

Understanding Hebrews

Peter Michell

Introduction

Who wrote it?

According to the King James Bible the author was Paul, but it is said there is no manuscript evidence to confirm it. Whoever wrote it must have had a very deep understanding of the Jewish way of life and of their scriptures.

There are difficult passages and I hope to bring light and understanding to some areas which are not always understood and not always taught in the best way.

This is not a verse by verse commentary, rather more an overview with some detailed explanations where I feel appropriate.

As we go we need to understand that this letter is written to converted Jewish believers, of whom there were myriads, and who were zealous after the law. (Acts 21:20). Correction was urgent and necessary.

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Essential background

We need a bit of Jewish history in order to understand what the writer is saying to the Hebrews.

We will be largely familiar with this – but it is a useful reminder when we come to study this letter.

The story of Israel starts with Abraham – called by God to leave his father's land and to go to a place the Lord would show him. Abraham is the first Jew, and the age of Israel and the age of the law has its origins with him. Abraham receives promises from God – promises of great blessing.

Isaac, his son inherits the promises given to his father and passes them on to his son Jacob.

This is the line from which the Messiah will eventually come. The wives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all required miracle intervention from God to produce children.

Joseph, Jacob's 11th son, was badly treated by his brothers and ended up in Egypt where he rose to a position of great power. Joseph was warned of coming famine and made extensive provision so that there was food in Egypt when famine struck the land.

Joseph's brothers came to buy food. To shorten the account the whole family settled in Egypt. As time goes by the position, of the now grown to a very large body of Jews, in Egypt becomes more and more strained - read it in Exodus 1. God raises up Moses to deliver the Jews out of the hand of Pharaoh.

Exodus chapters 4 to 11 have the account of the process of deliverance which culminates in the death of all the first born in the land of Egypt - after which Pharaoh allows the Jews to leave.

So that all the firstborn Jews do not suffer death the Lord instructs the Passover. A lamb is slain and set aside for 4 days. The blood is put on the doorposts and lintels of the dwellings of Jews and the Angel of Death passes over those dwellings marked with the blood. The Jews, Israel, are led out of Egypt the next day and start their journey to the Promised Land. During this process Moses receives the Ten Commandments written in stone and many other directions from the Lord - known collectively as the law.

The age of Israel starts with the forefather Abraham and lasts for broadly 2,000 years until Jesus. This period is often referred to as the Age of Law or the Age of Israel.

Before this there was also a period of broadly 2,000 years when there was no law - mankind being expected to live by conscience.

Most of the Israelites grumbled during the progress through the wilderness, only manna to eat, no water - we were better off in Egypt. When it came time to go into the land God promised to give them 10 of the 12 who were sent to spy out the land brought a bad report. There are giants and walled cities. Fear caused Israel to refuse to trust God and go into the land - they then had to wander in the wilderness for 38 years until that generation, except Joshua and Caleb, the 2 who brought the good report, had died out - their descendants being the ones to go in to take possession of the land.

Once in the land there is a succession of Judges and Kings who rule Israel until eventually they are occupied by and ruled by the Romans and the Messiah is manifest in the person of Jesus.

Many Israelites who became believers in Jesus also were very zealous for the law they had received through Moses, not realizing that it was a tutor pointing to the Messiah rather than an end in itself.

Whilst the Law was a standard of righteousness it pointed to Him who was and is total righteousness.

The early church, made up of many converted Jews as well as Gentiles, faced persecution and was dispersed. It was to these dispersed believing Jews, as well as any Jews remaining in Israel, that the letter is addressed.

Section 1

Take a look at this Jesus

(Chapter 1 of Hebrews)

Writing to Jews being tempted to go back to law, the writer jumps straight in - *'In these last days God has spoken through His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things. Through whom also He made the worlds; and who, being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had, Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.'* 1:1-3

Jesus is - the express image of God

- heir of all things
- the creator of the earth and the heavens

Jesus - upholds all things by His word

- has fully dealt with sin

Jesus is - now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

We can see Jesus, the creator of all things, in Genesis 1:1. This verse is very well known to all who read the bible. What is not well known is that there are two Hebrew letters, right in the middle of the verse, which have not been translated. These are 'aleph' and 'tav.' The Greek equivalent is 'alpha' and 'omega.' We know from Revelation 1:8 that this is a personal title of the Lord Jesus Christ - so now we can confirm that Jesus is right there in the very middle and beginning of creation.

Jesus the more excellent name.

Jesus has a far more excellent name than the angels - indeed the angels of God worship Him. Angels have a job to do - they are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who inherit salvation.

We may wonder why the writer mentions angels at all. In Genesis, in announcing the birth of Jesus to the shepherds, in many other places in the bible, and finally in the book of Revelation we find many mentions of angels.

According to Acts 7:53 the angels played a significant role in bringing the law - and the Jews held the law in great esteem. In Rabbinic writings, in the Midrash and in Jewish tradition angels feature a lot.

We encounter a vision of angels given to Jacob in Genesis 28:12-13. Jacob has inherited the blessing of his grandfather Abraham through prophetic impartation from his father Isaac. (28:3-4). Jacob sees in his vision a ladder reaching up to heaven on which angels are ascending and descending to fulfil their ministry we saw recorded in Acts 7:53. However, this did not bring eternal salvation - that is only possible in the name of Jesus.

For us in the present time, the ministering angels ascend and descend on the Son of Man - ministering to us who inherit salvation, (John 1:51), and at the conclusion of time gathering the elect. (Mark 13:27)

So, for his readers, the writer to the Hebrews is validating Jesus position firmly well above that of the angels.

Jesus is established as the express image of God, the upholder of all things through the word of His power. This is the '*rhema*' word – the word that is proceeding from the mouth of God, rather than the written word – the '*graphe*.' Our universe is upheld by Jesus continually day by day.

Jesus is established as the one who has dealt with sin, now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High – having become so much better than the angels.

In the next section of the letter the Hebrews are urged to grasp the salvation offered by the far better sacrifice of the Son of God and not to neglect it.

The Hebrews were steeped in the law. The previous 2,000 years had been the age of law, or the age of Israel. But now there is something much better. The new covenant, which had been promised to them through their prophets, was being initiated. Grasp it! Do not neglect it.

In the next section we work through this theme outlined in chapters 2 to 5 of Hebrews.

Section 2

Grasp this wonderful salvation

(Chapters 2 to 5 of Hebrews)

You cannot escape if you neglect Him

The law, which came directed by angels, determined a penalty for every transgression and disobedience. The law provided a temporary answer to sin through animal sacrifices but was unable to provide a way of escape from eternal judgement - we know that it was a ministry of death and condemnation and a tutor to bring us to Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 3:7-9 and Galatians 3:24.)

Section 1 showed us that Jesus brought a far greater level of truth than the angels. Now we are being shown that it was necessary for Him to come in the form of a human man. He had to be made like His brethren to be able to be a merciful and faithful High Priest, to bring many sons to glory. Because He has suffered being tempted (Mathew 4:1-11), He is able to aid us who are tempted in life.

God the Father bore witness to Jesus with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and with gifts of the Holy Spirit.

So don't ignore Him, Jesus. *'It was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.'* Hebrews 2:10

Through Jesus death and sacrifice He destroys him who has the power of death and releases His brethren from the fear thereof.

Don't neglect Him!

Jesus sufferings were threefold -

- 1) Temptation by Satan
- 2) Rejection by the world
- 3) Crucifixion

Don't be like your forefathers

Chapter 3 of Hebrews brings a call to faithfulness unlike their forefathers.

Look, you partake of the heavenly calling so consider faithfulness. Moses was faithful. Yet Jesus is counted worthy of more glory. The description used is that of a house . Moses was a faithful servant in the house of God, but Jesus was and is the builder of His house - whose house we are when we hold fast our confidence.

So then the writer gives a strong warning - your forefathers, when in the wilderness after coming out of Egypt, hardened their hearts against the Lord. As the Jews celebrated 'Passover' every year this reference would have very pertinent to them - they knew the whole story of deliverance from Egypt very well.

'Beware brethren lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.' Hebrews 3:12

Don't rely on your forefathers or on the law

It is no good saying that because we are children of Abraham we are therefore safe. (Matthew 3:9)
Here we see that the founding forefather of the Jews is Abraham. We remember that he was called to leave his father and his homeland to go to a place God would show him. This is the calling out and the beginning of the establishment of the nation of Israel – of course both he and it had to be separated from the rest of mankind, now known as Gentiles.

It also represents a major change in the way the Lord manages His human household. Before this point there was no law and man lived by his conscience. After this point the rule of law is introduced progressively. The sign of this covenant between the Lord and Abraham as the father of His special nation (and through Abraham's disobedience with Hagar, many nations) was circumcision. Here is the beginning of what becomes the introduction of law. We know this is so because circumcision is described as a work of the law. (Galatians 5:1-4) Furthermore, once the management of the Lord's household moves on from law to grace, then circumcision means nothing at all.

'If you become circumcised Christ will profit you nothing.' Galatians 5:2

There were many believing Jews who were tempted to turn back to the law and to circumcision because of persecution. Paul warns, *'Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Galatians 3:3.*

'Indeed I Paul say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace.' Galatians 5:2-4.

It is Jesus who brings many sons to glory, sanctifying them by His sacrifice. Do not neglect this wonderful salvation.

'Beware brethren lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.' Hebrews 3:12

Going back to circumcision and the law is departing from the living God.

The Promised Land

For those who left Egypt with Moses there was the expectation of entering the Promised Land – described as a land flowing with milk and honey, but inhabited by many of God's enemies.

Even though they had witnessed many miracles along the way most of the Jews who left Egypt wanted to return there. When they heard of giants in the land they succumbed to fear instead of trusting in the Lord – through unbelief.

In a similar way the recipients of this letter were looking back to where they had come from under the law.

Because they were being persecuted for their freedom in Christ they were tempted back to law by those who seek to make a good showing in the flesh. (Galatians 6:13) They were tempted to go back to law and to circumcision.

Don't miss out!

Chapter 4 details the promise of entering His rest

Look, the promise remains of entering His rest. No need now to establish your own righteousness through works of the law. Righteousness has been gifted to you through faith in the redeeming work of the Son.

There remains a rest for the people of God. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest.

We who have believed do enter that rest. Hebrews 4:3

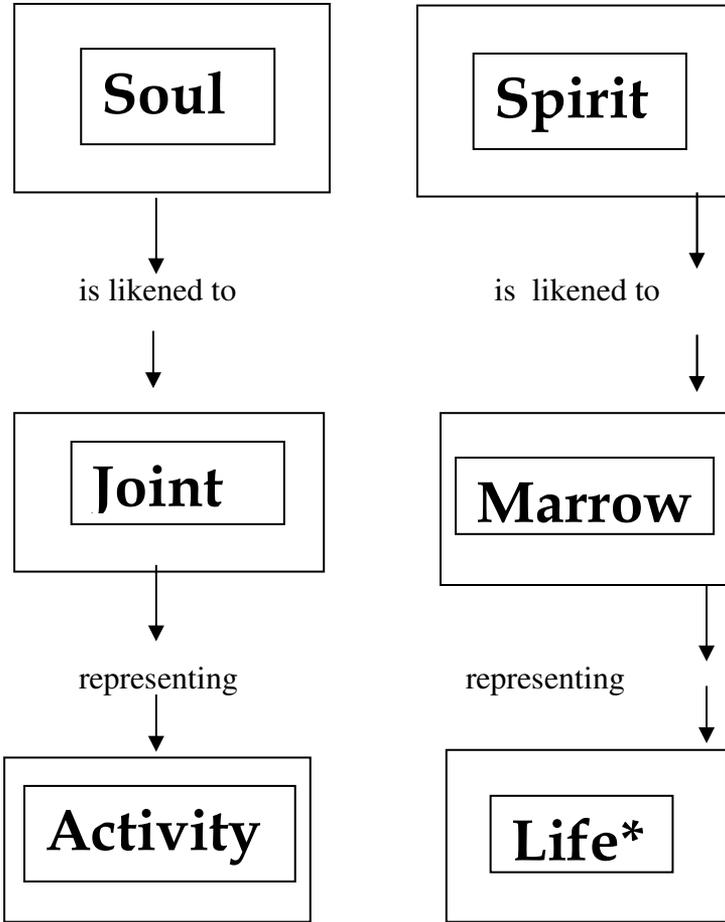
The living word of God will discern

'For the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' Hebrews 4:12

The word here is '*logos*' – one of the personal descriptions of Jesus and representing the whole revelation of God, just as Jesus is the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form (Colossians 2:9)

'*Logos*' as the full revelation of God includes all the writings, scripture, [*graphie*] and every word spoken by God [*rhema*]

So let's see the comparison being made:



Activity can be good or bad but 'life' from the Spirit is essential.

*In the human body our life-giving blood is made in the marrow and fed into the system at the joint. Here the essence of life is distinguished from activity - life coming from the Spirit, activity from the soul.

Life is in the blood - See Leviticus 17:14

So this comparison is telling us -

The works of the soul are of no eternal value, whereas the works of the Spirit bring life. We see this because the scripture tells us life is in the blood and we know that the constituent parts of blood are manufactured in the marrow.

The context is 'rest.' Works of the soul are our effort, whereas works of the Spirit are empowered by God's grace - this is working from rest, flow with the Spirit working in you, so be diligent to enter.

Don't miss God's invitation

Because we have Jesus as our High Priest let us accept His invitation, not a once a year visit to the holy of holies in the temple, but rather:

'Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in a time of need.'

Hebrews 4:16

Chapter 5 introduces the need for an eternal priesthood **Jesus the new High priest according to the order of Melchizedek is eternal.**

Look you Hebrews, every high priest taken from among men is appointed to offer sacrifices for sins for the people - but these men are themselves subject to weakness and need to offer sacrifices for their own sins also.

But Jesus, now He is our High Priest of a different, eternal, order.

He has been perfected through obedience, learned in His humanity through suffering. He is eternal. He is perfect. He is the author of eternal salvation.

Come, you who have had a diet of milk. You should be teachers by now, but you have not become skilled in the word of God. Take some solid food. Solid food belongs to those who are made complete, perfected, that is, who by habitual use have their organs of perception fully trained to make judicial estimation both of good in its fullest sense and of the evil habits of the mind. Grow up!

Section 3

Now 'run the race' to the end.

(Chapter 6 to 12 of Hebrews)

The writer is now taking the Hebrews into applying their understanding of the New Covenant, brought in by the new Priesthood, into daily life itself.

For this reason leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be carried on unto perfection. Not laying again a foundation of:

- 1) Repentance from dead works - leave behind works of the law as it is a ministry of death. (2 Corinthians 3:7)
- 2) Faith toward God - it is faith that pleases God not adherence to law. Think of Abraham whose obedient faith was counted as righteousness.
- 3) Doctrine of baptisms - move on from various washings under law, now it is only baptism into Jesus and into His name that count.
- 4) Laying on of hands - impartation as led by the Spirit. (Acts 6:6 for example.)
- 5) Resurrection of the dead - important for Hebrews to understand Jesus teaching as many did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Their eternal well-being is at stake. (Those who were called Sadducees)
- 6) Eternal judgement - everyone is eternal because man is made in the image of eternal God. Eternal judgement is the lake of fire. (Revelation 20: 11-15.) This is the second death.

These are things you have already been taught - truth already laid down for you. If you have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come associated with it - then if you fall back there is nothing to renew you to repentance whilst you crucify again for yourselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

Here we see that these Hebrews have experienced hearing God speak for themselves - having tasted the good '*rhema*' word of God. And the power that it brings.

Now, if they fall away, turn back to law, there is nothing that can help them whilst they persist in that foolishness. (See Galatians 3:1-9)

Persisting in that fallen-away state they become like earth that instead of bringing forth useful fruit only brings forth thorns and briers. It is rejected and near to being cursed (but not cursed) and whose end is to be burned - this is the judgement of believers works as taught in 1 Corinthians 3:11-17 The useless fruit, works, are burned away but the ground, (person,) is still saved eternally, not destroyed.

Chapter 6: 4-8 is not about eternal salvation it is about the bearing of useful fruit in life.

The land is not cursed - but what it produces is tested with fire.

Come on - Lay hold of hope

Look, God has given us hope confirmed by two immutable things – His oath and His promise. God cannot lie and as there is no one greater He swears by Himself.

'We might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.' 6:18

'This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the presence beyond the veil.'
6:19

For the recipients of the letter there are strong associations with their scriptures and with their experience of the temple.

Fleeing for refuge harks back to the cities of refuge appointed under Joshua. When someone had inadvertently killed another he could flee to a city of refuge to avoid being himself killed in revenge. (Avoiding the eye-for-an-eye type of judgement.) We deserve death because the *wages of sin is death.* (Romans 6:23). But we have Jesus as 'our city of refuge,' *because the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.'* (Romans 6:23)

Jesus is the forerunner of our hope - so our hope in Him enters the most holy place. In the temple the most holy place was sealed off by a veil or curtain and could only be entered once a year by the High Priest offering a blood sacrifice on behalf of the nation of Israel. (Leviticus 16:1-4)

Our hope is based on a change of priesthood

The Jews were, of course, fully aware that under the priesthood of Aaron and Levi sin was not dealt with on a once-and-for-all basis, rather the sacrificial offerings had to be repeated year on year.

With a change of priesthood a change of law is necessary. Hebrews 7:12. So the old law is annulled 7:18. It is passing away (2 Corinthians 3:11) It is rendered obsolete 8:13. A new law comes with the new priesthood - this is an eternal, once-and-for-all, law brought in by a once-and-for-all eternal priesthood.

The new law is the law of love - love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22)

A priest after the order of Melchizedek.

The writer is explaining to the Hebrews, who had a long history of having a high priest, that not only was a new High Priest necessary but one who is, and was, and always will be, eternal.

His example is Melchizedek - he was King and Priest of Salem (shortened form of Jerusalem). He is described as having no beginning, no end, no father, no mother, - but made like the Son of God. Who was this man? - an enigma, a puzzle? Not a created being - He certainly seems to be like a pre-incarnation of Jesus.

New 'household' management

Because Abraham marks the beginning of a new period of time in the management of God's household certain features, later incorporated into the law, appear straight away. Abraham gave one tenth of the spoils of war to Melchizedek. Abraham was circumcised - both of which are significant parts of the law.

The writer is underlining the superiority of the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek by showing that all those of the Levitical priesthood effectively paid tithes to him through Abraham. This has nothing to do with any requirement for born again believers to pay tithes today because there is no such requirement or commandment in the New Covenant. Anyone still under Law, unconverted Jews for example, still pay tithes today. We are not required to pay tithes which were compulsory under law - instead we are called to changed hearts becoming generous givers. (Refer 2 Corinthians 9:5)

Under the 'old' priesthood that was being superseded, circumcision, tithing and many other things were required. Nothing under the law was able to bring salvation - but it did act as a tutor pointing to the Messiah.

Now a much better Priesthood, bringing a much better covenant, was here in the very person of the Son of God, who gave Himself as the perfect, once for all, offering for sin and redemption of mankind.

God's new household management is a new heart of generosity, not an adherence to a law. This is the age of grace!

Being, not only the perfect offering to deal with sin, his blood does much more, introducing the New Covenant – much better by far, and described to Israel in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:25-27. This covenant is new life, this covenant is the indwelling Holy Spirit – this covenant is far superior to the old covenant.

'So much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.' Hebrews 7:22

So, Hebrews, why on earth would you want to go back to the old covenant?

Who would want the law?

It is...

rendered inoperative Ephesians 2:14-15

made obsolete Hebrews 8:13

annulled. Hebrews 7:18

a ministry of death 2 Corinthians 3:7

a ministry of condemnation 2 Corinthians 3:9

a tutor to bring us to Christ Galatians 3:24

It...

stirs up sin Romans 7:5

confines all under sin Galatians 3:22

brings wrath Romans 4:15

renders us inoperative in Christ Galatians 5:4

brings guilt Romans 3:19-20

is passing away 2 Corinthians 3:11

allows sin to produce evil desires Romans 7:8

and....

works of law are doomed to barrenness

Galatians 3:10

.....when there is a much better covenant.

This New Covenant is *'Christ in you the hope of glory'*
Colossians 1:27

They didn't seem to realize -

'In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.' Hebrews 8:13

And

'Christ in you the hope of glory.' Colossians 1:27

The writer explains that the things of the old covenant were a copy a shadow of the heavenly things but that, *'Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come.'* Hebrews 8:5 and 8:11

Just as the copies of the heavenly things had to be purified with blood every year - that being the blood of animal sacrifices, so the real heavenly things are purified with the blood of Jesus once and for all.

Why? Because animal sacrifices are insufficient. They do not make those who approach perfect (Hebrews 10:1) - it is just a shadow of things to come. On the other hand the once-for-all sacrifice, made by Jesus, does make all those who believe in Him perfect once and for all.

'For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.' 10:14

Whereas under the law there was no certainty, no salvation, with Jesus there is the guarantee of eternal life.

The guarantee

'In Him you also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,; in whom you also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.'

Ephesians 1:13-13. (See also 4:30 and 2 Corinthians 1:22 and 5:5)

Don't doubt it – Jesus said, *'I have lost none of those You gave Me save the son of perdition.'* (From John 17:12)

... and Paul says to the Philippians, *'being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.'* 1:6.

Believers are in the process of being sanctified - that is the work of the Holy Spirit in us and with us - He will complete His work with or without our co-operation.

'But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

2 Corinthians 3:18

Now be bold - enjoy the new reality Hebrews 10:19-20

'Therefore brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he consecrated for us, through the veil, that is His flesh.'

You are not now separated by a veil like in the Temple. No longer is God approached once a year by a human high priest entering through the veil in the temple. Now we can *'come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may find mercy and obtain grace to help in a time of need.'* Hebrews 4:16 The covenant has changed, the priesthood has changed - Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant.

Hold tight

Hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering - they were wavering. This is the writer's constant encouragement - He who promised is faithful. Therefore 'do not cast away your confidence which has great reward.' Hebrews 10:35

Take encouragement - look at this 'hall of fame.'

The writer is going to introduce us to examples of faith, but first he gives us attributes of faith -

Faith is like this:

'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not being seen.' Hebrews 11:1

Hope comes first -that is the certain expectation of future blessing.

Then faith is the like the title deed. When you have faith you own the outcome even though it is not yet visible. Faith is the foundation upon which the promised outcome will materialize.

To understand this we remember Romans 10:17 - *'Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.'* This is the spoken word of God - that little phrase or saying proceeding from the mouth of God. Jesus told us we need this word in addition to bread to have life.
Mathew 4:4

When God has spoken we have His promise - the reality follows. In this 'hall of fame' the writer gives many examples of those who heard God speak to them.

Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah and many, many more.

Come on you Hebrews - run the race

'Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.' Hebrews 12:1

How? *'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.'* Hebrews 12:2

Section 4

Then it will look like this

(Chapter 13)

'Let brotherly love continue.'

'Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.'

'Remember the prisoners as if chained with them – those who are mistreated – since you yourselves are in the body also.'

'Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.'

'Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said I will never leave you nor forsake you.' Hebrews 13:1-5

Then we can boldly say:

'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me.' Hebrews 13:6

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever.
Hebrews 13:8

So – do not be carried away with various and strange doctrines. Hebrews 13:9

The writer then makes a comparison between the animal sacrifices – where the bodies of animals used for blood sacrifices were burned outside the camp, with Jesus who made His sacrifice for us outside the gate.

His allusion here is that we do not have a continuing city here, but rather, like Abraham, we look for the city whose builder and maker is God – a reference to our inheritance in the New Jerusalem.

Conclusion

Hebrews is written specifically to apply to born again Jewish believers who were tempted to go back to the law due to persecution. As such it makes much reference to, and allusion to, the way in which the New Covenant is far, far much better than the law. It would be folly to go back to the old covenant that could not save them.

The benediction:

'Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.' Hebrews 13:20-25

Postscript – who has beguiled you?

We have only considered the Hebrews – but what about the Galatians? Here Paul is writing, and when we consider the text, he is using very firm language.

'O foolish Galatians.' Chapter 3 verse 1
'I marvel that you are turning away' Chapter 1 verse 6
'Who has bewitched you' Chapter 3 verse 1
'Are you so foolish?' Chapter 3 verse 3
'How is it you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage.' 4 verse 9

The Galatians and the Hebrews were seeking justification by works - in this case the works of the Law, also referred to as works of the flesh. (Galatians 3:3) The works of the law were incapable of bringing salvation, so the Galatians were in danger of coming under bondage and becoming unfruitful in Christ.

Paul's admonition is - *'I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.'* Chapter 5 verse 16

Today, in our churches and fellowships we too should take heed. We are unlikely to seek justification through the law, but how often do we make plans for this activity and for that outreach because we see other groups doing certain things which we then copy – flesh not Spirit! Walking in the Spirit is listening to God's instructions for us both in corporate and individual life.

We do not win points with God by doing things for Him or for the Kingdom. Rather as His servants we respond to His will - doing those things He asks of us.

Let us not be beguiled - trying to be justified by good works is the work of the flesh, encouraged by the enemy.. Satan would love to keep us very busy doing good things for the Kingdom.

We are called as those who, being born again, are now 'family.' God's family! He is the head of the family. He has all the wisdom. He knows what He wants each of us to do -

'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them' Ephesians 2:10

So our part is to listen to our Lord and obey His leading and His guidance - that is walking in the Spirit.

Other titles:**The ICCC - Transformed Working Life series:**

Inherent Power

Work is a 1st class calling

No one can serve two masters

Hope - the certainty of future blessing

Faith or presumption

Hearing God speak

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Be strong in the battle

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Fruitfulness

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