God by wandering back and forth between one of two extremes - forsaking them



altogether by lapsing into perverse pagan idolatry or, in the opposite extreme, perverting them into a legalistic ritual by which they might earn for themselves righteousness before God:

*“Although God was served in and according to the commands of the moral law - the unchangeable prescriptions - the ‘ten words’ - and also the duties required in the proper observance of the civil law, these regulations pertained directly to the worship of the Tabernacle and the ministry of the priests therein. Accordingly, in Hebrew, all idolatry and pagan superstition is called ‘strange worship.’ And it was precisely in regard to this divine worship that God was confronted by endless disobedience throughout the Old Testament. In regard to worship they were forever prone to fall prey to obnoxious extremes. Most often Israel was prone to neglect the true worship of God in favor of superstition and idolatry. The rules of worship which God had instituted were designed to serve as a hedge of protection around them to separate them from these hateful abominations. Whenever they broke down or ignored that hedge of protection, they promptly rushed off into the most despicable and hateful idolatry. On the opposite extreme, at times they placed all their trust and confidence for God’s acceptance and blessing on outward compliance to these rules. This caused them to ignore moral duty and authentic spirituality lapsing into the most flagrant sin and wickedness.”*  
“Owen, VI, p. 184)

At the same time, the continued use here of the “sanctuary” terminology from Chapter 8 anticipates the substance of Judaism in the concept of an increasingly exclusive worship space in the courtyard of the Tabernacle and the multiple courtyards of the Temple and the Holy Place and Most Holy Place of the shrine itself. Access into the presence of the Holy God could only be achieved on terms specified by Him through the substitutionary atonement of blood sacrifices to cleanse the sinner from sin-guilt. All of this would be perfectly fulfilled by the sacrificial death of the Son of God upon the cross shedding His own blood as the atonement price for the sins of humanity. Holiness and sinfulness cannot co-exist. God had to provide the way for fallen humanity to be cleansed from sin-guilt. The design of the sacrificial cult of Judaism and the sanctuary in which it was enacted set that concept before Israel and ideally, thru Israel before all the world.

The point of the discussion here is not merely to re-emphasize the insufficiency of the former covenant, which has already been strongly emphasized, but to stress the role of that covenant in anticipating and foreshadowing that which was to come in the perfect fulfillment accomplished by the Messiah Jesus.

*“The pastor describes the old sanctuary (9:1-10) and the establishing of the Old Covenant (9:16-22) in order to expose their insufficiency and establish*

their preparatory character. On the other hand, he vigorously affirms the unfathomable efficacy of Christ's sacrifice offered 'according to the Eternal Spirit' and thus 'able to cleanse the conscience.' (9:11-15) In this second segment he looks back at the Pentateuchal descriptions of the earthly sanctuary (9:1-10) and the founding of the Old Covenant (9:16-23) in order to expose them as preparatory but inadequate." (Cockerill, pp. 370-371)



*"Christ Interceding For The Church At God's Right Hand In Heaven"- Orthodox Icon*

The stage had been set for the contrast now presented between ***"the earthly place of holiness -the tent that had been prepared"*** and its perfect heavenly counterpart in Chapter 8:1's description of Jesus as ***"a High Priest, One who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a Minister in the Holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man."*** There the focus had been upon the inferiority of the earthly priesthood whose priests ***"serve a copy and a shadow of the heavenly things."*** (8:5) Now the tent in which that service took place is defined and described. That Sanctuary is not heavenly, but rather ***"an earthly place of holiness."*** The same noun, ***"holy place"*** is used in both chapters to highlight their connection. The Tabernacle on earth is only ***"the Tent that had been prepared"*** by Aaron and the Levitical priests of Israel - ***"a Sanctuary made by hand"*** (9:24), while the heavenly sanctuary is ***"the true***

***Tent that the Lord set up, not man."*** This contrast serves to stress the finite nature of the physical Tabernacle in contrast to the infinity of the heavenly Tabernacle derived from its exalted position at ***"the right hand of the Majesty in Heaven."*** (8:1)

*"This Sanctuary is severely limited because it is a part of the temporal created universe, and thus can provide no access to the Creator, who is beyond His creation. Contrast the opening section of the next and final movement where the Sanctuary entered by Christ is nothing less than 'heaven itself.' 'For Christ entered not into Holy Places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.' (9:24)...The details used in describing this earthly sanctuary keep the hearers from forgetting its earthly, and therefore limited character."*



***“For a Tent was prepared, the first section in which were the lampstand and the table and the Bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place.”*** - The text has indicated that the design of the Tabernacle came from God Himself. Nowhere was the separation between the holy God and sinful man more clearly illustrated in the Tabernacle than by the division of the division of the Tent itself into two different rooms cut off from one another by a massive curtain. The Tabernacle curtain formed an impenetrable barrier between God and His people which could only be transgressed on the Day of Atonement, and then only by one single individual, the High Priest under the most rigorous limitations and restrictions. Nor can it be dismissed as mere co-incidence that single the most dramatic event on the day of the Messiah’s sacrificial death was the destruction of the Temple curtain and the removal of the barrier which had liturgically barred man from the presence of God since the construction of the Tent at Mount Sinai. There could have been no more powerful physical expression of the success of the New Covenant in achieving that which the former Covenant had been unable to achieve throughout the thousands of years of its existence. The Evangelist, St. Matthew, gives particular emphasis to the totality of the curtain’s removal at the very moment in which Jesus died on the cross: ***“And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the curtain of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.”*** (Matthew 27:50-51) Hence, Hebrews places particular emphasis upon the prominence and significance of the curtain by describing the two ***“sections”*** of the Sanctuary literally as ***“the first and the second tent.”*** This unusual terminology, not used elsewhere in Scripture, serves as the strongest possible expression of the fundamentally profound significance of the curtain as the impenetrable barrier between God and man.



***“The Rending Of the Temple Veil When Christ Died”***

The description begins from the outside entrance on the eastern wall into ***“the first section”*** (literally - ***“the first tent”***) which ***“is called the Holy Place.”*** Two of the sacred furnishings of the Holy Place are mentioned - ***“the Lampstand,”*** and ***“the Table and the Bread of the Presence.”*** The Menorah (Exodus 25:31-39) was an exquisite work of art.

*“The Lampstand was a most beautifully crafted piece of furniture. It was cast of seventy-five pounds of gold, consisting of a base and shaft from which its six branches extended - three from one side of the shaft and three from the other. At the top of these six branches and shaft were cups - **“decorated like almond flowers with buds and blossoms.”** (Exodus 25:34) The Lampstand was placed on the south side of the Holy Place. It wicks burned perpetually within the Tabernacle.”* (Hendrickson, p. 237)

The Table of the Showbread was on the opposite wall. It was carved from Acacia wood, plated with gold. The Table was 3.5 feet long and 2.25 feet wide. Its function was to hold the twelve loaves of bread which represented the Tribes of Israel within the Holy Place.

***“You shall take fine flour and bake twelve loaves from it; two tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. And you shall set them in two piles, six in a pile, on the Table of pure gold before the LORD. And you shall put pure frankincense on each pile, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion as a food offering to the LORD. Every Sabbath Day, Aaron shall arrange it before the LORD regularly; it is from the people of Israel as a covenant forever. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in the Holy Place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the LORD’s food offerings.”*** (Leviticus 24:5-9)

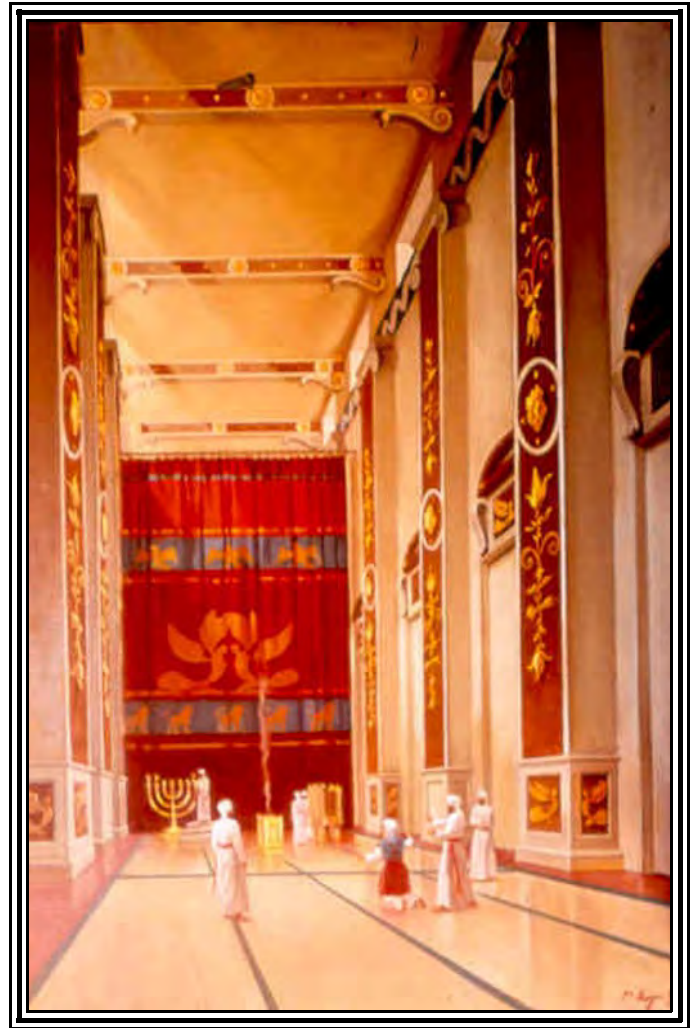


***“The Tabernacle Curtain From The Perspective of the Ark”***



***“The Bread of the Presence,”*** as it is here described, signified the relationship which God had established with His people. In the ancient world, table fellowship was one of the most powerful ways of indicating a relationship of trust and protection. Thus the profound significance of this detail of the furnishings of the Holy Place.

***“Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place.”*** - The identification of the curtain between the two Tents as ***“the second curtain”*** carries on the emphasis upon the profound separation between the two portions of the Sanctuary. The First Tent had its own curtain, covering the entrance by means of which the priests entered the Holy Place from the east. To categorize the curtain between the sections as ***“the second curtain”*** equates the two curtains as the entrance walls of a particular tent. Thus, the text speaks of the two sections of what was in fact one structure as if they were two separate and distinct structures altogether to stress the radically different nature of the two segments in terms of their relationship to the sacred presence of God. The language makes the theological point most efficiently.



***“The Holy Place And The Veil In The Temple Of Herod”***

*“This emphasis upon the distinction between the Holy and the Most Holy Places and the barrier separating them serves the immediate purpose of disclosing the lack of access to God under the old system. In the larger picture, it highlights the magnitude of the barrier breached by Christ (10:20).”*  
(Cockerill, p. 275)

The Rabbinic commentaries of the *“Mishnah”* report that in the Temple of Herod thirteen priests were required to carry each segment of the curtain and over one hundred priests labored to clean the curtain when necessary. Josephus adds that the veil was so substantial that it could not have been pulled aside to uncover the Holy of Holies by a team of strong horses.

***“A second section called ‘the Most Holy Place’*** - The Hebrew title of the sacred innermost

sanctuary “*kodesh ha kodoshim*” is the superlative form, denoting the most intense and highest possible application of the concept expressed. This relatively small enclosure was the epitome of holiness, a concentration of the concept of being set apart to the righteous and holy presence of God unparalleled anywhere else upon the face of the earth. While the ESV’s “*Most Holy Place*” adequately expresses the sense of the Hebrew, the traditional “*Holy of Holies*” more accurately captures the dramatic intensification by means the repetition of the term holy which is present in the original.



*“The Rending of the Temple Veil”*

*“Having the golden Altar of Incense and the Ark of the Covenant covered on all sides with gold...”* Once again the furnishings of the area are listed as had been the case previously in reference to the Holy Place. Considerable debate has been elicited among commentators by the inclusion of the Altar of Incense within the Holy of Holies. The Altar was actually situated in the Holy Place directly in front of the veil.

*“You shall make an altar on which to burn incense, you shall make it of acacia wood...And you shall put it in front of the veil that is above the Ark of the Testimony, where I will meet with you. And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations. You shall not offer unauthorized incense on it, nor a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD.”* (Exodus 30:1, 6-10)

Bible critics are quick to dismiss the reference here as a mistake by the author of Hebrews



who was simply misinformed about the arrangements in the Tabernacle/Temple. This easy out is, however, inconsistent with both the precise accuracy of the author's knowledge of every other detail of the sacred spaces and the doctrines of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. A more reasonable and reverent explanation is presented by the editors of the ESV:

*“The text describes the Most Holy Place as **having the golden altar of incense**. The altar of incense, however, was not in the Most Holy Place, but in the Holy Place ‘just in front of the veil (Ex. 30:6) that separated it from the Most Holy Place; and it was tended daily by the priests (Exodus 30:7-8; Luke 1:9-11), not just once a year. It is unlikely that the author of Hebrews, familiar with the OT Tabernacle and its sacrifices, would mistakenly think this altar was within the Most Holy Place. A better solution is to understand **having** to mean that this Altar of Incense was closely tied in its function to the Most Holy Place, so that it belonged to the Most Holy Place, for as its incense burned, the smoke drifted into the Most Holy Place. Thus, the original description of the Altar of Incense in Exodus 30:10 asserts: “**It is most holy to the LORD.**” 1 Kings 6:22 speaks of the Altar in a similar way: “**And he overlaid the whole house with gold until the whole house was finished. And the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.**” Psalm 141:2 uses the same imagery - “**Let my prayer be counted as incense before You, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.**” In a similar manner the prayers of the saints are characterized as incense in the presence of the Lord in the imagery of Revelation: “**And when he had taken***



*Zechariah Before the Altar of Incense*

*the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints. (Revelation 5:8) “And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with all the prayers of the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints, rose up before God from the hand of the angel.” (Revelation 8:5)” (ESV, p. 2374)*

Nor should the parallel between the Altar of Sacrifice in the courtyard directly in front of the Holy Place and the Altar of Incense directly before the Holy of Holies be overlooked. Each of these altars played a crucial role granting entrance into the sacred chamber which lay behind them.



*“Moses And Aaron Before the Ark” - Tissot*

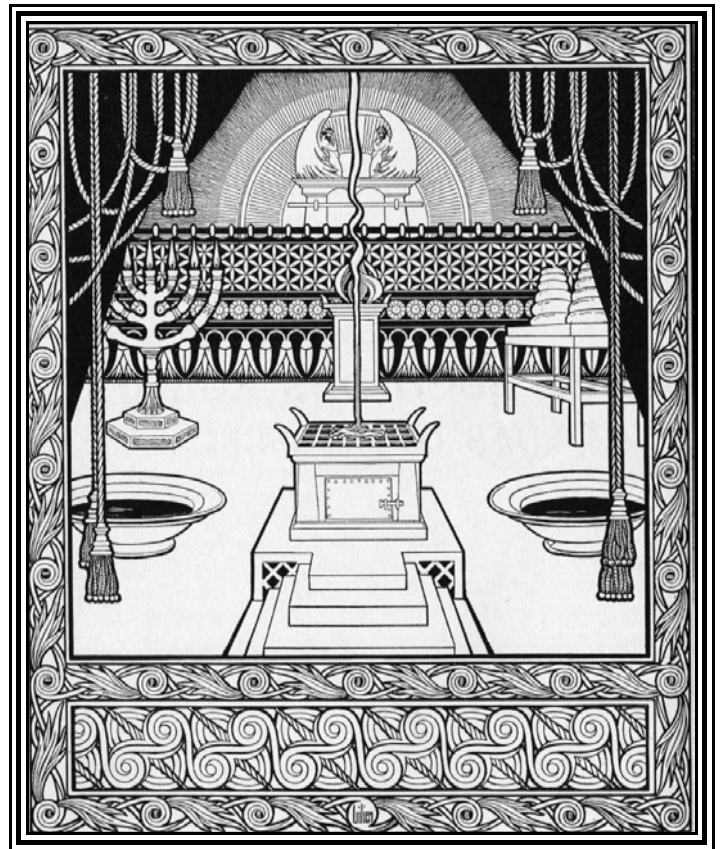
*“On the Day of Atonement the High Priest could not enter the Inner Sanctum without filling his censer with coals of fire from this altar: “And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, and two handfulls of sweet incense beaten small, and he shall bring it inside the veil, and put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cove the Mercy Seat that is over the Testimony, so that he does not die.” (Leviticus 16:12-13) He sprinkled the blood of the sin offering upon the horns of the Incense Altar as well as on the Mercy Seat or Place of Atonement upon the Ark: “You shall not offer unauthorized incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement, he shall make atonement once in the year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD.” (Exodus 30:10) “Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people, and bring its blood*



*inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the Mercy Seat and in front of the Mercy seat.” (Leviticus 16:15) Thus the pastor has associated the blood of the Incense Altar with the Most Holy Place, in accord with its function and his own purposes. By making this connection, he magnifies the Most Holy Place and anticipates its role in foreshadowing Christ’s entering ‘heaven itself’ (9:24) in fulfillment of the Day of Atonement. However, that fulfillment will denude it earthly type of all magnificence.” (Cockerill, p. 377)*

**“And the Ark of the Covenant, covered on all sides with gold.”** - The most significant furnishing of the Tabernacle/Temple was the sacred Ark of the Covenant.

*“The second thing mentioned by the apostle in this part of the Tabernacle is the Ark. This he describes, (1) from its appellation; ‘the Ark of the Covenant:’ (2) from one particular in its fabric; it was “overlaid round about with gold:” (3) from the things that accompanied it and had no other use but to be laid up by it; “the golden pot that had manna and Aaron’s rod that budded”; (4) from what was place in it, from which was its principal use; “the tables of the covenant.”...This, with the “Mercy Seat” wherewith it was covered, was the most glorious and mysterious utensil of the Tabernacle, and afterwards the Temple; the most eminent pledge of the of the divine presence, the most mysterious representation of the holy properties of His nature in Christ. This, as the heart of all the divine service, was first formed, all other things took their significance in relationship to it (Exodus 25:10-11)...The name of it is the “Ark of the Covenant”. Sometimes it is called the Ark of the Testimony. The Ark of the Testimony it is called because God called the tablets of the covenant by the name of His “Testimony,” or that which testified His will to the people, and by the people’s acceptance of the terms of it, it was to be a perpetual witness between God and them (Exodus 25:16; 31:18; etc. On that same account, it is called the “Ark of the Covenant” namely because of what was contained in it, or the tables of the covenant, which, as I have shown elsewhere, were usually called the*



**“The Furnishings Of The Tabernacle”  
E.M. Lillien**



*“Aaron Sprinkling the Blood Upon the Mercy Seat on the Day of Atonement Amid the Smoke of the Incense from the Altar of Incense”*

covenant itself. And so they are called the “Table of the Testimony”, that is, the covenant which was the testimony of God. And lastly, it was called the “Ark Of God” because it was the most eminent pledge of the special presence of God among His people.” (Owen, VI, p. 205)

*“In which was a golden urn holding the manna,, and Aaron’s staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.”* - The listing of the Ark’s contents further emphasize its most crucial significance within the symbolism of the Tabernacle furnishings. These objects were placed within the Ark by divine command.

*“Moses said, ‘This is what the LORD has commanded; ‘Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, so that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’ And Moses said to Aaron, ‘Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the LORD to be kept throughout your*

*generations.’ As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the LORD to be kept. The people of Israel ate the manna for forty years until they came to a habitable land, to the border of the land of Canaan.”* (Exodus 16:32-35)

*“On the next day Moses went into the Tent of the Testimony and behold the staff of Aaron for the House of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds. Then Moses brought out all the staffs from before the LORD to all the people of Israel. And they looked and each man took his staff. And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Put back the staff of Aaron before the Testimony to be kept as a sign for the rebels that you may make an end to their grumblings against Me lest they die. Thus did Moses as the LORD commanded him, so he did.”* (Numbers 17:8-11)

*“At that time the LORD said to me, ‘Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first and come up to Me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood. And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets that you broke, and you shall put them in the Ark. So I made an Ark of acacia wood, and I made two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain with the two tablets in my hand. And He wrote on the two tablets in the same*



***writing as before, the Ten Commandments, that the LORD had spoken to you out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly. And the LORD gave them to me, and I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets in the Ark that I had made. And there they are as the LORD commanded me.” (Deuteronomy 10:1-5)***

Each of these objects conveyed a critically important message to the Children of Israel about their relationship with the LORD and the events of its history. The jar of manna served to remind them of the loving care with which God had provided for them during their forty year sojourn in the wilderness. He alone enable them to survive their grim trek through the desert to bring to the abundant land which He had promised to them. The budded staff of Aaron certified the Levitical priesthood as God’s choice to represent the nation before Him in the Tabernacle and the Temple. And, most importantly, the tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments by God’s own hand, defined the terms of the covenant which God had established with His people.

***“Above it were the cherubim of glory, overshadowing the Mercy Seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.”*** - One final detail about the sacred ark forms the triumphant crescendo of this brief description. Having described what was within the ark the writer now turns to what was ***“above it.”*** Nowhere was the majesty and glory of this vessel more



***“A Guardian Cherub” -Vrubal***

clearly revealed than in the gleaming golden cover, ***“the place of atonement”*** or ***“the Mercy Seat.”*** The instructions for this most critical component of the Ark are the most detailed in the Book of Exodus:

***“You shall make a Mercy Seat of pure gold. Two and a half cubits shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them on the two ends of the Mercy Seat. Make one cherub on the one end and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the Mercy Seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the Mercy Seat with their wings, their faces to one another; toward the Mercy Seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. And you shall put the Mercy Seat on the top of the Ark, and in the Ark you shall put the Testimony that I shall give you. There I will meet with you, and from above the Mercy Seat, between the two cherubim that are on the Ark of the Testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.”*** (Exodus 25:17-22)



***“The Ark Lost In Battle to the Philistines”***  
Picart

These mighty guardian angels are called the ***“Cherubim of Glory”*** not because of their own grandeur but rather because the ***“Shekinah”*** ***“Glory of the LORD”*** dwelt among His people between their outstretched wings. Thus, their heads were bowed in humble reverence, gazing down upon the Mercy Seat rather than daring to look upon the glory of the Lord. The Ark with its Cherubim was viewed as the throne of God by the Children of Israel.

***“So when the people returned to the camp the elders of Israel said, ‘Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies. So the people sent to Shiloh and brought from there the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas were there with the Ark of the Covenant of God.”*** (1 Samuel 4:3-4)



***“And David arose and went with all the people who were there with him from Baale-Judah to bring up from the Ark of God which is called by the name of the LORD of Hosts, who sits enthroned on the Ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was on the hill.”***  
 (2 Samuel 6:2-3)

***“Give ear O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock. You who are enthroned upon the cherubim shine forth. Before Ephraim, and Benjamin and Manassah, stir up Your might and come to save us! Restore us, O God, let Your face shine that we may be saved.”*** (Psalm 80:1-2)

***“The LORD reigns, let the people tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim, let the earth quake! The LORD is great in Zion, He is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise Your great and awesome name. Holy is He!...Exalt the LORD our God, worship at His footstool! Holy is He! (Psalm 90:1-3)***



***“Israel Celebrating the Return of the Ark By The Philistines” - Picart***

***“Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: ‘O LORD of Hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the Kingdoms of the earth, You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O LORD and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were no gods, but the work of mens’ hands, wood and stone. Therefore, they were destroyed. So now, O LORD, our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone are the LORD.’ (Isaiah 37:15-20)***

The position of the cherubim ***“overshadowing the Mercy Seat”*** certainly adds to the heavenly majesty of the scene, expressing the wonder of the truth that God has chosen to come down to the earth to graciously dwell among His people. As the divinely chosen language of the Tabernacle was utilized by Saint John in the prologue to his Gospel - ***“The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us for a time and we beheld His Glory as the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*** (John 1:14) so may we confidently assert that the entire fact and design of the Tabernacle and its furnishing was indeed a



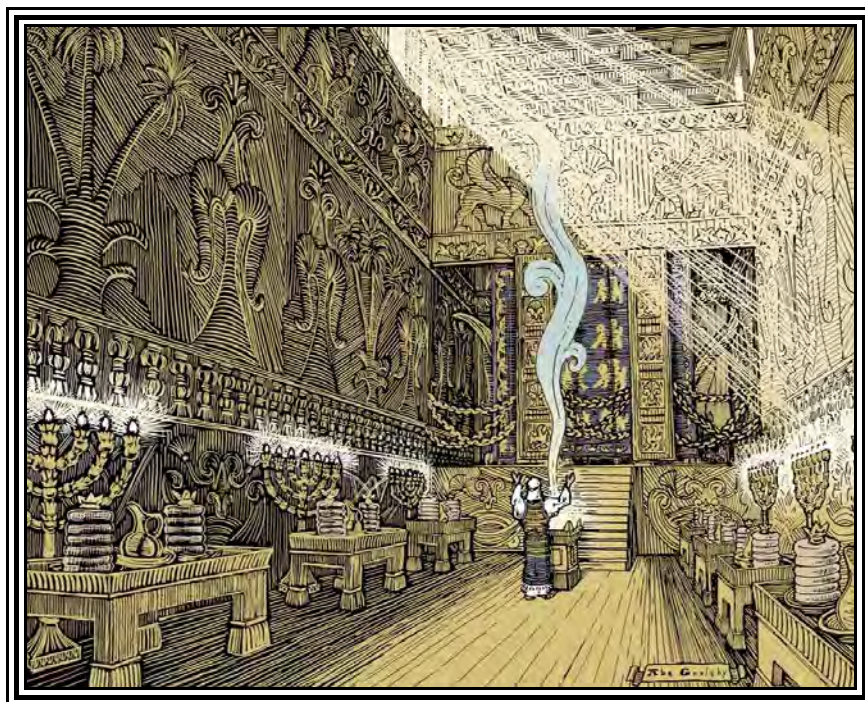
***“The Cherubim With Their Flaming Sword East of Eden  
Before the Tree of Life” - J. Kirk Richards***

foreshadowing of the ultimate visitation of God upon earth in the person of His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus. At the same time, it is most significant to note that the only previous mention of a mighty cherub in Scripture is that of the fierce guardian with the fiery sword who barred the way back to Paradise so that fallen Adam and Eve might never return to the perfect Garden from which they had been banished. The fearsome personification of the Law has here been transformed into the messenger of the Gospel gazing down upon the Mercy Seat where the blood was sprinkled to cover over the guilt of man’s sin. It is a most amazing transformation as God’s plan for the redemption of His pathetic creatures proceeds from the curse of Eden to the restoration of His presence among His people in the Tabernacle.

*“The cherubim, or angels under that denomination, were the ministers of God in executing the curse and punishment upon man when, after his sin, he was driven out of the Garden of God, (**“Therefore the LORD God sent him out from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the Garden of Eden, He placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the Tree of Life.”** Genesis 3:24). Hence ensued a fear and dread of angels in all mankind, which they abused into manifold superstitions. But now, to testify that all things in heaven and on earth should be reconciled and brought under one head: (**“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness***



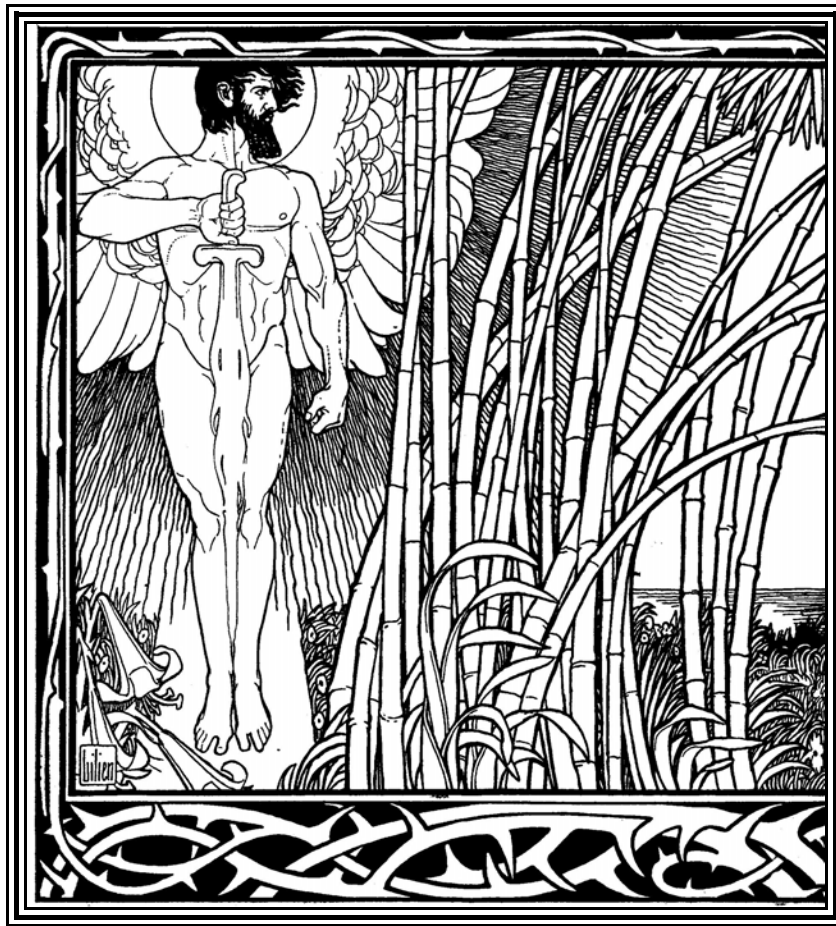
*of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us all, in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.” - Ephesians 1:10) there was a representation of their ministry in this great mystery of the Law and the Mercy Seat. Wherefore they are ready unto the ministry of the church of mankind, all things being now reconciled (“And to which of the angels has He ever said, ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool for Your feet.’ Arre they not all ministering spirits, sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?” - Hebrews 1:14), purely with respect unto the Mercy Seat, which their faces were turned towards, and which they shadowed with their wings.” (Owen, VI, p. 216)*



*“The Holy Place In Solomon’s Temple” - Abe Goolsby*

Using the guidance of the New Testament, Dr. Owen carefully details the manner in which the symbolism of the Ark and the Mercy Seat were perfectly fulfilled in the life and ministry of Messiah Jesus:

*“God instructed the church in all these things by the Tabernacle, particularly by this Most Holy Place and its utensils, furnishings and services. The purpose of all of them was to provide a representation of the mystery of His grace in Christ Jesus in a way appropriate for His people before Jesus actually became flesh and dwelt among them. Hence the gospel declares Jesus to be the sum and substance of them all. I shall endeavor, with all humble reverence, guided by the light of Holy Scripture, to demonstrate the fulfillment*



*“The Cherub Guardian Of Eden” - E.M. Lillien*

of the details of the Tabernacle in Jesus. (1) The Law was safely kept within the Ark. In His perfect obedience to God under the Law, Jesus is the true Ark, in whom the Law was fulfilled, answered, and accomplished. **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.”** (Matthew 5:17); **“For God has done what the Law, weakened by the flesh could not do; by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us...For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness for everyone who believes.”** (Romans 8:3; 10:4) Thus, the Law is not annulled, but established by God’s gracious pardoning and justifying of sinners; **“Do we then overthrow the Law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary we uphold the Law!”** (Romans 3:31) These rituals and services were designed by God to declare just this, namely, that no firm covenant between God and man could be established without the perfect fulfillment of the Law. This was the original mystery revealed in all these institutions, that in the obedience of the promised Seed of the Woman the everlasting, unalterable Law of God would be fulfilled. In the Messiah, in the traditional words of Judaism, ‘the Law was restored to its original perfectly pure crown.’ This restoration was signified by the crown of gold trim which



surrounded the cover of the Ark in which the tablets of the Law were kept. The crown and glory of the Law was truly restored when the Law was fulfilled by Christ. The church of Israel should have recognized and believed in this gracious fulfillment of the Law by God himself as did the Prophet Daniel in his prayer as he pleaded for mercy ***“O our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and for Your own sake, O LORD, and to his pleas for mercy, make Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary which is desolate...For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.”***(Daniel 9:17-18) Later, however, they spurned God’s mercy and relied upon the letter of the Law, carved upon tables of stone and perished. ***“What shall we say then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel, who pursued a Law that would lead to righteousness, did not succeed in reaching that Law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written: Behold, I am laying a Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame.”***...For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness for everyone who



***“Cherub Guardian”***

**believes.”** (Romans 9:31-33; 10:2-3) (2) Jesus was the ‘Mercy Seat,’ that is to say the role of the “Mercy Seat” symbolized what He would accomplish. The apostle specifically says: **“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood to be received by faith.”** (Romans 3:23-25) Propitiation refers to the Mercy Seat to which this word refers. The Mercy Seat of the Ark covered the Law in the sight of God when the blood was sprinkled upon it. The blood of Christ intervenes between the righteous God upon His throne and the tablets of the Law within the Ark, that we may not be judged by God under the curse of the Law. The Law required obedience, and threatened a curse upon those who disobeyed. The obedience which the Law required was represented by Ark as a symbol of Christ who fulfilled the Law. Christ is further symbolized by the Mercy Seat in that He paid the atonement price propitiating the wrath of God. Because of His blood the curse would not be imposed upon sinners because Christ took that curse upon Himself for us. **“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the**

**Law by becoming a curse for us - for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged upon a tree.’** (Galatians 3:13) (3) It was His blood, symbolically, which was carried into the Holy Place to make atonement, as the apostle clearly declares in this chapter. The effectiveness of His blood, when He offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice to God for sin, which served at the atonement price in the Holy Place not made with hands.



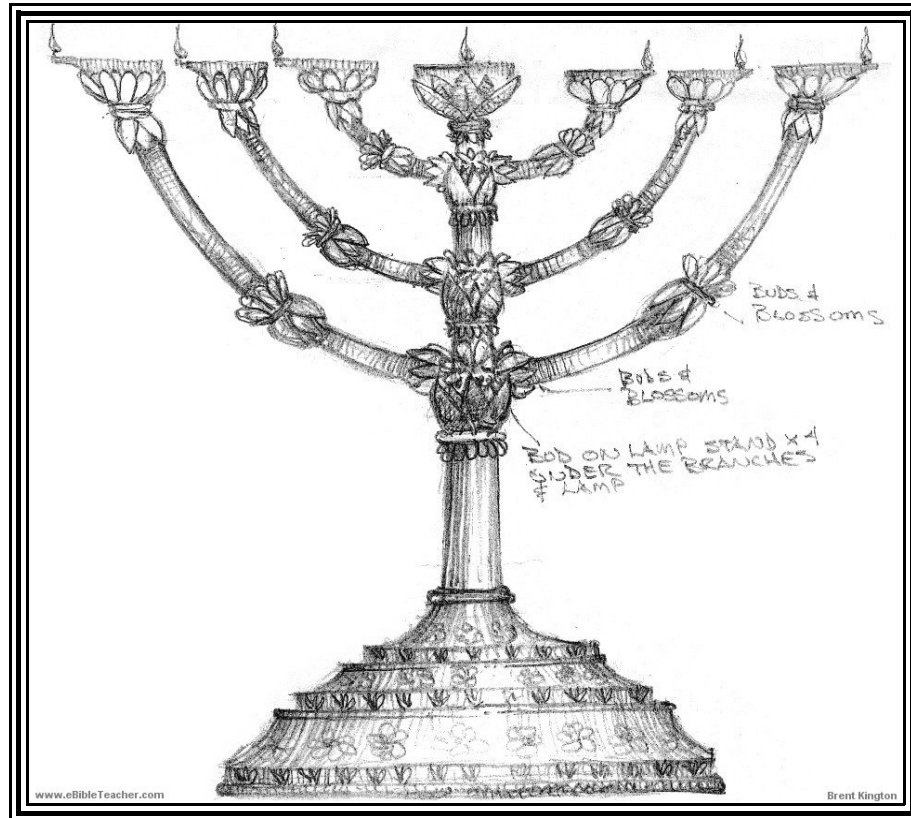
**“Cherubim”**

### **Hebrews 9:6-10**

**“These preparations having been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, but into the second section only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for unintentional sins of the people. By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the Holy Places is not yet opened, as long as the first section is still standing (which is**



*symbolic for the present age.) According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered, that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.”*



*“The Tabernacle Menorah” - Brent Kingston*

*“These preparations having been made, the priests go regularly into the first section...”*- Having describe the setting and furnishings of the earthly sanctuary, the writer now goes on to address the services and rituals which occurred there. *“These preparations”* refer to the divine design and the implementation of that design in the actual construction of the Tabernacle/Temple. *“The priests”* is a generic reference to the descendants of Aaron and the members of the priestly tribe of Levi without further detail or differentiation. These Levitical priests *“go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties.”* The assigned teams of priests came into the Holy Place every day. Their responsibilities there consisted of three basic tasks. The first pertained to the Menorah, the Golden Lampstand, to ensure that its seven lamps were kept burning constantly without interruption. This entailed both the regular refilling of the olive oil, and the trimming or replacement of the wicks floating in the golden blossoms. This occurred in the evening and the morning of every day.

*“You shall command the people of Israel that they bring up to your pure beaten olive oil for the light, that a lamp may be regularly set up to burn. In the Tent of Meeting, outside the veil that is before the Testimony, Aaron and*

***his sons shall tend it from evening to morning before the LORD. It shall be a statute forever to be observed throughout their generations by the people of Israel.” (Exodus 27:20-22)***



***“The High Priest At The Altar of Incense on Yom Kippur”***

The burning of incense on the Altar of Incense before the Veil of the Most Holy Place also took place in the evening and the morning of each day.

***And you shall put it in front of the Veil that is above the Ark of the Testimony, where I will meet with you. And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations. You shall not offer unauthorized incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour out a drink offering on it. Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement, he shall make atonement for it once a year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD.” (Exodus:30:7-10)***

The third ongoing ritual duty of the priests in the Holy Place was the placement and removal of the twelve loaves of Showbread on the Golden Table designed for that purpose. This was done every Sabbath Day.

***“You shall take fine flour and bake twelve loaves from it; two tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. You shall set them in two piles, six in a pile, on the table of pure gold before the LORD. And you shall put pure frankincense on each pile, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion, as a food offering to the LORD. Every Sabbath Day Aaron shall arrange it before the LORD regularly; it is from the people of Israel as a covenant forever. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the LORD’s food offerings, a perpetual due.” (Leviticus 24:8-9)***

All of these duties are summarized again in 1 Chronicles 23:24-32 to indicate that the practices remained unchanged when the Temple of Solomon replaced the Tabernacle. The point of this description at this stage of the argument in Hebrews is twofold. Once again the



constant repetition of the rituals is emphasized, thereby demonstrating that none of them were conclusively effective. If they had been there would have been no need for repetition. Secondly, because they were not conclusively effective, both the rituals and the priests which performed them were barred from the Most Holy Place and restricted to the ***“First Tent.”*** Therefore, access to God had not been achieved.

*“The age that began with Moses and established the earthly sanctuary is introduced as an age that was characterized by the repetition of the Levitical ritual...Everything in Verse 6 emphasizes the continuous, repetitive nature of the priests’ ministry and its consequent limitation to the First Tent...These priests are continually performing rituals that are never completed and that never get them further than the First Tent. They never achieve even symbolic access into the divine presence. Thus, the pastor lays a firm foundation for demonstrating the ineffectiveness of the ministry oin which the First Covenant was established.”* (Cockerill, p. 379)

***“But into the second, only the High Priest goes, and he but once a year...”*** - The daily and weekly activities of the priests in the First Tent are immediately contrasted the empty isolation of the Most Holy Place which could only be entered by the High Priest once a year on the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement was observed on the 10<sup>th</sup> Day of Tishri, the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar during the season of autumn. The text adds the word ***“only”*** to place special emphasis on the singularity of the one man on one particular day in contrast to the multiple priests in the First Tent all the time. Two phrases are used,



***“The High Priest Before the Veil In The Tabernacle”***

heaped upon one another so that the stark difference cannot possibly be missed - ***“only the High Priest goes, and he but once a year.”*** And if that were not enough, not even the most exalted member of the priesthood of Israel, was allowed to enter even once a year without submitting to unique cleansings and blood offerings, specifically for himself because of his own sinfulness, before he was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place and stand before the Ark as the representative of the people.



*“The Staff Of Aaron Blooming Before the Ark” - Lillien*

*“At the same time, however, it was clear that the perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice was not offered under the Levitical system, for the way into the Holy of Holies remained barred, and the ritual of the Day of Atonement was repeated year after year. Moreover, the High Priest who represented them before God was himself incapacitated by his own imperfection from effecting fully and finally that reconciliation which they needed, for, as we have mentioned, he, like them, was a sinner in need of forgiveness, and accordingly he offered the blood of the sacrifice for himself, as well as for the errors of the people (a requirement already noticed in 5:3 and 7:27). But the imperfection extended beyond the High Priest to the victim which was sacrificed, for it is evident that a brute beast can never be a proper substitute for man whom God created in His own image; and so the multiplicity of animal victims in itself*



*pointed to the need for one adequate victim who would bear away the sins of the world.” (Hughes, p. 320)*

***“And for the unintentional sins of the people.”*** - The ***“unintentional sins”*** terminology here has elicited significant debate among the commentators. The Greek adjective here rendered ***“unintentional”*** literally ***“ignorance.”*** This is the only instance in which the word appears in the New Testament. The Old Testament clearly distinguishes within the rules of the sacrificial rituals between sins committed unintentionally in ignorance of the Law and deliberate, defiant sin (Hebrew ***“high handed”***). Leviticus Chapter 4 specifies the required sin offerings for unintentional sins for a priest, the entire congregation of Israel, a leader of the people, or the common people. In each instance the case is introduced with the phrase: ***“If anyone sins unintentionally in any of the LORD’s commandments about things not to be done, and does any of them...”***. After spelling out the necessary sacrifices the paragraph concludes - ***“So shall the priest make atonement for his sin and he shall be forgiven.”*** The distinction is restated with some additional details in Numbers 15:

***“If one person sins unintentionally, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement before the LORD for the person that makes a mistake, when he sins unintentionally, to make atonement for him and he shall be forgiven. You shall have one law for anyone who does anything unintentionally, for him who is a native among the people of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them. But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is a native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken His commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.”*** (Numbers 15:22-31)

The difficulty here is that the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement are clearly in view. Leviticus 16 which establishes and defines this most solemn of festivals clearly states that the Day of Atonement ritual is for the forgiveness of all sins.

***“And it shall be a statute to you forever, that in the seventh month on the tenth day of the month you shall afflict yourselves, and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you. For on this day atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD for all your sins. It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you shall afflict yourselves. It is a statute forever. And the priest who is anointed and consecrated in his father’s place shall make atonement, wearing the holy linen garments. He shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the Tent of Meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly.”***

***And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins. And Aaron did as the LORD commanded Moses.” (Leviticus 16:29-34)***

The rabbis consistently taught, however, that the forgiveness of the Day of Atonement did not extend to the impenitent. This may well have been the distinction which this phrase has in mind:

*“The rabbis contended, however, that the forgiveness was not automatic. On that day the Lord forgave only the sins committed against Him, and then only if the conditions were right. The covenanter was required to first be reconciled to his brother against whom he had sinned; he had to repent, and he had to bring his sin and guilt offerings to the temple of the Lord. ‘If a man said, ‘I will sin and repent, and sin again and repent,’ he will be given no chance to repent. If he said, ‘I will sin and the Day of Atonement will effect atonement’ then the Day of Atonement effects no atonement. This was probably the condition which the author of Hebrews had in mind when he wrote about the priest’s atonement ‘of his own sins and the unintentional sins of the people.’” (Buchanan, p. 144)*



***“The Scapegoat Banished Into The Wilderness On The Day Of Atonement”***

***“By this the Holy Spirit indicates...”*** - There is no doubt whatsoever in the mind of the author of this epistle that the Bible is the Word of God. When Scripture speaks it is the word of the Holy Spirit. In 3:7 the quotation from Psalms is introduced - ***“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says.”*** In Chapter 10 the words of Psalm 40 are cited as ***“When Christ came***



***into the world He said.***” Later in the same chapter, the text of Jeremiah 31 is acknowledged as the witness of the Holy Spirit. Would that the people of God had not abandoned this unshakeable confidence in the Bible as the Word of God.

The former covenant was preparatory and didactic. That is to say it was to set the stage for the coming of the Messiah and teach the people the fundamental concept of the plan of salvation, namely that access to God could only be achieved by the once for all perfect sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross. Substitutionary atonement was indeed the core concept of the animal sacrifices but only in an imperfect, exemplary, way as the beasts sacrificed were used to convey the idea which would only be fulfilled in the innocent death of Christ. The division of the Tabernacle/Temple into two segments, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, with the Holy Place and the Veil obstructing the entrance into the Most Holy Place and the earthly presence of God above the Ark, served as ***“symbolic”*** of the fact that the Messiah had not yet come and accomplished His task. ***“As long as the first section is still standing” “the way into the holy places is not yet opened.”*** ***“If the ‘outer Tent’ could not even give access to the ‘inner Tent’ how could it possibly have given access to heaven itself?”*** (Cockerill, p. 382)

The ***“not yet”*** of Verse 8 expresses both the temporary nature of the former covenant and the eager expectation with which God’s people anticipated the coming of the Messianic era. The sanctuaries and services of the former age remained in force during which - ***“gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot effect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation”*** - until they were fulfilled and cancelled by the death of Christ upon



***“The Day Of Atonement In A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Eastern European Synagogue***



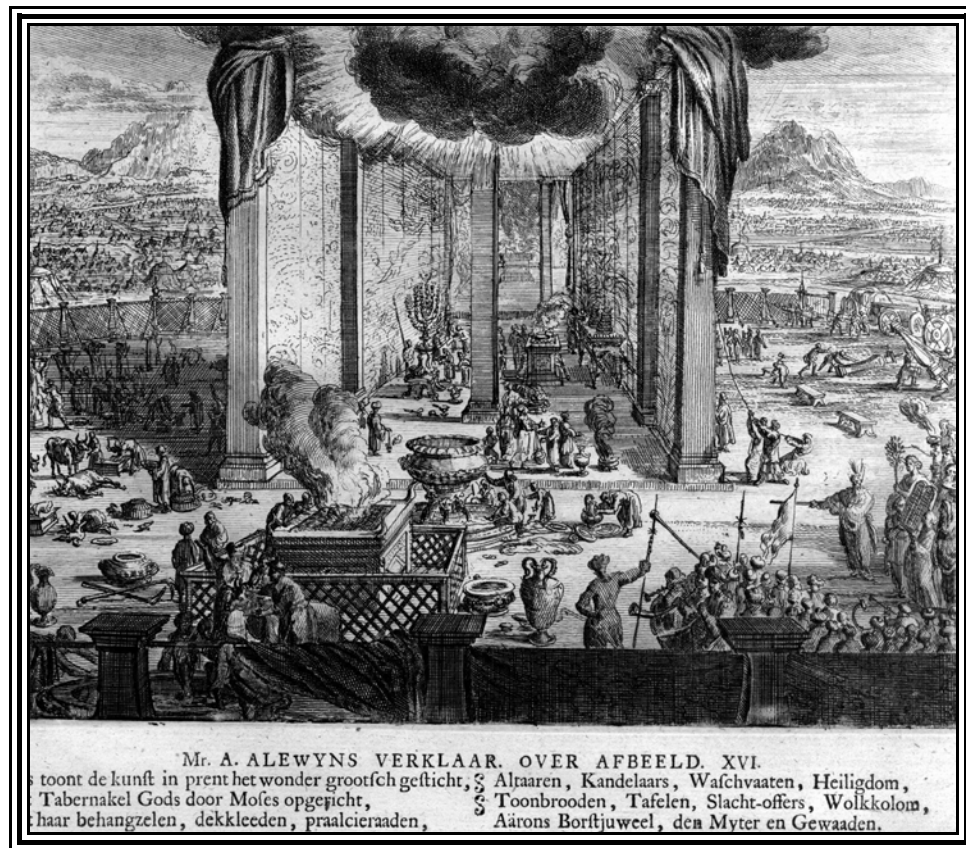
*“Building The Tabernacle”*

that point they became obsolete as was graphically demonstrated by the rending of the Temple curtain at the moment of Christ’s sacrificial death.

*“It would be the greatest mistake for the readers to think that the Tabernacle which God made Moses construct in the wilderness and fit up for the service by the priests and the high priest is the final thing and intended by Him to remain for all time and only to be advanced from the Tabernacle to the Temple building in Jerusalem, when the Holy Spirit Himself shows so clearly, by both the division of the Tabernacle into a Holy and a Holy of Holies and the nature of the ordinances which were prescribed for the Tabernacle services, that all this is only a temporary thing, a figure and a parable of the time when God brings the right arrangement. This time is here now, the author tells his readers. We now have the final high priest and the ministrant in the heavenly sanctuary.” (Lenski, p. 282)*

*“What the Old Testament says about worship under the old covenant is proof that something more effective was needed.” (Allen, p. 466) The writer contends that the worship of Tabernacle/Temple was inherently inadequate - **“cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper”** - because it **“dealt only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.”** It was never intended to be permanent but designed to prepare the way. The **“only”** Verse 10 is most emphatic, preparing the way for the contrast with the ministry of the perfect High Priest which will be further detailed in the chapters to come.*





***“The Worship Of The Tabernacle” - DeHooghe***

*“The combination ‘gifts and sacrifices’ embraces all the offerings of the First Tent, and thus condemns them all to futility. They were not able to perform the essential purpose of sacrifice; they could not ‘cleanse the worshiper in regard to conscience’ no matter how many times they were offered. The conscience is the flesh as the inner person is to the outer. It is the worshiper’s inner being, the true self, the heart. As the wilderness generation has demonstrated, the essence of the human predicament is ‘an evil heart of unbelief’, not only burdened with guilt, but dominated by the inner proclivity to sin and rebellion (3:12-14). The sacrifices of the First Tent could not touch this need...The sacrifices of the First Tent belonged only to the same sphere as these ceremonial regulations and provided the same kind of cleansing - outward and ceremonial...They are external, ceremonial, temporal and weak. They were devoid of divine power, and thus unable to change the heart or transform the person. They were appropriate only for a priesthood based on a ‘fleshly commandment’ (7:16). Thus they were valid and incumbent upon God’s people but only until ‘the time of correction’ when Christ arrived as the High Priest of the good things that have come.” (Cockerill, p. 385)*

***“The time of reformation”*** refers to the coming of Christ and the accomplishment of His work of salvation. The ESV’s translation of the Greek noun in the phrase as ***“reformation”*** is unfortunate. The term more accurately describes the abrogation of a law and its



replacement by a superior. The English versions offer a broad variety of translations.

*“‘The time of correction’ is literally ‘the time of setting straight’ or ‘making right,’ In the Old Testament context this would occur when the Jubilee arrived, the captives were set free and the land was restored to its original owners. Here, it would make the end of the evil age and mark the beginning of the age to come when a new administration would be in force, and the believers would find rest. It is the same as the time of restoration of all that which God had promised.” (Buchanan, p. 146)*

*“The ‘present age’ is now followed by a phrase that says much more; these ordinances are ‘imposed’ and thus are obligatory only ‘until the time of the right order,’ when all the imperfections of the Levitical and preparatory period would be discarded, when Jesus would bring everything to completeness (cf. 7:11). The ‘time of reformation’ in our versions is not a satisfactory English translation.” (Lenski, p. 287)*

The paragraph which follows in vss. 11-14 will identify that time in specific detail.



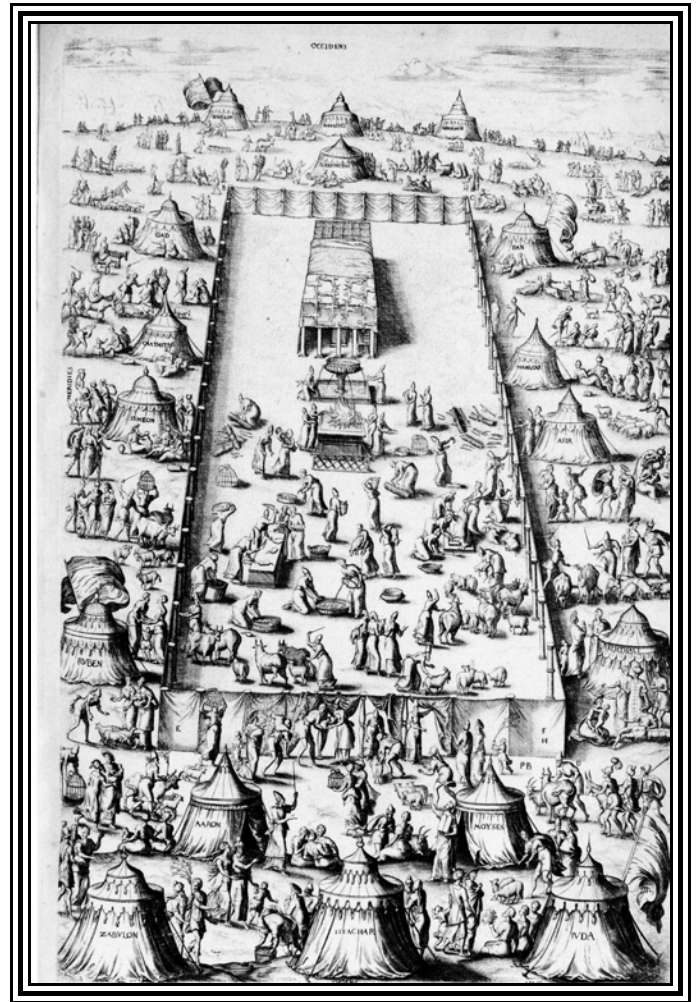
***“Orthodox Icon Of Christ the Great Perfect High Priest***

### ***Hebrews 9:11-14***

***“But when Christ appeared as a High Priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.***

***“But when Christ appeared as a High Priest of the good things...”*** - The adversative conjunction ***“But”*** signals that what now follows presents a sharp contrast with that which had preceded it. That is, the

sanctuaries, services, and priesthood of the former covenant are substantively different than those of Christ. The focus of this paragraph will be on the sacrifices of the former covenant in distinction to ***“the good things that have come”*** through the ***“once for all”*** sacrifice of Christ Himself. The sad conclusion of the foregoing assessment of the Tabernacle/Temple system was that they were insufficient and that no access to God had been achieved through them. The introduction of the contrast here suggests that the High Priesthood of Christ has, in fact, succeeded where the former system had failed. The past tense of the verb in the second phrase also points to a task which has already been accomplished - ***“the good things that have come.”*** *“The pastor has finished describing the repetitious sacrifices of the Old Covenant that brought no access to God. He turns now to the present time of fulfillment with a definitive statement of Christ’s achievement - ‘Christ has arrived as the High Priest of the good things that have come.’”* (Cockerill, p. 389)



***“The Tabernacle And Its Court In The Sinai Encampment” - 17<sup>th</sup> Century Engraving***

***“Then, through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)...”*** - The substantive difference between the former failed priesthood and that of Christ is indicated first of all by the setting in which it took place. The structural design and furnishings of the earthly Tabernacle have been described in detail to establish this contrast. The Tabernacle which was erected within creation was merely ***“symbolic of this present age.”*** The perfect High Priesthood of Christ, on the other hand took place ***“through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)”***. This ***“greater and more perfect tent”*** is the heavenly presence of God, the genuine sanctuary where God dwells in an eternity with beginning or end. The futility of the earthly Tabernacle constructed by Moses and Aaron was revealed by the need for its two segments - the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place - impenetrably separated from one another by the great Veil. That Veil could only be parted by the Aaronic High Priest on the Day of Atonement, under the most severe restrictions to present the blood of the sacrifices upon the Ark. This complex ritual was repeated annually, indicating its inadequacy. In the ***“greater and more perfect tent not made with hands”*** such barriers and restrictions were no longer relevant. In this heavenly dwelling place of God there was no need for two segments or a



*“The Heavenly Throne of God” - Vasnetsov*

Veil of separation which barred the way to into God’s presence. This heavenly sanctuary is **“greater and more perfect.”** These are powerful words, indicating an absolute and utter difference between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries.

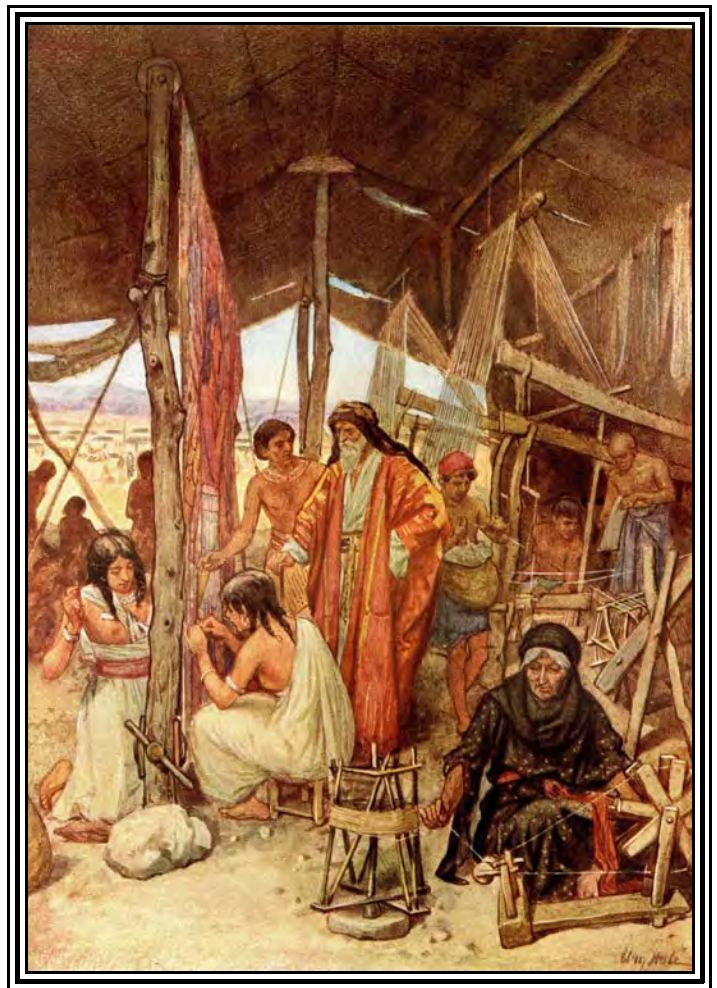
*“‘Greater’ and ‘more perfect’ affirm the absolute superiority of this ‘Tent’. It can be nothing less than the sanctuary Christ has entered, the ultimate dwelling place of God...When one approaches this heavenly reality, it is the same ‘greater and more perfect Tent’ through which Christ has passed, penetrating to the very throne of God; when one enters it is the Sanctuary in which Christ has taken a seat at God’s right hand. As described in 9:1-10, the Old Covenant was a religion of the Holy Place, confined to its boundaries and excluded from the Most Holy Place. In the New Covenant, there is no need for a Holy Place since Christ brings His people into the very presence of God...By thus stressing the heavenly location of Christ’s ministry, the pastor affirms its unique effectiveness in bringing God’s people in His presence.” (Cockerill, p. 391)*

**“He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.”** - Having presented the breath-taking assertion that Christian believers now have direct access into the presence of God Himself, the writer goes on to explain how this most miraculous of miracles has been accomplished. How did Christ do what the Old Covenant has been completely unable to do. How could Christ enter **“once for all into the holy places”** when the former rituals and ceremonies had to be endlessly repeated, year after year? Once again, the point is made by means of contrast: **“not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of His own blood.”** The essence of the former covenant was in the shedding of blood as the symbol of life.



***“If anyone of the House of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among them, eats any blood, I will set My face against that person, who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.”*** (Leviticus 17:10-11)

The blood of the sacrificial animals was to be a daily reminder that a price had to be paid for sin. ***“The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*** (Romans 6:23) The cost of sin is the death of the sinner. If the sinner is to be spared from death and allowed to live, justice demands that the innocent life of another must be given in his place. Anything less would be unjust and unfair, direct contradiction of the righteousness and holiness of God. There were no innocents among the descendants of Adam, none who were without their own sin, for which they themselves deserved to die. Thus, if the atonement price were to be paid, God Himself would have to pay it. This He accomplished by the incarnation and execution of His only Son. The blood of all the thousands of animal sacrifices offered upon the altars of Tabernacle and Temple, and sprinkled upon the golden Mercy Seat of the Ark, were a continuous object lesson, as it were, designed to teach this immutable truth. Death is the cost of sin. That cost must be paid either by the death of every sinner or by the substitution of an innocent, sinless, life for those who were guilty. But these animals could not pay the price for man, the crown of God’s creation, the only morally responsible creature fashioned in the image and after the likeness of God. The author places particular emphasis on Christ’s willingness to offer himself as the sacrifice when he declares that the blood which was shed was ***“His own blood.”*** The Son of God incarnate, the only possible sacrifice by whom this task could be accomplished, ***“thus securing an eternal redemption.”*** “This ***“eternal redemption”*** is presented in contrast to ***“the gifts and sacrifices that are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the people”*** (9:9) The term ***“redemption”*** is one of the key words which the Bible uses to define the work



***“Aaron Supervising The Weaving of the Tabernacle Veil” - William Hole***

of Christ for our salvation. The word signifies the paying of a ransom price to obtain freedom for a slave, a captive, or one who has been imprisoned. It is used most often in the Old Testament to characterize God's action in liberating the Israelites from bondage as the slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt.

***“Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the LORD and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgement. And I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.’ (Exodus 6:6-7; cf. 15:13; Deuteronomy 7:6-11;)”***

God used the same word to characterize His deliverance of the first born of Israel from the Angel of Death by the innocent blood of the Passover Lamb. This miracle was to be permanently re-enacted in the ritual sacrifices of the Tabernacle/Temple:

***“When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and shall give it to you, you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the LORD's. Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. And when, in the time to come, your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons, I redeem.’ (Exodus 13:11-15)”***

Asaph, the choirmaster of the Temple, sang the praises of God for His constant redemptions of the people throughout their history, using His mighty power, again and again to rescue and deliver them:

***“I will remember the deeds of the LORD, yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work and meditate on Your mighty deeds. Your way, O God is holy! What God is great like our God? You are the God who works wonders. You made known your might among the peoples. You with Your arm redeemed Your people, the Children of Jacob and Joseph... You led Your people like a flock, though the hand of Moses and Aaron.” (Psalm 77:11-15,20)***



*“Job And His Friends” - Vrienden*

***“O God, why do You cast us off forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture? Remember Your congregation which You have purchased of old, which You have redeemed to be the tribe of Your heritage! Remember Mount Zion where You have dwelt. Direct Your steps to the perpetual ruins; the enemy has destroyed everything in the Sanctuary.” (Psalm 74:1-3)***

Perhaps the most familiar Old Testament designation of the Messiah as the Redeemer comes from the patriarch Job, in the midst of his trials and tribulations:

***“Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were inscribed in the rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh will I see God, whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!” (Job 19:23-26)***

That designation of the Savior Messiah as the Redeemer, however, is certainly not unique to Job, but occurs throughout the writings of the prophets. Isaiah literally describes the payment of the ransom by which Israel was redeemed by their faithful Savior:

***“But now, thus says the LORD, He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel; ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of***



*Israel your Savior. I gave Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you, because you are precious in My eyes, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life...I, I am the LORD, and besides Me there is no Savior. I declared, and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are My witnesses, declares the LORD, and I am God...Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel...I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.” (Isaiah 43:1, 3-4,11-12, 14-15)*

*“Remember these things O Jacob and Israel, for you are My servant; I formed you, you are My servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me; I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud, and your sins like mist, return to Me for I have redeemed you...For the LORD has redeemed Jacob and will be glorified in Israel. Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer who formed you from the womb. I am the LORD who made all things.” (Isaiah 44:21-24)*

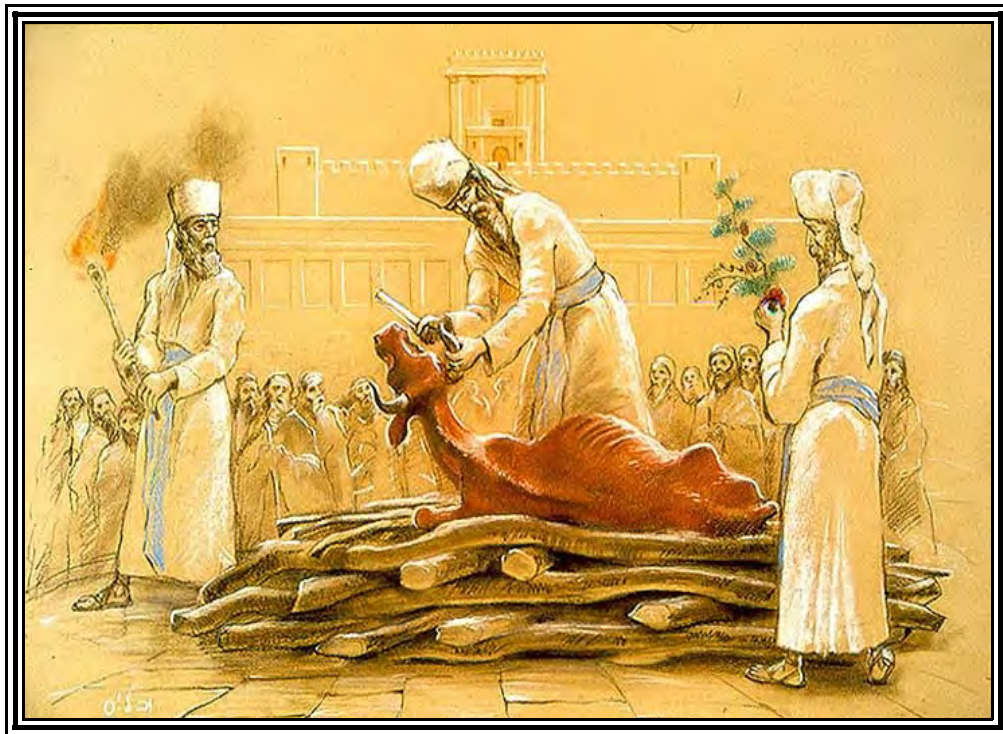


*“The Destruction Of Pharaoh And His Chariots In the Sea”*

The redemption accomplished Christ, the High Priest of the Order of Melchizidek is designated here as **“eternal.”** It transcends the limitation of time to include believers of every time and place and is without end, granting salvation and eternal life to all who receive it by grace through faith.

*“This ‘eternal redemption’ provides something more than the “purification of the flesh’ (9:10) under the old sacrificial system...Oppression under Pharaoh had preventing them from serving Him in the Promised Land. Long ago, God*

had ‘redeemed’ them from that bondage. Christ has now obtained a redemption that rescues them from something far deeper and more insidious. He has provided their deliverance from the corruption of sin, that prevents fellowship with God in the heavenly homeland, and thus from the fear of death and judgement endemic to humankind (2:14-15). That first redemption was temporal, both in the benefits it provided and their duration. This second is eternal in its effectiveness, benefits and duration. The price of eternal redemption was costly beyond measure, for it could be procured by nothing less than the ‘once for all’ self-offering of the eternal Son of God. The pastor’s great concern is that his hearers avail themselves of this great provision that is theirs in Christ.” (Cockerill, p. 395)



*“The Sacrifice of the Red Heifer”*

***“For if the blood of bulls and goats and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer...”*** - The writer has demonstrated the external symbolic role of the site of Tabernacle worship and its priesthood. Next he proceeds to make the identical point in regard to the sacrifices themselves. ***“The blood of bulls and goats”*** is the characteristic phrase to identify not only the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement, but all of the broad variety of sacrifices involved in the worship of the Tabernacle/Temple throughout the era of the former covenant. Thus, the LORD declares through the inspired words of the psalmist:

***“Hear, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you. I am God, your God. Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you. Your burnt offerings are ever before Me. I will not accept a bull from your house, or***



*goats from your folds. For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are Mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?”*  
(Psalm 50:8-13)



*“The Rituals of the Tabernacle” - Jan Luyken*

The text also refers to *“the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer.”* The purification ceremony of the red heifer is presented in Numbers 19:

*“Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: ‘This is the statute of the Law that the LORD has commanded; ‘Tell the people to bring you a red heifer in which there is no blemish, and on which a yoke has never come. And you shall give it to Eleazar the priest, and it shall be taken outside the camp and slaughtered before him. And Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of its blood toward the front of the Tent of Meeting seven times. And the heifer shall be burned in his sight. Its skin, its flesh, and its blood with its dung shall be burned. And the priest shall take cedarwood and hyssop and scarlet yarn, and throw them into the fire burning the heifer. Then the priest shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water and afterward he may come into the camp. But the priest shall be unclean until evening. The one who burns the heifer shall wash his clothes in water and bathe his body in water and shall be unclean until evening. And a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the*



***heifer and deposit them outside the camp in a clean place. And they shall be kept for the water, for impurity for the congregation of the people of Israel; it is a sin offering. And the one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. And this shall be a perpetual statute for the people of Israel, and for the stranger who sojourns among them.***” (Numbers 19:1-10)

The sacrifice of the red heifer was designed to provide ritual cleansing for anyone who had come into contact with a dead body. That is why Eleazar, Aaron’s son, was to perform the sacrifice rather than Aaron himself, for it was thought to be unseemly for the High Priest ever to come into even the most remote contact with death. Every detail of the ritual was fraught with the symbolism of life and death. Delitsch outlines the profound symbolism of the service in this way:

*“First of all, a perfectly spotless and as yet unyoked red heifer (a female calf, or young cow which had not given birth to more than one calf) was to be taken, spotless and unyoked because destined to be used as part of the sacred water of purification; and red as the color of life, because that purifying composition was for those who had suffered defilement through contact with the dead; a female animal was to be taken because the female sex is the source of life; and a cow because as the symbol of fruitfulness it would serve as the most radical opposite of the barren reality of death. The animal was to be brought to Eleazar and priest and to be slain by him outside of the camp, not to Aaron the High Priest, because all, even the most indirect contact with death was inappropriate (the high priest was not even permitted to approach the dead bodies of his parents); and outside the camp for a similar reason, because the camp of Israel with the Tabernacle Sanctuary in the middle of it was holy, and not to be defiled by any deliberate connection with death. After the slaying of the red heifer, Eleazar was to dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times in the direction of the Tabernacle. The blood of the sin offering which was made for the whole congregation which was slain in the Tabernacle, was also sprinkled seven times within the Holy Place, before the Ark; here, on the other hand, the sprinkling was made in the air, lest the defilement of death which is the predominant thought throughout the ritual should seem to be brought into any contact with the sanctuary of God; but at the same time, it was made toward the Tabernacle in order to impart toward the sin offering there presented the sanctity of its cleansing, death-defying power. After this, the heifer was to be entirely burned, flesh, skin, blood and all; and into the burning, the priest was to cast cedarwood, hyssop, and a crimson band or ribbon...What is unique here is that the blood is not poured out as in other sin offerings, is that the blood of the heifer is burned - but the meaning of this is not hard to discover - the purpose of the whole ceremony being to produce a*



***“The Burning of the Red Heifer” - Medhurst - 17<sup>th</sup> Century Bible Engraving***

*heap of ashes with the highest purifying energy, the blood, which as a result of the sprinkling toward the Holy Place, had become impregnated with purifying and atoning power, which would naturally form a principal ingredient of the ashes...The ceremony being completed in this manner, the ashes were to be kept in a clean place outside the camp to serve (when rinsed with the naturally purifying element of water) to be used as a means of cleansing for those who had been defiled by contact with a dead body; for that purpose, such persons were to be sprinkled with the water on the third and on the seventh day, and so purified; the same rule applied also to the house of the dead and to the furniture and clothes contained in it.” (Delitsch, II, p. 94)*

***“How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” -***

The point of Hebrews is, of course, that this prominent ceremony in the worship of the Tabernacle/Temple could do nothing more than ***“sanctify for the purification of the flesh.”*** It was a symbolic ritual and could be nothing more. It was only a ceremonial preview of the reality which was to come in the once for all self-sacrifice of the Messiah whose blood would actually cleanse humanity from the guilt of sin.

*“It was only in a superficial sense that the blood or ashes of the animals sacrificed under the levitical system could be said to achieve cleansing. The ceremonial involved did not penetrate to the heart of man’s need, which is the cleansing of his conscience whereby he knows himself to be condemned as guilty before God. Such ceremonial was only the shadow, though not without promise, and not the substance; **‘for it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.’**” (Hughes, p. 356)*

The contrast between the promissory ritual and the actual event offered by the perfect High Priest of the Order of Melchizadek is drawn in the clearest terms possible. The sacrifice in the ritual of the red heifer is a brute beast, not a moral creature. The perfection of the heifer can apply only to superficial physical characteristics and colors, capable nothing more than serving as symbols of the genuinely perfect sacrifice still to come. Nonetheless, the ritual of the red heifer was one of the most powerful and prominent sacrifices of Judaism - signifying the victory of life over death by means of shed blood. If that could be possible, the writer marvels, ***“how much more will the blood of Christ...”*** The beast was compelled to its death, without the slightest awareness of the meaning or significance of that which it endured. There is, nor can there be, any willing submission as in the agony of our Lord in the Garden: ***Father, not My will but Thine be done***” (Matthew 26:39) The opposite is true in reference to the sacrifice of Christ - ***the blood of Christ who offered Himself without blemish to God.***”

*“The act of self-sacrifice through this eternal Spirit is an ethical one of absolute validity and worth. For the life of the animal, a sacrificial death is a matter of constraint, unconsciously, or at any rate unwillingly endured, but that of Christ, made in the power of the eternal Spirit is a fully conscious and absolutely free act of obedience and love, and therefore productive not of a shadowy, but of a real atonement before God. It is the self-surrender of a pure and sinless, but at the same time pure and infinite and ever-enduring life, and a work of ever enduring power commensurate to the needs not of individuals only, but of all mankind. This universal application is indicated here by the comparison not with ordinary sin offerings made by individuals, but with that*



***“An Unblemished Red Heifer”***



*of the Day of Atonement made for all Israel, and with the universal means of purification provided for the whole people in the ashes of the red heifer.”*  
(Delitsch, II, p. 97)

Isaac Watts traditional Lenten hymn makes precisely the same point when it declares; “*Not all the blood of beasts, on Jewish altars slain, could give the guilty conscience peace nor wash our sins away. But Christ the Lamb of God, takes all our sins away. A sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they.*”



*“The Offering of the Red Heifer On The Mount Of Olives Sprinkling The Blood Toward The Temple”*

For the cleansing sacrifice to be real, it had to be man. And yet there was no man capable of offering the sacrifice for there was no man who was not himself polluted by the curse of sin. To use the words of Verse 14, there was no man who was “*without blemish.*” The application of the phrase to Christ in this instance moves from the ceremonial symbol and connects it with its actual fulfillment in the sinless life of Christ on earth. He did for us what Adam and every one of his descendants had failed to do. He lived the perfect life which then made it possible for Him to die an innocent death, which could truly be substitutionary. His blood paid the price for sinners because He was not a sinner.

*“The word used for ‘without blemish’ was often used of the goats and bulls of the old covenant as without physical blemish. By His incarnated obedience, Christ offered Himself without moral blemish in a final act of obedience on the cross. The pastor is not referring to a timeless holiness, but to the blamelessness that Christ achieved during His earthly life and which He continues to possess at God’s right hand.”* (Cockerill, p. 400)

Migne Herveus, a 12<sup>th</sup> Century theologian, describes the manner in which the incarnation of Christ made it possible for the Savior to accomplish His work of salvation in his classic commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews:

*“There was a need for a man who could be offered for men; so that a rational sacrifice might be offered for the rational sinner and might obliterate the guilt of the first parent. But what sacrifice, seeing that a man without sin was not to be found? How could a sacrifice offered for us cleanse us from the contagion of sin if it itself was not free from the contagion of sin? A defiled offering certainly could not cleanse defiled persons! Therefore, in order that there might be a rational victim it was necessary for a man to be offered so that he might truly cleanse man from sin - a man, and one without sin. But what man could be without sin if he were descended from the commingling of sin? Accordingly, the Son of God entered the Virgin’s womb on our behalf. There, He became man without sin for us, He offered His body as a sacrifice for us, presenting for sinners a victim without sin, who was able by virtue of human nature to die, and by reason of righteousness to cleanse.” (Hughes, p. 357)*

The importance of the contrast, and the particular emphasis placed upon it here can only be understood when we call to mind that this Epistle is addressed to Hebrews who are struggling with the temptation to relapse from Christianity back into the more familiar setting of Judaism. Contemporary commentator F.F. Bruce makes the same point in defining the radical contrast between the perfect sacrifice of Christ and the superficial symbolism of all of the sin offerings of the former covenant with particular application to the cleansing accomplished by the sacrifice of the Red Heifer.

*“In Christ’s sacrifice we see the final revelation of what God is. This is not a symbol or shadow of something else. There is nothing else to see of God beyond Christ. The religion which rest upon and relies on that sacrifice rests on the ultimate truth of the divine nature, and can never be shaken. The animals that were used for sacrifice in the earlier days were required to be physically unblemished; the life which Christ presented to God on the cross was a life free from inward blemish; like the Servant of the Lord, ‘He had done no violence, and there was no deceit in His mouth (Isaiah 53:9). Our Lord’s complete holiness, His ‘active obedience’ to God is essential to the efficacy of His sacrifice. Only one who knew no sin could take any responsibility in regard to it which would create a new situation for sinners. Christ’s offering of Himself without spot to God had an absolute or ideal character; it was something beyond which nothing could be, or could be conceived to be, as a response to God’s mind and requirements in relation to sin. It was the final response, a spiritual response, to the divine necessities of the situation...His*

*sacrifice was rational and voluntary, an intelligent and loving response to the gracious and holy will of God, and to the terrible situation of man. How this particular response, and nothing else, could satisfy both the divine will and the human predicament will become clearer in 10:5-10, where our author interprets the work of Christ in terms of Psalm 40:6-8. It is not contact with a dead body, or anything of a material or external nature, that conveys real defilement or interrupts true communion with God...It is an inward and spiritual purification that is required if heart communion with God is to be enjoyed.” (Bruce, pp. 217-218)*



***“It Is Finished!”***

The fundamental problem of sinful men is not ritual contamination caused by outward contact with the bodies of the dead. The problem, as described here is ***“dead works.”*** These same words were used previously in Hebrews 6:1 - ***“Therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works...”*** The works in question are ***“dead”*** because they are produced as the self-justifying efforts of human beings who are dead in their trespasses and sins. As such, the sinner is incapable of producing the living works which are the spontaneous evidence of a living faith which has been brought about by the grace of God in Christ. They are dead because they are not generated by God’s gracious love but by man himself and are those doomed to end in death as are all human attempts at self-justification. This is the sinner’s natural inclination, the *“opinio legis”* (the opinion of the Law) as Martin Luther described it.

*“These dead works which spring from deadness and lead to death speak very plainly of the disastrous nature of the human predicament and to the desperate need for the*

*purging and liberation of the conscience from the tyranny of death - the need, that is, for man’s renewal at the very root of his being.” (Hughes, p. 361)*

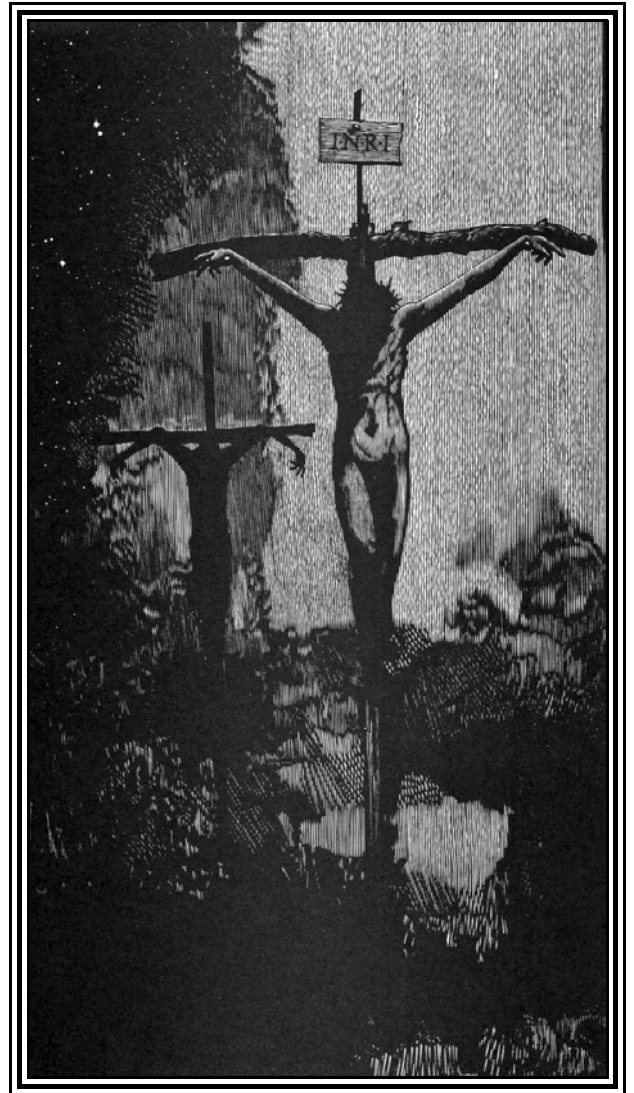
St. Paul pictured the unbridgeable gap between the works of death and the gift of life in the



closing paragraph of Romans 6:

***“For when we were slaves to sin, we were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time in regard to the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”***  
(Romans 6:20-23)

That which is cleansed here is not the outward body as in the ritual functions of the former covenant. The language shifts to emphasize the radically different effect of the sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood and that of the High Priesthood of Christ. Instead, in this instance it is ***“our conscience”*** - that is, the inner man, the essence of our identity and our very being which is cleansed by the perfect sacrifice. While the ***“dead works”*** of the ancient ceremonies were unable to achieve this cleansing, those who have now been washed in the blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world have now been set free from that damnable bondage and are able to worship God in spirit and in truth.



***“Sacrificed Once For All”***

*“Its operation is not a surface one, but central. It cleanses man’s own inward consciousness of his relationship to God; it relieves the mind from that shameful sense of a burden of impurity and alienation, which, making of the inward man a living corpse, produces only works (and among them even those of apparent legal righteousness) in which no pulses of the higher life are found.”* (Delitsch, II, p. 98)

***“To serve the living God”*** - The way of self-righteous external religion is a path polluted by hypocrisy, minimal compliance with legalistic requirements and judgmental condemnation of those who might appear to be less observant than others. Such things can only contaminate the soul and erect barrier between impenitent sinners and God. The goal of authentic cleansing in the blood of Jesus, however, is infinitely more. Service is not longer

the minimum compliance of begrudging legalism but the eager response of a sinner saved by grace whose identity has been transformed. The identification of the Lord as ***“the living God”*** points toward that total transformation.

*“This cleansing purges the true inner person of the believers so that they can genuinely serve and obey the living God. Thus the dead works which have been graciously purged will be replaced by God’s Laws written on the heart, empowering the cleansed for obedient living. Christ’s sacrifice achieves a true inner moral and spiritual transformation that results in an obedient life in reliance upon God.”* (Cockerill, p. 401)



***“Elijah And The Prophets of Baal” - Lucas Cranach***

The terminology of the paragraphs sets before us a striking parallelism between ***“dead works”*** and ***“the living God.”*** The two sides of the contrast are absolute opposites. The writer is urgently warning these Hebrew Christians that they cannot have it both ways. They are in peril of making the same eternally fatal mistake which their forefathers had made in the days of the Prophet Elijah when they tried to combine the worship of the true God with that of the false idol Baal. The prophet had denounced to hypocrisy: ***“How long will you go limping between two opinions? If the LORD is God then follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him.”*** (1 Kings 18:21) Life or death are irreconcilable opposites. And yet these foolish people were committing the contradiction of professing to serve ***“the living God”*** while at the same time reverting to the ***“dead works”*** which are the unmistakably hallmark of unbelief. Disobedience and dead works go together and these Hebrews are indulging in the worst of all dead works by deliberately rejecting the light of the saving truth which had been revealed to them in the Gospel of Christ. Such transgression will inevitably result in them falling in the hands of the living God who is a consuming fire of righteous judgement. The writer seeks to recall those in such peril to consciences purified from dead works that their faith transformation may be reflected in the free willingness and gratitude with which they serve the living God.



*"Moses Presenting The Law At Mount Sinai" - Martyn de Vos*

### **Hebrews 9:15-22**

*"Therefore, He is the Mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance since a death has occurred the redeems them from the transgressions that have been committed under the first covenant. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. Therefore, even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the Law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.' And in the same way he sprinkled with blood both the Tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the Law, almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins."*

*"Therefore, He is the Mediator of a new covenant...." - Hebrews 9:15 is the hinge verse of the entire chapter. It carries us from the content of vss. 1-14 to the conclusions and applications drawn in the second half of the chapter. That which now follows, declaring Christ to be "the Mediator of a new covenant" is based upon the fact that "Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God." That connection is expressed by the conjunction "Therefore" which begins this paragraph. The former*



covenant has been both fulfilled and replaced by the sacrificial death of the Son of God upon the cross.

*“By cleansing the inner being of the worshiper, Christ’s sacrifice brought an end to the sacrifices that could cleanse nothing but the ‘flesh.’ Thus, by establishing an effective way of approaching God, He terminated the Old Covenant as a way of salvation and inaugurated the New that it had typified. His self-offering became a sacrifice of covenant inauguration.” (Cockerill, p. 402)*

Furthermore, unlike the Levitical priests of the Old Covenant Christ was not merely a go-between. He is actually **“the Mediator.”** **“The Mediator”** is one who plays a substantive role in accomplishing the mediation, one whose personal participation and individual contribution makes that mediation possible:

*“a middle person between two others, acting in the way of giving and taking toward both sides, and therefore necessarily partaking of the character of each - i.e. in this case must be both divine and human, not merely acting as God’s representative before men, but standing between both parties and so uniting them.” (Delitsch, II, p. 100)*

He has Himself, by means of His substitutionary death on the cross, removed the barrier of sin and guilt which had separated God and man since the fall of Adam in the Garden - **“since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.”** His blood paid the expiation price and His resurrection is the guarantee that the righteous God has accepted His sacrifice on behalf of humanity so **“that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.”** The reference to **“transgressions committed under the first covenant”** certainly does not limit the redemption here described. However, in the covenant contrast which has been the subject of the preceding segments it is appropriate to affirm that the gracious forgiveness accomplished by the death of the Mediator is not limited by constraints of time and does extend to believers under the former covenant as well as those who will come in the aftermath of the sacrifice of Christ. The use of the noun **“transgressions”** means to step across a forbidden line, a moral boundary identifying the limits of right and wrong. The use of the **“death”** and **“inheritance”** language also sets the stage for the imagery of wills and testaments which will shortly be introduced in the following verses. The gracious nature of this covenant is stressed by the assertion of divine calling as the basis and foundation of the blessing - **“that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.”**

*“This divine calling, in itself insures the full effectiveness of the divine covenant and its promises. All is of God and all is of grace. God who has made provisions for the blessings of this eternal inheritance also by His*

*calling guarantees that there will be inheritors to enter into the enjoyment of it, for His calling is always an indefectibly effectual calling.” (Hughes, p. 368)*

Unlike the often empty words of men, the word of God is inherently powerful. God’s word always makes it happen. Thus the promise of prophet Isaiah centuries earlier has assured a dubious and discouraged Israel that they could place their absolute trust in the words and promises of God.

***“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there, but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes out of My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I propose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:10-11)***



***“God The Creator” - Luther Bible Illustration***

The Apostle Paul made exactly the same point in his encouragement to the Romans as he reminded their faltering believers that everything in their lives made perfect sense because it was all based upon the gracious actions of God undertaken on their behalf. Their call to faith plays a crucial role in Paul’s enumeration of that which God had done on their behalf:

***“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined, He also called, and those whom He called, He also justified, and those whom He justified, He also glorified.” (Romans 8:28-30)***

The certainty of all the blessings rest upon the reality that each and all of them are the work of God Himself. If we had been left to rely upon ourselves, we know only too well how uncertain that blessed outcome would be.

***“Since a death has occurred which redeems them from all of their transgressions...” - The particular emphasis placed upon the fact that the redemption price for the Hebrews and for***

believers of every time and place brings the reader back to the imperfect sacrifices of the former covenant, each of which served as a reminder that only by the shedding of blood could the sinner be bought back from the condemnation owed for his sin. *“His self-offering cleanses God’s people from sin so that they can escape the condemnation of the broken Old Covenant and receive the promised inheritance that it anticipated.”* (Cockerill, p. 402)



*“Satan Exulting Over the Dead Body of Christ In The Tomb” - Schneider*

***“For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established...”*** - The commentators wrangle at great length over the meaning of the word ***“a will”*** in this verse. Ordinarily this term is used in Scripture to define a covenant or contract between two parties. It is, however, also used in reference to the last will and testament of someone, identifying his heirs and distributing his possessions among them. It would appear that the immediate context favors that understanding of the term here as a characterization of Christ and His work of redemption. ***“A will”*** is by nature a stipulation of what is to occur upon the death of the testator. ***“For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.”*** Therefore it is inherently necessary for a death to have taken place in order for the inheritance which has been bequeathed to the designated heirs to become their property. That is particularly the case in this instance since the death of the testator is not only the event which activates the will but also the means by which the inheritance is created. The Greek text is even more forceful, literally reading - *“for a testament is confirmed upon dead bodies.”* The terminology of inheritance and wills serves effectively to stress the absolute necessity of the death of Christ to accomplish the promised inheritance of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life for forgiven sinners.

*“The point of Hebrews 9:16-17 is to show the necessity of the death of the covenant maker/testator for the covenant/testament to be ratified. Verse 15*

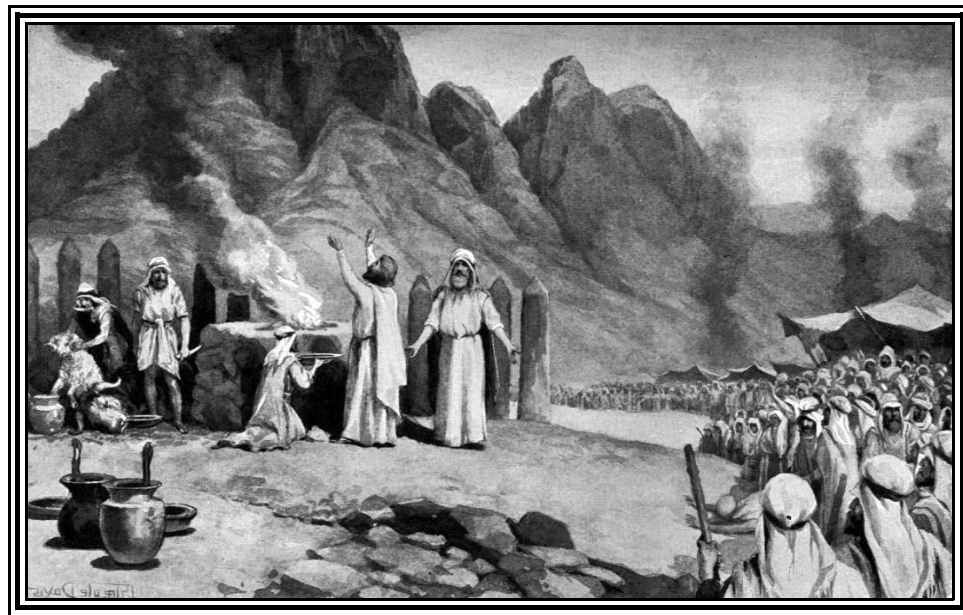


*stated Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, died to provide redemption from sins so that sinners would be set free. The covenant/testament is put into force because of His death.” (Allen, p. 481)*

At the same time, Roman law was extremely emphatic in regard to inviolate nature of a citizen's last will and testament, thus facilitating the use of the image to also assert the sure confidence with which the believer could expect the promises of Christ to be fulfilled for them, in this way reinforcing another aspect the this segment's theme. The analogy, as always, is imperfect in that in this instance Christ is both the testator of the will by whom the inheritance had been promised and the executor of the will's blessings by virtue of His resurrection from the dead. That unique difference, however, only helps to indicate the certainty of receiving the promised blessings in this case.

*“But all analogies from ordinary life must be defective when they are applied to Him who rose from the dead and is thus able personally to secure for His people the benefits which He died to procure for them. He is testator and executor in one, surety and mediator alike. There is no more possibility or feasibility of interference with the effective application of the blessings of the covenant that there is of interfering with a testamentary dispoenement once the testator has died. This use of the testamentary provision of Roman law to illustrate the inviolable security accruing from the sacrificial death of Christ serves to underline the unilateral character of the new covenant.” (Bruce, p. 224)*

***Therefore, not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood....***” - The national covenant with Israel, the promise of an ***“eternal inheritance,”*** in the land, had been



***“The Sacrifices Establishing The Sinai Covenant”***



*“The Sacrifices For The Presentation Of The Law At Sinai” - Luiken*

solemnly established with blood sacrifices using the same terminology of heirs and inheritance. Moses had reminded the LORD of that fact when in righteous anger He had declared His intent to destroy Israel for their apostasy at the time of the Golden Calf:

***“Turn from Your burning anger and relent from this disaster against Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel Your servants to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’” (Exodus 32:12-14)***

The inheritance language also occurs in Moses’ farewell address as he reminds the Children of Israel of God promise and their obligation to remain faithful to the commandments of God.

***“But the LORD has taken you, has brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of His own inheritance, as you are this day. Furthermore, the LORD was angry with me because He swore that I should not cross the Jordan, and that I should not enter the good land that the LORD your God, is giving you for an inheritance, for I must die in this land. I must not go over the Jordan, and take possession of that good land. Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which He made***

*with you and make a carved image, the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” (Deuteronomy 4:20-24)*

*“But there will be no poor among you, for the LORD your God will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess - if only you will strictly obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all this commandment that I command you to do today. For the LORD your God will bless you as He promised you.” (Deuteronomy 15:4-6)*

*“For when every commandment of the Law had been declared by Moses to the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded for you.’ And in the same way, he sprinkled with blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the Law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” - The specific ceremonies which Hebrews has in mind here are the great covenant sacrifice of Exodus 24 which immediately followed the presentation of the Law which Moses had received from the LORD upon the mountain and the sacrifices which accompanied the dedication of the Tabernacle and its priesthood.*

*“And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offering of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do and we will be obedient.’ And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, ‘Behold the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to these*

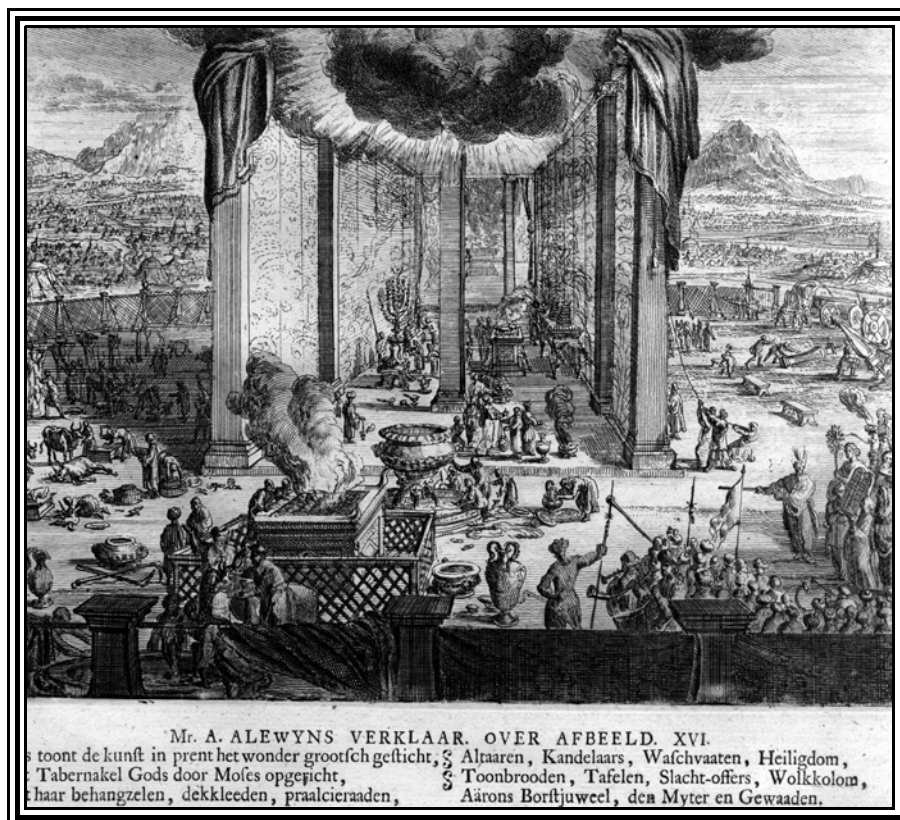


*“The Dedication Of the Tabernacle”*



words.’” (Exodus 24:3-8)

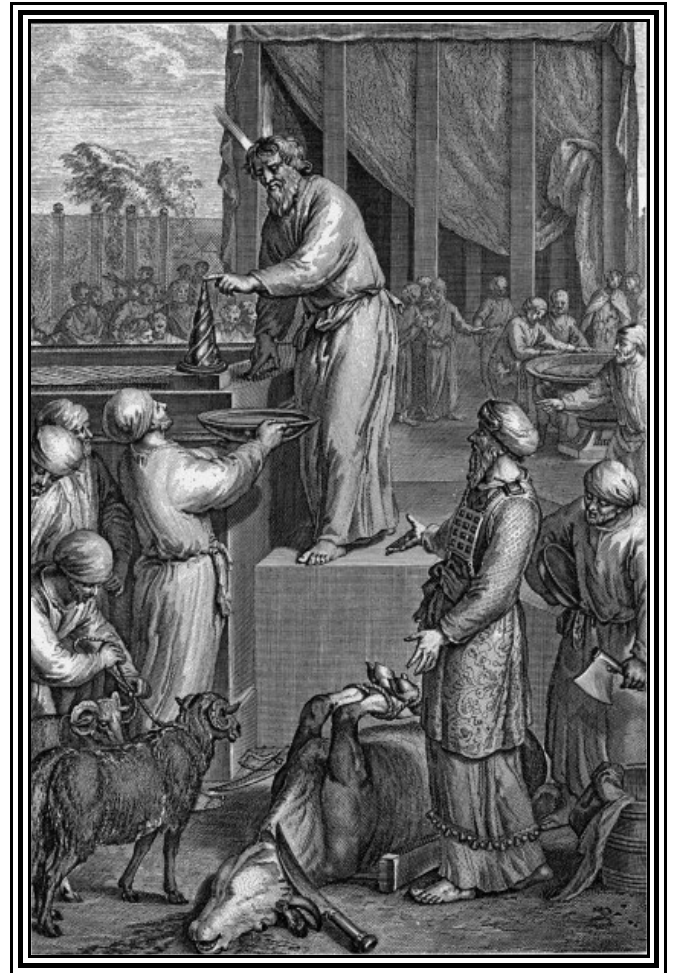
*“The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Take Aaron and his sons with him and the anointing oil and the bull of the sin offering and the two rams and the basket of unleavened bread, and assemble all the congregation at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. And Moses did as the LORD commanded him, and the congregation was assembled at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting...Then he brought the bull of the sin offering and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bull of the sin offering. And he killed it, and Moses took the blood and with his finger, put it on the horns of the altar and purified the altar, and poured out the blood at the base of the altar and consecrated it to make atonement for it...Then he presented the ram of the burnt offering and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. And he killed it and Moses threw the blood against the sides of the altar...Then he presented the other ram, the ram of ordination, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. And he killed it, and Moses took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron’s right ear and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. Then he presented Aaron’s sons, and Moses put some of the blood on their right ears and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet. And Moses threw the blood against the sides of the*



*‘The Consecration of the Tabernacle In the Wilderness’*

***altar...Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood that was on the altar and sprinkled it on Aaron and on his garments, and also on his sons and on his son's garments with him.”*** (Leviticus 8:1-4;14-15; 18-19; 22-24)

The point of the citation of these fundamental blood rituals at the most critical moments in the history of the former covenant is to reinforce the previous assertion that the Levitical priesthood and its rituals in Tabernacle/Temple ***“serve as a copy and a shadow of the heavenly things”*** (Hebrews 8:5) which would be accomplished by the Messianic covenant of which Jesus Christ would serve as the High Priest. Both Moses and Hebrews stress the central importance of the blood by identifying it as ***“the blood of the covenant.”*** (Exodus 4:8; Hebrews 9:20) The core message of the former covenant, foreshadowing that which was yet to come, was that the price of humanity's redemption would have to be paid in the blood of an appropriate sacrifice. The Savior would have to die in order to pay the ransom price to win life for the fallen heirs of Adam. That most basic concept is asserted his with unmistakable clarity: ***“a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”*** Both the former covenant and the new covenant demonstrate that the shedding of blood and a sacrificial death are necessary for forgiveness and cleansing. The difference between them was that under the former covenant the blood/death was external ritual pointing forward to that which was yet to come. Under the new covenant the blood/death was real and actually accomplished that which already been foreshadowed.



***“The Blood Sacrifices For the Consecration of the High Priest and the Altar”***

***“The author's overall argument is to say that this entire matter of a sacrificial death and the shedding of blood for atonement is God's way of dealing with the sin problem. Under the new covenant, without the cross of Christ, God does not forgive sins. Atonement is the basis of forgiveness and both are based on the work of Christ on the cross.”*** (Allen, p. 484)



*“Behold the Lamb of God” - Rudolf Schäfer*

### ***Hebrews 9:23-28***

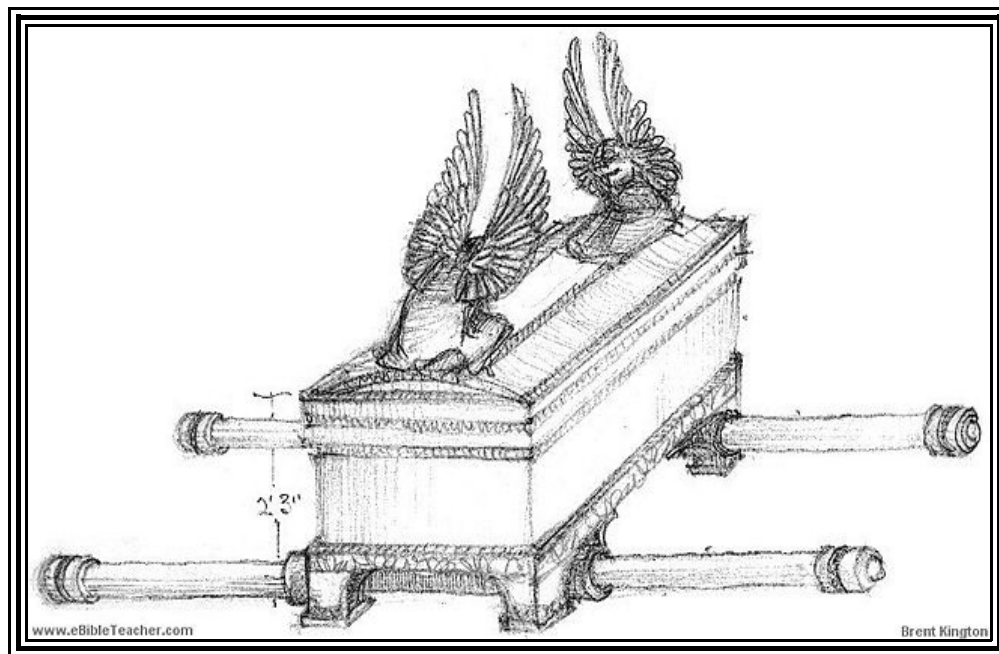
*(23) Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. (24) For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. (25) Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, (26) for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (27) And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgement, (28) so Christ having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*

*“Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified...” - “The copies of the heavenly things”* are the rites and sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood within the Mosaic covenant. The necessary purification for these copies were the blood sacrifices which the writer has just described at the presentation of the Torah and the consecration of the Tabernacle and the Aaronic priesthood. Despite the inferiority of the *“copies”* they, nonetheless, still reflect the reality of the *“heavenly things”* and therefore we can learn from them. The logic here runs from the lesser to the greater. What was true of the inferior copy must also be true of the greater which it reflects. Blood was needed for the copy to be accurate, therefore, blood sacrifice must also be at the core of its heavenly origin. But because



of the inferiority of the copy, the blood used in its sacrifices could be that of the lesser animals, cattle, goats, etc. However, for the actual forgiveness of sin to be accomplished before God - (*“the heavenly things”*) - as the text aptly describes the reality, *“better sacrifices than these”* - would be required. Thus, the stage has been carefully set to demonstrate the absolute superiority of the sacrifice of Christ to the wavering Jewish Christians who are the recipients of Hebrews.

*“For Christ has entered not into holy places made with hands...”* - The radical difference between the lesser and the greater is indicated by the radical difference between the sanctuaries in which their ministries occur. Unlike its pale earthly counterpart, the Holy Place of Christ is not *“made with hands”* for such sanctuaries are nothing more than *“copies of the true things.”* Instead, Christ has *“entered...into heaven itself.”* The Greek text is particularly forceful in its assertion of the unique identity of that heavenly holy place. In the Tabernacle/Temple, the presence of God was only symbolized by the Ark of the Covenant and the Shekinah which rested upon it. The entrance of Christ, however, is not symbolic but real - *“But into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.”* The language of the phrase also alludes to the crucial truth that unlike the Aaronic high priests, Christ did not need to act on His own behalf. Instead, as the sinless God/man He is able to stand before God as our representative - *“on our behalf.”*



*“Artist’s Depiction Of The Ark Of the Covenant”*

The *“where”* of Christ’s ministry enables the *“what”* of that ministry. Unlike the former covenant under which human high priests endlessly repeated an annual ritual of presenting the blood of brute beasts in their earthly sanctuary - *“Nor was it to offer Himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own.”* - under the new covenant - *“He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the*

***sacrifice of Himself.***” The reference here is once again to the great Day of Atonement, the only time when the Aaronic high priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies and stand before the sacred Ark to implement the ritual of sprinkling the blood of the animal sacrifice upon the Mercy Seat, once for his own sins and then a second time for the sins of the people. The “*once for all*” character of the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the world in contrast to the ongoing repetition of the Levitical sacrifices of the former covenant is repeatedly cited throughout the epistle as a conclusive demonstration of the superiority of the new covenant in contrast to the preparatory and transitory nature of the old covenant. That emphasis will continue on into the following chapter (Hebrews 9:23-10:18). If the sacrifices of the Aaronic high priests were sufficient it would not be necessary to repeat them year after year. Since they are not sufficient, it should be obvious that they must be replaced with a sacrifice which can actually accomplish the forgiveness of sins for all of humanity. That which Aaron and his heirs could not do, Christ has done. The inadequacy and impotence of the sacrifices of the old covenant prepares the way for the reassertion of the perfection of its fulfillment and completion in the new.



***“The Ark Of The Covenant Enveloped By The Shekinah”***

***“For then He would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world.”*** - If the sacrificial suffering and death of Christ would have had to have been repeated, like those of the former covenant, adequate only for limited period of time, the repetition of that sacrifice would have had to have begun at the time of the fall into sin in order to extend forgiveness to Adam and Eve and all of their descendants. This absurdity reveals the stark contrast between the two covenants, the former endlessly repetitive while the latter transcends time to accomplish forgiveness once for all, both throughout the past and the

future. Commentator F.F. Bruce explains:

*“If His sacrifice did call for repetition, then He would have to endure suffering and death times without number throughout the ages of world history (“since the foundation of the world”). But that involves a patent absurdity; “it is appointed for human beings to die once,” and the Son of Man, who became “like his brother in all things” cannot and must not die more than once...He appears eternally in heaven for His people on the basis of ‘His own sacrifice’ presented and accepted once for all.” (Bruce, p. 230)*

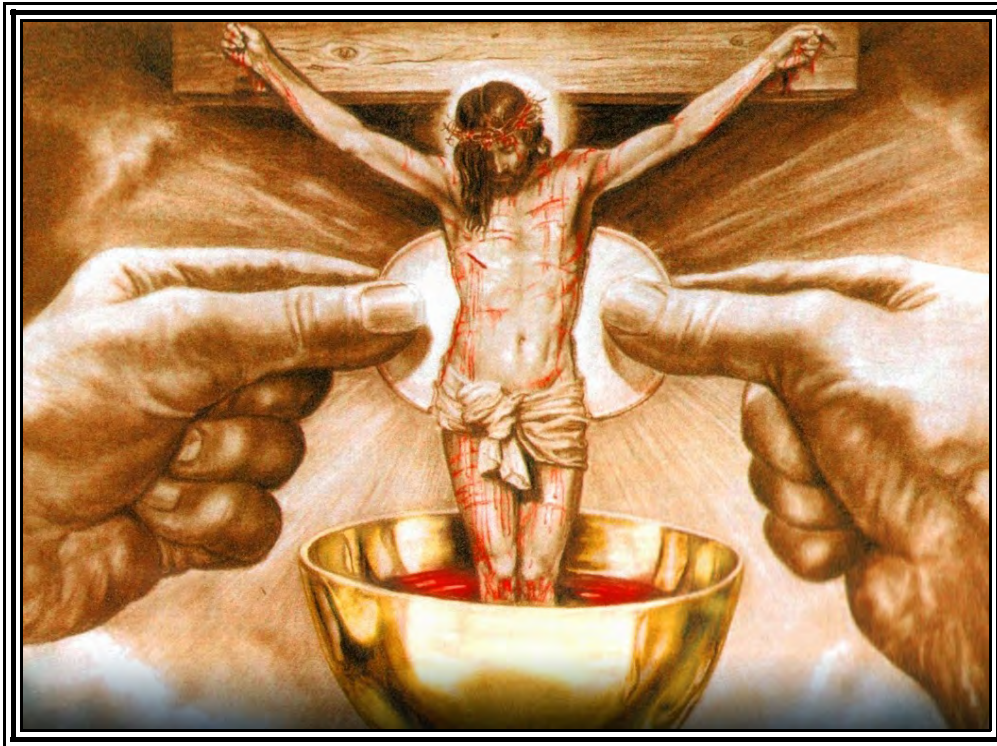


*“The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass”*

This forceful assertion flatly contradicts the Roman Catholic doctrine of the “*sacrifice of the mass*” which contends that the death of Christ upon the cross must be repeated in every communion service if it is to benefit those present at a particular celebration of the Eucharist, and/or those already in purgatory on whose behalf that mass is being said. The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent assert this doctrine forcefully and condemn any who would dare to contradict or question it:

*“Forasmuch as, this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the mass, that same Christ is contained and sacrificed in an unbloody manner, who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross; the Holy Synod teaches that this sacrifice actually removes the wrath of God, and that by means of this sacrifice we obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid, if we draw nigh unto God contrite and penitent, with a sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence. For the Lord, appeased by the offering of this sacrifice,*





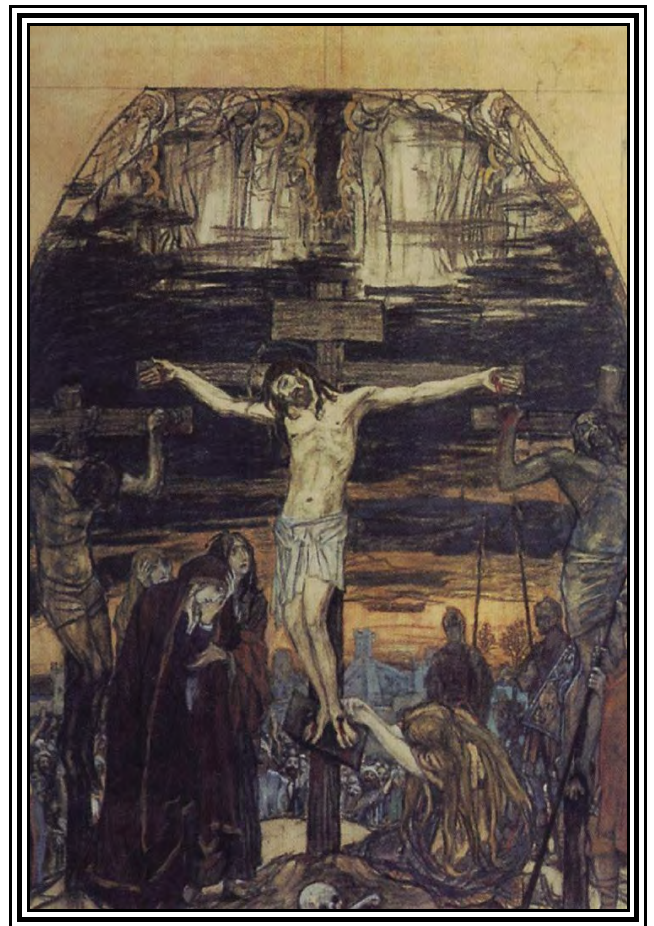
***“The Sacrifice of the Mass”***

*and granting the grace and gift of penitence, forgives even heinous crimes and sins. For the victim is one and the same, the same offering made here by the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself upon the cross. Only the method of the offering is different. Indeed, the fruit of that sacrifice, that is the bloody one, is now received most plentifully through this unbloody sacrifice. Thus in no way whatsoever does this sacrifice take anything away from the original sacrifice. Wherefore, not only for sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those who are departed in Christ, and who are not, as yet, fully purified, this sacrifice is properly offered in conformity with the tradition of the apostles....And because many errors are being disseminated and many things taught and maintained by a variety of people in opposition to this ancient faith which is based upon the sacred Gospel, the traditions of the Apostles, and the doctrine of the holy Fathers; this sacred and holy Synod, after numerous and varied deliberations in reference to these matters, has resolved, with the unanimous consent of all the Fathers, to condemn and to eliminate from the holy Church, by means of the canons added here, whatsoever is opposed to this most pure faith and sacred doctrine. CANON I - If anyone says that in the mass a true and proper sacrifice is not actually offered to God; or that to be offered is nothing more than that Christ is given to us to eat; let him be anathema. CANON II - If anyone says that by those words, ‘Do this in commemoration of Me (Luke XXII:LXX), Christ did not institute the apostles priests; or did not ordain that they, and other priests, should offer His own body and blood; let him be*

*anathema. CANON III - If anyone says that the sacrifice of the mass is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; or that it is a mere commemoration of the sacrifice consummated upon the cross, but not a sacrifice which actually propitiates the wrath of God; or that it profits only him who receives and that it should not be offered on behalf of the sins both the living and the dead, for pains, satisfactions, and other necessities; let him be anathema. CANON IV - If anyone says that by the sacrifice of the mass a blasphemy is cast upon the most holy sacrifice of Christ consummated upon the cross, and that thereby the original sacrifice upon the cross is diminished or derogated; let him be anathema."*

This teaching challenges and limits the efficacy of the once for all nature of the Savior's death as the sufficient ransom for every sin ever committed from the Fall to the Day of Judgement. It is plainly contradicted the this text and its correlates in the Epistle to the Hebrews and throughout the New Testament.

***"But as it is, He has appeared, once for all, at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."*** - The moment of Christ's appearance and of His ***"once for all"*** sacrifice is identified as the ***"at the end of the ages."*** The *"New English Bible"* catches the sense of the text precisely in its translation of the phrase as ***"at the climax of history."*** The epistle had opened with the same emphasis on the contrast upon the coming of Christ as the decisive moment in all of humanity's long history: ***"Long ago, in many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers through the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom He created the world."*** (Hebrews 1:1-2) That same perspective is repeated throughout the New Testament to stress the central importance of the coming of Christ. Although the specific language of Hebrews is unique - ***"at the end of the ages"*** - the concept is consistent. A few examples will suffice for our purposes: ***"Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come."*** (1 Corinthians 10:11); ***"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem***



***"It Is Finished"***

***happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come."*** (1 Corinthians 10:11); ***"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem***

*those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”* (Galatians 4:4); *“He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”* (1 Peter 1:20-21) It is most significant to note that the coming of Christ, His perfect life, innocent suffering, substitutionary death, and triumphant resurrection do not merely occur *“at the end of the ages”* coincidentally. These things bring about *“the end of the ages.”* *“It is not that Christ happened to come at the time of fulfillment, but that His coming made that time the time of fulfillment.”* (Bruce, p. 231)

*“All that preceding the advent of Christ was leading up to this climactic event which is the focal point for the true perspective of all human history. With His coming, the long years of desire and expectation are ended and the last, the eschatological era of the present world is inaugurated.”* (Hughes, p. 385)

The purpose of this pivotal event is expressed in the phrase - *“to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”* The verb, *“to put away”* means *“to remove”* or *“to cancel.”* The same term occurs in Hebrews 7:18 where it describes the impact of the replacement of the Aaronic High Priesthood by its Melchizedekian counterpart: *“For on the one hand a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced through which we draw near to God.”* That which is *“put away”* is sin itself. There is no qualification or limitation here. The reference is to the entirety of sin.

*“And the supreme purpose of this appearing was ‘to put away sin,’ that is, to deal root and branch with the very problem of sin which is the very center and core of the human predicament. This Christ does ‘by the sacrifice of Himself;’ for it is on the cross where He dies the sinner’s death, that the tyranny of sin is overthrown (Hebrews 2:14ff.). Its consequences are absorbed by Him and therefore removed from us; its force nullified. This, without qualification, in every form and degree and in every age of human history, retrospectively, as well as prospectively. Were this not so, we would be confronted with the incongruous conclusion that ‘then He would have to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world.’* (Hughes, p. 385)

The implicit sense of the term is to remove the burden of sin’s guilt by taking it upon one’s self and carrying that which previously had been borne by others. Delitsch points to Isaiah 53 as the precedent for this imagery:

*“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the*



*chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds, we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all...Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the many, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul in death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.” (Isaiah 53:4-6,12)*

*“For just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgement, so Christ having been offered once to bear the sins of many...”* -Since the great High Priest

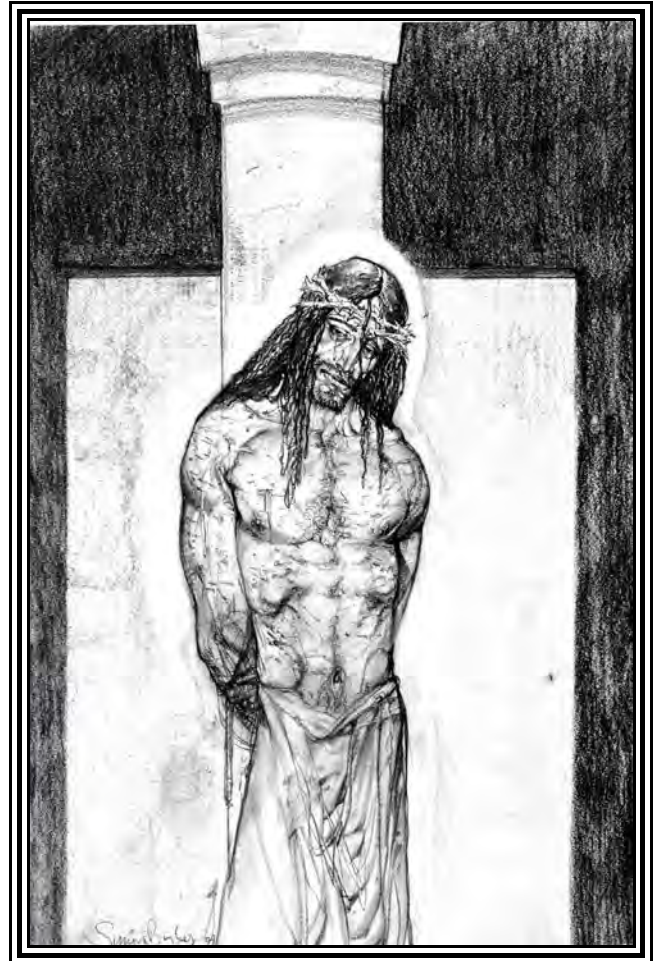
Himself is the offering which puts away sin it is impossible for that offering to be repeated like those offerings of the former covenant -

*“it is appointed for man to die once.”*

However, the repetition of the offering of Christ is not merely impossible it is unnecessary. The original, once for all offering, was perfectly sufficient. Any suggestion of repetition, as previously noted,

denies that perfect sufficiency and with it the heart and core of the Christian Gospel. John Calvin correctly observed: *“He appeared once for all, because if He had come a second or third time, there would have to have been a defect in the first sacrifice which would deny this fullness.”*

This implication explains the vehemence with which the possibility of repetition is spurned. The visions of Revelation do refer occasionally to *“the second death”* but in every instance this is not another physical death but the condemnation to eternal death and damnation for those who will be denounced on Judgement Day:

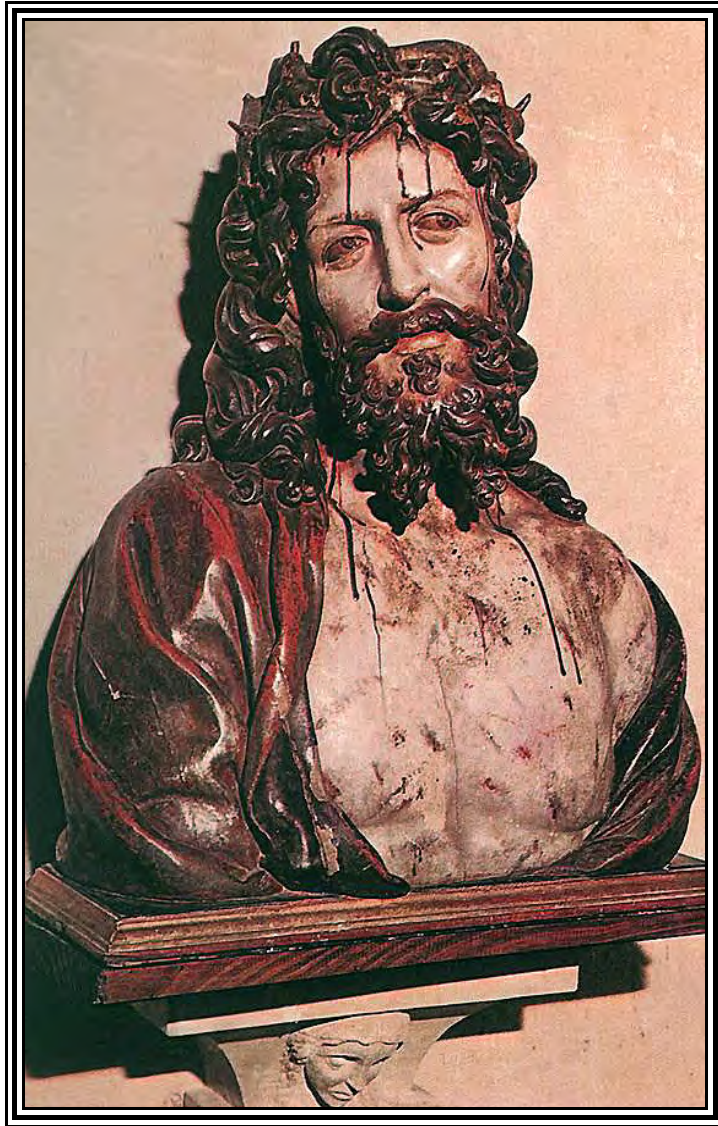


*“Christ The Suffering Servant”*

to eternal death and damnation for those who will be denounced on Judgement Day:

*“He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death...Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with Him for a thousand years...And the sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them and they were judged, each one of them according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the Lake of Fire. This is the*

***second death, the Lake of Fire, and if anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire...But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable; as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the Lake of Fire that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.***  
(Revelation 2:11; 20:6,14f.; 21:8)



***"Behold The Man!" Juan de Juni***

The phrase ***"to bear the sins of many"*** has been abused by some to defend the unbiblical concept of a ***"limited atonement"*** - contending that the sins of unbelievers were not actually forgiven by Christ's death. The terminology comes from the Isaiah text which forms the Old Testament basis for this segment - ***Therefore, I will divide Him a portion with the many, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.*** (Isaiah 53:12) The point of the language both in the prophetic text and here in Hebrews is to emphasize the stark contrast between the one Suffering Servant who stands alone and the great mass of humanity for whom His sacrifice is made. Scripture is unmistakably clear in its assertion that the blood of Christ paid the atonement price for the sins of mankind. Those who are damned do not find themselves in that state because Christ did not die for them but

because they spurned and rejected the perfect forgiveness which their Savior had accomplished. Paul unequivocally declares in 2 Corinthians 5:15-21 -

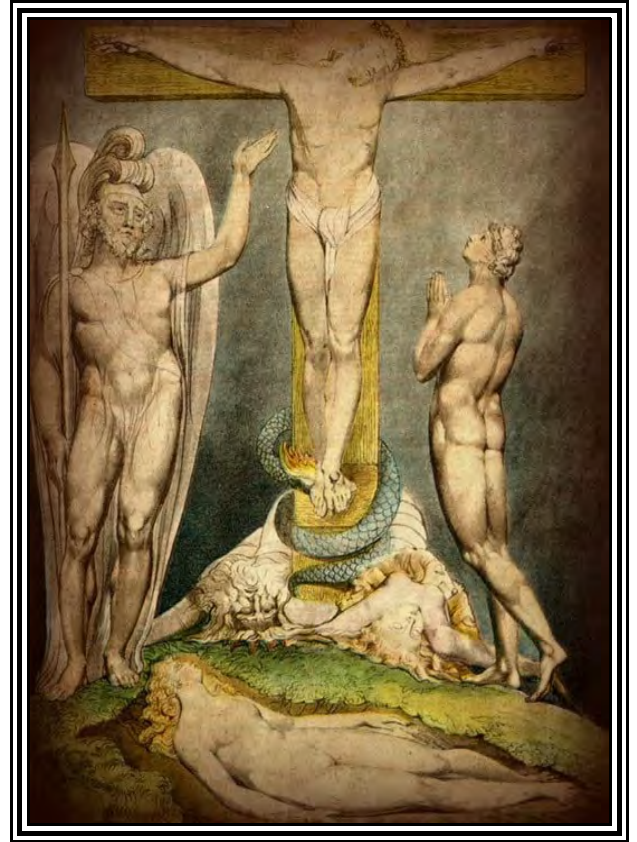
***"For the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this; that One has died for all, therefore all have died; and He died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for their sake and was raised...In Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not***



*counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”*

The apostle draws the same contrast in Romans 5 between the one man Jesus who rescued all men from the curse of Adam's sin, interchangeably referring to many and to all in comparing Adam and Jesus:

*“But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through the one man's trespass, how much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for many. And the free gift is not like that one man's sin. For the judgement following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift, following many trespasses brought justification. For if because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness, reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Therefore, just as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience, the many will be made righteous.”* (Romans 5:12-18)



*“The First And Second Adam”  
William Blake*

*“Will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly awaiting Him.”* - Christ will most certainly appear a second time. The purpose of His second coming, however, will not be to die again or in some way finish that which He had begun.

*“But when he appears the second time to those who expect Him, it will not be to deal with sin once more. Sin was dealt with decisively at His first appearance. All the blessings that He had won for His people at His first appearing, will be theirs to enjoy in perpetual fulness at His second appearing. Therefore, let them not grow faint and weary, but persevere in patience and faith.”* (Bruce, p. 233)

It is important to recognize the eagerness with which the worshipers in the Temple awaited



the return of the High Priest from the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. That eagerness was also tempered with significant anxiety as they gazed through the open doors of the Sanctuary toward the intimidating curtain which barred the way into the presence of God. The reappearance of the High Priest would signal that he and the sacrifice which he had offered upon the Mercy Seat on their behalf had been accepted. This poignant moment was the climax of the liturgical year of the Children of Israel and the author of Hebrews makes brilliant use of this context to characterize the eagerness with which these Hebrew Christians were now to eagerly anticipate the second coming of Christ just as they had the second appearance of the former High Priests from the Holy of Holies. The only difference was the absence of the fear. In the case of Christ, there was no room for doubt that His self-sacrifice had been accepted. The popular Apocryphal book of Sirach described the reappearance of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement in this vivid manner:

*“How glorious he was when the people gathered round him  
As he came out of the inner sanctuary!  
Like the morning star among the clouds,  
Like the moon when it is full;  
Like the sun shining upon the Temple of the Most High,  
And like the rainbow gleaming amid the glorious clouds.  
Like roses in the days of the first fruits,  
Like lilies by a spring of water,  
Like the green shoot on the hills of Lebanon on a summer day;  
Like fire and incense in the censer;  
Like a vessel of hammered gold  
Adorned with all kinds of precious stones;  
Like an olive tree putting forth its fruit,  
And like a cypress towering against the clouds” (Sirach 50:5-10)*





*The Descent Into Hell As A Triumphant Proclamation Of Christ; Victory” - Georg Rochegrosse*

### ***Hebrews Chapter 10***

*(1) For since the Law was but a shadow of the good things to come, instead of the true form of these realities, it can never - by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. (2) Otherwise, they would not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have the consciousness of sins. (3) But in these sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins every year. (4) For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (5) Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifices and offerings You have not desired, but a body, You have prepared for Me; (6) in burnt offerings and sin offerings, You have taken no pleasure.’ (7) Then He said; ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ (8) When He said above, ‘You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings (these are offered according to the Law), (9) then He added, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will.’ He does away with the first in order to establish the second. (10) And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all. (11) And every priest stands daily in his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. (12) But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God, (13) waiting from that time until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet. (14) For by a single offering, He has perfected for all time those who are being sacrificed. (15) And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying: (16) ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days,’ declares the Lord ‘I will put My laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds.’ (17) Then He adds, ‘I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more. (18) Where*



*"The High Priest Before The Altar"*  
E.M. Lillien

*there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. (19) Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, (20) by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, (21) and since we have a great priest over the House of God, (22) let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (23) Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. (24) And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see 'the Day drawing near.' (26) for if we go on sinning deliberately, after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, (27) but a*

*fearful expectation of judgement, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. (28) Everyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy, on the evidence of two or three witnesses. (29) How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? (30) for we know Him who said; 'Vengeance is Mine! I will repay!' And again, "The Lord will judge His people!' (31) It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (32) But recall the former days, when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings (33) sometimes being publically exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. (34) For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. (35) Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. (36) For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised. (37) For, "Yet a little while and the coming One will come and will not delay; (38) but My righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. (39) But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.*

### **Hebrews 10:1-4**

*For since the Law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form*

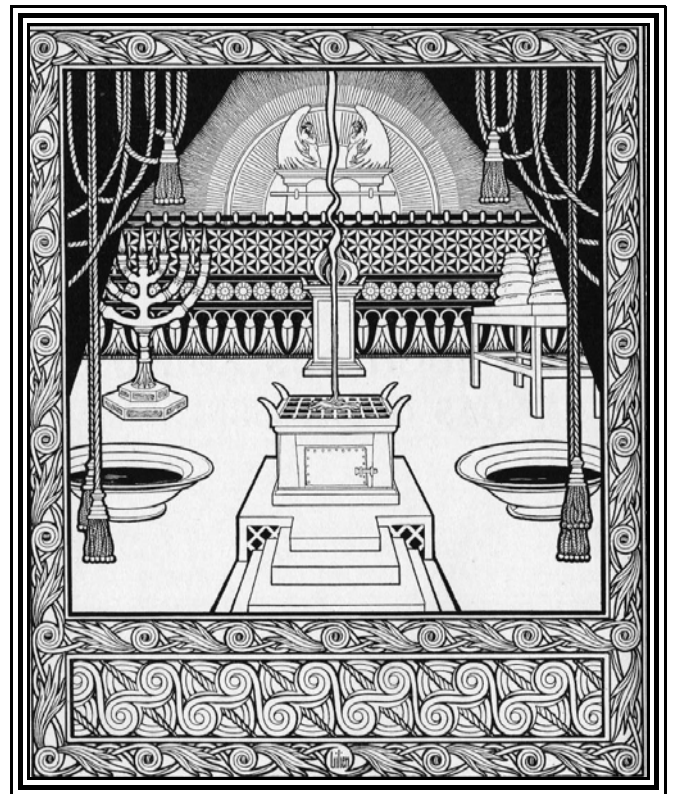


*of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*

*“For since the Law has but a shadow of the good things...”* - Chapter 10 summarizes the argument demonstrating the inadequacy and inferiority of the former covenant in four particular respects before the epistle goes on in the following chapter to define the faith which is the essence of the new covenant and provide an inspiring list of examples of heroes of faith from the former covenant. The majority of that which is stated here has already been set forth in the preceding discussions. As has been the case throughout Hebrews, the author’s assertions are consistently documented with texts from the Old Testament. As one commentator puts it - *“The entire passage is soaked in Scripture, one passage throwing light upon another.”* (Asmussen, p. 93)

First of all, the former covenant was never real, that is, its function was not to actually accomplish the forgiveness of sins but to foreshadow that which God would actually accomplish in the person of the great High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek, the God/Man Jesus Christ. While this assertion would have been highly offensive and bitterly contested as blasphemy by a Jew who had remained loyal to traditional Judaism, the audience here are Jews who have already become Christians and are thoroughly familiar with this fact. They are simply being reminded of a conclusion of which they have already been convinced.

St. Paul also describes the Law as a shadow in Colossians 2:16-17: *“Therefore, let no one pass judgement on you in questions of food and drink, or in regard to a festival, or a new moon, or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.”* In this instance, however, the focus of the shadow image is not on the dietary and festival rules as in Colossians, but particularly upon the priesthood itself and the sacrifices offered by the priests. Nonetheless, in both instances the *“shadow”* metaphor is used to express the truth that every component of the former



*“The Interior Of The Tabernacle With The Barrier Curtain Parted To Reveal The Ark Of The Covenant” - E.M. Lillien*

covenant had always been intended to be a preview of that which would actually take place in the ministry of Christ. A shadow, while reflecting the form of that which casts the shadow, is not real - *“instead of the true form of these realities.”* And yet the shadow is more than a mere preview. It is also a promise that the reality is yet to come.

*“The primary emphasis is on the gulf that separates the shadow from the reality. There is also, however a connection, for a shadow, though itself without substance, does not exist apart from a substantial reality, and thus it may be said to presuppose the existence of the reality of which it is the shadow...However, the shadow though caused by the reality that it portends, is not the same thing as that reality and must not be confused with it.”*  
(Hughes, p. 389)

In this sentence the ministry of Christ, particularly His death and resurrection are aptly identified as *“the good things to come.”*

*“The good things which were to come have now come (9:11). They embrace the unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ and His present High Priestly ministry, which carry with them eternal redemption and uninhibited access to worship the living God. They are the only absolute ‘good things’ because they comprise the ‘perfection’ which the old order was incapable of supplying.”*  
(Bruce, p. 235)



*“An Allegory Of Salvation” - Huber*

They are ***“good things”*** because of their substantive reality - ***“the true form of these realities”*** - and their effectiveness in completely accomplishing deliverance from sin, death and the power of the devil and restoring forgiven humanity’s access to God.

***“It can never by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins.”***  
- The assertion of the repetitive nature of the Levitical system as a conclusive demonstration of its failure has been repeated voiced before.

***“He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since He did this once for all when He offered up Himself.”*** (Hebrews 7:27)

***“Nor was it to offer Himself repeatedly, as the High Priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then He would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, He appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”*** (Hebrews 9:25)



***“The Roman Destruction Of Jerusalem”***





*“The Prophet Nathan Denounces King David”*

Repetition contradicts completion. If the task had truly been accomplished there would have been no need for it to have been done over and over again. *“An action that is final does not tolerate repetition, and, conversely, an action that is constantly repeated thereby shows itself to be inconclusive. What is inconclusive is imperfect both in itself and its effect.”* (Hughes, p. 390) The particular reference here is to the ceremony which most dramatically dealt with the forgiveness of sins and consequent access to God, namely the Day of Atonement - ***“it can never by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.”*** Thomas Aquinas, the foremost theologian of the Middle Ages, observes: *“because they did not cease constantly to offer the same sacrifices, it is a sign that they were not being cleansed as Christ says in Matthew 9:32”* ***Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.*** By the same token, once the perfect, once for all, sacrifice has actually been made, to continue the former sacrifices constitutes a blasphemous rejection and denial of the efficacy of the once for all sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. The guilt and shame which are the foremost evidence of unforgiven sin, along with the frantic terror of God’s righteousness, would have been gone - ***“since the worshipers having once been cleansed would no longer have any consciousness of sins.”***

As an aside, scholars note that these comments clearly suggest that the sacrifices and rituals of the Temple in Jerusalem were ongoing as this epistle was written and delivered to its intended audience. That would require a date for Hebrews prior to A.D. 70 and the total destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Roman legions of Titus.

***“But in these sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins committed every year.”*** - The inadequacy of the former covenant has been proven by its insubstantial nature as a shadow

of the reality that is to some and by its need for the endless repetition of sacrifices like those of the day of Atonement. The writer now continues on to the third indication of the inferiority of the former covenant. Its rituals and sacrifices were not only unable to actually accomplish the forgiveness of sin and the removal of its guilt, they were actually designed to serve as repeated reminders of sin's reality and its burden of guilt. The term ***“reminder”*** here, as elsewhere throughout its Biblical usage, involves a great deal more than simply calling something to mind. This reminding calls for action. The sinner has only two alternatives, he can repent of his sins by the power of the Holy Spirit or he can spurn the call of God to repentance and choose to persist in his sinful ways. Thus, Biblical repentance includes (1) acknowledgment of the sin; (2) contrition for the sin; (3) a willingness, wherever possible to undo the damage caused by the sin; and (4) a sincere resolve not to repeat the sin in the future. When the word ***“reminder”*** of sins is used in reference to God in Scripture it also requires a response either in pardon or retribution. Through His prophet Jeremiah, in a text quoted here in Hebrews 8:12, God had promised that the day was coming when: ***“I will be merciful toward their iniquities and I will remember their sins no more.”***



***“The Penitence Of King David” - Sevilla***

The inability of the sacrificial rituals to deal with guilt and shame caused by sin and the fear of just punishment for sin is freely acknowledged by the penitent King David as he pleads for mercy in Psalm 51, after the king's dramatic confrontation with the prophet Nathan. He has been forcefully ***“reminded”*** of his sin with Bathsheba and crushed by guilt and remorse:

***“Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from iniquity and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions***

***and my sin is ever before me..O Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare Your praise, for You will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite hear, O God, You will not despise.”***

The annual repetition of the Day of Atonement, with the fearful details of its ritual, the High Priest gingerly passing beyond the terrifying barrier of the curtain into the Holy of Holies, on this one single day of the year. The necessity of making that perilous journey twice, once for his own sins and then again for the sins of the people. All of these things combined to impress upon the gathered congregation the fatal gravity of their sin, but more still than that. Not only did the rituals of the Day of Atonement remind them of their own sinfulness but at the same time it reminded them that God remembers sin. And in twelve short months all of this would be re-enacted all over again as it has been every previous year and would be for all the years to come until the Messiah finally arrived. Unlike the confession of Christian liturgy, there could be no unconditional absolution here. Not one of the High Priests could have stood before the people and declared - *“Upon this, your confession, I by virtue of my office as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto to, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all of your sins.”* That wondrous pronouncement had to await the once for all perfect sacrifice of the Son of God upon the cross.

***“For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”*** The fourth and final argument in Hebrew’s dismissal of the former covenant as the final solution for the sinfulness of man is a categorical rejection of any possibility that its animal sacrifices could accomplish the task. It should have always been obvious that the lives of brute animals - ***“bulls and goats”*** - could have been considered as adequate exchange for the lives of that one creature who had been fashioned from the beginning as the crown of all creation. Man was the only creature fashioned in the image of God with the capacity for reason, love, and moral responsibility. Scripture has made it clear from the outset in Genesis 3:16 that it would be an individual male descendant of the woman who would crush the serpent’s and undo the dreadful damage which Satan had done. But as he was himself destroyed, the poisonous serpent would sink his fangs into the man’s heel. The price of salvation would be, could be, nothing other than the life of man. But no ordinary man would qualify. The heirs of Adam had been spiritually deformed by the fall of their first father and were now all sinful by nature. Each had to die for himself and could therefore not offer his own death as a substitutionary atonement for his fellow man. Thus the text here could add the blood of ordinary men to that of bulls and goats as being inadequate to take away sins. Hence, in the masterful summary of St. Paul in Galatians 4:

***“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has***



***sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir through Christ.”***  
(Galatians 4:4-7)

The inadequacy of the animal sacrifices of the former covenant by repeatedly emphasized by the prophets of the Old Testament. When, for example, King Saul attempted to excuse his disobedience of the Lord’s command to destroy the entire Amalekite nation, including all of the livestock, with the assertion of his intent to offer the finest of the livestock as sacrifice to the Lord, Samuel’s response was unequivocal:

***“And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, ‘Blessed be you to the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD!’ And Samuel said, ‘What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?’ Saul said, ‘They have brought them from the Amalekites for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the LORD your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction.’...And Samuel said, ‘Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than to sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the Word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king.’”*** (1 Samuel 15: 13-15; 22-23)



***1 Samuel 15 Bible Engraving - Klauber***

The Book of Isaiah begins with a stern denunciation of the Kingdom of Judah for the empty ritualism which their religion had become while the nation and its leaders lived in flagrant disobedience to the Word of the Lord:

***“Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! ‘What to Me is the multitude of your sacrifices?’ says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or of goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required of you this trampling of My courts? Bring no more vain offerings! Incense is an abomination to Me. New moons and sabbath and the calling of convocations - I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they have become a burden to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide from you. Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen, your hands are full of blood!”*** (Isaiah 1:10-15)

Jeremiah was no less stern in pronouncing the Lord’s repudiation of the sacrificial offerings of an apostate people.

***“Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Add your burnt offerings to the sacrifices and eat the flesh. For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. But this command I gave them, ‘Obey My voice, and I will be your God and you will be My people. And walk in all the way that I command you that it may be well with you.’”*** (Jeremiah 7:21-23; cf. Amos 5:21-24)

The psalmist ridiculed Israel’s adoption of the pagan notion that their idols needed the sacrifices of meat and grain to nourish and sustain them. He reminded that these rituals were no substitute for true faith and obedience to Him.

***“Hear O My people and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against you. I am your God, your God. Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you. Your sacrifices are continually before Me. I will not accept a bull from your house, or goats from your folds. For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the fields is Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are Mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me!”*** (Psalm 50:7-15)

### **Hebrews 10:5-10**

***Consequently when Christ came into this world He said, “Sacrifices and offerings You have not desired, but a body have You prepared for Me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings You have taken no pleasure. Then I said, Behold, I have come to do you will, O God, as it is written of Me in the scroll of the Book.” When He said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the Law), then He added, “Behold, I have come to do Your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.***

***“Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said...”*** Having dismissed the

sacrifices of the former covenant as ineffective and unable to actually accomplish the forgiveness of sins, the apostle now proceeds to

identify the voluntary sacrifice of Christ as the offering which was capable of winning forgiveness for the sins of humanity. The transition is made by means of Psalm 48:6-8. The Old Testament psalm heading for this psalm identifies it as a psalm of David. It's application here is similar to the hermeneutic of Peter who quoted another of David's psalms, Psalm 16:8-11, in reference to Christ. Peter explained his method in this way:

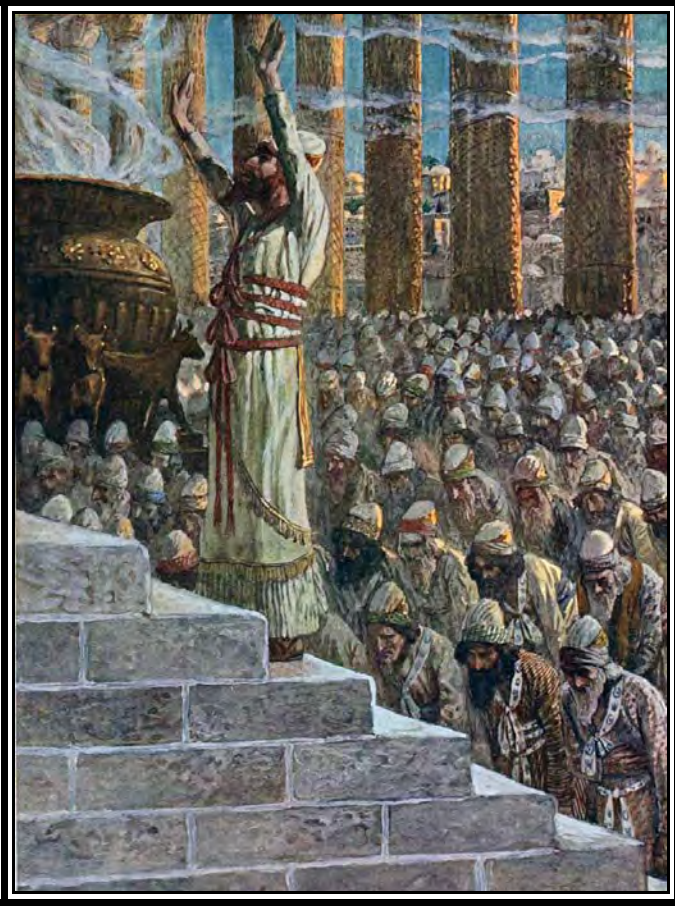
***“For David says concerning Him, ‘I saw the LORD always before me for He is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let Your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with Your presence.’ Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that He would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of Christ, that He was not abandoned to Hades and that His flesh did not see corruption. Ths Jesus God raised up and of that we are all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the***



***“Peter Preaching On Pentecost”  
Gebhardt Fugel***



***Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, ‘The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’ Let all the House of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, whom you crucified.”***  
 (Acts 2:25-36)

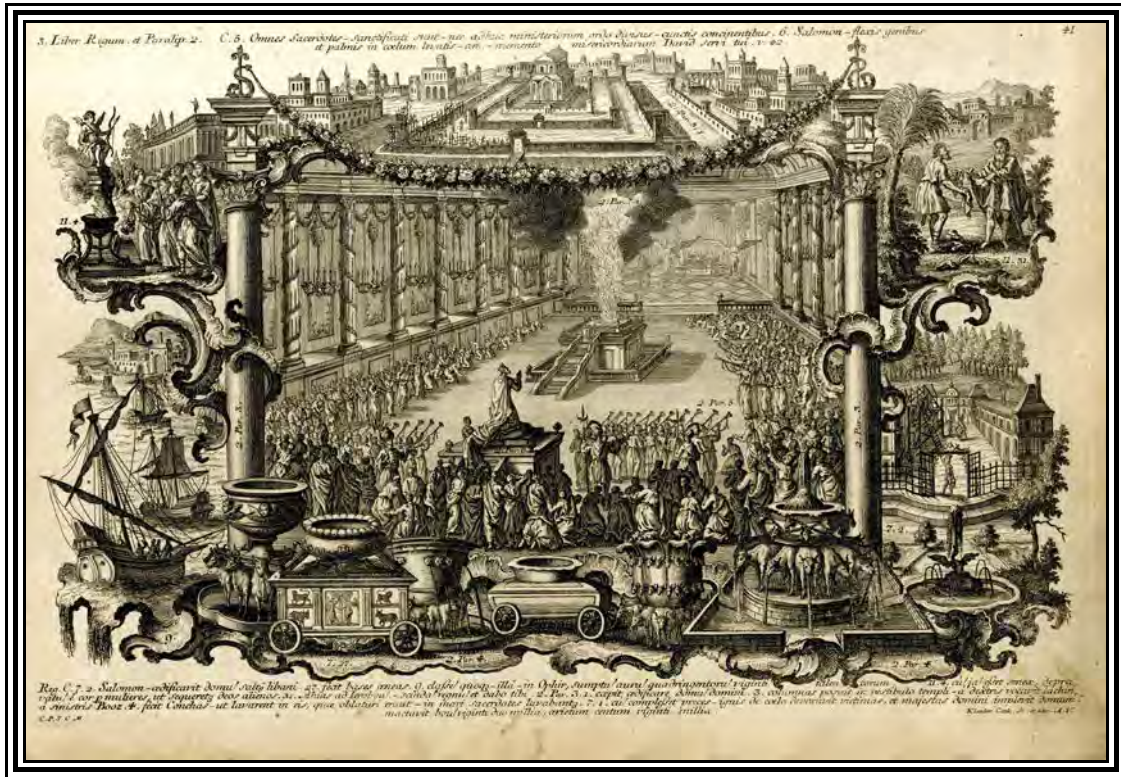


***“King Solomon Leading The Congregation In The Temple” - Jacques Tissot***

This interpretation of the Old Testament text which in its original context applied to someone other than Jesus and its direct application to the Messiah is indicative of the Christocentric nature of the Old Testament, all of which is written to prepare for the coming of the Messiah and is ultimately and only fulfilled in Him. Bible critics scoff at such usage of Old Testament texts by New Testament writers. They fail to perceive the nature of the Bible as a unified whole with a single focus. They further deny the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture. The same God is the author of both testaments and thus His usage of OT texts in the New Testament is simply the author indicating what He originally meant. In his recent commentary on Hebrews, Dr. John Kleinig of Luther Seminary in Australia, explains the use of the Psalm in Hebrews in the context of the role of the King of Judah in the services of the Temple:

*“The author of Hebrews uses Psalm 40:6-8 as one of the key texts in his sermon on the priestly work of Jesus...Does he, in his quotation and exposition of these verses misinterpret their sense and function in the context of the whole Psalm?...The key to this Psalm is to understand how the king was involved in the divine service at the sanctuary. While he was strictly excluded from the performance of the sacrificial ritual in the Holy Place and the altar for burnt offering, he, as the head of the congregation, and on its behalf ((1 Chronicles 16:7) presented offerings (2 Samuel 24:25; 2 Chr. 8:12) and performed the song of praise to the Lord through the Temple Choir in the daily services, and in the triumphal celebration of the Lord’s victories over His enemies (2 Sam. 22:1-51; 2 Chron.20:27-28). The performance of the Lord’s Song was his*

unique offering to the Lord in the divine service...The author of Hebrews clearly regards this Psalm of David as a royal messianic Psalm...He shows how Christ has fulfilled it by His incarnation and life, His death and resurrection, His ascension and His performance of praise together with the church in the heavenly liturgy.” (Kleinig, pp. 490-491)



**“Solomon Leading The Congregation Of Israel In The Worship Of The Temple”  
17<sup>th</sup> Century Engraving - Klauber**

**“When He said above, ‘You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices ...’** - Hebrews indicates that in the words of the Psalm the Messiah tells the congregation two things about Himself. First He foretells His incarnation - **“but a body You have prepared for Me.”** This offering of the Savior Himself is contrasted with **“the burn offerings and sin offering”** which were nothing more than a foreshadowing of the reality which was to come. Secondly, the Messiah indicates His incarnation occurs as the expression of His desire to submit to and fulfill the will of God - **“Behold, I have come to do your will.”** This voluntary submission to the will of the Father by the divine Son was a core component of the messianic promise throughout the Old Testament - **“as it is written of Me in the scroll of the book.”** **“The book”** in this instance is the entire **“Tanach,”** the Hebrew title for the Old Testament.

*“For our author, whom, as we have noted places the words of the psalmist on the lips of Christ, the connotation of ‘the scroll of the book’ would have been extended to refer to the Old Testament Scriptures in their entirety, Moses, indeed, who wrote of Christ (Jn.5:46), but also, beyond Moses, the prophets*



*and the psalms ('Tanak'), in short, all the Scriptures whose central theme is the coming of Christ into the world to accomplish the redemptive will of God. (Lk. 24:27,45)'' (Hughes, p. 398)*

By virtue of these two distinctive differences, the self-offering of the Messiah in submission to the eternal will of the Father is able to complete that which was foreshadowed in the sacrifices of the former covenant and thereby render them obsolete - ***“He does away with the first in order to establish the second.”*** The text clearly asserts the total efficacy of the self-sacrifice of Christ as the once for all substitute for the sins of all humanity in accordance with the will of God - ***“And by that will, we have been sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”***

Dr. Kleinig aptly describes these words as a *“dense confession”* and summarizes its substance and application for us in this manner:

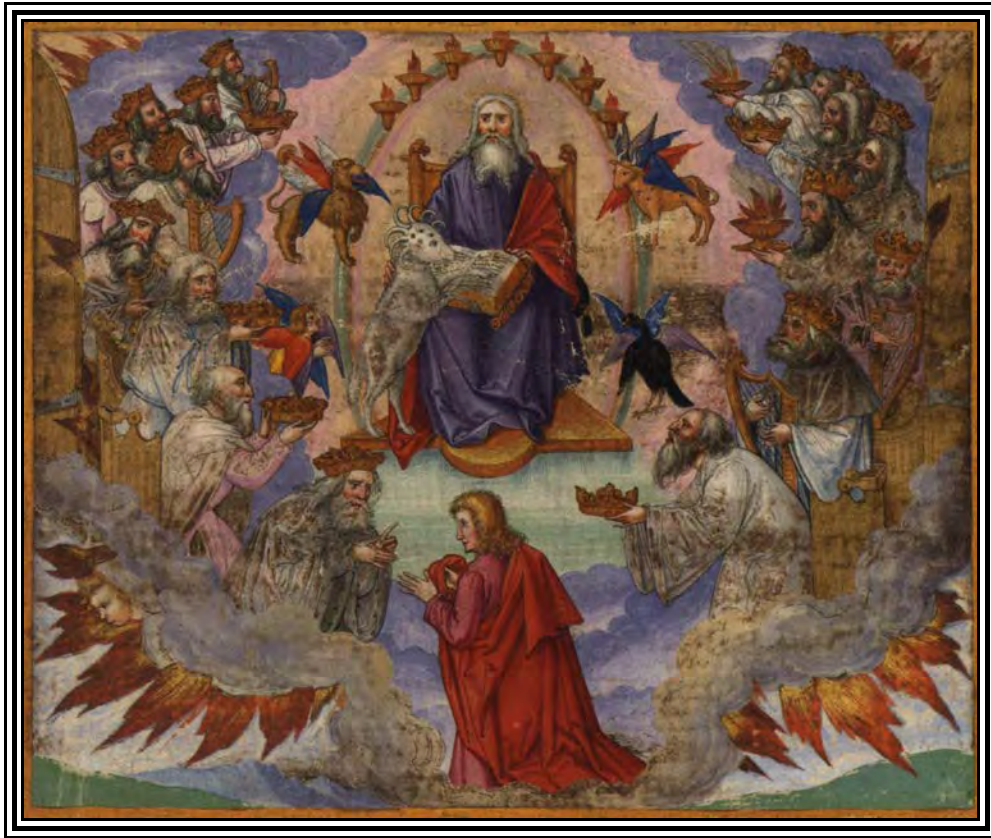
*“The dense confession of faith in 10:10 acknowledges three things about the congregation. First, they have all been ‘made holy’ (10:10) and continue to be ‘made holy’; (10:14; cf.*



***“King Solomon Presenting The Offerings Of The People Before The Lord”***

*2:11); they are all saints (6:10; 13:24); holy brothers who serve as co-priests with Jesus (2:11; 3:1). The verbal construction in 10:10 indicates that holy is their present state of being, a state of being that is the result of Christ’s past self-offering and their present on-going participation in His holiness. Second, ‘the body of Jesus’ is the source of their holiness. Thus, the designation ‘Jesus Christ’ is used for the first time in the sermon to stress that the man Jesus does this because He is the Christ, God’s anointed Priest and King, the One who was anointed with the Holy Spirit, and also offered Himself to God ‘through the eternal Spirit’ (9:14). His human body, which was offered once for all time in obedience to God, has made them holy and continues to make them holy. No further offering is therefore required for their sanctification. Third, just as it was God’s will for Jesus to present His body as an ‘offering’ for the sanctification of humanity, so it is God’s will to make Him the source of their sanctification. It is what God desires for them and gives to them bodily through the Body of*





*“John’s Vision Of The Trinity In Heaven With The Lamb At God’s Right Hand” - Woodcut by Otteinrich*

*Christ in the Holy Sacrament.” (Kleinig, p. 484)*

### ***Hebrews 10:11-14***

***And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Father, waiting from that time until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet. For by a single offering, He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.***

***“And every priest stands daily at his service..”*** - The contrast between the ongoing ineffective sacrifices of the former covenant and the once for all effective sacrifice the Messianic High Priest is re-asserted through their respective postures, the former priests endless standing through repeated ritual while the Messiah has taken His seat at the right hand of God. The Levitical priesthood is never finished because both its ministers and its offerings are marked by imperfection. Its priests must repeatedly stand before the Lord to fulfill the duties of his office. This is the traditional language for the role of the descendants of Aaron. ***“At that time, the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister to Him, and to bless in His name to this day.”*** (Deuteronomy 10:8); ***“The man who acts presumptuously by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or the judge,***

*that man shall die.” (Deuteronomy 17:12); “And if a Levite comes from any of your towns out of all of Israel, where he lives - and he may come where he desires - to the place that the LORD will choose, and ministers in the name of the LORD his God, like all his fellow Levites who stand to minister before the LORD, then he may have equal portions to eat, besides what he receives from the sale of his patrimony.” (Deuteronomy 18:6-8)*

Christ as the divine/human Son of God, the perfect High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek, alone is worthy to be seated at the position of honor - **“the right hand of God”** for He has been victorious in the strife and his mission is complete. The language here is highly dramatic:

*“On the one hand, the vain zeal, the agitation of these Levitical sacrificers, always on their feet - the standing position being that of the ministrant and of action - never at rest, incessantly reproducing the same actions, offering the same victims, every day starting their tasks over again, serving without effect since sin remains. On the other hand there is Christ, who offered but a single sacrifice of absolute worth, so that now He has only to rest and be seated, the seated position being synonymous in the Orient with being unoccupied.” (C. Spicq, p.247)*



*“The Ministry Of The Levites In The Tabernacle” - Dehooghe*

At the same time, the proximity of Christ the perfect High Priest, to God contrasts the exclusion of the Aaronic priesthood from the presence of God through the courts, the Holy

Place and the Holy of Holies. Christ's direct access to the Holy Presence of God should also serve as the source of great assurance to believers as Hebrews previously noted:

***“Since we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace in time of need.”*** (Hebrews 4:14-16)

This direct access to God is the essence of the Lord's office as the royal High Priest of the order of Melchizedek:

***“So Christ did not exalt Himself to be made high priest but was appointed by Him who said to Him, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.’ as He says in another place, ‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.’ In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered. And being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, being designated by God, a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.”*** (Hebrews 2:5-10)

The language of the text here in Hebrews 10:13 is drawn directly from another Davidic psalm, Psalm 110, which had previously been referenced as the source of the promise which foretold the coming of the perfect High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek, the Priest/King of Salem:

***“The LORD says to my Lord; ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool. The LORD sends forth from Zion Your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!...The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. The LORD is at your right hand, He will shatter kings on the day of His wrath.”*** (Psalm 110:1-2, 4-5)

### **Hebrews 10:15-18**

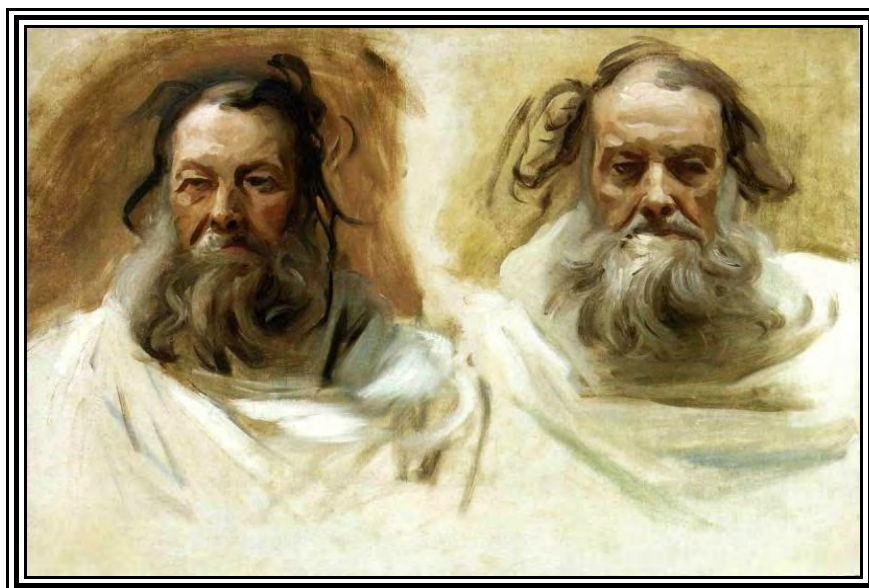
***And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us, for after saying, ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the LORD: I will put My laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds’; then He adds, ‘I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.’ For where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.***



***“And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us...”*** - The Apostle returns to the crucial prophecy of Jeremiah 31 to link the perfection of those who have been sanctified directly to the new covenant which the prophet had promised. In Chapter 8:8-12 the Jeremiah text had been quoted at length. Here only Jeremiah 31:33-34 are cited to demonstrate the benefits which that covenant bestows by virtue of the perfection of that which had only been prefigured in the laws and rituals of Israel. It is most significant to note that Hebrews contends that the ancient prophecy written many centuries before on the eve of the final downfall of the Temple, Jerusalem, and the last vestiges of the Kingdom of Judah is, in fact, the voice of God the Holy Spirit speaking to his audience in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D. and to all believers in the once for all sacrifice of their Great High Priest throughout all the ages yet to come. Dr. F.F. Bruce marvels at the content and significance of these few short words and their relevance for the Christian’s confidence in the permanent power and relevance of Holy Scripture as the Word of God.

*“These words, spoken by the prophet under inspiration, are naturally quoted as the words of the Holy Spirit, and they are viewed as the Holy Spirit’s confirmation of the conclusion to which our author’s argument has just led him. The new covenant, according to Jeremiah’s prophecy, not only involved the implanting of God’s laws, together with the will and power to carry them out in the hearts of His people; it also conveyed the assurance that their past sins and iniquities would be eternally blotted out from God’s record, never to be brought up as evidence against them. Here is something far beyond what the sacrificial law of Old Testament times could provide...God has spoken in His Son and He has no word to speak beyond Him.”* (Bruce, p. 248)

Before the power of the Spirit’s inspiration of His chosen prophets and apostles time and distance melt away. The promise made by the “weeping prophet” Jeremiah to a desperate



***“The Prophets Jeremiah And Isaiah***

Israel whose world was literally collapsing, is here applied to troubled Jewish Christians centuries later. By the same Spirit's power those promises continue to hold true for us and all those who will come after us until the Judgement trumpet finally proclaims the Lord's return. Nothing else in the human reality displays this permanence or power. Everything else is inescapably subject to the tyranny of change and decay. Jeremiah's colleague Isaiah - speaking by divine inspiration - said it as well as it can possibly be said. His majestic words sought to convey God's hope and comfort to a desolate people:

***“A voice says, ‘Cry!’ And I said, ‘What shall I cry?’ All flesh is grass and its beauty is like the flower in the field. The grass withers and the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of our God will stand forever.”*** (Isaiah 40:6-8)

***“Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.”*** - The ***“sins and lawless deeds”*** of men have been forgiven in the once for all perfect sacrifice of the God/man Jesus upon the cross. This magnificent assertion forms the conclusion of all that has been said thus far in Chapter 10. Christ's self-offering upon the cross, His innocent death as the substitutionary sacrifice for humanity, has accomplished that which the sacrifices of the former covenant did not achieve and could never have achieve. God's declaration of acceptance of that sacrifice has been unmistakably affirmed in the triumphant resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead on the third day. All that has gone before in the



***“It Is Finished” - Rudolf Schärer***

rituals, ceremonies, and sacrifices of the former covenant has has been perfectly fulfilled and rendered forever obsolete in the blood offering of the Messiah. ***“Christ's sacrifice achieves its end in the forgiveness of sins; animal sacrifice has no further role to play!”*** (Ellingworth, p. 514) There is absolutely no uncertainty of ambiguity here. The issue of forgiveness and therefore salvation is settled once for all. In 1908, British commentator P.T. Forsyth eloquently described the decisive nature of that which Christ has done for all time by linking together the death of Christ, the defeat of Satan, and the judgement of the sinner:

***“The absolute ultimate judgement of the world took place in Christ's death. There God spoke His last word - His last endless word. The last moral reality is there, the last standard, the last judgement. The last judgement is behind us. The true judgement***

*seat of Christ where we must all appear is the Cross...We often fail to realize that the Prince of this world has been finally judged, and that we live in a saved world only because we live in a judged world...Christ is not Judge merely at some future coming. He is eternal Judge in His great work as the crucified, a work historic, yet timeless and final. In Him, the Prince of this world has been finally and effectually judged, and the absolute condemnation passed. Satan then fell from the heavens. The absolute and irreversible judgement was passed upon evil. There too, the judgement for our sins fell once for all on the Holy One and the Just. The judgement Christ exercises stands on the judgement He endured. He assumed judgement because he absorbed it. Salvation and judgement are absolutely intertwined.” (Forsyth, pp. 61f, 72f.)*



***“It Is Finished!”***

Obviously, if this is all true, a continuation of the sacrifices of the former covenant is not merely unnecessary, it is blasphemy. It is a damnable rejection of that which God has already done in Christ and a denial of the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross. There is no convenient middle ground here. Either Christ is the Mediator and the Messiah or He is a liar. In warning against the deceptions of the Anti-Christ, the Apostle John spoke directly to the heart of the matter:

***“By this you know the spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist...God has sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins...Everyone who believes that Jesus is the***



***Christ has been born of God...Whoever has the Son has life, and whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*** (1 John 4:2-3,10-12; 5:12)

Israel's rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, and its consequent rejection of His death upon the cross as the only and ultimate sacrifice for the sins of all mankind is a repudiation of the Gospel of salvation. Those Hebrews who are tempted to relapse into the comfortably familiar ways of the past must now recognize that such action would constitute the denial of Jesus and the forfeiture of all that He has accomplished by His perfect fulfillment of the plan of salvation. For this most serious sin against the Holy Ghost, that is, the rejection of the precious Gospel of salvation, there can be no forgiveness. 17<sup>th</sup> Century Puritan commentator John Owen described the eternal consequences of such denial:

*“That covenant being confirmed and established in the blood and by the one sacrifice of Christ, there can be no more offering for sin. For god will never appoint nor accept anything that is needless and useless in His service, least of all in things of so great importance as the offering for sin. indeed, the continuation of such sacrifices would overthrow the faith of the church and all the grace of the new covenant. For, as the apostle says, in the new covenant and by it, the Holy Ghost testifies that as it was confirmed by the one sacrifice of Christ, perfect pardon and forgiveness of sins and prepared for and presented to the whole church and to every one who believes. To what purpose, then, should there be any more offerings for sin? Indeed, they who look for and trust any other, they fall into that sin for which there is no*



***“The Way Of The Cross” - Dore***

*remission provided in this covenant; nor shall any offering be accepted from them forever, for they despise both the wisdom and the grace of God, the blood of Christ, and the witness of the Holy Ghost. For such things there is no forgiveness.” (Owen, VI, p. 496)*



*“The Moment of the Sacrifice On Calvary” - Jan Styka*

### ***Hebrews 10:19-25***

***“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the House of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and do good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”***

***“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places....”*** - This entire paragraph is one sentence in the Greek text. It sums up the practical implications of the foregoing theological assertions demonstrating how those truths transform who we are in Christ and how we are to live together as Christians. This is the characteristic pattern of the apostolic epistles of the New Testament - first doctrine, then application. *“This insistence on the close connection between theology and action is a characteristic mark of the New Testament epistolary method. Doctrine is not mere theory; it must be applied. Faith must be practiced, as well as professed. Truth must be lived.”* (Hughes, p. 405) The conjunction ***“Therefore”*** indicates the close connection between the preceding and that which follows. Furthermore it reveals that the actions about to be presented are the necessary expression of the truth which has preceded. The apostle’s use of the title ***“brothers”*** is chosen to enable the author to identify with his audience. He is not a judge who wishes to condemn them for their failures and shortcomings. He is one of them. He shares in their struggle to



overcome his own sinful nature and consistently reflect Christ in word and deed throughout his own life. The same form of address has been used three times previously in the letter (3:1; 3:12; 6:9). That tone of sympathetic collegiality is continued by the use of the pronoun “*us*” and “*we*” in the following phrases as the apostle includes himself in both the admonitions and assurances presented - “*since we have confidence....He opened for us...since we have a great high priest...let us draw near.*” It is evident that he has learned the lesson of St. Paul to reflect the humility and compassion of Christ in his letter - “*I, Paul, myself entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ - I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away.*” (2 Corinthians 10:1)

“*Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He has opened for us through the curtain...*” - The terminology of Temple worship - with its core concept of access to God - continues to prevail in the Epistle’s characterization of that which Christ has accomplished. The Hebrews were forever barred from the entire Sanctuary both the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies - thus the plural “*Holy Places.*” This lack of access was the former covenant’s most forceful assertion of the Law - the constant reminder that the sinner dare not stand before the holy and righteous God. The prophet Isaiah’s response to the Lord’s presence within the Temple, even in the context of a vision, is indicative of the fear and awe which that presence evoked in the Hebrew mind -

*“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the Temple. Above Him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings; with two he covered his face; and with two he covered his feet; and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts; the whole earth is full of*



*“The Seraph Cleansing the Lips of Isaiah”*



***His glory!’” And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called; and the House was filled with smoke. And I said, ‘Woe is me! For I am lost! For I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts!’”***  
(Isaiah 6:1-5)



***“The Lord Upon His Throne High And Exalted” - Viktor Vasnetsov***

Because of Christ, the perfect High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek and His once for all offering of Himself upon the cross the believer may now ***“enter the Holy Places by the blood of Jesus.”*** Our fears have been banished because our sin has been forgiven. This forgiveness is not the result of anything we have done or could have done. It is the work of Christ alone - ***“by the blood of Jesus.”*** The text uses a series of images to convey the wonder of that which Christ has done. We are cleansed by ***“the blood of Jesus,”*** foretold in the blood which had been sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat of the Ark within the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. 19<sup>th</sup> Century British commentator Octavius Winslow penned this remarkable assertion of the centrality of ***“the blood of Jesus*** in the faith and faith life of the believer in 1904:

*“In all true prayer great stress should be placed upon the blood of Jesus; perhaps no evidence indicates a diminishing in the power and spirituality more strongly than the absence of this. Where the atoning blood is kept out of view, not recognized, not pleaded, not made the grand plea, there is a deficiency in power of prayer. Words are nothing; fluency of expression nothing, niceties of language and brilliance of thought nothing, and even apparent fervor nothing, where the blood of Christ, the new and living access to God, the grand plea that moves Omnipotence, that give admission within the Holy of Holies - is slighted, undervalued, and not made the groundwork of every*

*petition. Oh, how much is this overlooked in our prayers, how often is the atoning blood of Immanuel slighted! How little mention we hear of it in the sanctuary, in the pulpit, in the social circle - whereas it is this that makes prayer what it is with God! All prayer is acceptable with God, and only so, as it rise before Him perfumed with the blood of Christ; all prayer is answered as it urges the blood of Christ as its plea. It is the blood of Christ that satisfies justice and meets all the demands of the Law against us. It is the blood of Christ that purchases and brings down every blessing into the soul. It is the blood of Christ that demands the fulfillment of Jesus' last will and testament, every precious legacy that comes to us solely because of His death. This it is too that gives us boldness at the throne of grace. How could a poor sinner dare approach without this? How can he look up, how can he ask, how could he present himself before a holy God unless he brings in the hand of faith the blood of Jesus? Outside of Christ God can hold no communication with us; all communion is suspended; every avenue of approach is closed; all blessing is withheld. God has crowned His dearly beloved Son and He wants us to crown Him too. Never do we place a brighter crown upon His head, than when we plead His finished righteousness as the basis for our acceptance and His atoning blood as our only plea for the bestowal of all blessings with God. If then, dear reader, you consider yourself a poor, vile, unholy sinner; if you recognize that you are a backslider whose feet have wandered from the Lord, in whose soul the spirit of prayer has diminished and virtually disappeared, but still there stirs within you a secret longing to return; but you dare not because you are so vile, so unholy, and have wandered so far from the Lord, you may still return - **'having boldness to enter into the holy places by the blood of Jesus.'** Come, for the blood of Jesus pleads! Return, for the blood of Christ welcomes you!" (Austin Precept)*

*"A new and living way" has been "opened for us through the curtain" dramatically demonstrated by the rending of the massive veil of the sanctuary at the moment of Christ's death on Good Friday. **"Our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water"** allude to the ceremonial cleansing of the priestly rituals which prefigured the genuine spiritual washing of Holy Baptism by means of which we have been born again to new life in Christ. In each of these phrases the apostle demonstrates the manner in which the work of Christ has authentically accomplished that which had merely been prefigured in the former covenant. The **"Holy Places"** into which we have been enabled to enter are not an earthly building but the true heavenly sanctuary which is the dwelling place of God for all eternity.*

*"The possession we have of confidence or boldness to enter the sanctuary, that is, the true heavenly sanctuary where our exalted High Priest appears in the presence of God on our behalf, should be the logical consequence of the*

*careful instruction in the preceding chapters concerning the High Priestly office of Christ and its significance. The boldness of our entry, far from resting on any supposed merit of our own, is justified and indeed demanded by the blood of Jesus, that is to say, within the sphere and on the basis of the incarnate Son's atoning self-offering and thus by virtue of His merits alone...The freedom of access into the presence of God guaranteed by the Gospel, furthermore, contrasts strikingly with the exclusion of the people from the most holy place where the glory of God rested above the Mercy Seat."* (Hughes, p. 406)

The language of bold confidence in our access to God was expressed in a similar fashion by St. Paul as he assured the Ephesians of the cosmic significance of Christ's perfect work of salvation which had been planned by God before the beginning of time. This reality is the application of the pure grace of God in Christ:

***"To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that He has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him."*** (Ephesians 3:8-12)



***"Christ Enthroned Above Cherubim And Seraphim, the Principalities And Powers"***



The qualifying adjectives applied to the realities of the new covenant draw the contrast between it and its now obsolete counterpart. The way into the **“holy places”** in the past had been restricted to the Levitical priesthood under severe limitations. Access in Christ is now **“by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh.”** This access is **“new,”** that is it did not exist until it was brought into being by Christ. Furthermore, it is a **“living way.”** Our access to God is via Christ Himself, the Savior who is not dead but alive. As Jesus had declared to His perplexed disciples - **“I am the way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father but by Me.”** (John 14:6)



***“The Temple Curtain Torn Apart”***

The annual passage of the former High Priests thru the great curtains which barred the way into the Holy of Holies was a perilous journey fraught with anxiety and fear. The manifold details of the ritual were meticulously observed lest the life of the High Priest and the ritual forgiveness of the people be forfeited. This in glaring contrast to the total destruction of the veil at the moment of the new High Priest’s self sacrifice on the cross. The Gospel texts which describe the event emphasize the violent totality of the curtain’s removal. **“And behold, the curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”** (Matthew 27:51; cf. Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). The curtain was not merely opened. It was destroyed. The barrier between God and His people was removed once and for all. **“God is unveiled to us and the way of access to Him is thrown wide open.”** (Bruce, p. 251)

*“Yet, til Jesus died there was a barrier, an obstacle, a veil. For a thousand years the spattered blood of the sacrifice spattered it as the High Priest passed between its mighty curtains. But the barrier remained. Yet, at the hour in*

*which He breathed out His soul in death, the veil was rent by mighty unseen hands from top to bottom, disclosing all the sacred mysteries beyond to the unaccustomed eyes of any priests who at that moment may have been burning incense at the hour of prayer, while the whole multitude stood without. It was a torn veil now, and the way into the Holy of Holies stands open. It is new and living and blood marked, we may therefore tread it without fear or mistake, and pass in with holy boldness to stand where angels veil their faces with their wings in ceaseless adoration.” (F.B. Mayer - “The Way Into the Holiest”)*

The tragic replacement of the physical veil by the apostate priesthood of Aaron cannot alter the reality. The barrier is gone. The way is open. The text adds yet another qualifying phrase - ***“that is, his flesh.”*** In these powerful and poignant words the rending of the Temple Curtain becomes a metaphor for the sacrificial death of Christ. An ancient hymn of the church draws the contrast between the veil and the body of Jesus in these words:

*“O fine, twisted linen in thy purity, thou wert never so pure as that body  
which was conceived without sin!*

*O exquisite work of curious imagery, thou canst not vie with the marvelous mysteries  
that gather in that human form.”*



***“The New And Living Way He Has Opened  
For Us Through the Curtain”***

As the curtain intact had served throughout its long history as the physical representation of the separation of God from sinful humanity, so now the author of Hebrews uses the torn curtain as the image of the innocent death of Christ by means of which access to God for the forgiven sinner has been accomplished. The etymology of the Greek word ***“new”*** (*“prosphaton”*) in the phrase ***“a new and living way”*** actually means *“freshly sacrificed.”* *“The word ‘new’ in the Greek text is very interesting. It is prosphaton, made up of ‘pros’ meaning ‘near to’ and ‘phatos’, the perfect tense of the verb ‘to kill.’ The original meaning of the total word is ‘newly slain.’ Here the contrast is between the ‘old slain’ road of the earthly tabernacle/temple, where the High Priest would sprinkle the blood of the sacrificial animals seven times on the ground as he approach the Mercy Seat of the Ark in the Holy of Holies (Leviticus 16:14), and ‘freshly slain’ road of the Holy of Holies in*

*heaven, sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb of God. The Jewish recipients of this letter*

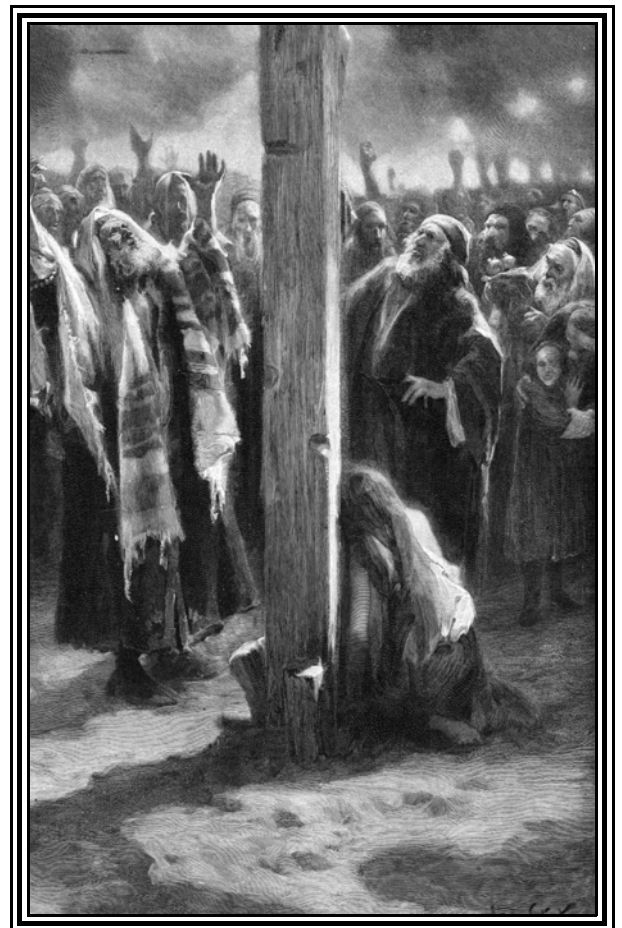
*are being asked to walk this new path. The old road to the Mercy Seat of the Tabernacle/Temple is a dead end. The Ark has been gone for centuries and there is no forgiveness or life there. It had all been nothing more than symbolism, an index finger pointing to the reality with which the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jew was now confronted. In the new road was life.” (Wuest, Hebrews Commentary)*

The incarnate Savior, the Word of God made flesh, fulfilled His task by dying. Hebrews has already asserted this truth with complete clarity:

***“Since, therefore, the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself, likewise, partook of the same things, that He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil...Therefore, He had to be made like His brothers in every respect so that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”*** (Hebrews 2:14,17)

The fact of the incarnation is indissolubly connected with the purpose of the incarnation. Christ became flesh so that it would be possible for Him to die. The God/Man was without sin. He had been conceived by the Holy Ghost and was thus not tainted by the curse of original sin and had lived a perfect life without ever committing actual sin. Hence, although it was possible for Him to die, it was not necessary for Him to die as the just punishment of a sinner. In this way, His death could be substitutionary. His death could be the redemption price for the forgiveness of humanity. In magnificent symmetry, the rending of the Temple Veil occurs at the moment of the death of the Savior, whose body had been literally torn apart by the brutal process of His dying, from the lashes of His tormentors - both Jewish and Roman - to the nails of the bloody cross. That innocent death removed the barrier and opened the way to God just as the rending of the Temple curtain removed the liturgical barrier which barred the way into the Holy of Holies.

*“An uncrucified Savior is no Savior. When the Messiah died on the cross, the Veil of the Temple was torn by the unseen hand of God showing*



***“The Mockery Of The High Priest”***



*Israel two things, that the Messiah had now provided the actual entrance for the sinner into the presence of God and that the symbolic sacrifices were to be discontinued for the Reality to whom they pointed had come and accomplished His mission of salvation.” (Wuest, Hebrews Commentary)*

“*The Divine Liturgy of St. James, the Holy Apostle and Brother of the Lord*” an Orthodox rite dating to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century AD and associated, most appropriately with the Church of Jerusalem, expresses this concept most beautifully in its “*Prayer of the Veil*” offered at the divesting of the elements shortly before the Words of Institution. It is clear that the words of the prayer are drawn directly from the text of Hebrews 10:

*“We thank Thee, O Lord our God, that Thou hast given us boldness for the entrance of Thy Holy Places, which Thou has revealed to us as a new and a living way through the Veil of the flesh of Thy Christ. We, therefore, having been counted worthy to enter into the place of the tabernacle of Thy glory, and to be within the Veil, and to behold the Holy of Holies, cast ourselves down before Thy goodness.*

*Lord, have mercy on us since we are full of fear and trembling, when about to stand at Thy holy altar, and to offer this dread and bloodless sacrifice for our own sins and for the errors of the people; send forth, O God, Thy good grace and sanctify our souls and bodies and spirits; and turn our thoughts to holiness, that with a pure conscience we may bring to Thee a peace offering, the sacrifice of praise.*

*By the mercy and loving-kindness of Thy only-begotten Son, with whom Thou art blessed, together with Thy all-holy and good and quickening Spirit, now and always. Amen!” (ANF, VII, p. 543)*

In “*Christ Sits At God’s Right Hand,*” contemporary hymn writer Stephen Starke’s anthem based upon the theology of Hebrews, also effectively incorporates these concepts into the worship of the church:

*“Christ sits at God’s right hand, His saving work complete,  
To reign till every foe will lie beneath His feet -  
All that the Father planned, the Son sought to fulfill,  
When first He said, ‘Lord here am I to do Your will.’*

*Christ was that priest God swore, uniquely First and Last,  
Who would in righteousness and love be unsurpassed;  
A priest forevermore, an oath God would not break;  
A priest within the order of Melchizedek!*

*Christ’s altar was the tree, where on the world’s behalf,*

*He shed a blood unlike the blood of goat and calf.  
To seal God's guarantee of grace that cannot fail;  
With blood He entered for our good behind the Veil!*

*That Veil which barred the way, to God who dwelt within  
Above the golden ark beneath the cherubim;  
That Veil now rent and torn, He bows His head and dies  
Our bloody path now open wide to Paradise.*

*What costly sacrifice, to cover human sin!  
Who but Christ Jesus had the right to enter in?  
His blood that sprinkled price, so we might be assured,  
That our inheritance in light, has been secured.*

*Then let us now draw near, washed that precious flood  
And enter the Most Holy Place by Jesus' blood.  
From tongues that are sincere, let tongues our hope profess,  
And trust anew God's faithful grace, that we confess.*

*All praise to Christ we bring, our Lord who intercedes;  
Our Great High Priest enthroned above who knows our needs.  
And to the Father sing, our songs of grateful praise  
Who with the Spirit reigns above for endless days. Amen!*

***“And since we have a great High Priest over the House of God...”*** - The next reason for our bold confidence to enter the presence of God is that we not only have a High Priest, as did the Children of Israel through the descendants of Aaron, but we have ***“a great High Priest.”*** The superiority of the High Priesthood of Christ has been a major theme of the Epistle, appearing in virtually every segment of the epistle. Hebrews 1:3 begins the demonstration of the superiority of Christ with the assertion that after His perfect, once for all, act of purification He sat down at God's right hand in the heavenly sanctuary:

***“He is the radiance of God and the exact imprint of His nature and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.”*** (Hebrews 1:3-4)

The unique identity of Christ as both God and man has enabled Him to accomplish His task of propitiation and, as ***“a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God,”*** to represent His fellow human beings as their Mediator in heaven before His divine Father with a compassionate understanding of man's predicament:

***“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things that through death He might destroy the One who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver those who through fear were subject to lifelong slavery...Therefore He had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest, in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”*** (Hebrews 2:14-16)

Christ’s great high priesthood is marked by complete faithfulness unlike that of any of His predecessors in the line of Aaron:

***“Therefore holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him...Christ is faithful over God’s House as a Son. And we are His house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.”*** (Hebrews 3:1-2,6)

The greatness of Christ’s high priesthood is conclusively proven by the fact that He now lives and reigns with His divine Father in heaven. He is one of our own, a man as we are men, and yet He reigns in the highest heaven as our ***“Great High Priest.”***

***“Since, then, we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Then let us with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace in time of need.”*** (Hebrews 4:14-16)



***“The Blessing Of Abraham By The High Priest Melhizedek”***



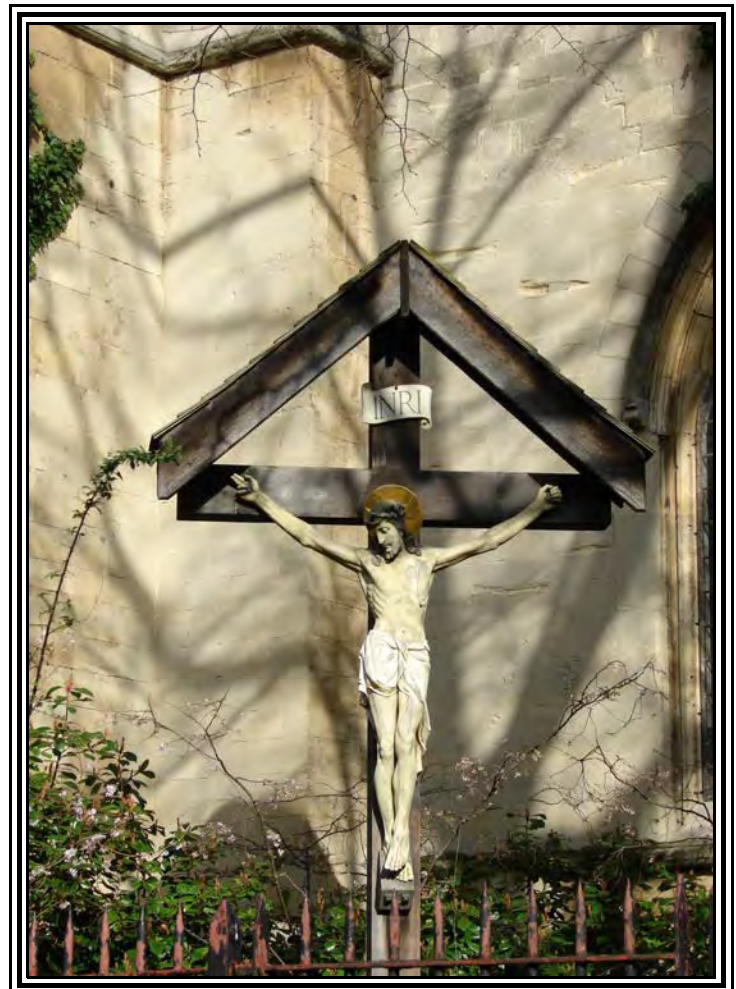
Christ is the great High Priest by virtue of the fact that He was appointed to that sacred office directly by God Himself, thereby becoming a High Priest like the ancient, mysterious figure of Melchizedek, priest/king of Salem and has passed beyond the curtain to stand eternally in the presence of God:

***“For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin...And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also, Christ did not exalt himself but was appointed by Him who said to Him: ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten you...As He also says in another place, ‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek...And being made perfect He became the Source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, being designated by God a high priest, after the order of Melchizedek.”*** (Hebrews 5:1,4-6,9)

***“We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”***  
(Hebrews 6:19-20)

***“For this Melchizedek, King of Salem, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him...This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of Him, ‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek...He holds His priesthood permanently because He continues forever...For it is indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.”*** (Hebrews 7:1, 15-17, 26)

The ministry of this great high priest is



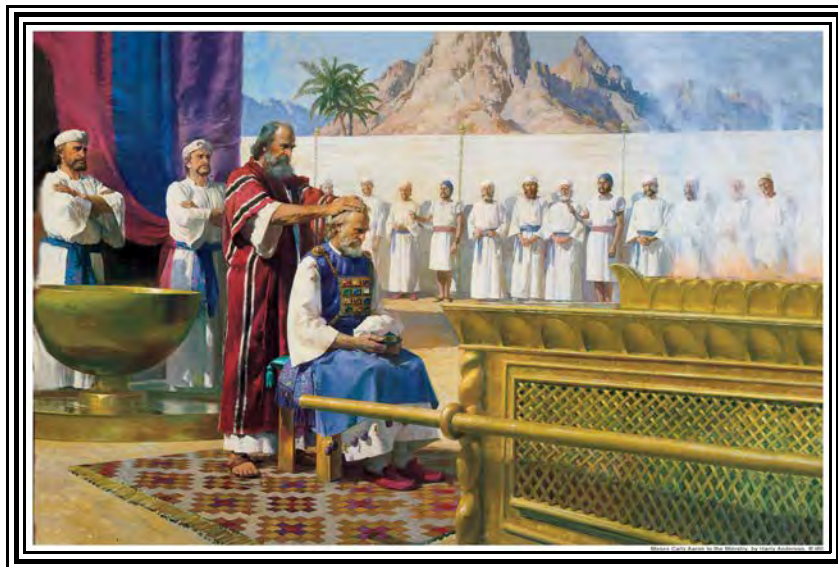
***“Christ Our Great High Priest”***

not conducted on earth in a temple built by the hands of men, but in the heavenly dwelling place of the divine majesty. Not is it limited by the constraints of time but continues throughout times and eternity. Unlike the ordinary high priests of the former covenant He offers Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of all sin.

***“Now the point in what we are saying is this; we have such a High Priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent, that the Lord set up, not man...Christ has obtained a ministry that is more excellent than the old as the covenant which He mediates is better, since it was enacted on better promises.”*** (Hebrews 8:1-2, 6)

***“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, He entered once for all into the Holy Places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of His own blood, thus securing eternal redemption.”*** (Hebrews 9:11-12)

All of this means that Christ is not merely our priestly advocate, mediating between God and man as is the function of the high priest, He is Himself also the basis of our access thru the



***“The Anointing Of Aaron As High Priest Of Israel***

veil - since it is only by the sacrifice of His torn and battered body, offered up in death upon the cross that He provides our access into the presence of the Father. Accordingly in every sense of the term Jesus Christ is ***“a great priest over the House of God”*** whose ministry makes it possible for us enter the presence of the righteous God with bold confidence and assurance.

The terminology here, although a traditional designation for the office of the high priest -





*“Aaron Anointed As High Priest”*

literally “*the priest that is greater than his brethren*” - infinitely more. One might wonder why this particular title, relatively unusual in the Hebrew Bible, would be used here to identify the High Priestly office of Jesus, the Messiah. Recall, once again, the specific recipients of this epistle. These are devout Israelites, members of a small minority - a faithful remnant, if you will - of their fellow Jews, struggling to understand the relationship between the covenant of their forefathers and its fulfillment in Jesus, the long awaited Messiah. Throughout the letter, thus far, we have observed that our inspired author has seldom missed an opportunity to buttress his argument with Old Testament reference or allusion. That pattern may well explain the unusual terminology here. The Hebrew mind was trained to “*listen for the echoes*” within the text, constantly asking themselves “*Where have I heard that*

*before?*” Thus when the designation “*the priest greater than his brethren*” appeared here, for the first time in the epistle, they might very well have recalled two foundational passages about the office of the High Priest from the Torah in which this same title had occurred. These two texts, one in Leviticus and the other in Numbers, are actually the only instances in which this title occurs in the five books of Moses. From the perspective of the author of Hebrews, the insight into the nature of the High Priestly office contained in these texts would certainly have served to enhance his readers’ understanding of the role of Christ as the “**great High Priest.**” The first reference, Leviticus 21:10, is spoken by God Himself as He institutes the position of the High Priest. In them the Lord stresses the special consecration and holiness which the occupants of the office of High Priest were to exemplify. Hebrews has repeatedly stressed how this special consecration and holiness would be perfected and fulfilled by Christ in a manner that had been sadly absent in the successors of Aaron. Thus Christ, the “**great High priest**” was capable of accomplishing the work of salvation in a way that none of His priestly predecessors could. The character of the High Priest is determined here by the repeated references to his anointing. The title “**Messiah**” means “*the Anointed One.*” In this way, both the role of the High Priest as one whose ministry would foreshadow that of the Messiah and the ministry of the Messiah as the One who would perfectly accomplish the tasks which made up the High Priesthood are expressed.

*“The priest who is chief among his brothers, on whose head the anointing*



***oil has been poured, and who has been consecrated to wear the garments, shall not let the hair of his head hang loose nor tear his clothes. He shall not go in to any dead bodies nor make himself unclean, even for his father or for his mother. He shall not go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God, for the consecration of the anointing oil is upon him; I am the LORD.*** (Leviticus 21:10-12)

The title “*the priest greater than his brethren*” also appears in Numbers 35. This intriguing text is a definition of the terms of confinement in one of the six “*cities of refuge*” scattered throughout the land of Israel. In this instance, the criminal who seek refuge is one who is guilty of manslaughter. All of this become relevant to us only because the period of confinement for the killer is terminated only upon the death of the High Priest under whom the death had occurred.

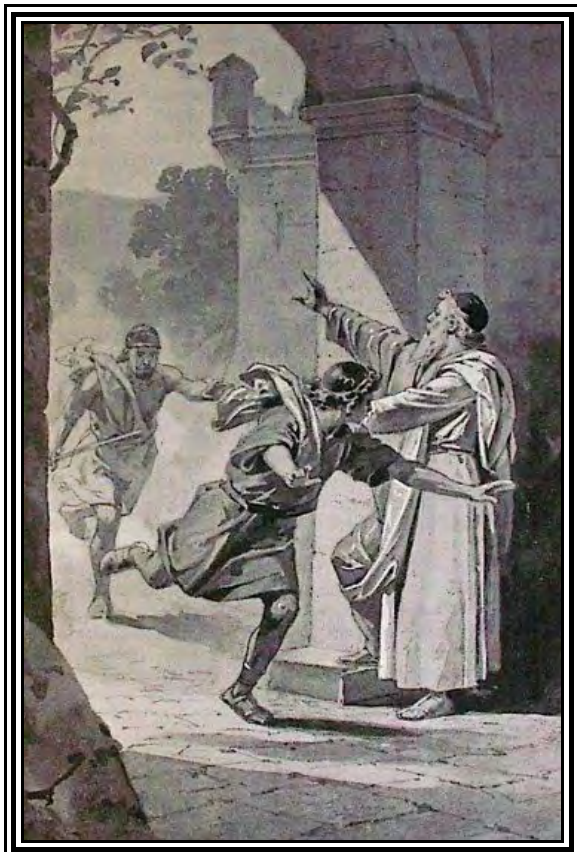
***“And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them, when you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall cities of refuge for you, that the man-slayer who kills any person without intent may flee there...And the congregation shall rescue the man-slayer from the avenger of blood and the congregation shall restore him to his city of refuge to which he has fled, and he shall live in it until the death of the High Priest, who was anointed with the holy oil...For he must remain in his city of refuge until the death of the High Priest, but after the death of the High Priest the man-slayer may return to the land of his possession. And these things shall be for a statute and a rule for you throughout your generations in your dwelling places...And you shall accept no ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to dwell in the land before the death of the High Priest. You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it. You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell, for I, the LORD, dwell in the midst of the people of Israel.’*** (Numbers 35:9-10; 25; 28-29;32-34)

The link between the death of the current High Priest and the cancellation of guilt for sin in these verses reveals one of the most direct ways in which the High Priestly office of the Old Testament foreshadowed the ministry of Christ, the “***Great High Priest.***” Note, once again, the emphasis placed upon the High Priest as one who has been anointed by God and the role which his death was to play in the forgiveness of the man-slayer confined in one of the cities of refuge. In this sense the High Priest, the Anointed One, is linguistically connected to the Messiah, the ultimate Anointed One. The forerunners’ deaths became the means of forgiveness for this handful of individuals trapped in one of the cities of refuge. This provided a shadowy and imperfect picture prefigured the ministry of Jesus Christ, the

**“Great High Priest,”** whose death on the cross would cancel the guilt of humanity’s sin for all time. 19<sup>th</sup> Century Lutheran Bible commentator Franz Delitsch offers these incisive observations:

*“In these regulations all the rigor of the divine justice is manifested in the most beautiful concord with His compassionate mercy. Human blood had been shed - although not wilfully - through the destruction of life. The shedding of that blood demanded expiation, that is, the removal of guilt by the just punishment. Yet, this expiation did not require the death of the offender himself, because he had not sinned wilfully. Hence, a sanctuary was provided for the guilty party in the city of refuge, a safe place to which he could escape and in which he would be protected from the avenger. This sojourn in the city of refuge was not to be regarded as banishment, although separation from house, home and family was certainly a punishment. Instead it was a safe haven under the mercy of God, which had provided such safe havens in the six cities of refuge. There the guilty could remain beyond the reach of the fury of the avenger of blood. There the slayer could find safe haven until his sin was expiated by the death of the High Priest. Many rabbis, fathers, and early commentators maintain that the fact of the expiatory character of the death of the High Priest is unmistakably evident from the addition of the words ‘who had been anointed*

*with the holy oil.’ If the death of the High Priest was not the basis for the slayer’s expiation these words would be unnecessary and without meaning. This clause points to the inward connection between the return of the slayer and the death of the High Priest. The anointing with the holy oil in the High Priest’s consecration was a symbol of the anointing with the Holy Ghost. By this outpouring of the Holy Ghost’s power the High Priest was empowered to act as mediator and representative of the nation before God. Therefore he alone could carry out the yearly and general expiation for the whole nation on the great Day of Atonement. In this anointing with the Holy Ghost the High Priest’s life and work acquired a representative significance. In the same way his death might also be regarded as death for the sins of the people, by virtue of the Holy Ghost imparted to him. In this*



**“The City Of Refuge”**

*specific instance the unintentional manslayer received the benefits of the propitiation for his sin before God through the death of his High Priest. He could then return to his native town, without further vulnerability to punishment by the avenger of blood. The death of the High Priest had the same result, in a certain sense, pertaining to his time in office, as his priestly function had in the Day of Atonement every year. Accordingly, the death of the earthly High Priest became thereby a prototype of the death of the heavenly High Priest. This great High priest, through his own eternal holy Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, that we might be redeemed from our transgressions, and receive the promised eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:14-15). Just as the blood of Christ brought about our eternal redemption, only because through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without any spot to God, so the death of the High Priest of the Old Testament secured the complete deliverance of the man-slayer from his sin, only because he had been anointed by the holy oil, the symbol of the Holy Ghost.” (Delitsch, 1, pp. 958-959)*



*“Christ With Moses And Elijah On the Mount Of Transfiguration*

Messiah Jesus is not merely the **“Great High Priest”** but **“a great High Priest over the House of God.”** The preposition **“over”** indicates rule and authority/responsibility. It would not be excessive to translate these words as **“a Great High Priest in charge of the House of God.”** This had already been indicated by the author when he noted that the authority/responsibility of Jesus surpassed even that of Moses, who had been as a **“faithful servant in God’s house.”**

***“Therefore, holy brothers who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses - as much more***



*glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the Builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a Son.” (Hebrews 3:1-6)*

The epistle has already defined *“the House of God.”* *“Christ is faithful over God's House as a Son. And we are His House indeed, if we hold fast our confidence, our boasting in our hope.”* (Hebrews 3:6) *“The House of God”* is His people, those on earth and those in heaven who have been saved by grace thru faith in Jesus. The author of Hebrews has no interest in the Temple as the House of God nor in any other sanctuary. With the incarnation of Jesus, the dwelling place of God, is among His people: *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us for a time, and we beheld His glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* (John 1:14) The same image is presented by St. Paul both to the Ephesians and to Timothy:

*“So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together, grows up into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”* (Ephesians 2:19-22)



*“Early Christian Worship Gathering” - Vasili*

*“I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.*

***Great, indeed, we confess is the mystery of God in holiness.” (1 Timothy 3:14-16)***

Under the former covenant, the House of God had been a sacred shrine, a holy place which could only be entered under carefully defined ways, severely limited by the meticulous detail of ritual. No longer! Jesus declared the stunning transformation to His disciples in these familiar words.

***“And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in My Name, there am I among them.” (Matthew 18:17-20)***



***“Early Christian Martyrs In The Coliseum” - Flavitski***

***“Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith....”*** - In Hebrews 4:16 the apostle had urged his readers - ***“Let us then, with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*** Based upon the irrefutable logic of the great truths which have been presented in the intervening chapters, that urging is repeated here in similar terms in the first of a series of three commands which make up the remainder of the paragraph: ***“Let us draw near...Let us hold fast the confession....Let us consider how to stir up one another...”***. The verb ***“draw near”*** continues the access imagery reflected in the Temple design of increasing limited access as one came closer to the Holy of Holies and the Ark which it contained. But because of that which has been accomplished by our Great High Priest our access to God is no longer a

matter walking thru rooms and brushing aside curtains. Nor is it restricted to High Priests.

*“In contrast to the entrance of the High Priest thru the curtain, Jesus ‘inaugurated’ (Heb. 10:20) a different way of entry into God’s presence ‘by means of His blood’ (Heb. 10:19), the way by which He entered heaven on our behalf ‘by means of His blood (Heb.6:19-30; 9:11-12,24), the way that was inaugurated by his blood and sanctified by His blood. It is quite ‘new’ since it is completely different from the way through the curtain of the Tabernacle and the Temple; it is also ‘living’ (Heb.10:20) since it is the way to eternal life with the living God (Heb. 3:12; 9:14; 12:22) thru the ever-living Jesus (Heb. 7:25). It is the way of His flesh (Heb. 10:20), the way into heaven that He pioneered (cf. Heb.2:10; 6:20; 12:2) with His human body in His life, death, resurrection and ascension, His bodily way that is now also the congregation’s way into the holy places, the way for the heart and the body to go (Heb.10:22). The congregation can come to God here and now in the Divine Service by this new way, the way that is provided for them through the flesh of Jesus... We have the freedom to go boldly and confidently where no Israelite high priest had ever gone, on a way that no previous priest had ever gone, to place where they had never gone. By His human flesh, His people have access to the heavenly sanctuary. Through His human flesh they too serve God in all their physical existence, just as Jesus did in His (Heb.5:7-10) so that He could transform the human life cycle from a dead end meander from the womb to the tomb into a pilgrimage that led from earth to heaven by sharing in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.” (Lockwood, p. 502)*

**“With a true heart”** refers to sincerity and singleness of purpose. Those who would avail themselves of that which their Great High Priest has accomplished and **“draw near”** to God have been liberated from the hypocrisy and falsehood of sin. **“A true heart”** genuine in its dedication to God and is truly resolved to remain faithful and to Him in every way. God’s prophet Jeremiah, quoted in Hebrews 8, had promised that in the **“new covenant”** which God would establish the obedience of His people would not be a matter of minimum compliance based on external coercion, but the willing response of believers upon whose hearts He had inscribed His Law:

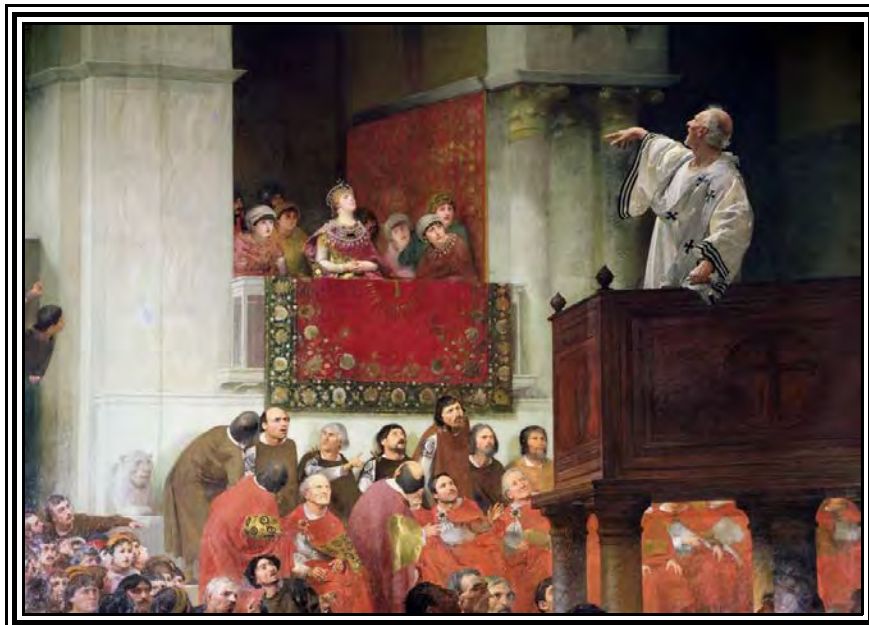
***“For this is the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those days, declares the LORD; I will put My laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people...they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities and I will remember their sins no more.”***  
(Hebrews 8:10-12; cf. 10:16)

That **“true heart”** is at peace because of the **“full assurance of faith.”** Those who come



before the Lord trust in His promises without doubt and realize that their standing before the Lord is purely the result of that which God has accomplished on their behalf in Christ. Their righteousness is perfect because it is not their own, but the perfect righteousness of Christ their Savior. Judah's King Hezekiah had once described his serene confidence in the Lord as having ***"a whole heart"*** (Isaiah 38:3), that is, a heart free from anxiety or doubt, which is being kept safe and secure under the guard of God in Christ. Anyone who does not possess this wondrous gift from a gracious God has a heart that is less than whole, a heart that is incomplete or, as we might say today, a broken heart. ***"And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."*** (Philippians 4:7) The ***"full assurance of faith"*** suggests a faith that is more than equal to its task. This is faith which nothing in the arsenal of the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh can defeat or destroy. One who possesses ***"the full assurance of faith"*** recognizes that the basis for his security is not the intensity of his faith but the fact that his faith is based upon that which God has graciously done for him in Christ. St. John Chrysostom is a superb example of such unshakeable assurance, based on the reliability of God and His holy Word. When the aged saint was dragged before the apostate emperor who demanded his allegiance under threat of the most dire punishments, the old man is said to have replied

*"The emperor threatened banishment to the most remote and desolate place on earth. Chrysostom responded; You cannot banish me for this world is my Father's house. But I will slay you, said the emperor. No you cannot, said the noble champion of the faith, for my life is hid with Christ in God. I will take away your treasures! No you cannot, for my treasure is in heaven and my heart is there. But I will drive you away from all men and you will have no friend left. No, you cannot, for I have a Friend in heaven, from Whom you cannot separate me. I defy you, for there is nothing you can do to hurt me."*



***"St. John Chrysostom Denouncing The Heresy of the Empress"***



*“The Covenant Ratification Ceremony At Mount Sinai*

***“With our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water”*** - For any of his readers who might still hesitate to approach the Lord in the confident assurance which he has described, the apostle offers the reminder of that which God has done to remove the barriers of sin and guilt which had always separated the fallen creature from his holy Creator. The two verbs ***“sprinkled”*** and ***“washed”*** are in the perfect tense which describes past action which has already been completed in the atonement which Christ has accomplished.

*“They function to give the reasons why we can draw near with a sincere heart and full confidence; because we have been cleansed and washed. These actions, which have already been accomplished for us at the moment of conversion, when the atonement is applied to our hearts, resulting in the objective forgiveness of sins, internal cleansing and concomitant deliverance from a guilty conscience.”* (Allen, p. 515)

In a most effective manner, the ritual language of the former covenant is utilized while being transformed from external symbolism to the genuine personal transformation which is the essence of the new covenant. In this way, the superiority of the new over the old is subtly expressed while the believer’s access to God, which the former covenant had never been able to achieve, is affirmed. The Levitical priests had been ***“washed”*** and ***“sprinkled”*** as a part of their ordination ceremony.

***“You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and wash them with water...You shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him...And the priesthood shall be theirs by a statute forever..”*** (Exodus 29:4)



***“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘You shall also make a basin of bronze, with its stand of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it, with which Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet. When they go into the Tent of Meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn a food offering to the LORD, they shall wash with water so that they may not die. They shall wash their hands and their feet so that they may not die. It shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his offspring throughout their generations.’ (Exodus 30:17-21)***

***“Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and shall wash them with water and put on Aaron the holy garments. And you shall anoint him and consecrate him so that he may serve Me as priest. You shall bring his sons also and put coats on them, and anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may serve Me as priests. And their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations.” (Exodus 40:12-15)***

***“And Moses said to the congregation ‘This is the thing that the LORD has commanded to be done.’ And Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water...And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head and anointed him to consecrate him...Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and of the blood that was on the altar and sprinkled it on Aaron and his garments, and also on his sons and on his sons garments. So he consecrated Aaron and his garments, and his sons and his sons’ garments with him.” (Leviticus 8:6,30)***



***“Israel Before Sinai” - Gerome***





***“The Blood Of the Covenant At Sinai***

In this instance those who are ***“sprinkled clean”*** are not merely the members of a Levitical priesthood but all believers. This shift indicates the changed reality of the new covenant as a ***“universal priesthood of all believers.”*** In this covenant the believer needs no other man to represent him before God than the God/man Jesus Christ. Instead, as is the point of this text, every believer has direct access to God in Christ. In a similar fashion, the sprinkling of the entire congregation of Israel with the blood of the sacrifices at the Sinai covenant ratification ceremonies (Exodus 24:8) signified that the covenant was between the Lord and all of the Children of Israel as the words of Moses explained. Half of the blood was sprinkled on the altar, representing the Lord, and the other half was sprinkled over the congregation assembled at the foot of the mountain.

***“And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and he read it in the hearing of the people.. And they said, ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient. And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, ‘Behold. The blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.’”***

This transformation had been promised through God’s prophet Ezekiel. The Lord repudiated the meaningless external cleansings of His apostate people and foretold a time when He would replace their rituals with the real thing a genuine cleansing of heart and mind.

***“I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness and from all your idols. I will cleanse you, and I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit will I put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put***

***My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey My rules.” (Ezekiel 36:25-27)***



***“The Prophet Ezekiel”***

Ezekiel’s prophecy is clearly a prophetic promise of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, which, in keeping with the point of the text here, is not merely outward, or symbolic, ritual, but a genuine means of grace by which God creates or confirms faith within the heart and soul of the baptized. That promise is reaffirmed here in the phrase ***“washed with pure water”*** which is also a direct reference to Holy Baptism.

*“So here in Ezekiel then is a real prophecy of the grace of baptism as clothed in a visible sacramental form. Baptism is, in the New Testament, a washing of regeneration, and the water thus specified in not only a symbol, but also a vehicle of the Spirit...As the Word of God is said ‘to pierce to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow’ so the water of baptism is a pure water, in that it is not merely an outward or ceremonial*

*purification, but as being the sacramental vehicle of an inward divine operation, by which the spiritual side of the earthly body is consecrated for the future resurrection, and for the present indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In this way, both our personal and our natural life receives a special consecration for divine service and communion by which we are enabled to approach with confidence the throne and presence of the Holy One.” (Delitsch, 2, p..177-178)*

As previously noted, God had scorned the hypocritical outward piety of His people as they carried on the services of the Temple while wallowing in immorality and idolatry. The Lord pleaded with them to genuinely wash themselves and be cleansed. ***“O Jerusalem, wash your heart from evil, that you may be saved. How long shall your wicked thoughts lodge within you?”*** (Jeremiah 4:14)

***“For long ago I broke your yoke and burst your bonds; but you said, ‘I will not serve!’ Yes, on every hill and under every green tree you bowed down like a whore. Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine? Though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your guilt is still before Me,***

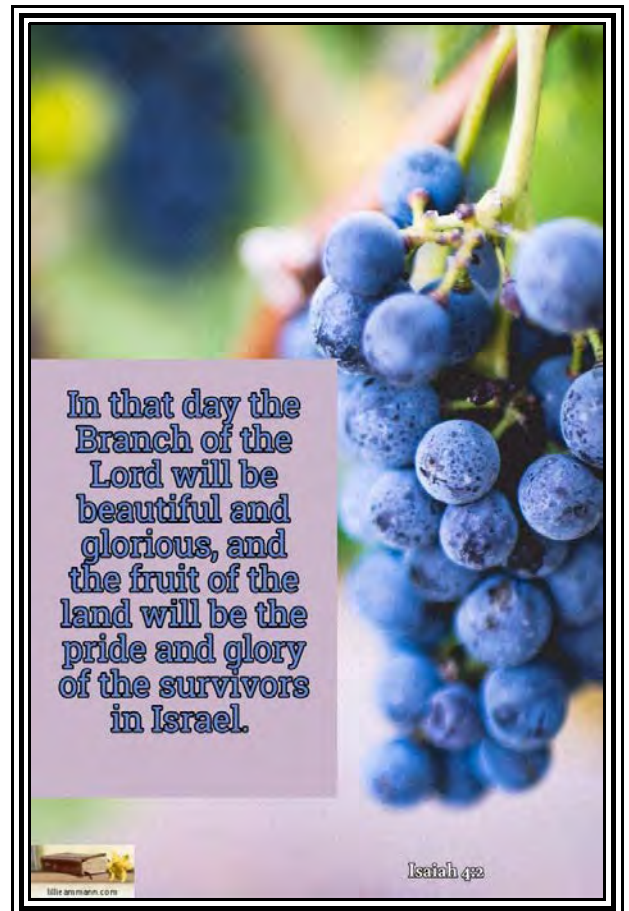
*declares the LORD.” (Jeremiah 2:20-22)*

***“What to Me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD. I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required of you this trampling of My courts? Bring no more vain offerings. Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations - I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers I will not listen for your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves! Make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good. Seek justice, correct oppression, bring justice to the fatherless and plead the widow’s cause.”***  
(Isaiah 1:11-17)

At the same time God promised that the day of authentic cleansing was on the way when His Messiah would do what His sinful people had failed to do for themselves. Then God would dwell among the remnant of His people again as He had in the days of their wilderness wandering.

***“In that day, the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel. And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, when the LORD shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgement and a spirit of burning. Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud by day and the smoke of flaming fire by night.”*** (Isaiah 4:2-5)

King David had used this same imagery in his penitent prayer for forgiveness: ***“Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin...Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than***







*"The Repentance Of King David" - il Giovane*

*snow!"* (Psalm 51:2,7)

With these ancient promises and judgements resonating in their ears, the readers of this epistle would have clearly understood the wonder of that which God, in Christ, had accomplished on their behalf as the firm foundation upon which they were now able to approach God cleansed from the blame and burden of sin. The **"hearts"** which have **"sprinkled clean from an evil conscience"** obviously do not refer the physical organ, a mere pump to distribute the blood throughout the body, but to the entire person, body and soul. **"An evil conscience"** is a conscience that is troubled by guilt for sin because it does not recognize or trust completely in the grace of God in Christ as the sole basis

for the forgiveness of God, life and salvation. Such a conscience is not at peace, although it could and should be. It is not surprising that a person with such a troubled conscience would be hesitant to enter into the presence of God.

Dr. John Kleinig makes a convincing argument that the **"hearts sprinkled clean"** terminology here is an allusion to Holy Communion. This assertion is made in conjunction with the preceding references to our **"confidence to enter the holy place through the blood of Jesus"** (10:19) and our passage into the Holy of Holies **"through the curtain, that is, through His flesh"** (10:20). If Kleinig is correct then Verse 22 would refer to both of the sacraments of the church, baptism and communion, as the basis for our confidence in approaching God.

*"The ardent encouragement in 10:19-22 for the congregation to 'come near to God' in His holy heavenly place, 'having had their hearts sprinkled from a bad conscience' (10:22) provides another likely allusion to the Lord's Supper. There Christ's brothers are urged to gain entry into God's presence by two means - 'by the blood of Jesus' (10:19) and 'through His flesh' (10:20). First, they enter with His blood and by means of it, just as Jesus entered there on their behalf through His blood and with it (9:12). His blood is 'sprinkled' on their hearts to give them a clear conscience and qualify them for coming near to God (10:22). Second, they enter that Holy Place 'by the way of His flesh'*

*(10:20), for His living flesh provides and new and living way into God's presence. It is difficult to understand these terms as mere metaphors for the past human life and sacrificial death of Jesus, for that overlooks their function as the present means for entry into the heavenly sanctuary.” (Kleinig, p. 305)*



***“Buried With Him In Baptism” - Donnell***

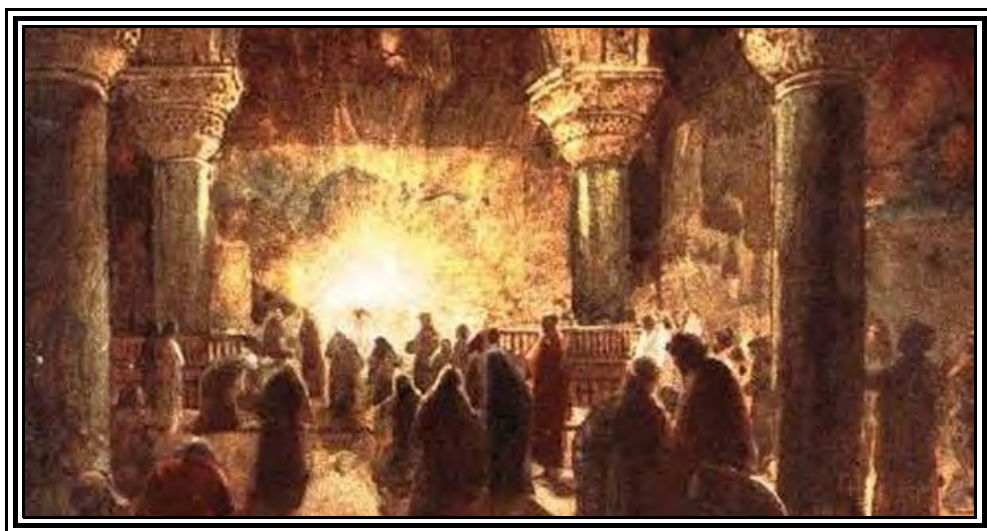
Franz Delitsch concurs in this assessment stressing the difference between the empty external ceremonial washings and sprinklings - both with blood and water - and the sacraments of the new covenant which the merciful God has instituted as genuine means of grace by which He reaches out to touch the heart and soul of His own.

*“We, as Christians, are all priests for we have received a sacramental sprinkling and we have been cleansed in a sacramental washing. That sprinkling is with the blood of Christ which conveys a joyful sense of justification before God, and in this way relieves the conscience from the burden and pollution of unpardoned sin. Furthermore, we have received a washing of baptism, whose cleansing waters have penetrated not only into the depths of our moral consciousness, but also into the foundations of our bodily nature itself with the spiritual power of healing and life. We therefore are not merely sanctified by some ritual cleansing of our bodies in outward symbolism. Rather, we have been cleansed inwardly and spiritually in such a way that our entire being, body, soul, and spirit, is transformed by this new birth. We have been sprinkled with that blood which is speaking forever within the heavenly sanctuary, and washed with baptismal water which has also been impregnated with the blood. Therefore, it is our privilege, at all times, to enter by a new and living way the heavenly temple, penetrating to its innermost sanctuary, and there presenting ourselves in the presence of God.” (Delitsch, p. 179)*



***“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”*** - Our unlimited access to God in Christ has profound implications for who we are and how we are to live. The reality that we live out every day in God’s presence empowers us to do things which would otherwise have been impossible. The Christian faith is a vital combination of already and not yet. We already live with Christ today, forgiven and free from sin’s curse. But at the same time, our earthly pilgrimage is not yet complete. Thus we live now in hope, eagerly looking forward to the moment when we will join Christ and all the saints who have preceded us to glory before the throne in heaven. That happy anticipation is ***“our hope.”*** God’s ever trustworthy promises become, as the apostle has previously declared, ***“a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where Jesus has gone.”*** (Hebrews 6:19) The blessings which constitute our hope are countless. The text of Hebrews thus far has been replete with assertions of those blessings - gifts already ours today which will be perfectly fulfilled in the eternity of heaven. A summary listing of those blessings would include: rest with God (4:1-11); eternal salvation (1:14, 2:3,10; 5:9; 6:9; 7:25; 9:28); eternal redemption (9:12); their eternal inheritance (6:11-12; 9:15); the remission of sins ((10:18); life with God (10:38; 12:9); healing (12:13); holiness (12:14); access to the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22-24) The certainty of this hope is them result of the faithfulness of God ***“He who promised is faithful.”***

Our hope in Christ is not a secret to be kept hidden away. It demands expression to both friend and foe. Thus the use of the term ***“confession.”*** ***“Confession”*** occurs three times in Hebrews. ***“Therefore holy brother, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the High Priest and Apostle of our confession.”*** (Heb.3:1) ***“Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession.”*** (Heb. 4:14) The Greek word is *“homologia.”* It literally means *“saying the same thing.”* The word indicates *“verbal agreement with others by reiterating what they have said. A formal speech act which repeats what has been said,*



***“Worship of the Early Church”***



agrees with it, and gives public assent to it.” The usage of the term in this epistle suggests that the author of the letter and those to whom he is writing share a common confession of faith. In each of its three uses it is identified as **“our confession”** or **“the confession of our hope.”** The shared faith expressed in that confession is the basis for the communication between the apostle and his readers. The manner in which **“the confession”** is simply cited without explanation or definition indicates that the writer is confident that his readers are well aware of the nature and substance of **“the confession.”** The context of **“holding fast the confession of our hope”** and the baptismal reference of have been **“washed in pure water”** in 10:22-23 suggests that this confession, in its most basic form, was linked to the Sacrament of Holy Baptism as a summary statement of the faith into which one was baptized. The confession is an statement of objective truth, not a description of the congregation’s personal experience of that truth. The clear focus of the word is on what is confessed, not the group’s act of confessing. All of this, of course, flies directly in the face of the radical subjectification of the contemporary world view which views everything exclusively from the perspective of each individual. The identity of the congregation is defined by their joint confession, their expressed recognition of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Redeemer/Mediator whose blood shed for them upon the cross is the sole basis of forgiveness and salvation. Their unity as **“holy brothers who share in a heavenly calling”** (3:1) is the result of the convictions which they hold in common with one another. *“So by confessing that Jesus is God’s Son, they also affirm their own status as God’s sons and therefore as brothers with one another.”* (Kleinig, p. 168) The confession of the church is, in its essence, a declaration of that which God has done by grace for **“Jesus is the High Priest and the Apostle of our confession”** (3:1). Accordingly, when **“we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope”** (3:6) we are actually glorifying and thanking God for what He has done in Christ. Given the manner in which **“the confession”** is presented here in Hebrews, the general consensus among scholars is that some sort



13<sup>th</sup> Century Illustration Showing Each of the Twelve Contributing One Phrase to the Apostle’ Creed



***“13<sup>th</sup> Century Illumination Depicted The Twelve Apostles Inspired By The Holy Spirit to Compose the Creed”***

*with the Holy Spirit, compiled this brief token of their future preaching, each making the contribution that they thought fit, and they decreed that it should be handed out as standard teaching to believers.” (Kelly, p. 1-2)*

That tradition expanded over the centuries, as traditions are wont to do, so that by the 8<sup>th</sup> Century AD, not only did the twelve write the creed themselves but the specific words and phrases of the creed which each apostle contributed had become a part of the story. While such tales must be dismissed as amusing anecdotes, they do reveal the assumption that from the earliest days Christianity was regarded by its founders as a specific body of doctrine which was to be consistent among all those who could rightly be recognized as Christians. Those who deviated from that doctrine were to be rejected. Thus, toward the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century St. John writes in his first letter:

***“Beloved, do not believe in every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. For many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God, every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.” (1 John 4:1-3)***

In his classic study *Early Christian Creeds*, J.N.D. Kelly contends that Christianity is

of brief creedal statement already existed among the earliest congregations, used in their worship with particular application to the rite of Baptism and in their proclamation of the Gospel.

The origin of the three ecumenical creeds - Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian - and the existence of creedal statements in and shortly after the apostolic age remains the topic of considerable debate among scholars. The traditional belief was that the apostles themselves composed the earliest creed which still bears their name. In a letter dated around A.D. 404, an theologian named Rufinus contended:

*“As they were therefore on the point of taking leave of one another, they first settled on an agreed norm for their future preaching, so that they might not find themselves, widely separated as they would be, giving out different doctrines to the people they invited to believe in Christ. So they met together in one spot and being filled*



creedal by nature and that the New Testament provides ample evidence of the formulation of brief doctrinal statements from the beginning. These may not have been creeds - that is official doctrinal statements certified and sanctioned with the structure of a church organization - by they most certainly were confessions of the truth of Jesus Christ which constituted and expressed the Gospel of salvation.

*“The Early Church was from the start a believing, confessing, preaching church...Had the Christians of the apostolic age not conceived of themselves as possessing a body of distinctive, consciously held beliefs, they would scarcely have separated themselves from Judaism and undertaken an immense program of missionary expansion. Everything goes to show that the infant communities looked upon the bearers of a unique story of redemption...In light of these considerations, it is impossible to overlook the emphasis on the transmission of authoritative doctrine which is to be found everywhere in the New Testament. In Jude 3, for example, we read of ‘the faith once delivered to the saints; later in verse 20, the author speaks of ‘your most holy faith, again using the word in the sense of an accepted body of beliefs. Similarly in the pastoral epistles, such phrases as ‘model of sound words’ (2 Timothy 1:13), ‘the healthy doctrine’ (2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9); ‘the deposit’ and ‘the noble deposit’ (1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 1:14); ‘the faith’ in its concrete acceptance (1 Timothy 1:19; Titus 1:13) and, ‘the splendid teaching’ (1 Timothy 4:6) form a constant refrain. The writer of Hebrews, too, is frequent in his allusions to ‘the confession’ to which he advises his readers to hold fast at whatever cost. (Hebrews 3:1:4:1,14; 10:23) In another passage (6:2) concerned with catechetical practice, he refers unmistakably to an elementary stage in Christian education which includes instruction in doctrine, as well as in ethics and the sacraments....St. Paul himself is a witness to the fact that the process of formulating a hard and fast outline of doctrine was well under way towards the end of the first century. Remonstrating with the Galatians, he reminds them that ‘before their eyes Jesus Christ had been openly set forth*



*“The Twelve Apostles Composing The Apostles’ Creed -13<sup>th</sup> Century”*



*crucified.’ (Galatians 3:1). In 2 Thessalonians 2:14, he exhorts his correspondents to ‘hold fast to the traditions which you have been taught’ the latter hints that he has doctrine in mind; and in Romans 6:7 he speaks explicitly of ‘the pattern of doctrine to which they have been committed. In 1 Corinthians 11:23 and 15:3 the same idea of tradition passed down and received recurs, in the one case with reference to the Eucharist and in the other the narrative of the resurrection...Examples could easily be multiplied and the conclusion is inescapable that however anachronistic it may be to postulate fixed creedal forms for the apostolic age, the documents themselves testify to the existence of a corpus of distinctively Christian teaching. In this sense, at any rate, it is legitimate to speak of the creed of the primitive church.” (Kelly, pp. 9-11)*

When that confession of hope is offered within the community of believers it is intended to be a matter of mutual encouragement and strengthening motivated by a Christ-like concern to build up one another in our common faith. In contrast when the good confession of our hope is presented to the unbelieving world all around us it becomes a matter of both evangelistic proclamation and defense of the truth in the face of the multi-faceted lies of the Adversary - to the glory of God and the salvation of men. Peter, often identified as *“the Apostle of Hope,”* urged Christians to be fearless in the confession of our hope in Christ, undaunted by the opposition or even persecution of the world, so that our courage in confession might give honor and glory to Christ.

***“Have no fear of them, nor be troubled. But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that when you are slandered. Those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.” (1 Peter 3:14-17)***

The Hebrews are encouraged to ***“hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.”*** The language here is virtually identical to that of both of the previous references to the confession. The two phrases ***“hold fast”*** and ***“without wavering”*** reinforce one another. The terminology suggests personal danger in the face of strong opposition. It summons the believer to call upon his utmost strength as provided by Christ to constantly and persistently maintain the good confession. The opposite of this perspective is characterized as ***“wavering.”*** The waverer is described by James in the opening segment of his epistle in the most graphic language: ***“But let him ask in faith with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like the wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in his ways.”*** (James 1:6-8) Classic Puritan commentator John Owen, whose eight volume

commentary on Hebrews remains a standard in the field although it was written four hundred years ago, notes:

*“One that is always disputing and tossed up and down by various doubts in his mind, not coming to a fixed resolution or determination. He is like a wave of the sea which sometimes subsides and is quiet, and sometimes is tossed one way or another, as it is driven by the wind. There were many in those days who did hesitate in the profession of the doctrine of the Gospel; sometimes they were inclined toward it and cautiously embraced it; sometimes they returned again to Judaism; and sometimes they would attempt to reconcile and unite the two covenants, the two religions, the two churches together. With such waverers our apostle had great contention. As men’s minds waver in these things, so their confession wavers. That is exactly what the apostle condemns, setting in*

*contrast to it ‘full assurance of faith.’ It is that ‘full assurance’ which he requires of us. The term ‘full assurance’ means to resist being pushed back and forth by outside pressure. To stand steady and firm. The ‘full assurance of faith’ “without wavering” is contradicted by (1) halting indecisively between two opinions - God or Baal, Judaism or Christianity, truth or error. This ‘wavering’ involves matters of doctrine. (2) a weakness of mind or lack of resolution to continue steadfast in the faith in the face of opposition or difficulty. (3) a willingness to yield in compliance to opposition on any point of doctrine or worship with the faith we have professed. Thus, for example, the Apostle Paul would not yield, ‘no not even for an hour’ to those who required circumcision. (4) to the final apostasy from the truth to which this wavering up and down inevitably leads, as the apostle will indicate in the text which follows. Instead, ‘assurance of faith’ ‘without wavering’ consists of (1) a firm conviction of the mind as to the truth of the faith which we have professed. (2) constant resolve to remain in that faith and adhere to it without the least deviation in the face of any and all opposition. (3) firm resolve to do all that is required in order to remain steadfast in the truth. This is the sum and substance of that which the apostle urges upon the Hebrews.” (Owen, pp. 516-517)*



**Puritan Theologian John Owen**

***“Holding fast to the confession of our hope without wavering”*** is made possible by the

faithfulness of the God upon whom our hope is founded. Falling away from the confession of this hope is a demonstration of both a deficiency of personal commitment to our utterly trustworthy God, and of deficiency of comprehension regarding the character of God and His unfailing faithfulness.

*“It is, of course, a vitally important consideration that the promises in which we have faith and which are the foundation of our hope are the promises of God which, as such demand the response of faith that is fully assured and a confession of hope that is without wavering, unswerving. If the promises were to any degree the promises of man, to that degree they would be fallible and uncertain, a question mark would be placed against their fulfillment, and faith and hope would falter. But of God, and only of God, it can be affirmed as absolutely and everlastingly true that ‘He who promised is faithful.’” (Hughes, p. 414)*

The perfect faithfulness of God is constantly affirmed through Holy Writ as the only basis for the unshakeable confidence of the believer. The faithful is set before the Christian as a source of encouragement that enables him to that which would otherwise be impossible:

***“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord...God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” (1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:13)***

***“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it.” (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)***

***“Finally, brothers, pray for us that the Word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as has happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith, but the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 3:1-5)***

***“For it is time for judgement to begin at the household of God, and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the Gospel of God? And, ‘if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?’ Therefore, let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.” (1***



Peter 4:16-19)

***“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*** (1 John 1:7-10)

Nowhere is the faithfulness of God more frequently or firmly asserted than in the visions of Revelation as St. John foretells the grim persecution and trials which God’s people will be called upon to endure as the Day of Judgement approaches:

***“Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.”*** (Revelation 1:4-5); ***“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of God’s creation.’ “*** (Revelation 3:14); ***“Then I saw heaven opened andd, behold a white horse! The One sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.”*** (Revelation 19:11)



***“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and do good works...”*** - The application or expression of ***“holding fast the confession of our hope without wavering”*** is presented in a specific appeal for thoughtful and loving concern both for the fellow members of the Christian community and the integrity of the community. This immediate application to real life should remind us that our creed is not some sort of detached formula or collection of abstract ideas. Authentic faith is active in love. Thomas Aquinas correctly observed - ***“It is not sufficient to have hope in the heart, but it also must be confessed with the mouth.”*** But having said this, we must also sadly note that the popular modern slogan ***“Deeds Not Creeds!”*** is also an evil distortion of the truth of God. Deeds without creeds, that is, actions which are not the deliberate expression of that which the one true God has done to accomplish for sinful humanity in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, upon the cross - are nothing more than human busy-work which will replace the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone with fatal self-righteousness. Creeds and deeds

dare never be viewed as an either/or. It is most certainly true that faith without works is dead, as James pointedly reminds us. But it is equally true that works without the substance of true faith are also dead. Our works are the embodiment of our faith, the expression of that which we believe revealed to us by God in the biblical balance of Law and Gospel. And as the old song says - *“You can’t have one without the other.”*



*“Jesus and His Disciples At The Last Supper”*

***“Not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*** - Christianity is inherently and necessarily a group experience. The church is the *“ecclesia”* - the gathering of those who have been called out of the world by God in Christ to be His own. The gathering of the congregation around Word and Sacrament is the core activity of the church. It is both an individual encounter with the grace of God for the forgiveness of my sins and strengthening of my faith and, at the same time the prime opportunity for me ***“to stir one another up to love and good works”*** and ***“encouraging one another”*** in our mutual faith. Thus, the close connection here between these goals and ***“not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some.”*** A primary motive for our participation in the corporate worship and study of the congregation should be to stir up and encourage one another by our presence and joyful participation. Then, as in every other dimension of life, we ourselves will be blessed by that which we have done to be a blessing to others.

Thus, the heart of Christianity is the assembly of the faithful around Word and Sacrament. Here the new man is nourished and empowered in the preaching and teaching of God’s Word and in the sacraments which Christ has instituted to convey that forgiveness in a uniquely tangible way. As we ***“consider how to stir up one another to love and good works”*** this gathering of the faithful becomes a primary opportunity. The personal forgiveness and faith strengthening which I there receive is immediately applied as I am enabled to discern that my presence and participation in the gathering is not merely for my



own benefit.

This basic truth is contradicted by the radical individualism of contemporary culture which tends to reduce the Christian faith to an exclusively personal relationship between Jesus and I. Like all of the first Liar's falsehoods, this lie has just enough truth to make it plausible. Certainly faith is individual and personal. But unfortunately if it stops there the consequence will be a malignant self-absorption which distorts and destroys true faith. The result is a relationship that is no longer Jesus and I but has become instead I and Jesus, with the emphasis on me. I then define this relationship in terms of my own self-perceived needs and desires. Those needs and desires redefine Jesus, whom I deign to allow into my life only to the degree that He meets my needs and desires. The divine Son of God who became a man to suffer and die for sinful man is banished only to be replaced by a superficial self-realization guru whom I may manipulate at will. In this mutation of true faith I am no longer a sinner in desperate need of the forgiveness which Christ alone can provide. Instead, I am a consumer pursuing happiness and self-fulfillment on my own terms.

The love of God in Christ is inherently geared toward self-sacrificing service. That principle is demonstrated most clearly and powerfully in the life of Christ Himself. The faith which God creates within the individual believer through the Means of Grace - the Gospel in Word and Sacrament - breaks the dominance of sinful selfishness and reorients the believer, transforming him from taker to giver. The result is that the defining characteristic of the Christian becomes a desire to reflect the love of his Savior in the service



*"Jesus Washing His Disciples Feet" - Ford Maddox Brown*





***“Jesus Washing His Disciples’ Feet”***  
***John Jacob Aristides***

of others. Sadly, that transformation is neither perfect nor complete this side of heaven as the conflict between what we are by nature and what we have become in Christ will continue throughout our earthly lives. In this context, it is most appropriate that the apostle, having presented the truth of the faith (creed) immediately proceeds - on the basis of that truth - to admonish the Hebrews to Christ-like service of and concern for one another.

Our Lord conveyed this profound truth by His humble demonstration of service in washing the disciples’ feet at the Last Supper. Each of those present were receiving a wondrous gift in His body and blood for the forgiveness of their sins. And yet the gift was not an end in itself. The gift was intended to free them from the selfishness of sin to the service of love.

***“When He had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed His, He said to them, ‘Do you understand what I have done to you? You call Me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’ and you are right for so I am. If I then your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example so that you also should do just as I have done to you.’” (John 13:12-15)***

St. John Chrysostom rightly observed the critical role of the interaction believers in worship - *“As iron sharpens iron, so also fellowship increases love, for if a stone rubbed against a stone sends forth fire, how much more person in contact with person.”* (Hughes, p. 415) John Kleinig argues that this verse is *“a high point”* of the Epistle because of *“its rich teaching on the unique character of Christian worship.”*

*“With its rich teaching on the unique character of Christian worship, this high point in the sermon helps the congregation to understand what happens in the Divine Service. There they approach God the Father communally in His heavenly house. All the members of the community are well-qualified for this because they have been washed with the water of baptism and cleansed with the blood of Jesus (10:22). Since He is their great High Priest, He Himself ushers them into the Father’s presence. He gives them His own flesh as their way to the Father - ‘the way of His flesh’ (10:20) and His blood to cleanse their hearts from a bad conscience (10:22). They, therefore, truly put their*

*faith in God's promises and seek with hope what He has promised. As they join together in approaching God as brothers of Christ and God's royal children, they also regard one another as fellow members of God's holy family by sharing their love and their material resources with the people in their community of faith. Thus, in the divine service, God's holy people exercise their faith in God's grace, their hope in what He has promised, and their love for their brothers and sisters in Christ.” (Kleinig, p. 508)*

**“And all the more as you see the Day approaching near.”** - The urgency of this admonition and of the holy task of mutual encouragement and edification among believers in Christ is based upon the fundamental reality that we are living in the end times, the interval between the first and second comings of Christ. There is no time for lackadaisical indifference or delay. This world and everything pertaining to it is rapidly running out of time. This brief designation of the impending judgement as **“The Day”** also appears in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 where St. Paul reminds the Corinthians that **“the Day”** will ultimately reveal the value of all of the deeds of men. **“Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw - each one's work will become manifest for the Day will disclose it; because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.”** The Day upon which Christ returns in glory and power as the supreme Judge of the universe will be the final decisive day of all time, the day of days, bringing an end to time and ushering in eternity. **“The Day”** could come at any time, when we least expect it, and accordingly God's people must live in constant expectation, always aware of the transitory, temporary nature of here and now. All of the calamities and crises of time are



**“The Destruction Of Jerusalem by Vespasian” - Jan Luyken**

forerunners of ***“the Day”*** and that was most certainly true of the impending destruction of Jerusalem as God’s judgement upon apostate Judaism.

*“But at the time when this epistle was written the impending judgment upon Jerusalem, of which so many signs filled the sky, brought home the thought in a particularly vivid manner to the minds of men. That judgment, indeed, though not the Day itself, was truly its fiery and blood-red dawn.”* (Delitsch, I, p. 183)

### ***Hebrews 10:26-31***

***(26) For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, (27) but a fearful expectation of Judgement and an expectation of fire that will consume the adversaries. (28) Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. (29) How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? (30) For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine. I will repay!” And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” (31) It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.***

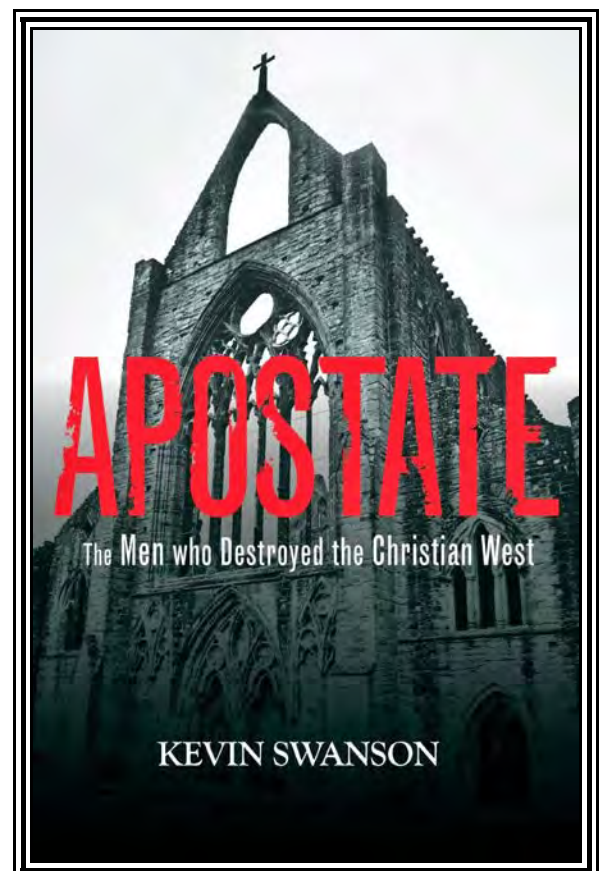
***“For if we go on sinning deliberately...”*** - This grim text has been the subject of intense debate among theologians across the centuries as proponents of a variety of doctrinal positions attempt to bring it into conformity with their own presuppositions. The church has struggled with the question of apostasy and the possibility of repentance after falling from the faith throughout its history. In the early church, for example, Novatian, a 3<sup>rd</sup> Century theologian/bishop, contended that those who had renounced Christianity during periods of imperial persecution could not be accepted back into the church under any circumstances. The majority of the bishops at that time disagreed and insisted that these individuals had to be dealt with on a case to case basis. At the time of the Reformation, John Calvin’s strong assertion of eternal security - popularly expressed by the phrase *“once saved always saved”* - strenuously rejected by the followers of Jacob Arminius who argued that since faith is the result of a personal decision, that decision can be changed. That debate continues within Protestantism to this day. It is not the least bit of overstatement when F.F. Bruce observes - *“This passage was destined to have repercussions in Christian history, beyond what our author could have foreseen.”* (Bruce, p. 261) In Lutheran theology has historically been recognized as one of a number of New Testament passages which refer to *“the sin against the Holy Spirit.”* John Gerhard, perhaps the premier theologian of 17<sup>th</sup> Century Lutheran orthodoxy offered this definition of the Sin Against the Holy Spirit:

*“In order that we may be able to penetrate to the true and proper designation of this sin, a careful examination of the statements of Scripture which speak*



*about it must be made. (Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10; Hebrews 6:4-6; Hebrews 10:26-27,29; and, 1 John 5:16 are listed as proof texts) If the words and circumstances of these passages are carefully considered, it will be discovered that the Sin Against the Holy Spirit is the deliberate rejection of the truth of the Gospel which has been accepted and which was approved in conscience, which rejection is conjoined with a stubborn attack upon it and voluntary blasphemy. For it must be observed that this kind of sin, rebuked by Christ in the Pharisees, who were constrained by the very force of the declared truth, were refuted in conscience by its brilliance, and yet kept raging against it with malicious wickedness, with the result that they were unashamed to ascribe the doctrine and miracles to Satan himself. The Epistle to the Hebrews describes those who sin against the Holy Spirit in this way; those who have first been illumined, who have even tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, who have also tasted the good Word of God, and have also tasted of the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come (Hebrews 6:4-5), and who nonetheless afterwards lapse, and thus on their own account crucify again the Son of God and hold Him up in contempt (for all these pertain to the description of the subject in that place) (Hebrews 6:6). Also, they despise the Son of God with their willing apostasy, esteem as unclean the blood of the testament in which they were sanctified and bring reproach upon the Spirit of grace.” (Gerhard, XII-XIV, pp. 217-218)*

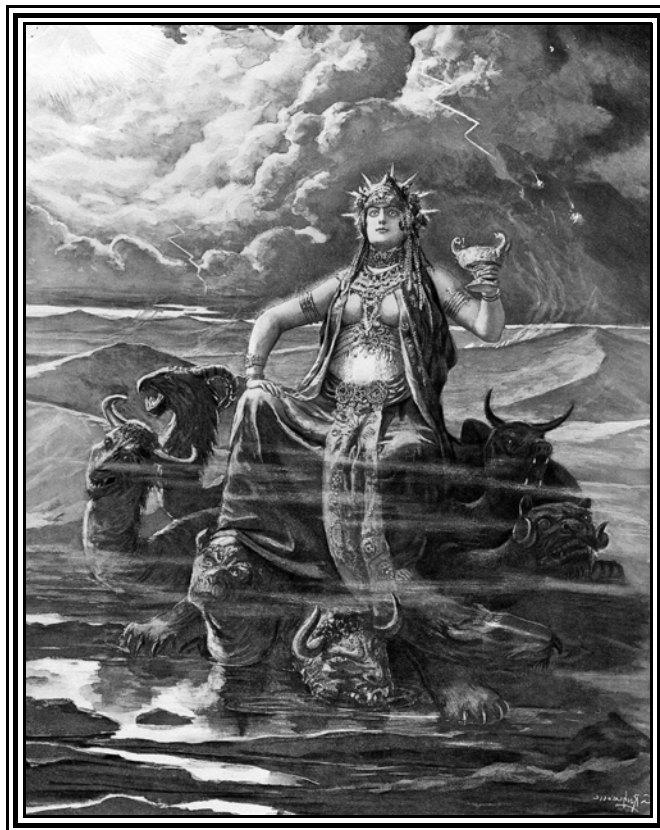
The admonition now administered is linked to that which was stated in the preceding verses by the conjunction **“For.”** In the Greek text, however, the first word in the phrase is the adverb **“deliberately.”** That unusual placement is designed to give particular emphasis to the unique nature of this sin as an action that is taken after consideration of its significance and potential consequences. While **“deliberately”** is an accurate translation of the Greek it lacks the force of the Greek, particularly in the context of the Old Testament’s characterization of such sin, to which Hebrews will refer in the coming verses. This more than mere premeditation. This is not a momentary lapse. Rather it is an ongoing pattern of spiteful rejection of God and His covenant of grace (cf. Deuteronomy 30:15-20) That pattern is reflected in the present tense of the participle - **“go on sinning deliberately.”**



*“The present tense ‘go on sinning’ indicates perseverance and continuance in apostasy; the sin here spoken of is not a momentary or short-lived aberration from which the infirm but sincere believer is speedily recalled by the convictions of the Spirit, but one willfully persisted in.” (Delitsch, II, p. 184)*

The final verse of the Book of Isaiah grimly depicts those who indulge in such blasphemous rebellion against the Lord and their inevitable fate: ***“And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against Me. For their worm shall not die; their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”*** (Isaiah 66:24) The Torah dramatically characterizes such sin as sinning ***“with a high hand”*** suggesting a clenched fist raised to heaven in angry defiance of God. Numbers 15:27-31 makes a careful distinction between unintentional sin and the actions of the willful deliberate sinner who must be ***“cut off from among his people.”***

***“If one person sins unintentionally, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement before the LORD for the person who makes a mistake, when he sins unintentionally, to make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven...But the person who does anything with a high hand...reviles the LORD and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken His commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.”***



***“Harlot Babylon - Revelation 14” - Rochegrosse***

Proverbs 2:12-15 presents a graphic description of such defiant, deliberate sinners and their irrevocable destruction in a warning to the man of God to avoid them and their deliberate rejection of God and dedication to evil at all costs:

***“Delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech, who forsake the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, men whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways. So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; for her house sinks down to death and her paths to the departed; none who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life.”*** (Proverbs 2:12-19)



***“St. Paul Miki and Missionaries Martyred In 17<sup>th</sup> Century Japan”***

This is the fourth such warning against apostasy in the Epistle (2:1-4; 3:7-4:11 and 6:4-8) Franz Delitsch is exactly correct in his definition of this sin and its perilous nature in the specific context of the audience to whom this letter is addressed:

***“The sin meant is that of apostasy; unfaithfulness to God and to His manifestation in Christ, being the ground and foundation of all other sin. This sin, also called ‘rebellion’ in the Old Testament, is committed by the man who, from a Jew had become a Christian, willingly and knowingly forsakes the services and communion of Christ’s people to make common cause with the anti-Christian synagogue.”*** (Delitsch, II, p. 134)

Another of the unique circumstances which contribute to the unparalleled severity of this particular sin is that it can only be committed ***“after receiving the knowledge of the truth.”*** This is not an inadvertent action committed by ***“the ignorant and the wayward”*** which can



be dealt with gently. (Hebrews 5:2)

*“There is an abandonment of the Christian profession and of the way of holiness inseparable from that profession. Such a sinner turns away, of set purpose, from what he knows to be the truth. He sins against the covenant with whose sign he has been sealed. He sins against the light (Heb. 6:4), showing that he love darkness rather than light (John 3:19). He repudiates salvation and chooses judgement.”* (Hughes, p. 419)

**“There is no further sacrifice for sins...”** - Hebrews 10 uses the terminology of Numbers 15 to describe the consequences of such action - **“there is no longer a sacrifice for sins.”** That which had been the case under the former covenant is all the more devastating under the new covenant which the multiplicity of the sacrifices and offerings which foreshadowed the work of the coming Messiah have been perfectly fulfilled in the once for all self-sacrifice of Jesus the Savior upon the cross. To declare, as does Verse 26, that **“there is no longer a sacrifice for sins”** is to say that such reprobates have cut themselves off from the one and only means of forgiveness and reconciliation to God in Christ. That terrifying point will be made more explicitly in Verse 29 - **“How much worse will that punishment be for one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?”** There cannot be any other fate for one guilty of such sacrilege **“but a fearful expectation of judgement and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.”** The language of these phrases is most forceful. They have nothing else to look forward to than the terrifying certainty of divine judgement for all of eternity for they have consigned themselves to the consuming fires of eternal damnation in Hell. All that is left to them is

*“a dread and shuddering expectation of future punishment which already afflicts the inmost soul of the apostate...the awe and terror of this anticipation can only be faintly imagined by the mind which has not felt it and is in itself inexpressible. This is all that remains for the apostate Christian.”* (Delitsch, II, p. 186)

Scripture is replete with similar expressions of the consuming fire of God's wrath. The intensity of the image is the reflection of the intensity of God's passionate love and His righteous abhorrence sin and evil because of their devastating effect upon mankind which is the object of His love. The original text literally reads *“and a fiery zeal that is soon to devour the opponents.”* *“God's zeal is His passionate ardor for His beloved people as well as His ardent indignation against all sinners who desecrate His holiness and attack His people.”* This terminology is derived from Isaiah's appeal to the Lord to demonstrate His majesty before the wicked who remain blind to His glory:

***“If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land***

***of uprightness he deals corruptly and does not see the majesty of the LORD. O LORD, Your hand is lifted up, but they do not see it. Let them see Your zeal for Your people, and be ashamed. Let the fire for Your adversaries consume them!” (Isaiah 26:10-11)***



***“The Destruction Of Sodom And Gomorrah By The Fire Of Judgement” - Herri Met de Belis***

St. Paul had warned the Romans, ***“The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and all unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”*** (Romans 1:18) That righteous ***“wrath of God”*** - His burning anger is depicted throughout Holy Writ as a fire which completely consumes, leaving nothing in its wake, and is not to be trifled with.

***“How long, O LORD? Will You be angry forever? Will Your jealousy burn like fire? Pour out Your anger on the nations that do not know You, and on the kingdoms that do not call upon Your name! For they have devoured Jacob and laid waste his habitation.”*** (Psalm 79:5-7)

***“Take care, lest you forget the covenant, and make a carved image, the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden, for the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God...Know, therefore, that He who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the LORD your God.”*** (Deuteronomy 4:23-24; cf. 9:3)

***“O LORD, Your hand is lifted up, but they do not see it. Let them see Your zeal for Your people and be ashamed. Let the fire for Your adversaries consume them...The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the***

*godless; who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isaiah 33:14)*

*“As one gathers silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into a furnace, to blow fire on it in order to melt it, so I will gather you in My anger and in My wrath, and I will put you in and melt you. I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath and you shall be melted in the midst of it..Therefore I have poured out My indignation upon them and I have consumed them in the fire of My wrath.” (Ezekiel 22:20-22,31)*

*“Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD; in the fire of His jealousy all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end He will make of all the inhabitants of the earth....For My decision is to gather the nations, to assemble the kingdoms, to pour out upon them all My indignation, My burning anger; for in the fire of My jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed.” (Zephaniah 1:18; 3:8)*



## *“Moses The Lawgiver”*

***“Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.”*** - The point is reinforced by an argument from the lesser to the greater based upon the practice of the Old Testament. The Torah dictated that in the most flagrant cases of premeditated murder, blasphemy or idolatry the death penalty was required. The rabbis enumerated a total of 613 crimes in the Torah. Only twelve of these crimes were capital offenses. They included: idolatry (Exodus 22:20); human sacrifice (Leviticus 20:1-5); blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16); false prophecy (Deuteronomy 18:20-22); necromancy (Leviticus 20:27); witchcraft (Exodus 22:18); homosexuality (Leviticus 20:13); bestiality (Leviticus 20:15-16); murder (Genesis 9:6); adultery (Leviticus 20:10); rape (Deuteronomy 22:25); and, incest (Leviticus 20:11-12). As the text here in Hebrews notes, the conviction of the

accused in a capital crime and the imposition of this ultimate penalty had to be certified by the testimony of multiple witnesses - *“On the evidence of two or three witnesses.”*

***“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Bring out of the camp the one who cursed, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let***



*all the congregation stone him. And speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. And the congregation shall stone him...Whoever takes a human life shall surely be put to death.” (Leviticus 24:13-17)*

*“If there is any among you, within any of your towns which the LORD your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing His covenant, and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven which I have forbidden, and it is told to you and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently, and if it is certain that such an abomination has been done in Israel, then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has done this evil thing, and you shall stone that man or woman to death with stones. On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people.” (Deuteronomy 17:2-7)*

*“If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses. But no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness...You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of the one who shed it.” (Numbers 35:30,32)*

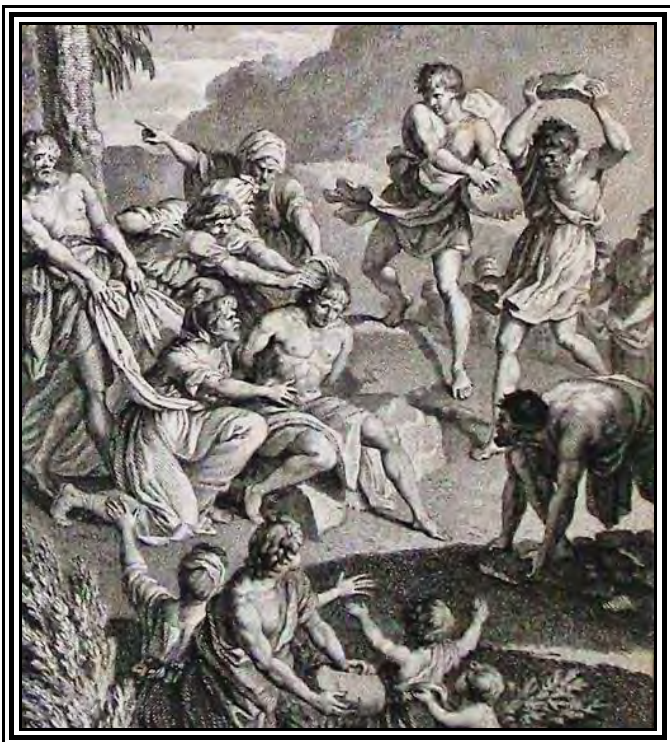


*“The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah” - John Martin*

The unique severity of these crimes and the importance of preventing their repetition among the people because of the moral danger they posed to society indicated by the imposition of the most severe punishment necessitated that the death penalty be imposed ***“without mercy.”*** ***“Mercy”*** or hesitance motivated by pity for the criminal was a luxury which the culture could not afford. This same grim realism was expressed by Moses - using the same words quoted here in reference to the elimination of the pagan Canaanites during the Israelite occupation of Palestine and to the execution of those among Israel itself who would entice their own countrymen to apostasy and idolatry:

***“When the LORD your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You must make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them...And you shall consume all the peoples that the LORD your God shall give over to you. Your eye shall not pity them, neither shall you serve their gods for that would be a snare to you.”*** (Deuteronomy 7:2,16)

***“If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you embrace, or the friend who is like your own soul entices you secretly saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods...you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him, but you shall kill him...And all Israel shall hear and fear, and never again shall do such wickedness as this among you.’”*** (Deuteronomy 13:6-12)



***“Stoning The Blasphemer” - Hoet***

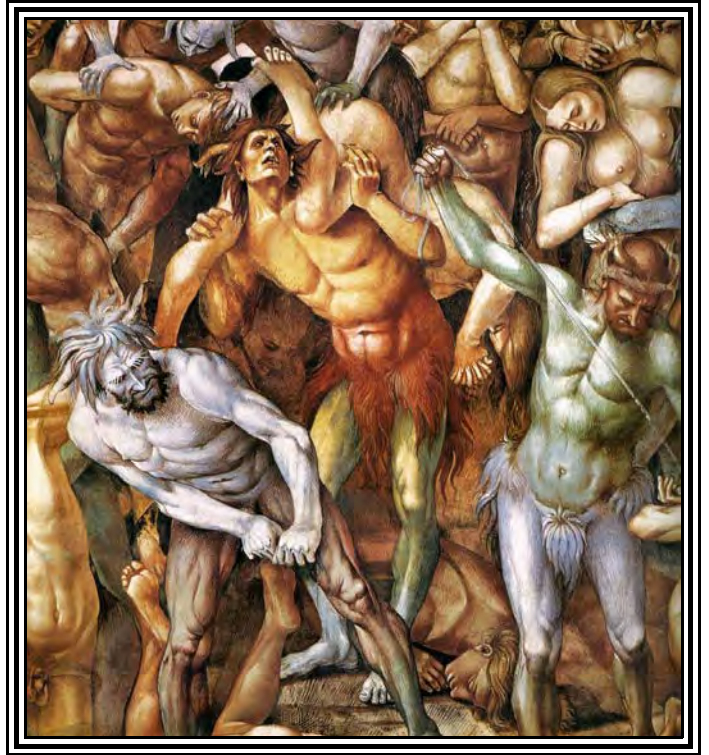
***“But if anyone hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and attacks him and strikes him fatally so that he dies...the elders of the city shall take him from there and hand him over to the avenger of blood so that he may die. Your eye shall not have pity on him, but you shall purge the blood of innocent blood from Israel, so that it may be well with you...A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established...So you shall purge the evil from your midst and the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any evil among you. Your eye***



***shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.”***  
(Deuteronomy 19:13-21)

***“How much worse punishment will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God...”*** - Having reminded his readers of the harsh penalties imposed for violation of the rules of the Torah and the merciless manner in which they were to be implemented upon those who did not remain faithful to the Sinai covenant, the writer now proceeds from the lesser to the greater. He shifts his attention to the infinitely superior covenant which God has instituted through the once for all sacrifice of the great high priest, His own Son Jesus Christ upon the cross. If the penalties of the Mosaic Law were so severe to be carried out without exemption and without the least sympathy

for the covenant breaker, how much more severe must the consequences be for anyone who dares to scorn and reject the New Covenant implemented by the sacred blood of God’s only Son?



***“The Torments of the Damned” - Signorelli***

***“Who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of Grace”*** - Three stunning phrases characterize the action of the sinner who having been born again by the Gospel, deliberately chooses to abandon, reject and condemn that Gospel in order to return to the empty shell of an obsolete Judaism. *“Our author is not given to wild exaggeration, and when he uses language like this, he chooses his words with his customary care.”* (Bruce, p. 261) Each of the three verbs explodes like the blast of a judgement trumpet expressing action so self-destructive and extreme that it verges on the incomprehensible. ***“Has trampled underfoot the Son of God”*** denotes contempt and rejection of the most flagrant kind. The violence of the term is the expression of an enraged fanatic who will go to any length to demonstrate his scornful repudiation of Jesus Christ and everything which He has ever done.

***“To trample Him underfoot is not merely to reject or cast away as something unfit for use which men carelessly tread upon (Matthew 5:13 - “It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under peoples’ feet.”) (Luke 8:5 - A sower went out to sow His seed, and as he sowed, some***

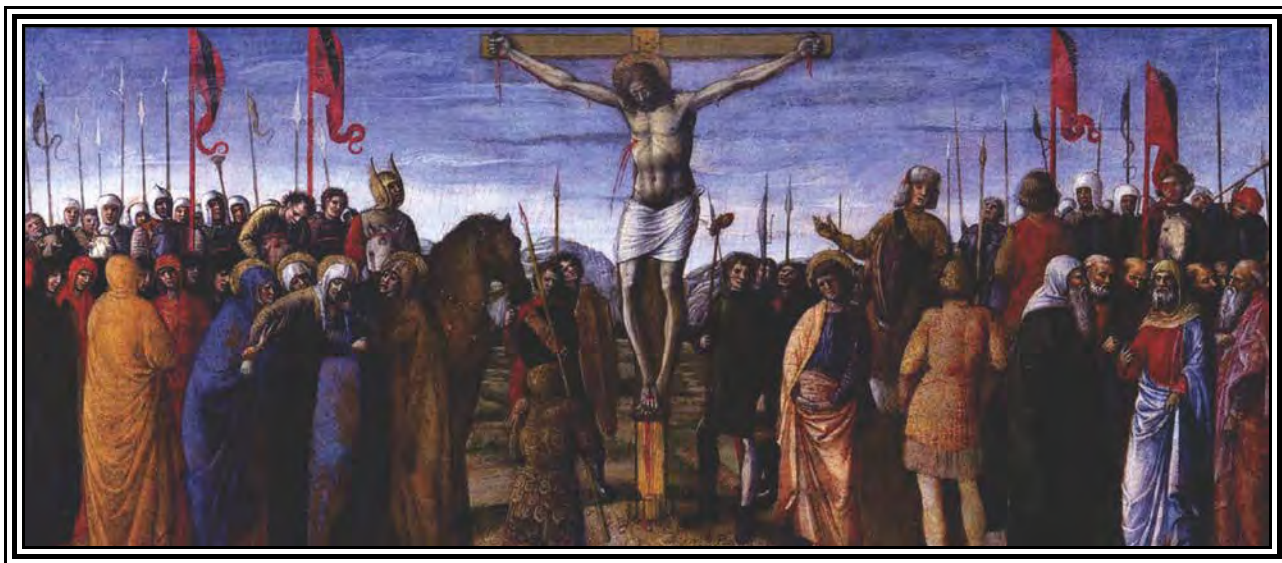


*fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it.”) but to trample down with ruthless contempt as an object of scorn or hatred (Matthew 7:5 - “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.”)” (Delitsch, II, p. 188)*

The identification of the object of His rage as *“the Son of God”* appears to focus his rejection of Christ on His claim to deity. This is completely consistent with the response of the priests and rabbis, culminating in the hypocritically staged horror of the High Priest at the mock trial of Jesus. Even in the midst of His agony upon the cross Caiaphas and the foremost leaders of the Sanhedrin taunted and mocked Him and His claim to be the Son of God, which to them seemed the ultimate blasphemy.

*“And the High Priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, ‘Have You no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against You?’ But He remained silent and made no answer. Again the High Priest asked Him, ‘Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ And Jesus said, ‘I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven!’ And the High Priest tore his garments and said, ‘What further witnesses do we need? You have heard His blasphemy!’” (Mark 14: 60-64)*

*“And those who passed by derided Him, wagging their heads and saying, ‘Aha! You who would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself and come down from the cross!’ And so also the chief priests and scribes mocked Him to one another, saying, ‘He saved others. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.’” (Mark 15:29-32)*



*“The Mockery Of Christ On The Cross”*

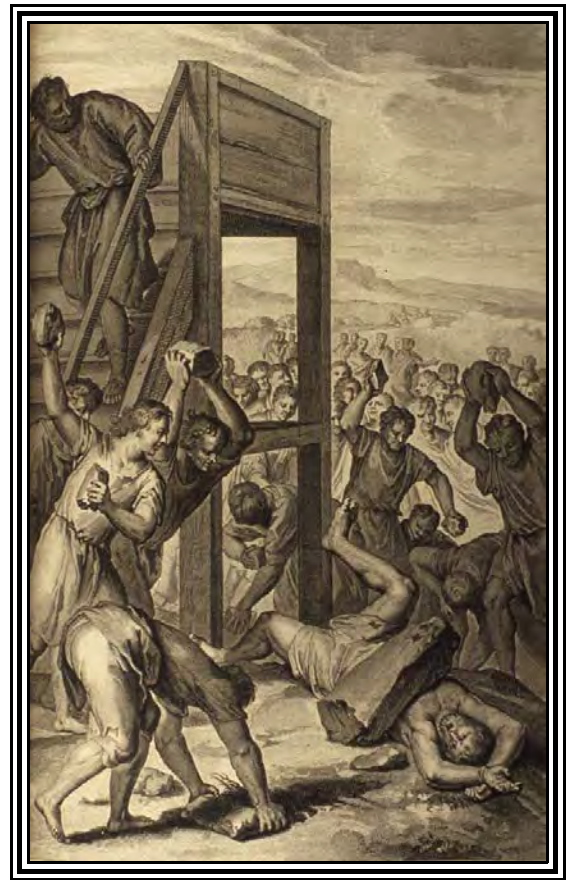
The same terminology appears in Psalms 56 & 57 where David laments the mistreatment which he has endured at the hands of his enemies, anticipating the scorn and rejection which his messianic descendant would also one day endure from His oppressors:

*“Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me; all day long an attacker oppresses me; my enemies trample on me all day long, for many attack me proudly. When I am afraid, I put my trust in You. In God whose word I praise; in God I trust, I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?...I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills His purpose for me. He will send from heaven and save me, He will put to shame he who tramples on me, God will send out His steadfast love and faithfulness.”* (Psalm 56:1-4; 57:2-3)

In the visions of the prophet Daniel, the destruction of the Persian Empire by the Greek realm of Alexander the Great was depicted as a ram cast down and trampled upon by a male goat with four horns - *“And the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled on him.”* (Daniel 8:7) This trampling upon the Son of God is in stark contrast to the promise of Hebrews 1:13 where God promised that Christ’s enemies would be utterly subdued and made a *“footstool for Your feet.”*

Only in the context of everything which the Epistle to the Hebrews has already said about the divine identity of Jesus Christ as the only-begotten Son of God can the enormity of the blasphemy of those who have *“trampled underfoot the Son of God”* be fully understood:

*“To trample the Son of God under foot implies, within the context of our Epistle, the sneering rejection of Jesus as the Son of God through whom God has spoken, and enacted His final redeeming word to mankind, through whom the world was created and by whose powerful word the universe is sustained and carried forward to its predestined end (1:1-3). It means the rebellious denial of the superiority of the angels of Him to whom God has said, ‘Thou art My Son’ and ‘Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever,’ and ‘Sit at My right hand’ (1:4-13). It means the supercilious contradiction of the superiority to Moses, a servant in God’s house, of Him who is over God’s house as a Son (3:5ff.). It means the callous abandonment of the confession of Jesus as the Son of God and our Great High Priest, who infinitely superior to Aaron, has*



*“The Stoning Of The Blasphemer”*

*passed through the heavens, and through whom we may with confidence draw near to the throne of grace (4:14-16). It means the contemptuous repudiation of Him who really is the Son of God, eternal, incarnate, crucified, risen and glorified; and who, beyond measure greater than Abraham and all the others, has been made perfect forever (7:4ff, 26-28). Such is the apostasy that so totally despises the Son of God, as trample Him underfoot.” (Hughes, p. 422)*

Some commentators suggest that this blasphemous trampling upon the Son of God is more than a mere metaphor but may actually describe a ritual action required of one who desired to return to Judaism after renouncing Christianity. Such a ritual would most probably have related to the sacraments of baptism or the Lord's Supper. The apostate's rejection of Christ would have been signified by his willingness to literally trample upon the white robe customarily worn by those who baptized in the early church or upon consecrated bread of Holy Communion which Christianity acknowledged to be the body of Jesus Christ by means of which the forgiveness of sins was conveyed to the communicant.

*“Chrysostom and some others associate the ‘trampling of the Son of God underfoot’ with the unworthy reception of the eucharist. It is true that Paul writes that ‘whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord’ and ‘eats and drinks judgement upon himself.’ (1 Corinthians 11:27,29). But if particular moments of experience in the life of one who has lionked himself to the life of the Christian community are to be sought in the language of Verse 29, it would seem preferable to interpret ‘spurning the Son of God’ as equivalent to the repudiation of one’s baptism, in which ‘putting on Christ’ (Galatians 3:27) and identification with Him in His death, burial and resurrection is professed (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12).” (Hughes, p. 424)*

The second characterization of the apostate is equally severe - ***“and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified.”*** As the first description of the apostasy referred to the person of Christ as the Son of God, so then the second focuses upon the work of Christ in the redemption which He accomplished by shedding His precious blood for sinners upon the cross. Throughout the epistle the blood of Christ is synonymous with His sacrificial death upon the cross, reflecting the sacrificial terminology of the former covenant and the significance of the blood of the offerings. Thus, for example, Hebrews 9 declared:

***“He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer sanctify, for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offering Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead***



***works to serve the living God...Indeed, under the Law almost everything is purified with blood, for without the shedding of blood there is not forgiveness of sins.***” (Hebrews 9:12-14,22)

The blood of Christ is ***“the blood of the covenant”*** because the Son’s sacrifice of Himself was the means by which the salvation of mankind was accomplished as had been promised by the prophets and prefigured in the rituals and sacrifices of the former covenant. Hence in Hebrews 13:20, the writer will identify Christ’s shed blood as ***“the blood of the eternal covenant.”***

*“An apostate does not just renounce God’s Son, but also desecrates His most holy gift, His saving blood by treating it as something despicable. He becomes guilty of sacrilege. He defiles the blood that Jesus had offered up for the redemption from sin (9:12), the blood of the covenant (9:20) that cleanses (9:14) and sanctifies (13:12) His disciples in Holy Communion. Thus, by his rejection of God’s Son he rejects not only the source, but also the means of his own redemption. That is why there is no longer any sacrifice for those who intentionally desecrate Christ’s holiness.”* (Lockwood, pp. 529-530)

The verb ***“has profaned”*** is the Greek *“koinon”* which means that which is common or ordinary. In the context of religion and ritual the term takes the next step to describe that which is impure and unholy. In the laws of the Torah the blood of the sin offerings was holy because it accomplished the removal of the guilt of sin and rendered everything with which it came into contact holy. The rules in Leviticus are most emphatic as to this fact:

***“The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the sin offering. In the place where the burnt offering is killed, shall the sin offering be killed before the LORD; it is most holy. The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the Tent of Meeting. Whoever touches its flesh shall be holy, and when any of its blood is splashed on a garment, you shall wash that on which it was splashed in a holy place. And the earthenware vessel in which it is boiled shall be broken. But if it boiled in a bronze vessel, that shall be scoured and rinsed in water. Every male among the priests may eat of it, it is most holy. But no sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood is brought into the Tent of Meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place; it shall be burned up with fire.’”*** (Leviticus 6:24-30)

Again, arguing from the lesser to the greater, if such meticulous care had been taken with the blood of the animal sacrifices of the former covenant to signify its role in accomplishing the cleansing of the people from sin then how much more meticulous care should be accorded to the most precious blood of the Son of God -

*“how much more must this be the case with that blood which was poured out in the power of an eternal Spirit for our reconciliation and which as the covenant blood of the sprinkling of the New Testament has actually accomplished for us an approach into the Holy of Holies! To treat this blood, by a return to Judaism, as the blood of an ordinary man, nay (as too likely) as that of a misguided or guilty criminal - what a profanation of the most sacred thing, what a provocation of the severest vengeance on the part of Him who has thus been treated with the blackest ingratitude!” (Delitsch, II, p. 189)*



***“The Holy Of Holies In The Temple Of Solomon” - 18<sup>th</sup> Century Bible Engraving***

This profaning of the sacred blood of Christ is all the more egregious because it was the very basis for the ungrateful apostate’s own salvation - ***“by which he was sanctified.”*** Once again, the text makes it clear the those who are addressed here were once true Christians who have become apostate, that is, they have repudiated their faith and rejected their former Savior. The means of their sanctification was the blood of Christ by which their sins had been forgiven, purifying them from sin’s guilt and enabling them to stand before God within the Most Holy Place. The verb ***“sanctified”*** means *“to make holy”* or to be set apart by God as His own for sacred purpose. The English word reflects the Latin words *“sanctus”* and *“ficio”* - to make holy. This same verb was used in Hebrew 2:11 - ***“For He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why He is not ashamed to call them brothers.”*** As has so often been the case throughout the letter, this sanctification formula is the familiar language of the Old Testament, affirming that the Lord had set Israel apart as His own among all the

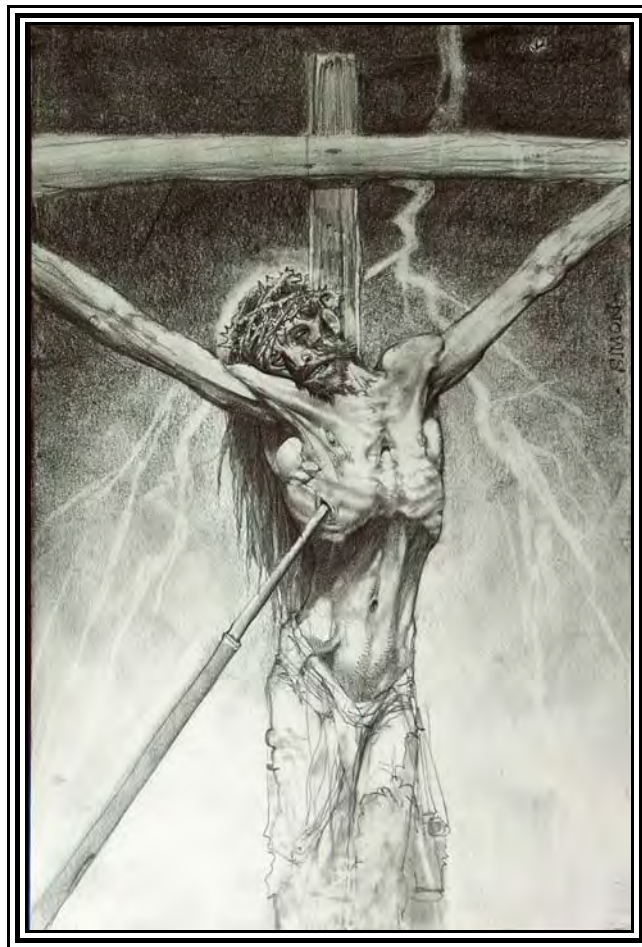
nations and particularly the priesthood within Israel as the servants of God: (Exodus 31:13) ***“That you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you.”*** (Leviticus 20:7) ***“Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. Keep My statutes and obey them, I am the LORD who sanctifies you.”*** (Leviticus 21:8,15,23) ***“You shall sanctify him (a priest) for he offers the bread of the LORD your God. He shall be holy to you, for I, the LORD who sanctify him to you am holy...He may not profane his offspring among his people, for I am the LORD who sanctifies him...He shall not go thru the veil or approach the altar because he has a blemish, that he may not profane My sanctuaries,***

***for I am the LORD who sanctifies them.” (Ezekiel 20:12) “Moreover I gave them My Sabbaths as a sign between Me and them that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them.” (Ezekiel 37:28) “Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.”***

The concept of holiness, holy things, and holy places runs throughout Hebrews as the epistle demonstrates how the priesthood, rituals and services of the former covenant prefigured that holiness which would be perfectly accomplished in the life, death, and exaltation of Messiah Jesus.

*“According to God’s will (Heb.10:10) Christians have been and will continue to be sanctified by the body of Christ (Hebrews 10:10) and with His blood (Hebrews 10:29; 13:12) for divine service together with Him in the heavenly realm (Hebrews 9:11-14). Through Jesus as the minister of the holy things (Hebrews 8:2), who entered the holy places on their behalf (Hebrews 9:12,24), they, therefore have access to the holy things of God in the holy places (Hebrews 9:8; 10:19). They are called to share in God’s holiness (Hebrews 12:10) and also pursue sanctification (Hebrews 12:14) by their participation in the divine service. Thus, since they have this divine calling, they are holy brothers of Jesus (Hebrews 3:1), people who are saints, the holy ones ((6:10; 13:24).” (Lockwood, p. 120)*

Finally, the third description of one who abandons the Christian faith to return to Judaism ***“has outraged the Spirit of grace.”*** This unusual title for the Holy Spirit appears to have been derived from Zechariah 12:10 - ***“And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, as one weeps over a firstborn.”*** Most appropriately in this context of Hebrews’ discussion of an apostate Christian who has returned to Judaism, this title, ***“Spirit of Grace”*** occurs in a messianic prophecy which foretells the remorse of Israel



***“The Corpse of Christ On The Cross Pierced by the Centurion’s Spear” - Simon Bishley***



over their rejection of the Savior sent by God. The Evangelist, St. John applies this text to the crucifixion of Christ, more specifically to the piercing of the dead Savior's heart by the spear of the Roman centurion in command of the guard detail at our Lord's execution. ***“For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled: ‘Not one of His bones will be broken.’ And again another Scripture says, ‘They will look on Him whom they have pierced.’”*** (John 19:36-37) In this instance the title ***“Spirit of Grace”*** alludes to the role of the third member of the divine Trinity in working through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament to create faith in the heart of the believer. The Spirit is the divine Source of all grace.

*“The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Grace because He is both God's gift to the saints (Hebrews 6:4) and the sum of all God's gracious gifts to them (Hebrews 2:4; 6:5) The Spirit assures them of God's grace (Hebrews 12:15) and prompts them to approach Him in prayer to receive grace from Him (Hebrews 4:16). So those who disown God's holy Son and spurn His holy blood also insult God's Spirit by their insolent rejection of this holy, heavenly gift. Nothing could be worse than that, for the rejection of that gift shows disgraceful contempt for its generous Giver. Their insolence expels the Spirit of Grace from their hearts.”* (Lockwood, p. 530)

It is for good reason that such apostasy has traditionally been called *“the sin against the Holy Ghost.”* As one commentator notes: *“To condemn or to despise this Holy Spirit is to blaspheme the whole work of grace of which one has once been the subject and to exhibit it as deception and a lie. It is profanely to contradict the very truth of God and draw down upon one's self a vengeance which cannot fail.”* (Delitsch, II, p. 190)

The unique severity of the consequences of the sin against the Holy Ghost reflect the unique damage which this particular transgression can inflict upon the witness of the Gospel of salvation and the powerful contradiction of that Gospel which the actions of the apostate alone can present. That is especially true in the context of apostasy from Christianity back to Judaism, given the primary role of the Spirit of Grace in the inspiration of the Old Testament prophets and the demonstration through the preaching of the apostles and the signs and wonders which accompanied that preaching, that Jesus was truly the Messiah.

*“The Holy Spirit of God, promised and communicated under the Gospel by Jesus Christ from the Father is the author and cause, by whom grace is applied and communicated to all who believe. Thus is He aptly identified as the Spirit of Grace. The sin of apostasy outrages the Spirit of Grace in a host of different ways. It was the Holy Spirit of God himself who reveals that the grace and mercy which He had conveyed was the perfect fulfilment of the most glorious promises of the Old Testament. By their repudiation of Christianity and their return Judaism these apostates had directly renounced that truth.*

*This Holy Spirit was sinned against by these apostates in a particularly direct and personal way in that His work was to bear witness to the person, doctrine, death, and sacrifice of Christ and His glorious exaltation thereafter had all been foretold by the faithful prophets of God throughout the former covenant. **“When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all Truth for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is Mine. Therefore I said that He will take what is Mine and declare it to you.”** (John 16:13-15) **“Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating, when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and His subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you in the things***



***“Christ Crucified Surrounded By The Prophets Holding Their Writings Which Had Foretold His Death” - Tissot***

***that have now been announced to you through those that preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels longed to look.***” (1 Peter 1:10-12) *And this the Spirit of Grace did in various ways. By Him the souls of great multitudes were converted to God in Christ - their eyes were enlightened, their minds were sanctified, and their lives were transformed. By Him those who believed in Jesus came to understand the Scriptures which before had always been a sealed book to them. By Him they were directed, encouraged, supported and comforted in all that they were called upon to suffer for the Name of Christ. By Him were empowered all of the mighty works, signs, wonders and miracles which had been performed by the apostles and other preachers of the Gospel since the beginning. All of these things, and the entire powerful impact of the Gospel upon the multitudes who had confessed the Gospel had been acknowledged as the work of the Holy Spirit. Believers affirmed that these mighty deeds were all the works of the Spirit as promised by the prophets in the days of the Messiah. These works of the Holy Spirit had sowed confusion and consternation among their foes. Before their apostasy, those who now had fallen away had joined in this affirmation. But now, having completely abandoned Christ and His Gospel, these same people rejected all the works of the Spirit of Grace as either diabolical delusions or the errors of misguided fanatics. These same people who had once confessed the works of the Spirit as irrefutable confirmation of the truth of the Gospel now rejected them as untrue, without power or reality which could not rightly serve as a confirmation of the Gospel of Christ. This rejection, coming as it did from those who had once been Christians themselves was the deepest wound which could ever have been inflicted upon the Gospel. All the adversaries of that Gospel who had been silent and left speechless by the works of the Spirit of Grace and His countless miracles were confirmed in their unbelief. They concluded that the Gospel of Christ could be nothing more than empty pretense, for who should know that better than those who had once been Christians themselves.*” (Owen. VI, p. 546 ff.)

***“For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is Mine; I will repay.’”*** - There should be no doubt as to the readiness of the Lord to act in righteous judgement to the full extent of justice in punishing those who are guilty of such heinous crimes against the Son of God, the Blood of the Covenant, and the Spirit of Grace. No one is exempt from the justice of God and all should stand in fear and awe before Him. The author reinforces that point with the inclusive pronoun ***“we”*** - thus including himself in a humble awareness of the majesty of the Holy One.

*“His identification of himself with them is a mark of his love and concern for them as he earnestly endeavors to head them away from the precipice of apostasy. He refuses to treat them as outsiders, for, perilous though their*



*position is, they have not yet forsaken the fellowship of grace which is found within the sphere of operation of the new covenant. Hence, his appeal to them as those who with himself, know the God who not only bestows grace, but who also punishes disobedience. Whatever excuses they may offer for their immaturity, they cannot plead ignorance of Him!” (Hughes, p. 425)*



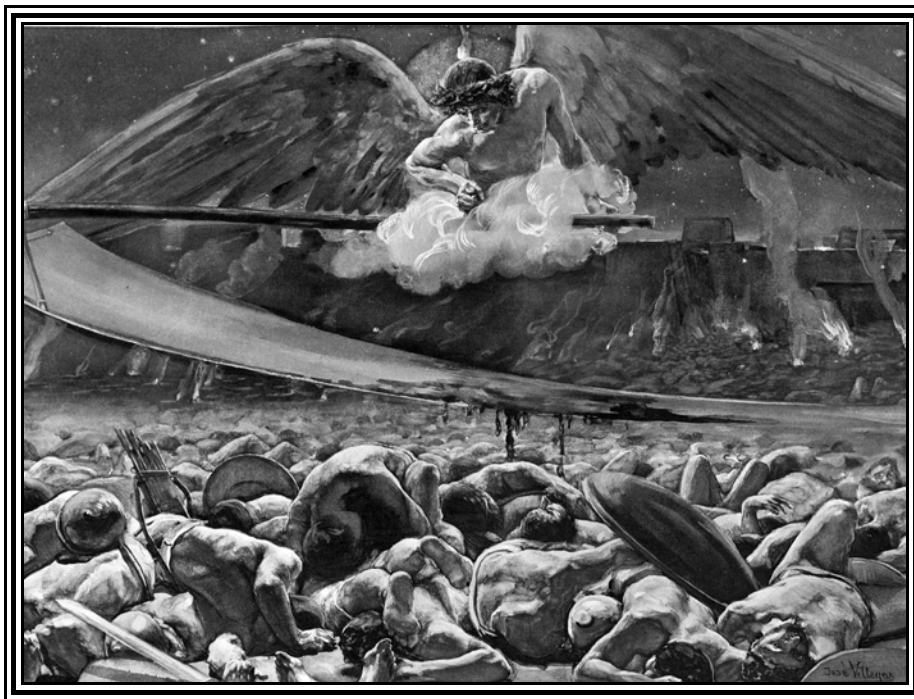
*“The Lord Enthroned Between The Cherubim” - Lilien*

The two quotations come from the “*Song Of Moses*” at the culmination of the Torah in Chapter 32 of the Book of Deuteronomy. The text would have been familiar to the Hebrew recipients of the Epistle in that the “*Song of Moses*” had long been used as a canticle in the worship of both Temple and Synagogue. That usage was continued in the early Christian congregations where its warnings against apostasy were applied to Judaism’s rejection of Jesus as the promised Messiah. The aged prophet, who would remain the pre-imminent spokesman for God in the eyes of Israel throughout their history, recounts the abundant blessings which God has showered upon the nation and warns of the dire consequences which will be incurred by ingratitude, disobedience or apostasy. The first warning “***Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.***” comes from Deuteronomy 32:35. Paul also cites this text in Romans 12:19 in an admonition to Christians to forego personal revenge and allow God to punish wrongdoers in His own time. The second word of warning also follows in the text of Deuteronomy 32:36 - “***And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’***”

*“The privileges which Israel enjoyed as God’s covenant people meant that their responsibilities were greater and that their retribution would be the more severe in their case if they gave themselves up to unrighteousness. ‘**You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore, I will visit upon you all your iniquities.**’ (Amos 3:2) What was true then remains true for God’s dealings with His people now.” (Bruce, p. 265)*

The writer concludes with his own summary statement - ***“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*** ***“Fearful”*** is a very powerful word. It denotes overwhelming terror and dread of the most intense sort. Ordinarily, ***“the hands of the living God”*** are a positive metaphor in the Old Testament, an image of safety and security. Thus, for example, King David had asserted the justice and mercy of God when he declared: ***“I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercy is great. But do not let me fall into the hand of man.”*** (2 Samuel 24:14) In this instance, however, that is clearly not the case. The true God, unlike all idols, is not an impotent figment of man’s imagination. He is real. He is ***“living.”*** Both His love and His wrath are the evidence of His reality. His promises are true because He alone is the living God, but so is His judgement. The prospect of that very real judgement ought to fill the hearts of the apostate with abject panic. There is no escape from the righteous judgement of ***“the living God.”*** ***“See now that I, even I am He and there is not god beside Me. I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand.”*** (Deuteronomy 32:39)

Moses reminded his people of the remarkable privilege which had been their to hear the voice of the living God at Mount Sinai and survive the awesome experience. ***“This day we have seen God speak with man, and man still live. Now, therefore, why should we die? For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of fire as we have, and has still lived??”*** (Deuteronomy 5:24-26) When the Assyrian monarch Sennacherib, the most powerful man on earth at that moment in history, dared to



***“The Destruction Of The Host of Sennacherib” - Rochegrosse***

mock the living God his massive host was struck down before the walls of Jerusalem. Faithful King Hezekiah confidently prayed for deliverance because of his trust in the one

true God:

***“It may be that the LORD your God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master the King of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke the words that the LORD your God has heard; therefore, lift up your prayer for the remnant which the LORD your God has heard...Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; Open Your eyes, O LORD and see, and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were no gods, but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone are the LORD.”*** (Isaiah 37:4,17-200)

John Owen observes that the title ***“the living God”*** reveals two critically important truths about the nature and actions of the Lord, truths which will bring about either terror or comfort in the minds of men.



***“The Living God”***

***“This title is used to identify God for two main reasons. 1. In contrast to all the dead and dumb idols whom the heathen worshiped, and which are graphically described by the psalmist: “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths but do not speak; eyes but do not see. They have ears but do not hear; noses but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so do all that trust in them.”*** (Psalm 115:4-8); as also by the prophet: ***“All those who fashion***



*idols are nothing and the things that they delight in do not profit. Their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame. Who fashions a god or casts an idol that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his companions shall be put to shame, and the craftsmen are only human. Let all assemble. Let them stand forth. They shall be terrified.”* (Isaiah 44:9-11) 2. God is called the living God to impress upon our minds an appropriate sense of His glory and eternal power when we are called either to trust in Him or to fear Him. Life is the foundation of power. He who has life in Himself, who is the cause of life in every living thing, must therefore also be the only source of unlimited power. In this instance, God is called the Living God in view of His eternal power to avenge the sins of men. Indeed, this designation calls to mind all of His other holy characteristics which are designed to impress dread or terror upon the minds of presumptuous sinners. In this way, their punishment is proven to be unavoidable and inescapable. The Living God sees and knows all the evil malice of their sins in each and every situation. For He is **“the God who lives and sees”** (Genesis 16:14) And as He sees, so He judges for He is the Living God. This same living power and knowledge is the foundation of our trust in Him: **“For to this end we toil and strive because we have our hope set upon the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.”** (1 Timothy 4:10) This

remarkable name, **‘the Living God’** is full of either terror or comfort for the souls of men.” (Owen, VI, p. 555)

The fact that Hebrews includes these warnings suggests that at least for some members of the congregation the apostasy has not yet taken place. At the same time the stern warnings of the text could be directed at those who were considering following the example of others who had already fallen away in order to prevent them from following in the fatal footsteps of their friends.

*“The grim warning against apostasy suggests that the author sees a potentially dangerous situation in the community. His pastoral insight sees past the present to final eventualities; so his rhetoric is designed to shock the*

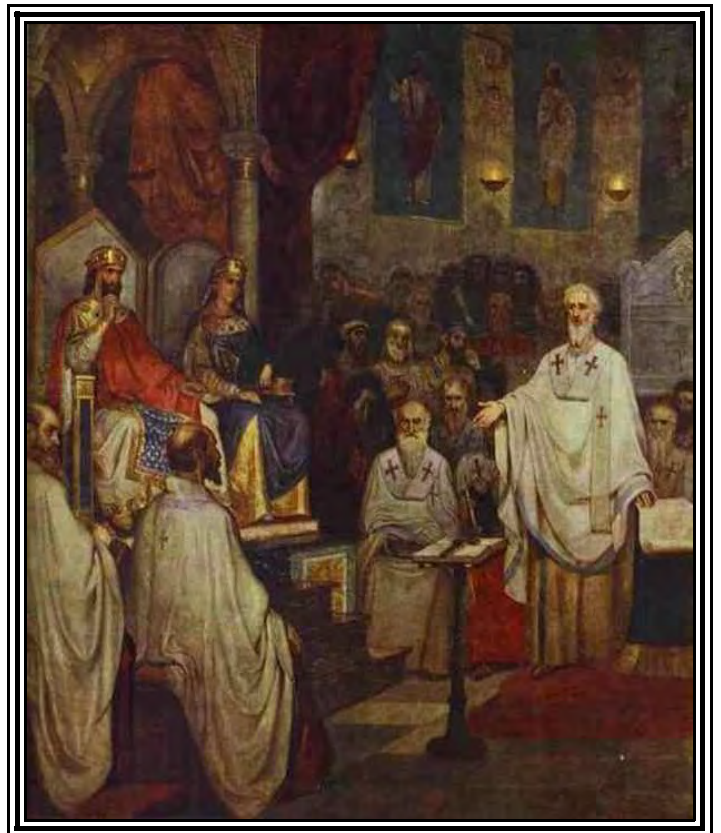


*“The Holy Trinity” - Dürer*

audience out of its present complacency. Neglect of the Word can easily become hardened revolt against it.” (Pfitzner, p. 149)

### **Hebrews 10:32-39**

**(32) But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, (33) sometimes being exposed to public reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. (34) For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. (35) Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. (36) For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. (37) For, ‘Yet a little while and the coming One will come and will not delay; (38) but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.’ (39) But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.**



**“John Chrysostom Defending the Doctrine of the Two Natures In Christ Before The Emperor At the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon**

**“But recall the former days....”** - A gentle word of reassurance follows the stern warnings of the preceding character. In this way the author maintains the careful balance of Law and Gospel which has been evident throughout the Epistle. In a sermon based upon this text St. John Chrysostom compares his skill to that of a surgeon -

*“The best physicians, after they have made a deep incision, after they have increased the pains by the wound,.do not go on to make a second; but rather soothing the afflicted part, the one that has been made, with gentle remedies, and such as are suited to remove the violence of the pain. This Paul also did after he had shaken their souls and pierced them and convinced them that he who does insult to the grace of God must certainly perish...after he had shown from the laws of Moses that they also shall perish, and had said that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, then, lest the soul grow despondent through excessive fear should be swallowed up with grief, he soothes them by commendations and give them comfort derived from their own*

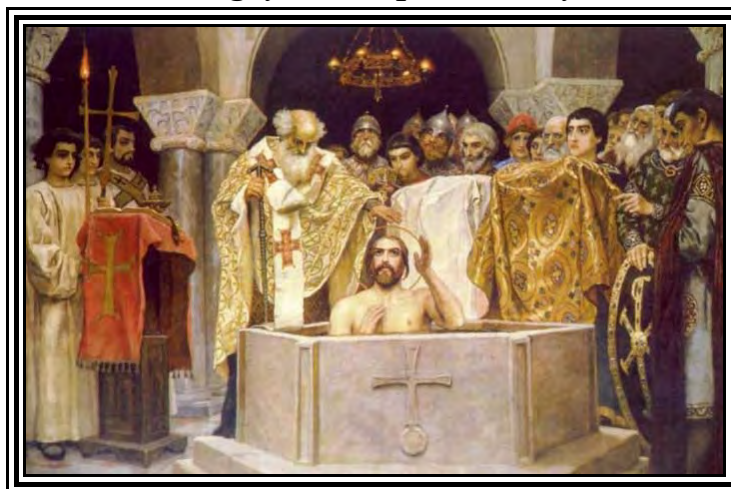


*conduct...Powerful is the exhortation from deeds already done, for he who begins a work ought to go forward and add to it...He who encourages them thus, encourages them from their own example.” (Heen, p. 168)*

He urges his readers to remember ***“the former days,”*** that is, the period when they first became Christians. He pleads with them to recall the ardor of their first love and the joyful realization, granted by the Holy Spirit, that God had fulfilled all of the promises given to their fathers across the centuries and to them in Jesus Christ. The beautiful phrase which is used to identify that time - ***“after you were enlightened”*** - signifies the removal of darkness and doubt and being brought forth into the light of joy and hope. The term ***“enlightenment”*** was utilized in the early church as a synonym for Holy Baptism. Justin Martyr, writing in the second century, asserts that those who had been baptized were commonly identified as ***“the enlightened ones.”***

*“Then they are brought by us where there is water and they are born again in the same manner in which we ourselves were born again. For in the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water...And this washing is called ‘enlightenment’ because they who learn these things are enlightened in their understandings. And in the name of Jesus Christ who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Ghost who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus the enlightened one is washed.”*  
(ANF, I, p. 183)

Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, had been filled with the Holy Spirit, to proclaim that this was the very purpose for which the Messiah was about to come into this lost world - ***“to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.”*** (Luke 1:79) The Apostle Paul had been called by Christ on the Damascus Road for the sake of this mission of enlightenment - ***“I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may turn from***



***“Baptism of St. Vladimir”***

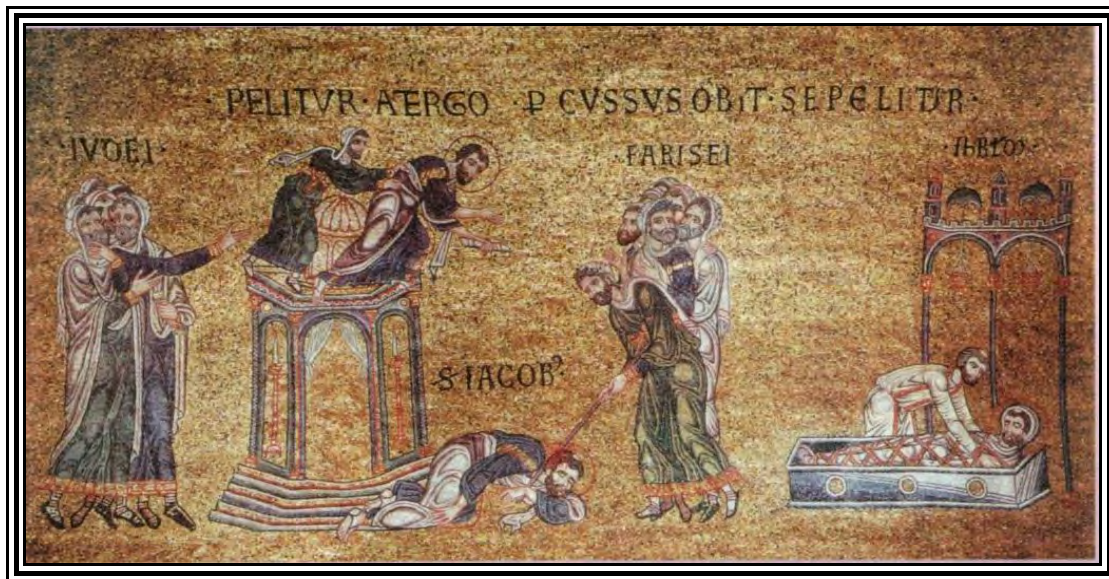




*“The Nobility Of Rome Groveling Before the Divine Emperor Caligula”*

*darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God that they may receive the forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”* (Acts 24:18) How tragic it would be if one of those who Christ Himself had brought forth from the darkness into the light would not be misled to return to the darkness from which he had been delivered!

That recollection of God’s action in cleansing them through the water of Holy Baptism ought to be able to counteract the stress and confusion which they are currently experiencing as some among them have yielded to the temptation to abandon the faith and return to Judaism. They are what they are because of the gracious action of God. That same God who brought about their enlightenment will not fail to sustain them now and enable them to endure the trials of the present moment. They had been tested in the past - **“you endured a hard struggle with sufferings.”** They were not strangers to the relentless pressure of a hostile culture which always and in an endless variety of ways sought to compel them to abandon their confession of faith in Jesus Christ. This **“hard struggle”** would have been particularly difficult for the Hebrews to whom the Epistle is addressed. In the polytheistic Graeco/Roman world the addition of another god or goddess was not ordinarily objectionable. Tolerance of a plethora of deities was characteristic of this culture. Problems arose when Christians (and Jews - the empire’s only other monotheistic religion) refused to acknowledge the divinity of the emperor and worship Caesar with all of the other citizens of the realm. The incomprehensible obstinacy was viewed by the state and people generally as not only bizarre theologically but unpatriotic and seditious politically. Hence the persecutions which periodically broke out against Christians from the government were the result of a refusal to offer sacrifices to the imperial deity. For Jews who became Christians, however, the focus of persecution was typically from their fellow Jews, who viewed Jewish



*“The Martyrdom Of James The Brother of Jesus In Jerusalem”*

Christians as apostates and traitors who had betrayed the heritage of Israel. This was, most probably the focus of the struggles to which the author of Hebrews is referring.

*“For a Jew to confess the faith of Christ crucified brought on him the detestation and obloquy of his compatriots, the ruination of his business, and even expulsion from the family circle. This would particularly be the case in the Jewish homeland, and it goes a long way toward explaining the extreme poverty of the Christian community in Jerusalem, which caused Paul to give such prominence to the collection of relief funds among the Gentile churches. The description of the severe consequences of embracing Christianity, involving not only physical suffering, but also loss of property would well fit a group of converts located in the Jewish milieu of Palestine.” (Hughes, p. 427)*

The nature of the suffering which these Hebrews had endured when they left Judaism to become Christians is specified as **“sometimes being exposed publically to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.”** It would seem that the assertion of Hebrews 12:4 - **“In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.”** - indicates that none of the members of the congregations to which the epistle was addressed had yet been martyred at the time when they received this letter. This would seem to eliminate the Jewish Christian congregations in Jerusalem itself as potential recipients of the epistle since violent persecution and martyrdom were regular occurrences in the city. As the location of the Temple as thus the most holy place in the world for the faithful of Judaism, and the ancient capital of the lost Israelite kingdom and thus the focus of Jewish nationalism, Jerusalem would have been the place where a Christian presence would have been most highly offensive. These realities were reflected in the ongoing tension, frequently expressed in violence, which characterized the history of



## Christianity in the Holy City.

*“Members of that church had suffered death in the persecution that broke out immediately after Stephen’s execution about AD 33 (**“And Saul approved of Stephen’s execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church and entering house after house, he dragged off men and woman and committed them to prison...I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”*** (Acts 8:1-3; 26:9-11), and also in AD 43 under Herod Agrippa I when James the son of Zebedee was beheaded (**“About that time, Herod the King laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James, the brother of John, with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.”** (Acts 12:1-3), and in AD 62 when James the Just was stoned at the insistence of the High Priest Annas II (if, indeed, the last named incident had taken place by the writing of this epistle!)” (Bruce, p. 268)



***“Martyrdom of James the Brother of John In Jerusalem”***





*"The Daughters of Danaus" - Waterhouse*

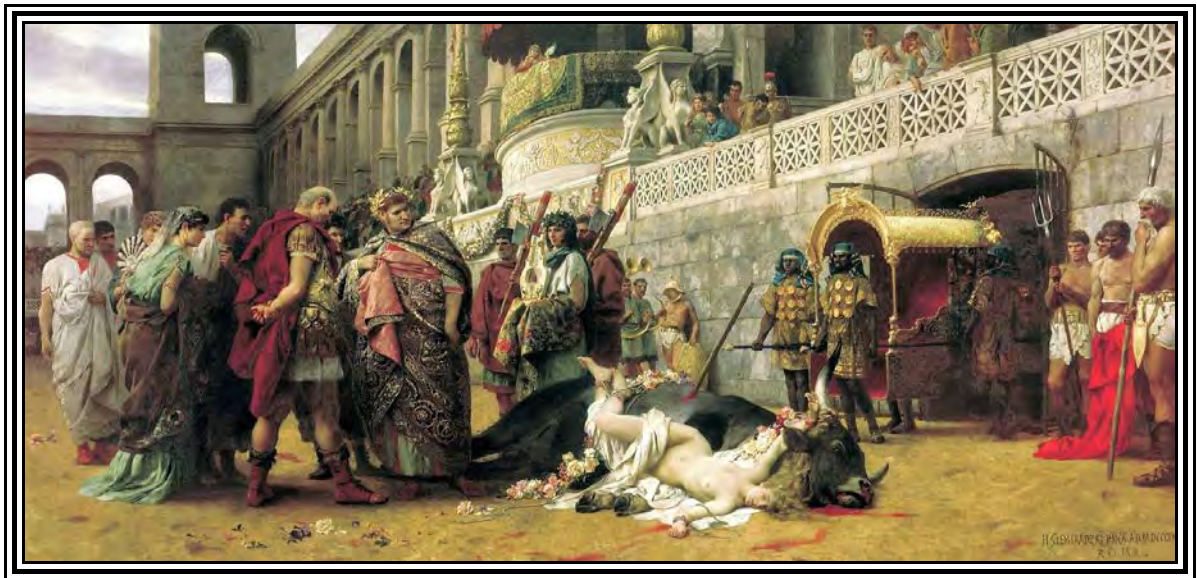
These saints had endured public scorn and mockery - *"sometimes being exposed to reproach and affliction."* The terminology here suggests staged spectacles or processions in which they were presented before mobs of scornful onlookers and made to look ridiculous and foolish. The Roman historian Tacitus reports that in the Neronian persecution of Christian which followed the burning of Rome in AD 64 Christian women were arrested and compelled to appear in spectacles as the scantily clad daughters of Danaus, who in Greek mythology had been condemned to perpetually fill leaking water vessels and thus became the epitome of futility and foolish. Sadly, ridicule was the least of the techniques utilized by the bloodthirsty Nero in his desperate effort to divert suspicion for the burning of the city away from himself and onto the Christians:

*"Under this wanton charge of incendiarism, backed by the equally groundless charge of misanthropy and unnatural vice, there began a carnival of blood such as even heathen Rome never saw before or since. It was the answer of the powers of Hell to the mighty preaching of the two chief apostles, which had shaken heathenism to its core. A vast multitude of Christians was put to death in the most shocking manner. Some were crucified, probably in mockery of the punishment of Christ, some sewed up in the skins of wild beasts and exposed to the voracity of mad dogs in the arena. The satanic tragedy reached its climax at night in the imperial gardens on the slope of the Vatican Hill (which embraced, it is supposed, the present site of the plaza and church of St. Peter); Christian men, women, and children, were covered with pitch, oil, or resin and then nailed to post of pine where they were lighted aflame and burned as torches for the amusement of the mob; while Nero, in fantastical dress, took part in a horse race and displayed his skill as a charioteer. Burning alive was the ordinary punishment of incendiaries; but only the cruel ingenuity of this imperial monster, under the inspiration of the devil, could have invented such a horrible system of illumination."* (Schaff, I, p. 381-382)

This bloodbath would also seem to eliminate the Christian congregations in the city of Rome as potential recipients of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Many scholars contend that it was Alexandria in Egypt, the cultural capital of Hellenism in

the ancient world which best qualifies, in light of these descriptions of non-lethal persecution, as the Christian community to which the Epistle was addressed. The Jewish/Hellenist philosopher Philo of Alexandria reports that in AD 38 all of the numerous Jews and Christians of the city were driven from their homes, herded together into a small ghetto, and forced to watch in horror as their homes and businesses were pillaged and looted by the mob, and all of their belonging divided up among the heathen like the victorious spoils of war. The looting was accompanied by brutal violence, public humiliation, and outrage of every sort imaginable. The heathen scornfully dismissed the validity of the montheists' bizarre belief in one God, whether Jehovah of the Jews or Christ of the Christians, conclusively proven by their god's inability to protect his people from the abuses which had been inflicted upon them. The event was hailed as a tremendous victory for and vindication of the old gods of the mobs over the one god of their victims.



*Emperor Nero Savoring The Sight of A Christian Martyr Slaughtered On the Horns of A Bull to Reenact The Mythical Death of Dirce” - Siemiradzki*

Those who are enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to offer the good confession and to fearlessly profess their faith in Christ before all the world will inevitably become the object of persecution. The Prince of Lies fears only the truth and he does to dare to allow that truth to go answered. He knows only too well that the Light of Christ will banish the darkness of his lies. Thus he must desperately seek to silence the witness and douse the Light before his reign of fear, doubt and death is broken. Therefore the opposition must come. The more public and powerful the witness is, the public and powerful the opposition to it will be. Paul reminded the Corinthians that the apostles themselves, as the messengers of the Gospel of salvation designated by Christ Himself, had become the object of the most fearsome opposition. ***“For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.”*** (1 Corinthians 4:9) It is no coincidence that the word ***“spectacle”*** which Paul used in this text is the same term which identified the grandiose productions of blood and death which were presented to hordes that filled the Colosseum in Rome and the other arenas



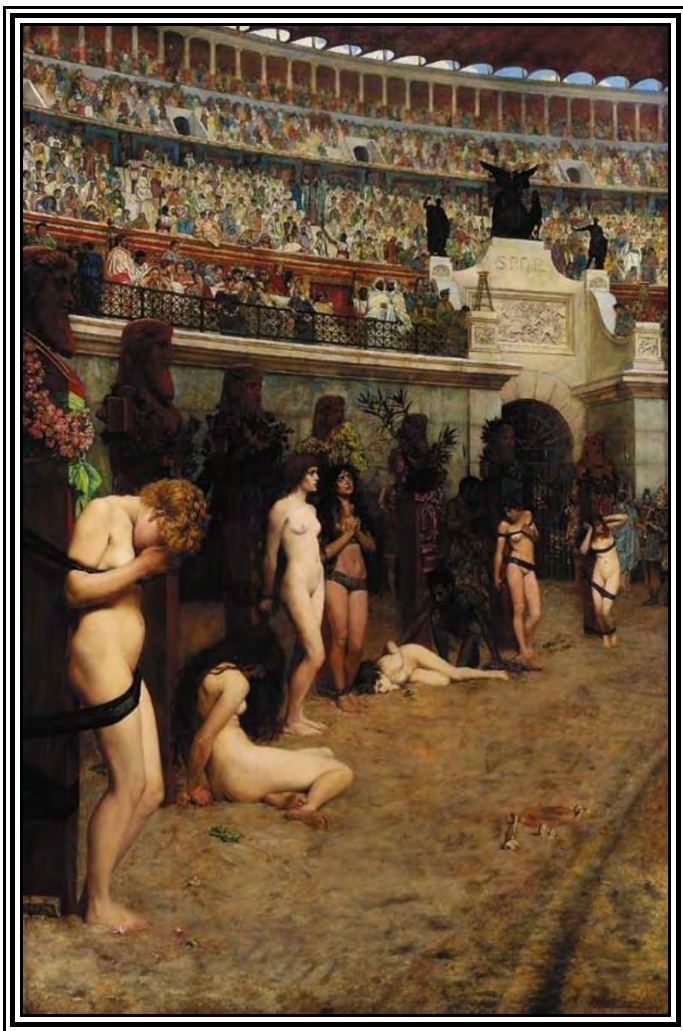
scattered across the empire. A form of the same Greek verb *“theatrizo”* appears here in Verse 33 translated by the ESV as ***“being publically exposed.”*** Sadly, this endless onslaught of intimidation and opposition is most effective in silencing the witness of the majority of those who profess Christianity. But according to God’s steadfast promise, there will always be a faithful remnant, the seven thousand in Israel who have now bowed the knee to Baal. With these inspired words of encouragement, recalling the courageous consistency of the past, the author of Hebrews seeks to strengthen those who are now struggling with the temptation to yield to the opposition and to abandon their Lord.

Not only had these now wavering Christians been faithful to Christ in the past be personally ***“enduring a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publically exposed to reproach and affliction”*** - ***“you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one”*** - but above and beyond their own experiences they had remained loyal to their fellow believers and had refused to abandon them in their time of trial. At considerable additional risk to themselves they continued to identify with and provide aid and comfort for their comrades - ***“sometimes***

***being partners for those so treated - for you had compassion on those in prison.”***

***“They had suffered by association with those who were being publically persecuted because they supported them by visiting them in prison and providing food and clothing for them and their families.”***

(Lockwood, p. 531) This courageous solidarity with their fellow Christians only brought down more suffering upon them and resulted in the loss of their earthly possessions and property. In this way, these bold Christians demonstrated that their future was absolutely secure in the hands of God who had provided for them an everlasting refuge in the mansions of heaven, which revealed all the treasures of this world as the worthless trash which they were. Not only were the enemies of Christ unable to intimidate individual believers with their threats and persecution, they were unable to fracture or divide the unity of the people of God. Their opposition only served to strengthen the Christians’ faith and forge stronger bonds among them as the people of God. The language of the text



***“Faithful Unto Death” - Schmalz***



emphasizes not only the risks which were accepted by the Christians as they stood alongside their comrades but also the intensity of the commitment to one another in Christ which that willingness demonstrated. ***“Sometimes being partners” - “you had compassion” - “you joyfully accepted.”*** Their Adversary the Devil not only failed to drive them to despair or cause them to mourn the losses of all the things of which he had deprived them; he gave them reason to rejoice in Christ who had given them the victory and their joy became the most powerful witness which they could possibly offer to the truth of the Gospel of Christ. Christ Himself had foretold this outcome and promised the power to make it happen:

***“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven; for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*** Matthew 5:10-12)

This is exactly the same point made by the Apostle Peter in his first letter as he urged Christians to recognize that we are living in the end times and must learn to look beyond the suffering of the moment to the eternity which has been prepared for us:

***“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for you who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now, for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials - so that the tested genuineness of your faith - more precious than gold which perishes - although it is tested by fire -may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*** (1 Peter 1:3-8)

Each of these ringing phrases expresses the invincible confidence of Christians empowered by Christ to stand alongside one another and overcome the worst which the devil could do in his struggle to silence or divide them. This is triumphant language designed to suggest that those who were victorious in the past - individually and together - cannot be defeated now if they will continue to believe that they still ***“have a better possession and an abiding one.”***

***“Therefore, do not throw away your confidence which has a great reward.”*** - The approaching conclusion of this portion of the discussion is signaled by the use of the conjunction ***“Therefore”*** indicating that the summary statements which follow are the logical conclusions of that which has been stated previously in this paragraph. The imperative verb ***“do not throw away”*** prohibits an action that has not yet occurred and

should never be allowed to occur. The word refers to a deliberate act of discarding or abandoning something. In this instance, that which is not to be abandoned is ***“Your confidence.”*** In classical Greek this noun referred to an individual’s right of citizenship within the various Greek city states. It certified the citizen’s right as part of the community to attend the governing assembly, to speak freely within those assemblies, and to participate in the decision-making process by means of voting on an equal basis with all of the other citizens.

*“‘Confidence’ was the boldness of speech that was the right exercised in the Greek polis by the free citizen. It is a virtue that continued to be celebrated by the philosophers as an image of the freedom of the wise person who refused to cringe before a tyrant and exercised his free speech in bold defiance of the tyrant’s power to compel acquiescence or flattery.” (Lockwood, p. 171)*



***“Make the Sacrifice Or Be the Sacrifice”***

The Greek term came into biblical use through the Septuagint Greek translation of the Old Testament. The political matrix of the classical usage shifted to an emphasis on the privilege of the believer to stand before God without fear on the basis of His calling them to be His own people. Hence, for example, in Leviticus 26:13, a contrast is drawn between the status of the Israelites as lowly slaves in Egypt, forced to bow down before their masters beneath their yoke of bondage, and their new status as the chosen of the God who had liberated them from slavery. The colorful Hebrew idiom used to express this new position says ***“And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you to walk erect.”*** The Greek translation of the latter phrase - ***“made you to walk erect”*** - is expressed with this noun, literally reading *“made you to walk with confidence.”*

*“God’s covenant with the Israelites whom He had liberated from slavery gives them the legal right, the privilege, to approach Him as free sons rather than*