

April 27, 2003

"God's Final Messenger"
Hebrews 1

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Introduction: The usual data (where, when, authorship, and circumstance) regarding the Book of Hebrews (in sermon form rather than as an epistle, letter) are not as obvious as some epistles which form God's New Covenant. The author, for instance, is not explicit within the Book itself. Different Bible scholars believe the author to have been Paul, Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Silas, Philip, or Priscilla, wife of Aquila. [My choice is Paul and is best discussed at Chap. 13 - WA.] From the burden of the message of Hebrews, one must conclude that the writer diligently developed a critique of choosing Judaism (based upon the Law and legal rites) as an appropriate faith when compared to faith in Jesus Christ and the personal, individual leading of God's Holy Spirit. The extensive quotations from the Old Covenant writings indicate a person well versed in them. Also, he or she apparently had been an ardent believer in the Old Covenant before accepting Jesus as the Messiah. At the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection, practically every believer in Jesus Christ had been Jewish in faith. These early Jewish Christians were probably undergoing fierce persecution, socially and physically, both from Jews and Romans. Christ had not returned immediately to establish his kingdom, and the people needed to be reassured that Jesus was indeed the Messiah whom the Jews were and had been expecting for centuries. The Temple was still standing which Jesus had said would be destroyed. This fact leads one to believe, therefore, that Hebrews was written shortly before 70 AD, probably about 60-62 AD.

II. That God has communicated with the human beings whom he has created from Adam and Eve to the present, there can be no doubt. The Holy Bible contains that testimony from Genesis through Revelation. That account conveys two distinct methods which God has used to converse with humankind. In the first instance, God chose certain individuals who either by birth (fathers, progenitors of the lineage of Jesus Christ and/or holders and revealers of faith in Jehovah God, Creator of all, and the only true God) or by special selections of God and who were and are known as prophets, forthtellers of God's will to people. During this period when God communicated thusly, is designated as the Old Covenant era. God used a variety of methods to reveal his will at that time. On one occasion, for example, he put into Cyrus, king of Persia and a Gentile, the desire to write a decree that Jews who had been captives in Persia be allowed to return and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem for centralized worship there, II Chron. 36:22-23. Cyrus' successor, Darius, even supported financially the completion of the Temple, Ezra 6:1-15. Another example of the variety of ways God communicated with his people is found in Numbers 22 when God through a donkey spoke to Balaam and rebuked him for his intention to curse God's people and honor Balak instead. God spoke through dreams and visions, and, of course, actually visited personally with Adam and Eve in the beginning before they elected through sin to break the personal relationship.

III. In our period, the New Covenant era, God chose a new way to

communicate with his human creation. Rather than leave the crucial matter to others, he came himself in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. This arrangement puts God in the very heart of mankind's spiritual condition, being separated from God spiritually. Jesus is heir of all of creation, because through Jesus God made his creation (KJV - worlds). Jesus is the epitome of God's glory, much higher than God's messengers, the angels. The universe is actually held together and kept in natural motion through the power of Jesus Christ. Through that same power he also makes available a completely perfect human spirit for those persons who trust Jesus for spiritual salvation. To prove Jesus' superiority over angels, Hebrews declares that he sits at God's right hand (a metaphor indicating that Jesus' authority is equal to God's himself), and that Jesus' inheritance is above all others, because Jesus is God's firstborn Son, Heb. 1:4-6. The text here quotes Psa. 2:7; II Sam. 7:14, and the Hebrew original (LXX) of Deut. 32:43 which states that all the angels will worship God's only begotten Son. Believers are not to worship angels Col. 2:18, for we outrank angels in that we are, by adoption, God's children and joint heirs with Jesus, Rom. 8:14-17,29. (Please note in this connection Lk 10:18-20; II Cor. 11:14-15; Gal. 1:6-9.)

IV. After relegating angels to an inferior position to Jesus and his fellow heirs (believers in Jesus as Savior), the word now further elaborates Jesus' superiority. In vs. 8 it states that God's Son, Jesus, (quoting Psa. 45:6-7) now holds God's scepter which indicates supreme authority as God, forever and ever. This scepter (authority) is based upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ. That perfection of rightness is attributed by God to every person who trusts Jesus for eternal at oneness with God (spiritual eternal life). However, those who do not make Jesus' righteousness their own through faith in him, will perish as garments wear out, vss. 8-12. Returning again to comparing the angels with the Savior in vs. 13, the writer states that no angel has ever been told by God (quoting Psa. 110:1; see also Matt. 22:41-46) to sit at God's right hand until God's enemies are all subdued, I Cor. 15:24-28. All angels are God's servants who are at God's bidding to serve all who have accepted God's Son, Jesus Christ. Those who are heirs (recipients of God's spiritual salvation through faith in his only begotten Son) of God with Jesus are to share in God's glory for ever and ever, John 17:5, 22-23. We should live in the hope of that coming glory, Col. 1:27. [For a conclusion for today's lesson, I quote from Peter's second letter, 3:3/18. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days mockers, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.' For this they willingly forget that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. - - - Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening toward the day of God. - - - seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye lose your own sense of steadfastness, but grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ."]

May 04, 2003

"Heeding God's Final Messenger"
Hebrews 2

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Last week in Chapter 1 we saw that the author of Hebrews indicates that Jesus, God's Savior, not only created the universe, but uses that same power to forgive the sins of those who trust him. Jesus was/is not an angel and is not to be worshiped as one. He has the authority (scepter) of God and is to be worshiped as God. In fact, angels are not to be worshiped at all, because they are servants of God and his children, including his adopted children who have been adopted because they trust his only begotten (uniquely so) Son, Jesus. Many early Christians were being tempted to waver in their trust of God's free grace and begin to combine grace and Judaic legalism and ritualism in their thinking. To meld the two together (law and grace) many were assigning given graces to angels, i.e., some angels for material blessings and others for spiritual blessings. Trying to keep all the angels straight created continual fear. The shepherds who witnessed the angel of the Lord announcing Jesus' birth were filled with fear, and why did the angel tell them not to fear? Because, for their sake (and ours) a savior was born that very day in Bethlehem. While we need not fear angels (since they are our servants), we should be cautious of any messages they bring to us, Matt. 4:3; Lk 10:18-20; John 12:28-32; I John 4:1-3.

II. The Hebrews author [God, really] announces his first warning to the Jewish Christians in Chapter 2 by calling to their attention that neglect of Jesus as superior to the prophets and angels (because of his deity) carries grave consequences. Profound concern about God's revelation of his will in Jesus should hold first priority over every other facet of one's faith otherwise one can lose sight (drift away from) the basis of God's plan of spiritual salvation. If the messages given by God through the Old Covenant (the Law) angels proved to be trustworthy and punishment followed the lack of abiding by those messages, how much severer will the consequences be if one neglects to follow through on the Good News accomplished by his only Son, Matt. 21:33-46! Jesus himself first made the message clear that trusting him would assure the truster of life eternal, John 3:16. Then others who witnessed first hand Jesus' message, sacrificial life, miracles, and resurrection testified convincingly to the Hebrews author that they were persuaded beyond any doubt of the reality of God's salvation through Jesus Christ. Also the assignments by God's Holy Spirit to various believers further confirmed the truth of God's message of Jesus Christ.

III. In vs. 5 the author again refers to angels. When God created the world and everything in it, including mankind, the Lord did not tell the angels "to replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion - - - over every living thing that moveth upon the earth," Gen. 1:28b. Rather, the Lord (quoting Psa. 8) assigned mankind to that position of managing his world. Now at the conclusion of God's plan for his creation, he has chosen a human in which to place his only begotten Son as sole authority to rule. For a season (about 33 years) God subjected his Son to be a little lower than the angels as he had other humans (with more limited abilities,

i.e., subject to time and space restrictions). In Jesus God has glorified mankind even more excellently by placing under him, alone, the total works of God, the universe. This process is still underway as noted in vs. 8b. This process is to reach the ultimate conclusion which God intends. It was God's plan from the beginning of creation that he would come and live among mankind and become perfect (as a human) through suffering the humiliation of human spite. Jesus in submitting himself to severe persecution and even physical death, (although he did not sin which would have justified such death) paved the way for others to trust him and thereby become spiritual siblings to share God's glory. Jesus leads others to God's spiritual reconciliation. He is the only one who can make people pure from their sins, and that purity makes both him (the human component of his being) and those who rely on his goodness to be the children of the same Father, Jehovah God. In vs. 12 the author quotes Psa. 22:22 where God's Son (as later revealed) claims proudly that those who trust him are his siblings. "God, I will speak about you to my brothers; I will praise you before the whole gathering." Again, another Old Covenant quote is given to emphasize the oneness of believers with Jesus. David in II Sam. 22 said, "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress and deliverer; the God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the strength of my salvation, my high tower and my refuge." And again at Isa. 8:18 the author quotes, "Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion."

IV. The children to whom David and Isaiah referred are human beings. God determined that, in order to understand fully the lot of his created human beings, he (God himself) should become a partaker of humanity's nature. The climax of Satan's power over humanity is death (separation from God) by tempting people to rebel against God as the Devil had done. Here the principle that makes one's choice an individual, personal decision and absolute, comes into the plan. But in Jesus (God, but also a fully human being) God overcame the Devil's ultimate power to separate people from their Creator. Since physical death places a person in final, comprehensive jeopardy of being eternally separated from his or her loving Father God, God's plan in Jesus was/is to neutralize Satan's power. Before Jesus fulfilled God the Father's plan, people lived their entire lives fearing death. In effect, their time here was lived in slavery to their forthcoming, inevitable physical death. Now, however, because of Jesus' human nature and his victory over sin as a human (the seed of Abraham), we who trust him are identified with him as fellow humans (not angels). Jesus who lived a perfect, sin-free life as a human is alone qualified to be a priest between God and his fellow human beings and help the latter to be acceptable to be in the presence of a holy God, the Father. Because Jesus suffered as a human and maintained perfection, his righteousness is accepted by God as an appropriate substitute for anyone who will trust him for eternal spiritual life, Rom. 3:21-27. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor, Rom. 11:33-34?"

May 11, 2003

"The Servant vs. the Son"
Hebrews 3

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. The author of Hebrews makes his position very clear as to the spiritual status of the Jewish Christians to whom the message was addressed. Note carefully the way the author refers to them. Because of the writer's having established in Chap. 2 the relationships of Jesus and those who trust him as Savior, he calls the readers sanctified (holy, set aside) siblings of Jesus. Those siblings are called out by God's calling from heaven (entered into the Lamb's Book of Life). No person can accept Jesus as God's Son and Savior unless the Holy Spirit makes that known and takes the initiative, John 6:41-45. The writer calls his readers again to give complete attention to the offices of Jesus, God's Messiah. He was/is God's Apostle (one sent with a special commission) and High Priest (communication and grace channel between God the Father and his children). God's Holy Spirit is the corroborating (makes certain) agent in the salvation experience. [At this point I want to make a part of this lesson the two contributions made last week concerning ways of better understanding how the three persons of the triune God (our Spiritual Father, Savior Son, and Comforter Paraclete) relate to each other: First, they are like the three facets of a man who can be, at the same time, a father, a husband, and an employee of a firm. Secondly, the triune nature of God is like water which can be, while water in each instance, a liquid, a solid (ice), and a gas (steam or atmospheric humidity). Bill Norman related the former and Charles Barrier the latter. Recall also that Jesus himself when talking to Nicodemus likened the Holy Spirit to the wind which cannot be seen, but his effects can be seen and heard, John 3:8.]

II. In vs. 2 it is declared that Jesus was faithful to God the Father who appointed him to come to earth and reconcile all who would trust him for eternal, spiritual life. Here Jesus' faithfulness is compared to the faithfulness of Moses in his time and place. However, in vss. 3-4 in continuing the comparison, Jesus is more worthy of more glory than Moses, because the Law came through Moses and was not made, initiated by him. In other words, the Jewish nation and the correct, acceptable rules of life (house) were built (created) by Jesus (God), and Moses simply received the house from Jesus. And truly, the one who created the house is more honorable than the nation (Israel) and the Law themselves which were created by God (Jesus). Everything that exists was created by Jesus, John 1:3,10,14. In vss. 5-6 Moses' faithfulness is reiterated concerning Moses' leadership of God's people, Israel, but note that his leadership was as a servant (slave) of Jesus and only symbolic of what would take place later when Jesus, God's Son, would himself come as the rightful heir of all God's people. But now the house (the people of God through trusting Jesus as Savior and following the leading of God's Holy Spirit) includes not only the flesh-and-blood descendants of Abraham, but also those and all others who relate to God through faith in his Son, Jesus.

III. The Hebrews writer, beginning in vs. 7, announces the second

warning which relates to a people keeping a living faith in God's Son, Jesus. That warning has to do with the "hardening of the heart" and the possible effects of such "hardening" on the future of believers. The author gives direct credit to God's Spirit as the one who told David in Psa. 95:7-11 that only those who remain faithful to God (Jesus) are the ones who will be given the opportunity to be a part of and enjoy God's "Day of Rest." Jesus came to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, and I believe that if the Jewish people had accepted him as king, the kingdom would have been established, literally and immediately. But the Jews, as a nation, rejected Jesus, and therefore Jesus' personal reign on earth was postponed. He now reigns on earth in the hearts of believers through the agency of his Holy Spirit. When on earth in human flesh, Jesus promised to return to earth, and at that time there will be no denying God's immediate establishing of Jesus personal reign over God's people who trust Jesus as God's only begotten Son. That will be God's "Day of Rest" for his people, Matt. 10:22; 24:13; Mk 13:13. The author is bringing to minds of the Jewish Christians their knowledge of how Moses led the children of Israel out of their slavery under the Egyptians, and how they rebelled against God's will for them in the Sinai Peninsula while Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the commandments of God. The Israelites' corporate spirit in the rebellion is characterized as one of provocation, i.e., they provoked God to anger by "hardening their hearts" against his will for them. They not only refused to go immediately to the land promised to them by God, but also worshiped an idol whom they gave credit for freeing them from slavery, Exod. 32:4. Because of this rebellion, all males who exercised the rebellious spirit died before reaching the promised land, Numb. 14:26-35. Moses himself was permitted to see the promised land but not to enter it, Deut. 34:4.

IV. The author beginning in vs. 12 again stresses that trusters in Jesus (brothers) should be heedful that their faith in Jesus inspires them to continue to practice following Jesus' (the Holy Spirit's) leadership. To deny that leadership will discredit ones qualification to "enter into" God's special period, the "Day of Rest." We should daily encourage one another in our faith, vs. 13. Today, during the New Covenant period, we believers can lose the joy of our salvation by not looking forward daily to the promised joy of God through our faith in Jesus Christ. We are to love God and believe his promise to us in Jesus and patiently wait for the fruition of that promise. Just as the Israelites were promised a physical reward (a land flowing with milk and honey) for acting on God's promise, so are we promised by God a glorious future for living in faith through our experience of physical death. Our faith is to endure continuously until Jesus has our mansions prepared, and then we will live by sight rather than faith! We will then be living in the very presence of God himself! As God's Word promises, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; - - - and I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, - - - I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them; they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. There shall be no more tears, death, sorrow, crying, nor pain, Rev.21:1/4.'"

May 18, 2003

"The Day of Rest"
Hebrews 4

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. The author of Hebrews bases the ideas in Chap. 4 upon the admonition given in the preceding chapter, i.e., because Jesus is superior to Moses both in performance and person, a believer in Jesus should not test God by "hardening" his or her heart and thereby distrusting God to keep his promise. Just as the Hebrews under Moses' leadership ceased trusting God to bring them to the Holy Land (the promise of rest from slavery and tribulation), but rather, turned to idolatry (love and trust of immediate, temporary, material satisfaction, Eph. 4:19; Col. 3:5; I Tim. 6:10). In Chap. 3 (vs. 18) the time of "rest" for God's people is mentioned as a time when certain ones whose belief (faith) endures (Matt. 10:22) will "enter into." Chap. 4 is devoted mostly to this time of rest (vss. 1-13), but also Jesus' high priesthood is introduced in vss. 14-16.

II. An obvious assertion is assumed at the outset of Chap. 4: God's promise of rest still stands, and that promise involves ones entering into eternal life and during that eternal life shedding the temporary, flesh-and-blood housing in which every person begins and ends physical life. Each truster in Jesus Christ should be careful to maintain that belief and make it a choice-basis for the way one lives daily, Jam. 2:18-20. There was good news made known to the wandering Israelites for temporary rest just as the good news (Gospel) has been brought to the world in and through Jesus Christ for God's one-time spiritual day of rest. God's message does not produce the potential, desirable result unless an individual receives, appropriates, and makes the message to permeate ones life, (Rom. 6:11) a willingness to follow the leading of God's Holy Spirit, Eph. 4:30. The promise of God to the Israelites during the forty years wandering in the wilderness (desert) was not received with faith that the promise would be fulfilled. In the first covenant period God did not embody (pour out) his Holy Spirit in each individual Israelite, but in response to God's Son's request (John 14:16) God has made his Spirit a part of the life of every believer (Acts 2:38) in God's promise through Jesus, i.e., that that believer is a citizen of God's Kingdom, Mk 1:15; 4:11; Lk 12:31; 14:15; 16:16; 17:21; John 3:5. God had in mind firmly from the beginning of mankind's history (when he created the world) what the end result would be of his creation, including mankind. Here the author quotes Psa. 95:11 in which God said that he was swearing under oath that those who will not believe him (trust his promise) will not be invited to enter the period to which he refers here as "my rest." We who trust Jesus are to remember with diligence that God's word (promise) is true and that there is no appeal from his position.

III. Involved in God's firm promise to those who place their total trust in Jesus, his Son, is the attitude of God following his creation of the world. Again, quoting from God's Word (Gen. 2:2-3) indicating that, following the six days during which God made the heavens and the earth, he rested for a day. The seventh day in which God rested he considered holy or different from the former six days. Not only did God consider the seventh day holy, but he also commanded

mankind to consider the seventh day different, holy. People were to maintain a conduct of life which honored God's desire of keeping the seventh day distinct, holy. When God instructed the manner of life his people should follow through the Law given through Moses, one of the first four commandments relating people to God himself was to keep in mind the seventh day, to keep it holy. This fourth commandment of the decalogue (The Ten Commandments) stated that temporal needs were to be earned on the six days (just as God had worked to create the heavens and earth), but as God rested on the seventh and considered it separated (sanctified), so should people not forget to refrain from unnecessary labor on the seventh day. As God had made the Sabbath (Sunday) holy, people who please God do the same, Ex. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15; acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2. [It is possible, of course, to make a fetish of remembering the Sabbath (Sunday) as Jesus plainly and explicitly taught, Matt. 12:1-14; Mk 5:10-16. One can observe the seventh day as holy without considering the observance to be magical or with irrationally obsessive devotion, Rom. 14:5-9.

IV. God has set a day (time, period) yet future which is emphasized in vs. 7 by TODAY where the author quotes Psa. 95:7-9 in which God spoke through David and said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts [and to continue the quote] as you did at Meribah (quarreling), as you did that day at Massah (testing) in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did." If Joshua had made his period of leadership a true day of rest (spiritual), then another day of Sabbath-rest would be inappropriate. However, the Israelites, because of their reticence to believe and obey God, fell short of the promised day of rest. God's Word (Jesus, God's only begotten Son, John 1:14) will determine (John 5:19,30; Acts 17:31) who participates as the people of God with Jesus during God's Day of Rest. [The Scriptures do not, in my humble understanding of them, make a simplified, succinct outline of the coming rest period for God's people, both Old and New Covenant representatives. However, there is enough Scriptural evidence, as in this Hebrew instance, to leave no doubt about the fact that such a rest day is assured. The assurance is tied directly and exclusively to the sacrifice by God of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. To include such a rest day in God's plan there will necessarily be two resurrections and two books containing all mankind's final destinies (noted by Ned Yates on 1-16-94). References are found at Rev. 20:5,12. (For more on the books see Rev. 3:5 and 5:9.) Much mystery has been generated by Bible scholars relating to Rev. 20, primarily, I believe, because of the magnitude of general information given in an extremely small capsule. People would much prefer to have the information "spelled out" in finite detail. God did not inspire John to do so. Therefore, we believers must have faith and trust God that he will, through Jesus, give us everything good, I Cor. 2:9-10; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:12. I believe that the thousand year (millenium) is to be the Day of Rest mentioned here in Hebrews 4. Peter in his second letter at 3:8 relates God's reckoning of time in a significant way. There he states this, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."]

Remember our context in Hebrews
Read Acts 15:1-5, 13-19 P.921

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25
May 18, 2003

"The Day of Rest"
Hebrews 4

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

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P.973
Vss. 17-22

Paul's Beliefs

P.972
Gal. 2:
* God or
* prof
* Matt.
7:21-2
P.974
* Matt.
7:1-2
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final
judge
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* Acts

P.906

1 Cor. 3:6

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Peter's 1st

witness
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P.390

P.976

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IV. God has set a day (time, period) yet future which is emphasized in vs. 7 by TODAY where the author quotes Psa. 95:7-9 in which God spoke through David and said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts [and to continue the quote] as you did at Meribah (quarreling), as you did that day at Massah (testing) in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did." If Joshua had made his period of leadership a true day of rest (spiritual), then another day of Sabbath-rest would be inappropriate. However, the Israelites, because of their reticence to believe and obey God, fell short of the promised day of rest. God's Word (Jesus, God's only begotten Son, John 1:14) will determine (John 5:19,30; Acts 17:31) who participates as the people of God with Jesus during God's Day of Rest. [The Scriptures do not, in my humble understanding of them, make a simplified, succinct outline of the coming rest period for God's people, both Old and New Covenant representatives. However, there is enough Scriptural evidence, as in this Hebrew instance, to leave no doubt about the fact that such a rest day is assured. The assurance is tied directly and exclusively to the sacrifice by God of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. To include such a rest day in God's plan there will necessarily be two resurrections and two books containing all mankind's final destinies (noted by Ned Yates on 1-16-94). References are found at Rev. ^{P. 1042} 20:5,12. (For more on the books see Rev. 3:5 and 5:9.) Much mystery has been generated by Bible scholars relating to Rev. 20, primarily, I believe, because of the magnitude of general information given in an extremely small capsule. People would much prefer to have the information "spelled out" in finite detail. God did not inspire John to do so. Therefore, we believers must have faith and trust God that he will, through Jesus, give us everything good, I Cor. 2:9-10; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:12. I believe that the thousand year (millenium) is to be the Day of Rest mentioned here in Hebrews 4. Peter in his second letter at 3:8 relates God's reckoning of time in a significant way. There he states this, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."]

Gen.
1:20
2:1-3

7
Jesus
Told
modern
the a
person
must be
born of
flesh
with
with
with
(physical
& of
spirit
from
above)
to be
right
with
God,
Bless
spirits

But, of course, we believers begin "resting" spiritually the moment we entered the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus as our Savior.
+ Lord on Oct 2

24:40-43

June 01, 2003

"The Priesthood Concept"
Hebrews 5

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Please recall that we stated last week that we would discuss Chap. 5 by beginning with Chap. 4, vss. 14-16, because the priesthood of Jesus is introduced at 4:14. In this sermon to the Hebrew Christians we have learned that Jesus has been chosen by God, the Spiritual Father of all those who trust Jesus, as sole communicator of God's truth to mankind, because Jesus is God by inheritance (sired by the Holy Spirit of God) and at the same time human (as the physical son of Mary who was in the lineage of Abraham, David, etc.). The author established as fact that Jesus is superior to Moses, the founder of Israel as a nation. Moses was a great leader for temporal accomplishments, but Jesus as God-man established the potential for every individual to become spiritually alive and to live spiritually (together with God) beyond the deserved wages of sin, death (being separated from God.) In fact, believers will reign with Jesus during a day of rest for God's people, II Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:6. However, the author admonishes the believing former Jews that their faith in God's promise through Jesus must endure throughout mortal life, not as their Jewish forefathers who refused the temporal promise during Moses' and Joshua's day by disobeying their Creator through idol worship.

II. Some Jewish Christians appeared to be reluctant to continue faith in God's leadership through his agent, the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus came and imparted the Spirit to every believer in Jesus, the faithful could have questions about religious matters answered by a fellow human being, a member of the Jewish priesthood. Now the Jewish (by race) believers (in Jesus as their Savior) were considering whether to become like their forefathers who longed to go back to Egypt even if again to slavery, because there, at least, they had food and were assigned work, Exod. 16::2; I Cor. 10:10-11. [In other words, they were much like the present day "hard line" Russians who want to go back under a Communist regime, for then they had someone to make every major decision in life for them. All they had to do was to obey orders.] These Jewish Christians wanted to return to obeying the priests who controlled all religious affairs of their lives by interpreting the Law of Moses and tradition based upon that Law. If the lower ranked priests could not decide a particular issue in doubt, consultation was made with the chief or high priest for a solution. The high priest would regularly convene a council (the Sanhedrin, who had religious, civil, and criminal jurisdiction) for more complicated matters. Remember that final decisions were considered to be God's will in each instance, i.e., the priests spoke for God to people. God's will for individuals came only through a priest with the high priest having the final say. (Rare exceptions came through angels (messengers) sent directly by God.) In the period during which the New Testament was being established and codified by God's Holy Spirit, the High Priest of Israel was primarily a political (from Rome) appointment.

III. The author in 4:14 reminds the Hebrew Christians that New Covenant believers have a new High Priest [who is not appointed

by Rome]. The new high priest has returned to God (through the heavens) and is none other than Jesus, the very Son of God himself. In light of that knowledge, we should hold on to the accompanying promise of God concerning those who trust Jesus. With the only high priest (who communicated and communicates through the Spirit) being Jesus, we should profess faith in no other for eternal and temporal help, Matt. 10:32; John 3:16; Acts 4:12; I Tim. 2:5; Rev. 3:5. And why are we to be so sure that Jesus is the genuine and only high priest who can be trusted without hesitation or reservation? Because he came as a human who, without any exception, was tempted to contradict and disobey God's will as every other human is tempted, and yet, not once did he displease God, Isa. 53:6,9; II Cor. 5:21. As individuals whose faith is in Jesus, we can be sure that we trust a high priest who is able to sympathize with us, because he can with firsthand knowledge understand our weaknesses. The author encourages believers to approach God's seat of power confidently; because there sits the God of grace who dispenses forgiveness for sin; because he is a merciful God who will deliver help at any time at any place to anyone who calls upon the name of Jesus, Rom. 10:12.

IV. The priesthood established in the Pentateuch with Aaron (Moses' brother, a Levite) as the first priest, as such, (Lev. 8:2,6,13,31,36) along with his sons illustrates the problem with human priests other than Jesus. While Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving God's Law, Aaron yielded to the peoples' demands and made an idol which the Hebrews worshiped, Exod. 32:1-4,35; Acts 7:37-42. What the author is stating, in effect, is that Hebrew priests were appointed from among themselves (Levites) until such time as God would send his own son, Deut. 18:15,18-19; Matt. 21:33-46; Acts 3:22-26. God selected Aaron and his descendants as priests for the Hebrews, but he later chose Jesus to replace the entire priesthood. Jesus was referred to in Psa. 110:1-5 and Matt. 22:41-46 as one who would come and assume the high priest role and would at the same time be David's Lord. The priestly position which Jesus was chosen by God to fill was to be and now is like the priesthood of Melchisedec, i.e., as indefinite in time and place as was Melchisedec. [We will be discussing this ancient priest later in Chap. 7.] Jesus as God's Son, through obedience and suffering, was made completely adequate (perfect, complete) and qualified to become the author (creator) of eternal life for all who accept him as God's promised Savior.

V. At this point, vs. 11, the message to the Hebrew Christians questions the hearers' willingness to perceive what is being told them regarding the change in God's Covenant with mankind. With their knowledge of Jewish history, they should have been in a position to teach young believers in Jesus about God's plan for them. They should have understood God's love and mercy, but they still wanted to mix his love with legal rites and priestly authority apart from the leadership of God's Holy Spirit. The author likens spiritual maturity to certain chronological ages and a person's ability to receive body nourishment. Growing spiritually in Jesus Christ is a process in which one must apply oneself. A new believer can take only baby food, milk, while one who is spiritually mature can be nourished by adult spiritual food, meat or solid food.

June 08, 2003

"Spiritual Maturity"
Hebrews 6

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. We mentioned earlier that there are five distinct warnings in the Book of Hebrews. Through Chap. 6 three are covered: "neglect" in 2:1-4, "unbelief" in 3:7-4:13, and "not growing (maturing) in God's grace" in 5:11-6:20. For the latter see also Eph. 4:14-16; I Pet. 2:1-2; II Pet. 3:13-18. This third warning has, in my opinion, been as widely misinterpreted as practically any other portion of Scripture. Perhaps the reason for the false understanding of Chap. 6 is due to in large measure to "proof texting" small sections of the chapter without relating the subideas to their context within the rest of the chapter, or the entire New Covenant account. Take, for example, vss. 4-6 which, if considered alone, could be made to convey that a child of God (truster in Jesus) does not have God's promise of eternal life assured, but must have such status renewed every time the truster makes a mistake by doing something displeasing to God or "not living the life" according to how one "feels" about the actions. [Talking the talk but not walking the walk] Let us now examine all of Chap. 6.

II. A believer is to build but not dwell upon some of the elementary teachings (facts) of ones initial experiences while becoming a child of God (truster in Jesus for spiritual salvation). Maturing is to be the goal of every believer in Jesus just as a child wants desperately to be older than he or she is at any given time, say, before age twenty or twenty-one. The author of Hebrews is revealing that not growing ones faith toward maturity could be similar to a graduate student in a university doing a doctorate in shoe-tying, coat hanging, or napping. The Holy Spirit leads a willing person to repent (recognize and express sorrow) for his or her lost spiritual condition (being separated from God's purpose for his or her existence or life), and then that willing person accepts God's only plan for a reconciliation to himself (becoming a truster of Jesus, God's only begotten Son). At that moment one becomes a child of the living God, a new citizen of the Kingdom of God, and that relationship is sealed forever by God's Holy Spirit, John 3:15-17; 10:27-30; Eph. 1:13-14. In today's vernacular we can safely say that we who are trusting Jesus as Savior are united to God as Father forever, and that is the "bottom line" or irrefutable eternal word of God himself. We are therefore to serve God as his children, demonstrating faith in God with our attitude and actions (not performing "dead" works or works not enhancing the King whose subjects we are, or reflecting wrongly our Spiritual Father whose children we are.) The wrong habit of many immature believers is to mull over or worry about infractions of God's will that were committed even before they became God's children, Psa. 103:12; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; Eph. 1:7, or, infractions committed as God's children, Eph. 4:30-32; I John 1:8-9. A child's view of reality is considerably different from that of a mature adult, I Cor. 13:11.

III. The author of Hebrews in vss. 2-3 lists several events relating to becoming a believer in Jesus as Savior. They are: original repentance of sin for salvation, childlike faith in God, baptism,

laying on of hands, the resurrection from physical death, and the eternal judgment of God. These teachings are a necessary part of becoming a believer, but one cannot live in a house foundation. Nor can one say truthfully that the original intent of building a home is fulfilled when the base foundation is completed, as important as the foundation is. As the Kingdom of God is expanded, these basics are necessarily repeated, and the author commits to repeating them as often as unbelievers are encountered in mission outreach (as God permits). The author here, however, is communicating to believers who are, or should have been, well beyond recently accepting Jesus as the Messiah (Savior). It is not necessary or even possible for one to hear the Good News of God in Jesus, accept that divine message, begin following the Holy Spirit's leadership, become a citizen of the Kingdom of God and the kingdom age to come, and then believe that God will not be faithful to his Covenant made with such a believer. The author compares such a supposed break in relationship to God's bringing a rain on a farmer's crop to nourish the plants and then withdrawing the natural blessing which follows from his natural law. No, the sacrifice of God for a believer's sin is a one-time seal for eternity. The New Covenant is not like the Old Covenant when sinful priests were required first to sacrifice for their own sins and then likewise over and over offer blood (of animals) sacrifices for the members of the Hebrew congregation (nation). Such a view of God's sacrifice of his Son Jesus would be a shameful requirement. In other words, applying Jesus' death on the cross for the same person's eternal salvation a second time would be, in effect, denying that the perfect Jesus could not (is unable) to provide eternal life once and for all time, Rom. 6:7-14. Just Suppose that such a break with God for everlasting life were possible for an individual believer, vs. 6. Such a thought would perhaps be appropriate for those immature (baby) believers who are not bearing fruit for God's Kingdom, John 15:4-8. Their lives would be like thorny briars worthy of being burned, but they still have eternal life. However, their being selected for the Day of Rest could be in jeopardy, I Cor. 3:11-17; 4:4-5; Heb. 4:1.

IV. Beginning with vs. 9 the author (God) gives the preceding vss. 1-8 a proper perspective. He is confident concerning these who are believers about their spiritual lives after he has just questioned the quality of their service in God's Kingdom. Even though some believers contribute immature service, God is not unfaithful to them who are trusting Jesus, I Cor. 1:9. Again, the author admonishes the Hebrew Christians to be strong in their faith and hope right up until they experience death (the end). They are not to be lazy (ineffective) but diligent and patient. God's promise is as sure as God's eternal nature. Abraham is cited as one who received God's promise, but it was necessary for the patriarch to exercise much patience. During this time of God's New Covenant, God's promise to trusters of their spiritual welfare into the hands of his only Son Jesus is immutable (impossible of ever being changed). That very immutability has two bases for being true: It is impossible for God to lie, and the resurrection of Jesus from physical death. We need not fear that God will ever nullify his promise to us through Jesus. That promise is the ANCHOR OF OUR SOULS.

June 15, 2003

"Melchisedec, Aaron, and Jesus"
Hebrews 7

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. The author of the Message to the Hebrews returns to the subject of the priesthood in Chap. 7, a subject which he considered somewhat briefly in Chap. 5. It appears that he deemed it necessary to interrupt his thoughts on the priesthood in order to emphasize a need for mature thinking before being able to understand the priesthood of Jesus. Having implored the readers, Hebrew Christians, to think as spiritual adults, he now examines the priesthood from its very earliest introduction in God's relating to humanity. He starts with Melchisedec in Gen. 14 and ends with God's last and final priest, Jesus the Messiah. Before Melchisedec the Lord communicated directly with his people. In Gen. 12:1 the Word states, "- - the Lord had said unto Abram, 'Get thee out of thy country - - - unto a land that I will shew thee.'" In order to meet the priest through whom Abram was to honor God, Abram needed to make a change in his life, a phenomenal change. In Hebrews 6 the author (God) said that in order to understand God's will for them, the Hebrew Christians needed to make a change in their lives, a phenomenal change. The priesthood had completely changed. The New Covenant which God had instituted in Jesus required trusting Jesus as God and living a life led by God's Holy Spirit, the same Spirit who led Jesus as the God-man, an awesome but completely satisfying life.

II. At Chap. 6:19-20 Jesus is announced as the hope of the believer whose hope is sure, steadfast, and an anchor of the truster's soul, because Jesus has entered into God's presence as an eternal high priest in the order of Melchisedec. He is forever behind the veil (of the Temple) where Hebrews under the Law could not pass except the high priest. Even the Aaronic high priest was allowed to enter beyond the veil into the Holy of Holies but once each year, on the great Day of Atonement. At that time he sprinkled the blood of the sin offering on the mercy seat, first for himself, and then for the sins of all of the Israelites, Lev. 16:11, 15-16. [The English word "priest" is derived from the Greek word "presbyter" which signifies "elder" (Heb. "cohen").] The need for a priest through whom a person could approach God grew from humanity's consciousness of being unworthy before a perfect, holy God, i.e., sin. Mankind has an innerconsciousness of having done acts or thought thoughts which displease the God who made them. Related to this belief in having done things contrary to God's pleasure created a need to proclaim laws or regulations codifying the acts contrary to God's position, John 1:9; Rom. 1:18-23 (teleological knowledge of God).

III. The author in 7:1 tells us more about Melchisedec to whom he has related our Lord Jesus in the last vs. of Chap. 6. In comparing Jesus to the ancient priest, he states that the latter was of another order, i.e., not of a Levitical priestly order. In fact, Melchisedec was declared to be a priest of the Lord God before the Aaronic priesthood was established by some 600 years. Melchisedec was greater even than was the founder of the Hebrew people, Abraham. Melchisedec was the king of Salem (peace) which later became Jerusalem, "the dwelling place of peace," where Jesus was crucified to

bring spiritual peace to all who will entrust their spirits to his welfare. Melchisedec was not only a king, but the Hebrew author proclaims him to be the priest of "the most high God," Jehovah. His position as priest is indicated by the fact that Abram paid to him a tithe (one tenth) of all the spoils of war received after killing the five kings who had captured Lot, Abram's nephew and son of Haran, Gen. 14:18-20. Vss. 2-3 states that Salem was at first known as "righteousness" and then as "peace." As was later discovered in Gen. 19:4-8 (Rom. 1:26-28), the Sodomites were a wicked people, and, in contrast, the Salemites were a righteous people. Scripture does not mention the parents, birth, or death of Melchisedec as it does of the Levitical priests beginning with Aaron. Melchisedec was so great that father Abraham honored him as God's priest (representative of God), and it is an established fact that one who blesses (Melchisedec) is greater than the one who is blessed, (Abram). Therefore, as great as Abraham was considered to be by the Jews, God's Word states that Melchisedec was greater. The Law given to Moses later, required that the Levites as God's priests should be supported by tithes from all the other descendants of Jacob. In fact, when the Israelites paid tithes to the Levitical priests (Aaronic), they were, in effect, paying tithes to Melchisedec since Melchisedec had received tithes from Abram and the Levites were descendants of Abraham, the Levites' forefather, vss. 9-10.

IV. The Levitical priesthood was active at the time the Law was given to the Israelites and prevailed until Jesus was sent by God to establish the New Covenant, John 1:17. When God changed the plan through which people could be reconciled to himself, he chose the human component of the new High Priest's (Jesus) heritage to be of the tribe of Judah (Mary, Jesus' Mother, Rom. 1:3). In the Law given to Moses, nothing allows for one from the tribe of Judah to be a priest. They were the tribe of royalty and kings. One could say therefore that Jesus could not be a priest, but King David in the Spirit (Psa. 110:4-6) declared that such a priest would come who would also be king, a priest and king as Melchisedec had been! God never changes, but as people changed he did change the person through whom they are to be made right (righteous) in his sight. The Law was never meant to be the ultimate means of making people right with their Creator, vss. 16-19, but the Law did promise the coming of a priest who was not subject to the permanent effects of physical death (Psa. 16:8-10; Acts 2:29-36) who would be Ruler and Priest, King and Mediator. The Jewish priests served in the priesthood and then died, but Jesus served God without one infraction of God's pleasure and then was resurrected to life forevermore. Because there is no end of Jesus' priesthood, anyone whoever and whenever approaches Jesus for the forgiveness of God, that forgiveness shall be granted. Jesus is within the veil where God is, for Jesus is God. The Law always makes men priests who are fallible, Rom. 3:21-31, but God made Jesus high priest who is holy, innocent, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become a citizen of God's heaven. Jesus is the only priest today through whom a person can be reconciled to God by having his or her sins forgiven once and forever. (If time permits, we will review John 8:25,27,33-39,41,44, 47-59.)

June 22, 2003

"A Better Covenant"
Hebrews 8

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. The English word covenant came from the Latin convenire meaning to agree. It means to pledge an agreement by contract between two or more persons. As a noun convenant means a formal, solemn (usually written) agreement or compact. A covenant can be broken by further action of one of the persons unless its conditions are in effect at the time of the physical death of one or both of the parties. If a person codified a covenant (will), he or she can change the provisions while still living, but upon death of the testator the will stands firm as last stated. However, a covenant can be made to apply not only to a given individual but to his or her heirs (descendants) as well. Some of the covenants made by God with people he chose contained such a provision. A number of covenants made by God with his people are as follows: (1) In Gen. 3:15 God promised that through the female of the human species he would create a person who would counteract the satanic, evil effect of mankind's separation from himself (God), I Cor. 15:22. (2) In Gen. 9:9,11 God covenanted with Noah that humanity would never again have the earth flooded with water. (3) In Gen. 15:18 God covenanted with Abraham that the land between Egypt and the River Euphrates would belong to Abraham's descendants. To understand this agreement one must look further into the Scriptures, because confusion could result in determining which descendants were meant. Those descendants included (at the time of Gen. 15:18) both the Jews (Isaac) and the Arabs (Ishmael). At Gen. 17:18-21; 24:7 and 25:5 God makes it clear that his covenant with Abraham was to continue only through Isaac, not Ishmael or the children of Keturah. (4) In Exod. 19:5-6 God covenanted with all Israel that if they would keep the Law he was about to give to them through Moses, he would make them a holy (sanctified) nation of priests to convey his will to all the earth's people. The Israelites agreed to the covenant, Exod. 19:7-8. (5) At Numb. 25:11-12 God covenanted with the Israelites through Moses that the descendants of Aaron would be the priests of God to make atonement for Israel. (6) In II Sam. 23:5 God covenanted with David that Messianic salvation would come through his dynasty (seed).

II. Now the author of Hebrews at 8:1 begins a summary of what he has been discussing. God has made a New Covenant. We believers (trusters) in Jesus as God's Messiah (Savior) have a high priest who speaks to and is God. He can speak to God on our behalf concerning any and all matters of our concern. He is now and will always be in the very presence of God the Father. He serves us not as an angel but as one of us, i.e., he lived as a human among us. A priest by definition is one who necessarily must have an acceptable offering to satisfy the only holy and just Creator, a God who cannot be approached by anyone who has willingly participated in evil (sinful) actions. Jesus as high priest (mediator) dwells not in a place (even though designed by God) made by mankind as was the Tabernacle (tent) in the wilderness or even God's houses (Temples) made by Solomon, Zerubbabel, Ezekiel, or Herod the Great, but one built by God himself, in Heaven with God. At the time when Hebrews was written there were still Jewish priests offering animal sacrifices

to God. These temporary priests served (and still do) as an example of what God promised was to come. The priestly order was strictly maintained as God had instructed Moses under the covenant given at Mt. Sinai. But now (when Jesus was sacrificed on Golgotha) God has instituted a better covenant in which Jesus received a more excellent service. He is mediating a different and better agreement (covenant), and that covenant was established upon better promises than the former covenant.

III. If the first covenant [referred to in #4 above, I believe, based upon keeping the Law - WA] had had no weakness or fault (people's ability to keep the Law, Rom. 8:3), there would have been no reason for God to have instituted another covenant. It is obvious in retrospect that people did not do God's bidding under the Old Covenant, but God through the prophet Jeremiah (31:31-34) promised a New Covenant. Jeremiah made it clear that a New Covenant would not be like the Old Covenant under the Law. The principle difference would be that God would not treat people as immature children, i.e., lead them around by the hand. They assumed no responsibility under this arrangement and refused to keep God's covenant. The New Covenant promised to the people through Jeremiah would include placing God's Holy Spirit himself in each and every individual believer to instruct and empower him or her in doing God's will. In this way God would put his way (law) in each believer's mind (intellect) and heart (emotion), and then they (the trusters of Jesus) will indeed be God's people. Likewise, God will be their Lord. There will be no need for priests to tell each believer what God wants him or her to think or do. A believer will not be in position to judge another believer, because God is, through his Spirit, leading each one directly. Through faith in Jesus as Savior, all believers will know God from those considered to be least to those who are considered to be the greatest, for God will be merciful in considering their unrighteousness and remembering those confessed unrighteousnesses never again. Only God has the ability to block our from his consciousness the sins against him committed by his creatures. When God promised such a New Covenant during the time of the prophets, he was promising that the Old Covenant would be replaced. Now that God has relegated the Old Covenant to obsolescence, it is time for those who have faith in God through Jesus to consider that Old Covenant to have vanished away. [Jesus was asked by Peter at Capernaum on one occasion whether a brother who had sinned against him should be forgiven as many as seven times. Jesus, who always expressed God's position, told Peter that a person who is a subject of God's kingdom should forgive seventy times seven which is to say that there is no limit to how many times one should forgive a brother. I believe that the 70 X 7 is figurative speech for an infinite amount - WA.] A believer in Jesus is eternally safe. The hymn writer Edward Mote put it this way:

"When he shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh may I then in him be found;
Dressed in his righteousness alone;
Faultless to stand before the throne.
On Christ the solid rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand."

June 29, 2003

"The Necessity of Blood"
Hebrews 9

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Understanding the message of God in the Book of Hebrews apart from the time of its writing is practically impossible. Those who heard and believed what Jesus told them in Lk 19:35-48 were not wondering whether the great Herod Temple would be destroyed, but when. The Hebrews writer (as God spoke through him) knew that soon the great facility which was such a necessary part in maintaining the Jewish religious customs of that time would no longer exist. Soon the Temple as the place where the Jewish priesthood could continue month after month and year after year to practice their interpretation of what God had told their forefathers through the Law and Prophets would be gone. Soon there would be no center or core where all Jews could look to as a place where they could focus on the presence and will of the God of their fathers. Without the priesthood how could their sins be purged? Without the Temple where would the high priest go every year on the Day of Atonement to absolve through the prescribed rituals his own sins and the sins of the people? The Jewish Christians for whom Hebrews was written had been Jews in their religious persuasion but now had placed their faith in Jesus as God's Messiah (Savior) and without need for the Old Covenant's provisions. However, they were thinking about whether they should revert to the Jewish faith, at least in part. In Judaism they had at least entities which implemented their faith in a physical way. The Temple was real, and the priests were visible as they performed the religious activities.

II. The Jewish Christians needed a mature view of their relation to God through Jesus Christ. In this Chap. 9 the author compares the Old and New Covenants as concerns the part blood and the sanctuary play in both Covenants. He relates at the outset that it was true that the first Covenant did indeed have activities dedicated to serving God (divine service). Also, an earthly place was designated where the people could know God's presence, for God had promised to meet with the High Priest in the sanctuary after the High Priest had properly cleansed himself with the blood of sacrificed, properly chosen animals, Exod. 25:22. The author describes in considerable detail the appointments of the Tabernacle. There was a large fenced area within which was a specially designed tent, the Tabernacle. In the Tabernacle were located both the holy place and the Most Holy Place. The High Priest and his chosen helper priests serviced the holy place every day. There the table of shewbread stood to the right as one entered the holy place. On the left was a golden, seven-light lamp stand which burned perpetually and furnished the only light within the holy place. Apart from these lights absolutely no light could enter the area. Beyond the table and lamp stand was an altar whereon incense was burned. The aroma of delightful incense within the holy place presented a stark, but pleasant, contrast with the odor just outside the inner sanctuary where the altar stood on which raw animal flesh was burned to ash for sacrifice. Between the altar for burning flesh and the entrance to the holy place was a basin referred to as a bronze laver in which they washed themselves before entering the holy place. The entry to the Taberna-

cle was considered the first or entry veil into the holy place, Exod. 26:36. A closely woven veil divided the holy place from the Most Holy Place, Exod. 26:33. Beyond that second veil was the Most Holy Place in all of Israel, because there was kept the Ark of the Covenant in which was concrete evidence of God's deliverance from bondage. No one was ever permitted within that second veil except the High Priest once per year on the annual Day of Atonement. At that time he took the blood of an animal and purified himself and afterward took the blood of another animal and offered a sacrifice for the sins of all the Israelites. This sacrificing was "open-ended" in that it was required over and over again. The author of Hebrews states explicitly clearly that this system of sacrifice could not satisfy the inner feelings of guilt for the participants, vs. 9. The fallibility of the High Priest was evidence that the ultimate holiest of all sacrifices was not present during this period of a temporal dwelling place for God, and ordinances conducted with such temporary elements, vss. 8, 10.

III. In vs. 11 the author turns to Christ and God's New Covenant through and by Jesus and contrasts the New Covenant with the Old. The contrast at the outset refers to a "more perfect tabernacle" not made with human hands and which is not of this creation, i.e., earthly. The new Tabernacle is not to be served by human fallible priests and with animal blood over and over again but by Jesus' blood which need only be applied once for the eternal spirit of the individual believer (truster) of Jesus. The unblemished animals chosen for sacrifice in the Old Testament are completely inferior to God's holy sacrifice, himself in the person of his Son, Jesus the Christ. If the blood of animals could symbolize the cleansing of the flesh (temporarily), how much better is the shedding of Jesus' blood (in terminating his fleshly life) to bridge the sinful gap between the only holy and righteous Creator and his sinful (willfully so) creatures, people! (Mk 14:24) To free peoples' fearful consciences, God selects individuals through his Holy Spirit to receive an eternal inheritance (life), vs. 15. In order for this New Covenant to become effective the Testator (Jesus) had to die, vs. 16. While Jesus lived in the flesh as a human (and God), God's New Covenant could not be effective, vs. 17. Such was true for the first covenant to be effective, i.e., death had to occur, blood had to be shed (signifying cessation of life). That death has to precede forgiveness is a mystery, but such is truly a requirement of the God who does the forgiving, vs. 20. Without the shedding of blood (death) there can be no forgiveness by God for a person's sin (spiritual separation from God). The truth revealed in vs. 23-24 appears to be that Jesus' death on the cross not only made a way for people on earth to become right with God, but there were (and are) purifying effects in the heavens as well, Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:20; II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6. Note what the author (God) states in vs. 26 where he makes Jesus' sacrifice retroactive throughout history (foundation of the world). Every person whoever had faith in God's promises will be saved (made spiritually alive) by means of the same factor that makes us right with God today, the death (blood) of Jesus. (For further evidence see Matt. 22:32; 27:50-53.) Every person must experience physical death, and following that experience must give an account of their sins before God, vs. 27. However, those who have exercised faith in Jesus' sacrificed blood are waiting eagerly for his return and the culmination of their salvation. They will be presented to God separated from their sins, vs. 28. We owe it all to Jesus.

March 20, 1994

"Mutual Encouragement"
Hebrews 10

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. Continuing the idea at the end of Chap. 9, the author states in 10:1 that the New Covenant was not equal to the image of the Old Covenant, but the Old was only a shadow of the New, i.e., the recurring sacrifices of the Old could not make perfect those who participated in them. If under the Law the rites had abolished the separation between God and his creatures (people), there would not have been need for a new agreement offered by God through Jesus Christ. The blood of amoral animals (creatures with no moral choice) only aroused in keepers of the Law a sense of being sinners (being separated from God's will). A final permanent forgiveness is impossible through animal sacrifice, vs. 4. At this point the author quotes from a Psalm of David (40:6-8) and attributed its message as having been the voice of Jesus, and although the quotation appears nowhere else in the New Testament, it relates God's expectation of his people even in the Old Testament, I Sam. 15::22-23; Psa. 51:16-19; Jer. 7:21-23; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8. Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 at Matt. 9:10-13 and Matt. 12:1-8. The author of Hebrews interprets David's quote (vss. 5-7) as though Jesus had said to God the Father, "You did not desire the Old Covenant system of animal offerings and sacrifices but (instead) you have prepared a (human) body for your Son. To replace the burnt animal offerings and sacrifices in which you had no pleasure, I volunteered to visit the world and do thy will, O (Father) God."

II. The Hebrews author builds on the Psa. 40:6-8 quote to mean that Jesus did follow through and became in his body the acceptable sacrifice which did away with the old system of animal sacrifices and the old priestly order, vss. 8-9. It is this sacrifice (the broken body of Jesus) which sanctifies (sets apart as spiritually perfect) the believers (trusters) in Jesus as Savior. This sacrifice (the body of Jesus) is ultimate in God's sight and makes permanent (once and for always) his relation with his children (believers), vs. 10. The Old Covenant priests work on a temporal basis (repeatedly) and offer sacrifices which cannot take away sins, vs. 11. However, the man (human) Jesus offered a sacrifice which takes away a believer's sins on a permanent basis (forever) and then went into the very presence of God in Heaven. There he sits on the right of God, the Father, vs. 12. The plan of mankind's redemption involves Jesus' remaining there with God and waiting until every enemy of God is put under the power of Jesus. In the meantime, God is singling out selected ones for sanctification (making new creatures and setting them aside) forever those who are trusting Jesus. The Holy Spirit is God's agent in bringing about this reconciliation, vs. 15, and see also Rom. 8:16. Here the author again (Heb. 8:10,12) quotes Jer. 31:33-34. With this eternal arrangement in place (through Jesus as Savior), there need be no more offerings made for God's children, vs. 18. Why? Because God is giving direct guidance and power to every believer, and he or she has an inexhaustible account sitting in the very presence of God. [A believer's relation with God is based upon love, not Law, Rom.3:20; Gal. 2:16; 3:11. A believer does God's will, because he or she loves what has been done

for him or her through Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "If ye love me, obey me. - - - He that hears my teachings, and does them, he it is that loves me: and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will reveal myself to him," John 14:15,21.]

III. We believers have confidence to enter into the Holy of Holies, because Jesus' blood (life) was shed (lived) for us. The veil (Jesus' flesh) was torn apart so that we may enter into the Holy of Holies while the high priest is there, into the very house of God (Heaven), Matt. 27:50-51. Because Jesus, our Lord, is our High Priest, we can approach God with full assurance that "our hearts have been sprinkled from an evil conscience" and made righteous before God. We have been made anew through Jesus' broken (sacrificed) body. Our lives have been consecrated to a new and heavenly purpose, to serve the living God. We are to continue in our profession of hope and not waver, because God who has promised us is faithful, vs. 23 and I John 3:20. Believers at this part of the message are encouraged to "stir up" each other to love and perform activities which become those who profess to know and love Jesus Christ. To make this encouragement easier and more likely to happen, we are to associate one with another and boost each others spiritual morale. The nearer to the occurrence of Jesus' return to complete our salvation, the more important the meetings together become. Evidently, some of the Jewish Christians were not meeting, at least not regularly, with other believers, vs. 25. [Complicating their problems?]

IV. Again, the author proposes a sad situation which occurs when God's children are not practicing their faith vitally. (See 6:4-8) In this Chap. 10:26-31, we are told the mind of God when we do not act as God's children know we should, Eph. 4:30. Since Jesus' sacrifice was "once and forever," there is no next year for another ritual for forgiveness as during the First Covenant. Under Moses' Law a breaker of the Law could legitimately be killed for cursing ones parents (Lev.20:9), for adultery (Lev. 20:10), for homosexuality (Lev. 20:13), for bestiality (Lev. 20:15), and this constitutes a short list. This treatment (death) was for breaking God's Law as given through Moses, and now the author contrasts this harsh punishment with those who would dishonor God's grace after the sacrifice of his own Son, Jesus Christ. Imagine making God's grace something to be stepped upon, a thing to be treated as unholy!!! Quoted here is Deut. 32:35-36 where God says that he will indeed punish those who despise his grace, who become objects of his wrath. This strong view of the evil of spurning God's grace constitutes the writer's fourth warning, this one for Falling Back into Judaism. The first was Neglect in Chap. 1, the second Unbelief in Chaps. 3-4, the third Remaining Immature in Chaps. 5-6. Following the fourth warning the author notes several instances in which these Jewish Christians had been persecuted, made spectacles of, and had their possessions plundered, all because they had accepted Jesus as God's Messiah (Savior). On an occasion they had been merciful to the writer while he was a prisoner. They are not to turn away from their rewarding confidence but remain patient (endure). In vs.39 the author includes the readers with himself as trusting Jesus to the saving of their souls. They were and we are living by faith, Hab. 2:4 Rom. 1:17; 3:22; 9:30.

March 27, 1994

"The Experience of Faith"
Hebrew 11

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. The author quoted Hab. 2:4 at Heb. 10:38: "The just shall live by faith." This quote from the Old Testament appears also at Rom. 1: 17 and Gal. 3:11, and is the only Old Testament verse quoted three times in the New. At Chap. 11 he returns to the faith factor by giving an experiential definition and many who have exercised faith in God's promises throughout human history. Even the creation of the physical universe itself is understood through faith that the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ created it by actions on matter which is not now apparent, Gen. 1:1. The definition of faith in vs. 1 is perhaps best translated, "Faith is the title-deed (guarantee) of things hoped for, the proof (that which convicts or persuades) of things awaiting (for the ones who are experiencing such faith)." It is this same faith (in God's promise) that provides the good credentials of the Old Covenant witnesses of God's faithfulness in keeping his promises. It is possible to group the faithful ones as follows: before the flood, vss. 4-7; the patriarchs, vss. 20-22; Moses, vss. 23-28; the Exodus generation, vss. 29-31; a general grouping of others, vss. 32-38; and the projection of those during the Christian period, vss. 39-40. One should note the presence of two women among this listing of the faithful. Also the character of some of these faithful could be criticised today by some self-righteous hypocrites who judge others by the Law, Matt. 7:1-5; Rom. 3:20-21.

II. In Gen. 4:4 Abel offered a blood sacrifice to God and was declared righteous thereby. Abel still bears a witness for all who follow even though he died physically. Enoch was unique. [Methuselah was his son who lived longer than any other person in recorded history, 39 years longer than Adam, 969 - 930. Enoch was Cain's oldest son, Gen. 4:17, who murdered Abel.] At last he was honored by God for his faith by never experiencing physical death, Gen. 5:24. In the New Testament Enoch is mentioned at Lk 3:37 and Jude 14. The author in thinking of Enoch stated plainly that without faith it is impossible to please God. One can only know God through believing that he lives, and faith alone can reveal that God will reward those who sincerely seek him, Exod. 33:20; John 1:18; Heb.11:6. Noah is an excellent example of how faith is involved in the salvation process. As James makes clear at 2:14,17,20 faith is not simply forensic or theoretical but must be exercised to develop its full meaning. Noah exemplified the necessity of believing God's promise single-handedly (only eight were saved from the flood, I Pet. 3:20). He was ridiculed for his faith that God would keep his promise, and God declared him to be righteous for acting on his faith.

III. Abraham demonstrated his faith in the promise of the Living God when he left his birthplace in Ur of the Chaldees as God commissioned him to leave for another place. He left without even knowing where his new place of residence would be. He left a good home and lived in tents, for he believed God's promise to make him an eternal home which was permanent and made by God himself. His time

on earth after leaving Ur was spent in tents and lasted for parts of three generations. Sarah, Abraham's wife, likewise proved her faith by believing God could usher her into motherhood at the advanced age of 90 with her husband as good as dead at age 100, vs. 12. In vs. 11 the Greek is better translated: "By faith also Sarah herself, although barren, received power for the depositing of semen." God promised Abraham that his posterity would become nations with innumerable inhabitants. I believe that many self-righteous religionists would condemn the actions of Abraham and Sarah, because they were both the children of the same father, Terah, Gen. 20:12. They lived long lives, 175 and 127 respectively, and underwent many toils and dangers. They were never allowed to enjoy the home God promised them, in fact, they were strangers and pilgrims their whole lives on earth. Their lifelong testimony was that they had received God's promises, embraced them, were persuaded by them, and even died physically believing that God would be faithful to keep his promise to them. The most faithful act which Abraham undertook was taking Isaac through whom God had promised to bless him, vs. 18, and would have sacrificed (killed) him had God not suddenly, at the last moment, furnished a lamb for sacrifice instead, Gen. 22:5-14; John 1:29; Rev. 5:1-14.

IV. The author now lists Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph as men of faith who were faithful in receiving, believing, and acting upon the faith of Abraham which had been practiced by each and passed on to the others. Just as Abraham as father of the children of Israel as a people was given more attention among the individuals of faith, so beginning in vs. 24 Moses is emphasized as the founder of Israel as a nation. Immediately after Moses' birth, his family saved him through their faith in the purpose, plan, and promise of God through the Hebrews to all humanity.. Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses, but he refused to remain her adopted son and enjoy the luxury and prestige of the king's household. Rather, he determined to further Jehovah's will by remaining with and complementing God's program through his chosen people. Moses could see in that early time the eventual triumph of Jesus Christ as God worked through him at a future time, vs. 26-27. God honored Moses by giving through him the Law which foreshadowed the Good News to mankind through his Son, Jesus Christ. The author now mentioned Joshua and his faith that felled the walls of Jericho as the land promised to Abraham's descendants was taken. Rahab the prostitute is then listed among God's faithful. She acted upon her faith in Israel's Lord by harboring the Hebrew spies, Josh. 2:9-10. (She is another whom the self-righteous would prefer to forget.) Following Rahab are given others who demonstrated faith in their lifetimes: Gideon, Judg. 6:11ff; Barak, Judg. 4:6ff; Samson, Judg. 13:24ff; Jephthah, Judg. 11:1ff; David, and Samuel. Through many trials and tortures these all retained their faith. All of the above remained faithful to God because of his promise, but not one of them has yet received the ultimate promised reward of their faith. God is withholding the promise made to them, for he wants all those who place their trust in the sacrifice (righteousness) of Jesus Christ to receive their ultimate reward at the same time as the Old Covenant faithful. It is amazing to know that we are included with God's great such as Abraham, Moses, and David!! Without Jesus there would be no final blessing!!!

April 3, 1994

"Disciplining Children"
Hebrews 12

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. The author, after listing many of the faithful to God's promises in the Old Testament, admonishes the Jewish Christians to beware of the temptations which await to ensnare the believers' fleshly weaknesses, Matt. 26:41-42; Rom. 7:18-25, I John 1:8-10. We believers are going through our salvation experience and should be patient, realizing that the race is long and difficult, Phili. 2:12-15. Every believer has a prescribed race which requires endurance (a second wind) in order to overcome. In the Phili. chapter noted above Paul also stated, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" - - - who as a human became a servant, and was obedient [to the Father] unto death, even the [humiliating] death of the cross. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name," vs. 5/9. I refer to this passage, because in vs. 2 the writer leaves the Old Testament faithful heroes to call our attention to the Lord himself whom he declares to be the originator (creator) and perfecter of our faith. Jesus' endurance through the trials of the religious leaders' opposition, humiliation, and persecution, the very crucifixion torture itself, was maintained through the JOY of knowing that God would keep his promise, Psa. 22:1-10,24. In fact, about fifty days after his physical death on the cross, Jesus returned to the right hand of God his Father (and our Father through our faith in Jesus Christ). Now, we are to consider the faithfulness of Jesus and his example for our behavior and trust in God's promise as we are "striving against sin." At least, the author tells us, we have not been tested by shedding our blood as Jesus did his, i.e., only Jesus was, is, or can ever be the Savior of people from their sins. Believers' cannot be tempted to displease God so intensely that God's power is not available to enable those believers to overcome that temptation, I Cor. 10:13.

II. With vs. 5 the author (God) calls to mind some changes from the Old Covenant, e.g., they are now God's children, and they have been exhorted (warned, advised) in the Scripture at Prov. 3:11-12 that when God creates offspring, he does not leave his children to fend for themselves. [When a person places his or her faith in Jesus Christ, that person is born from above (reborn, John 3:3,5-7) and is forever a spiritual child of God, John 3:15-16.] God works with his children through discipline (correction) so that they will grow in his grace, II Pet. 3:18. Even human fathers and mothers (God-loving ones) will take the time and expend the effort to nurture and teach their children what proper maturing is. That nurturing is a difficult task requiring constant vigilance and consistency. "What parent is there of you who, if his child asks for bread, will give that child a stone, or who asked for a fish, will be given a snake?" Jesus asked this rhetorical question in his teaching one day. He then gave the parallel to that question by declaring, "If you then, being evil (subject to human limitations), know how to [that you should] give good (proper) gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:7-11) For the situation to be other-

wise would indicate that the parent would be bastardizing their own children, relating to them as illegitimate and not ones very own! In other words, a proper parent will own his or her own children and recognize that parent-child relationship by affording appropriate nurture and training, even if that rearing involves disciplining, Prov. 13:24; 19:19. Children with a right relationship with their parents will respect their parents for correct discipline and nourishment. If that be true, and it is, then how much more worthy is it for God's children to be subject to the discipline of his or her Father of their spirits. Human parents are concerned for their children's temporary, earthly welfare, but God is concerned also with his children's eternal, holy welfare. A child who brings pride to his fleshly parents is dwarfed by God's pleasure when his children live holy, sanctified, Godly lives, Matt. 5:48. While discipline is meted, the immediate situation can be (and usually is) unpleasant, but believers should honor the God who has redeemed their spirits by conducting their lives according to the leadership of God's Spirit who dwells within, Rom. 12:1-2. The results of God's discipline when properly received and acted upon by his children, brings inner peace and righteous living, Jam. 3:17-18. We believers are to exercise our spiritual wills just as we do our physical bodies. We should examine our spiritual health regularly and bolster our weaker desires by applying more faith. Especially in our relations with others, we will practice civility, amicability, and utter grace. The best time to stop a fight is to snip negative feelings before they smolder into blazing fires. Eliminate the heat and there will be no fire, Matt. 5:21-22. To ensure a loving relation with our Lord, we must see others through God's grace, i.e., with eyes of Godly (holy) love and forgiveness, Matt. 5:44-47; 6:14-15; I John 4:20-21.

III. Before God extended his grace through Jesus Christ and people's decisions were limited to the provisions of the Law (John 1:17; 8:31-32), one like Esau had no second chance after making a profane or godless decision. After he relinquished his inheritance for a bowl of bean soup and bread (Gen. 25:33-34), he could not change his mind later, Gen. 27:32-35. The author, with this example of Esau, illustrated ones yielding to the temptation of bodily appetites (lust) contrary to the leadership of God's Spirit, Rom. 7:6,25; 8:1-4,35; Jam. 4:1-7. In vss. 18-24 the author makes clear the difference between God's Old Covenant and the fear associated with it and God's New Covenant and the love which motivated it, John 3:16; I John 4:18-19. Believers are not judged by the Law, because their hope is rather in God's grace through the life lived by Jesus Christ and given up by him for the erasing of all evidence which separate those believers from their Holy Father. We come to God who is our exclusive and final Judge and who can see no impurities in us as he views us through our faith in Jesus blood (life). Our spirits are just, being made perfect through Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant with a blood infinitely better than that which indicated Abel's faith in God. We are not to presume God's grace as something that can be treated without awe and profound respect, because we are royal citizens of the Almighty's kingdom, eternal and holy. Not to presume thusly constitutes the final and fifth warning in the Message of Hebrews. Because God, our heavenly Father, has accepted us through his grace, we too are to be full of grace.

April 24, 1994

"Final Admonitions"
Hebrews 13

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. The first mark (that which distinguishes) of believers (trusters) in Jesus as Savior is love of one another, vs. 1. The Greek word used for love here is "philadelphia" referring to brotherly kinship, friendly, admiration, esteem, kindly disposed toward, to wish well, venerate, delight in, to long to be with, to desire to associate with, through ones will (introspectively) rather than by command from without. This love is not Godly love, agape, which is meant in John 13:34-35; 15:12;; 21:15-16. After stressing the need for the Jewish Christians to love one another as members of the family of God, the writer states that they should also not forget to entertain strangers (Gentiles?), because they too can bear God's message (the Good News of Jesus Christ), see Gen. 18:1-3ff; 19:1-2ff. God is using those who were not used in earlier times to make his will known (Matthew, writer of the first Gospel, is an excellent example of such.) It is not possible to distinguish those in whom God places his Holy Spirit by an outward examination of race, color, nationality, or any other physical appearance or social status, Matt. 25:35, 38,40; Lk 17:20-21.

II. The author now specifically mentions concern for those who are imprisoned. We in a democracy usually assume that prisoners are in prisons because they are lawbreakers and mean. The New Testament attitude appears to be that whether one is in prison for such a reason or other reasons (political, religious, etc.), the incarcerated one is in special need of love and care, Matt. 25:36,39-40. In fact, believers' caring for prisoners makes them ambassadors (representatives) of Jesus, King of the Kingdom of Heaven. Many early believers were put in prison, e.g., John the Baptizer, Paul, Silas, Peter, James, and Jesus himself was arrested and crucified to death. Included with the prisoners are others who are mistreated. The context of vs. 3 indicates that those in trouble and prisoners are in this condition primarily because of their being believers in Jesus and members of God's household, i.e., "as being yourselves in the body." Now the author turns to believers' proper attitude toward the exclusive monogamous sexual commitment and continual companionship of one male and female to each other (marriage). There were those who, as Roman citizens, held the institution of marriage in low esteem. To them marriage was not a bond of commitment under God, but often was to create either a lustful, political, or social status and had little to do with sexual purity. Also, there were among the Jews of ascetic persuasion, many who believed that sexual gratification, even in marriage, was inately evil just as many Christians today who believe that those who abstain from marital sex are holier than those who marry, but see I Cor. 7:28,36,38; Col. 2:23; I Tim. 4:3. While sexual activities are honorable for any believer who is monogomous, sexual activities are evil in God's sight (subject to his judgement) which deviate from the singular commitment of one man and one woman to each other (KJV-whoremongers and adulterers). In vss. 5-6 the author admonishes the Hebrew Christians about their attitude toward temporary, material things. He states that believers should conduct their affairs in such a way

that their lives not promote self-greed or avarice. Here he quotes Deut. 31:6, "Be courageous and strong, without fear, for the Lord thy God is with thee wherever you go; he will not fail or forsake thee." Jesus himself said regarding prayer at Matt. 6:8b, "- your Father knows what things you need, before you ask him." Again, at vs. 6 he quotes Psa. 27:1, "The Lord is my light and salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" See what Jesus said at Matt. 6:24-34.

III. The writer at vs. 7 turns to those "which have rule over you, who have spoken the word of God - - ." The message for us in this admonition, I believe, concerns those whom God chose to codify the text of the New Covenant (Testament). He underscores the invariableness of the message contained in that text with vs. 8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." The New Testament was completed by God and thereafter was not to be changed either in its text or modified by later traditions which church leaders might impose upon it. In vs. 9 the writer explains further what he has in mind, "Be not carried away with various and strange teachings, for it is right that the (believer's) heart be established on grace." Rituals will not satisfy God's requirement for a person's righteousness. Only accepting God's grace through relying upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ can a person know peace with God. What is left for the believer to do: offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, confessing that our hope is beyond this fleshly, temporary state, and do good and share our blessings with others." Obey God's Word with joy, for that is profitable for ones spiritual well-being.

IV. The author begins at vs. 18 a personal conclusion. He solicits the Hebrew Christians' prayers, because he is fully persuaded that he is conveying God's message as he writes to them (Eph. 6:19-20). He seeks restoration to the Jewish Christians, i.e., to be considered by them to be their sibling in the family of God (God's Kingdom). In vs. 20 a doxology which is often used in ending worship services is given, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect (whole) in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

V. [I believe that Paul wrote this message to the Hebrews because: 1) The Greek is more refined in style than Paul's letters, but Paul dictated rather than actually writing his (God's) thoughts; 2) Paul would have been careful not to emphasize his authorship, because many Jewish converts (believers) objected to his emphasis of faith rather than ritualistic and nationalistic Jewish practices; 3) Paul referred to his bonds at 10:34 and how he had been refreshed there as he did at II Tim. 1:16; 2:9; 4) at vs. 23 the author refers to Timothy as "our brother" in like terms as at Phili.1; 5) The author does, in fact, emphasize faith (Chap. 11, etc.), but the emphasis is couched in Old Testament history. Note Matt. 5 where Jesus reinterpreted much of the first century Jewish tradition.]