

HEBREWS

BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

ANDREW M. DAVIS

WITH JOEL W. HARFORD

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Books By Dr. Andrew M. Davis

- An Infinite Journey: Growing Toward Christlikeness, 2014.
- Revitalize: Biblical Keys to Helping Your Church Come Alive Again, 2017.
- Exalting Jesus in Isaiah, 2017.

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Preface to the Reader

One of the most important elements of a healthy Christian life is regular study of God's word. The Psalmist writes in Psalm 19:7-8 that *"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."* I yearn for Christians to reap the rich benefits of scripture study, and to grow in the knowledge and love of God's word through directly engaging with the biblical text. This is why I have chosen to publish bible study questions instead of commentaries. There are many valuable commentaries to help aid your study of scripture, and I recommend using them. For guidance on commentaries visit www.bestcommentaries.com.

However, the focus of this book is to engage you, the reader, and to challenge you to answer relevant questions based on the scripture.

I have in mind three types of users for this book: First, group bible studies. Most of these questions were written for my weekly men's bible study. I recommend that the leader use this resource to prepare beforehand, reading all the questions and picking only five to seven for discussion. Twenty questions would certainly be a lot of material to discuss! For the bible study, each participant could have a copy to follow along. Second, sermon preparation. Asking questions of the text can be very helpful for understanding the flow and point of a passage of scripture. Third, personal bible study. Again, you can gain valuable insights by asking questions of the text.

My hope for these bible study questions is that they would encourage and facilitate Christians' gathering together to study God's word. One day, as Habakkuk 2:14 says, *"the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."* Critical to this prophecy in Habakkuk is our *knowing* about the Glory of God, and this is best achieved through the study of the bible. So let's do our part!

I challenge you, reader, to ask some friends, colleagues, classmates, or fellow church members to join you for a bible study. Ask God to open your eyes to understand the scripture (Psalm 119:18), and step out in faith to spread the knowledge of the Glory of God. May this book enrich your study of God's living and active word (Hebrews 4:12), and may the Lord Jesus Christ bless your bible studies!

Summary of Hebrews

The book of Hebrews is a letter of exhortation written to a church of mostly Jewish believers living in Italy (likely Rome) who had professed faith in Christ and shown great courage and faith in their early Christian walk. However, as time progressed, it appears that living as a Christian was becoming increasingly difficult. Some were losing their courage and strength, and there was a huge temptation to commit apostasy and go back to Old Covenant Judaism. Therefore, the central theme of Hebrews is the superiority of Jesus Christ (and the New Covenant in Christ) over the Old Covenant and all the mediators and prophets of the Old Covenant.

There are many themes woven throughout the letter to the Hebrews, the first being the superiority of Jesus Christ over all other mediators and types in the Old Testament. The author argues that Jesus, the Son of God, is far superior than the angels. Angels, though powerful and majestic, are nothing compared to the divine son of God. The author then compares Jesus to Moses. He explains that Moses was faithful to God as a servant, but again, Jesus the Son is far higher than the godly and respected prophet Moses. The author demonstrates Jesus' superiority to Joshua, for although Joshua brought the people into the promise land, it was not the final resting place for God's people. Finally, the superior nature of Jesus' eternal priesthood is demonstrated to be far better than the Aaronic priesthood.

In conjunction with the arguments for the superiority of Jesus over all other mediators and prophets, the author makes the argument that the New Covenant that Jesus brings is vastly better than the Old Covenant mediated by Moses. Indeed it is so much better that the Old Covenant is actually finished and is vanishing away. Because Jesus is the fulfilment of the Old Covenant, and because Jesus has instituted an infinitely better priesthood (one that is sufficient to eternally pay for our sins), the Old Covenant is finished and the New Covenant is here to stay.

Interspersed throughout this letter are also seven severe warnings to the readers. They are warned against the grave dangers of (1) drifting away from the gospel, (2) turning away from the living God, (3) falling away from Jesus, (4) shrinking back from faith, (5) staying away from Christian fellowship, (6) throwing away their confidence in a heavenly reward, and (7) being carried away by strange teachings. Though the author believes his readers to be Christians, he issues these strong warnings to push these Christians to persevere. Scriptural warnings are a means of grace in the Christian life to keep us in the faith.

Another overarching theme in Hebrews is the call for endurance. Perseverance in the Christian life is proof that one's confession is true and that one belongs to Christ. The Hebrew Christians, along with all Christians, can look to the examples of faith in the Bible and church history to see men and women who have gone before us in the faith and have persevered to the end. May all true believers heed the warnings and exhortations from the author of Hebrews, and run with endurance to the end!

THE SUPREMACY OF JESUS CHRIST

HEBREWS 1:1-14

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What is the writer of Hebrews seeking to prove in Hebrews 1?
2. Why is it important that Christ is superior to angels?
3. What do these verses teach us about Christ? About the universe? About angels?

II. VERSE BY VERSE QUESTIONS:

GOD'S FINAL WORD: JESUS CHRIST (VV. 1-3)

1. How does the writer to the Hebrews begin this letter? Why does he start by talking about prophets? Compare it with Hebrews 4:12-13. How important was the prophetic word? (1)
2. What are some of the “many times and many ways” in which God spoke through the prophets? See also 2 Peter 1:19-21. How did God speak through the prophets? (1)
3. What does the phrase “in these last days” tell you? Are we in the “last days”? How does this relate to 1 John 2:18? (2)
4. What has God done in these last days? What is the difference between God speaking “through” the prophets and God speaking “by” His Son? (2)
5. What does verse 3 teach you about Jesus Christ? How is Christ “the radiance of the glory of God”? What is “glory”? What is “radiance”? How does this relate to John 1:4-5? (3)
6. What does it mean that Jesus is the “exact imprint of his nature”? Note: this word signifies the imprint of a signet ring in soft wax, or like a typewriter’s mark. How does this verse relate to Jesus’ statement to Philip in John 14:9 “Whoever who has seen me has seen the Father”? Or to John 1:18? (3)
7. What does verse 3 teach us about his mission? How did Jesus provide purification for sins? What is the significance of His sitting down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven? How does it relate to verse 13? (3)

CHRIST SUPERIOR TO ANGELS (VV. 4-14)

8. Based on verse 4, what conclusion does the writer to Hebrews draw from verse 1-3? (4)
9. Why is the fact that Christ is superior to angels so important? How does it relate to Hebrews 2:2-3? (4)
10. What is the name that Christ has inherited? Compare Philippians 2:9-11. (4)
11. What does the word “For” tell you about verse 5? How do verse 4 & 5 relate? (5)

12. What does verse 5 discuss? What is this verse quoting? What is the OT context of these quotes? (5)
13. What does verse 6 call Christ? Does the term “firstborn” appear anywhere else in the Bible? What is the significance of Jesus as firstborn? (6)
14. What does the quote “Let all God’s angels worship him” prove in the author’s argument? How does this verse help prove the deity of Christ? (6)
15. What does verse 7 tell you about angels? What is the OT context of this quote? Does this verse seem to be talking about angels in the OT? (7)
16. The author to Hebrews has an amazingly high view of the inspiration of the Old Testament, as we all should. What is the significance of his introduction of all OT quotes with phrases like “He says” or “did God ever say”? (5-13)
17. Who is speaking in verses 8-10 according to the author when he writes “He says...”? What is amazing about this if the “He” is God the Father? What does “He” call the Son in verse 8? (8)
18. What does verse 8 teach you about Christ and His kingdom? How important is righteousness to the ruling of Christ’s kingdom? What is a scepter? What is Christ’s scepter? (8)
19. What does Christ love and hate? Should we learn to love the things Christ loves, and hate the things Christ hates? (9)
20. According to verse 9, why did the Father set Christ above His companions? Who are Christ’s “companions”? See Hebrews 2:11, 14. (9)
21. What do verses 10-12 teach you about creation? How do these verses function in the argument the author is making about Christ’s superiority? (10-12)
22. What does it mean that “you, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth”? What does it mean that “like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed”? (10-12)
23. What does verse 12 teach you about Christ’s basic nature? (12)
24. How does verse 13 help to prove Christ’s superiority to angels? What else does verse 13 teach? Is verse 13 being fulfilled now in history? How so? Compare this with Psalm 2. (13)
25. What does verse 14 teach you about angels? How does this verse encourage you? (14)
26. What does it mean to “inherit salvation? (14)

III. SUMMARY:

In demonstrating the superiority of Jesus Christ over all things, the author of Hebrews begins the letter by proving that Jesus is the exalted Son of God, and is far higher than the great angels, or any other created thing, for Jesus created all things.

THE DANGER OF DRIFTING

HEBREWS 2:1-4

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to drift away from God, and how does this passage give a remedy?
2. Why does the author warn us about ignoring this great salvation?
3. What does verse 4 teach you about the early church and its experiences of the Holy Spirit?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. What does the author exhort his hearers to do in verse 1? (1)
2. What does it mean to “pay much closer attention”? Compare with what Jesus says in Mark 4:24. There he commands “Consider carefully what you hear...” Are there different ways to listen to the word of God? What are some habits of the heart that would enable you to obey this warning? (1)
3. Some have said that learning to listen to the preached word without obeying is one of the most dangerous habits you can get into. Do you agree? Why or why not? (1)
4. How does 2 Peter 2:20-22 shed light on this issue?
5. What danger does Hebrews 2:1 warn against? What does it mean to “drift away”? Have you ever felt yourself to be “drifting away” from God? Have you observed it happening in others? What is the remedy given here?
6. How does the word “Therefore” connect 2:1 to what was taught in chapter 1? (1)
7. How does the “For” at the beginning of verse 2 help explain the logic of “therefore” in verse 1? (2)
8. What is the “message declared by angels”? See Deuteronomy 33:1-4, Acts 7:38, Acts 7:53, and Galatians 3:19. How does this concept (i.e. that the Old Covenant was given to Moses by angels) help explain the case the author is making in Hebrews 1, that Jesus is superior to angels? (2)
9. What does it mean that “every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution”? To what is this referring? Was it true? For example, was every adulterer executed based on Deuteronomy 22:22? What about King David? (2)
10. Why does the author underscore that punishment of every violation was just? (2)
11. Verse 2 underscores the seriousness of violating the Old Covenant. What application does the author make concerning the New Covenant in verse 3? (3)
12. What does it mean to “neglect such a great salvation”? What effect should the point this passage is making here have on our evangelism? (3)

13. Why does the author refer to “such a great salvation”? How is our salvation in Christ “great”? (3)
14. Message of angels vs. Message of Christ. This is the contrast in Hebrews 1:4-2:3. How was the gospel message first spoken by Christ? (3)
15. How was it confirmed? Who is the “us” of verse 3? Who were “those who heard” him in verse 3? Who did the “attesting”? What does this verse tell you about the author of Hebrews? Could it have been one of the original Twelve, for example? Why or why not?
16. Who also “bore witness” to the gospel message, according to verse 4? How did He do it? (4)
17. Compare this concept to what Jesus said in John 5:36.
18. Read Acts 14:3. How does that passage shed light on Hebrews 2:4? How did miracles confirm the message of God’s grace? (4)
19. Do miracles convert anyone? According to scripture, what produces saving faith? (See Romans 10:17) If the preached word alone is sufficient for producing saving faith, why did God confirm the message by enabling them to do signs and wonders during the apostolic age? (4)
20. Do these miracles still happen? Have you ever seen them? If not, why do you suppose they no longer happen? (4)
21. Do you think modern preaching is more or less effective than Paul’s preaching was in Acts 14? Did he need help from miracles that modern preachers no longer need? (4)
22. What are “gifts of the Holy Spirit”? How do they testify to the gospel that Christ brought? See 1 Corinthians 12-14, Ephesians 4:11-17, Romans 12 for cross-references. (4)
23. What does “distributed according to his will” mean? What does it teach you about spiritual gifts? (4)

III. SUMMARY:

The author warns his readers against the danger of drifting away from Christ, showing that if breaking the Old Covenant was justly punished, how much more would we face punishment if we walk away from the New Covenant. This New Covenant, the “great salvation” was proclaimed by Christ and his witnesses, while miracles were done to attest to its truth.

THE SON OF MAN CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOR

HEBREWS 2:5-9

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What do these verses teach us about Jesus' relationship to angels?
2. What do these verses teach us about the world to come?
3. How do these verses help explain Jesus' present humiliation and future exaltation?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. Why does the author return to talking about angels? What point is he trying to make? (5-9)
2. What is "the world to come"? Why does the author say "of which we are speaking"? (5)
3. When was the author speaking about the "world to come"? (5)
4. What does "subjected" mean? What does the author's use of the word "subjected" teach us about the world to come? To whom will that world be subject? (5)
5. Why does the author speak so vaguely about the authors of Old Testament scripture, writing "it has been testified somewhere..."? (6)
6. Why do you think the author uses such a strong word, "testified" a word we usually reserve for courtroom statements? (6)
7. What passage does the author quote? What case is the author trying to make, and how does the quote prove the author's point? (6-8)
8. Read Psalm 8. It is a meditation on the lowliness of man. How does that meditation fit into the train of thought in Hebrews 2? (6-8)
9. Of whom is the author thinking when he cites Psalm 8? To whom is he applying these verses? How do you know? (9)
10. Does this passage (Psalm 8) reflect Christ's humiliation or exaltation? Support your answer.
11. The Hebrew in Psalm 8:5 says, "You made him a little lower than *elohim*..." The word *elohim* is usually translated "God," but sometimes also refers to false gods, mighty warriors, human rulers or judges. Yet the Greek quotation in Hebrews 2:7 clearly says "angels". How could you reconcile these? How could the word *elohim* help us understand the point in Hebrews 2?
12. In what sense was Jesus made a little lower than the angels? How does that fit into the author's goal of demonstrating that Jesus is superior to angels? (8-9)
13. What aspects of the Psalm does the author pick up on in verses 8 and 9? (8-9)

14. How is everything subject to Christ? Who subjected everything to Christ? Why is it significant that the Father subjected everything rather than that Christ conquered and won it of Himself? (8-9)
15. The subjection of the universe to Christ by the Father is a major theme in the New Testament. Ephesians 1:20-23 and Philippians 2:9-11 teach it. The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18 teaches it, and it receives extended treatment in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. How would you compare 1 Cor. 15:20-28 with Hebrews 2:8-9? What similar doctrines are there in these two passages? (8-9)
16. What does it mean that “he left nothing outside his control”? What are the ramifications of this doctrine? How does this relate to Hebrews 1:13? (8-9)
17. Why do we not see everything subject to Jesus at present? How is that manifested in present world history and daily life? (8)
18. How would you interpret “we see him” especially since the author says we see Jesus now “crowned with glory and honor”? In what way do we **see** Jesus? Note: The author also uses this language in Hebrews 12:2, “Looking to Jesus...” (9)
19. How was Jesus made a little lower than angels? (9)
20. How is Jesus now crowned with glory and honor? According to the author, why is Jesus now crowned with glory and honor? To compare, see Paul’s use of the word “Therefore” in Philippians 2:8-9. According to Paul in that passage, why does God exalt him to the highest place and give Jesus the name that is above every name”? (9)
21. What therefore is the relationship between earthly suffering and eternal glory? See also Romans 8:17. (9)
22. What does “so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone” mean? (9)

III. SUMMARY:

The author quotes Psalm 8 and ascribes it to Jesus as the perfect man, temporarily made a little lower than angels, ultimately exalted above the heavens, temporarily suffering death, ultimately crowned with glory and honor, ruling over the world to come. Therefore the author is showing that Jesus seems to be lower than He really is, because in His earthly mission He humbled Himself even to death on a cross. The author is also declaring that, in the end, Jesus will reign over angels and all the new creation.

JESUS IS EXALTED THROUGH SUFFERING

HEBREWS 2:10-18

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. Why, according to this section, was it “fitting” for Jesus to suffer?
2. How does this section of Scripture help us understand Jesus’ incarnation?
3. What do these verses tell us Christ’s death accomplished?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. What does the phrase “in bringing many sons to glory” mean? Who are the “sons”? How are they “brought to glory”? (10)
2. How should the fact that all things exist through and for God affect our daily lives? See also Romans 11:36, Revelation 4:11. (10)
3. How was Jesus made “perfect through suffering”? See also Hebrews 5:9 and 7:28 which also speak of Jesus being “made perfect”. What does this mean? Was Jesus “imperfect” in any way before being “made perfect”? How did the suffering “make Him perfect”? (10)
4. Why was it “fitting” that Jesus be made perfect through suffering? (10)
5. Verse 11 refers to the one who sanctifies (or “makes holy”) and those who are sanctified (made holy). Who are each of these? What does “sanctified” or “made holy” mean here? (11)
6. What is the main idea of verse 11? Does this concept (that we are all from one Father, and Jesus is not ashamed to own us as his brothers) amaze you? Compare this statement to Hebrews 11:16. (11)
7. How would you compare the shame of verse 11 to shame in the following verses: Mark 8:38, Romans 1:16, Philippians 1:20, 2 Timothy 1:8. Who has greater cause for shame: Christ about us, or us about Christ? What is the source of our shame about Christ in this world? (11)
8. How does verse 12 begin? To whom does the author of Hebrews ascribe the three Old Testament quotations in verses 12-13? (12-13)
9. What point do these three OT quotations make in the flow of the author’s argument? (12-13)
10. What are the original contexts of these three OT quotations (Psalm 22:22, Isaiah 8:17 & 18)? How does understanding these contexts help you understand Hebrews 2?
11. What question do verses 14-15 seek to answer? (14-15)
12. According to these verses (14-15) why did Jesus take on a human body? How does Jesus taking on flesh and blood “destroy” or “render powerless” the devil? (14-15)

13. What does verse 14 teach us about the devil? How did he have the power of death? Does he still have it? See Revelation 1:18. What is the present relationship between Christ and death? What will the future relationship be? See 2 Timothy 1:10, 1 Corinthians 15:25-26, Revelation 20:14, 21:4. (14)
14. The subjection of the universe to Christ by the Father is a major theme in the New Testament. Ephesians 1:20-23 and Philippians 2:9-11 teach it. The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18 teaches it, and it receives extended treatment in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28. How would you compare 1 Cor. 15:20-28 with Hebrews 2:8-9? What similar doctrines are there in these two passages?
15. In what way were we subject to slavery through fear of death? Is this universally true of all people? How has Jesus delivered us from this? What causes “fear of death”? See 1 John 4:18 and 1 Corinthians 15:55-57. What are some practical implications of verse 15? (15)
16. How does verse 16 contribute to the train of thought here? What angels are being referred to? Why is it significant that he does not help them? Why does the author specifically say that he helps “the offspring of Abraham”? How does Abraham factor in here? See Genesis 15:6, Galatians 3:7 (16)
17. How was Jesus made like his brothers in all things? Why was it necessary? How does his being made like us enable Christ to become a merciful and faithful high priest? What do the words “merciful” and “faithful” teach you about Christ’s ministry? (17)
18. This is the first time “high priest” is ascribed to Christ? What is the significance of this title and that it is ascribed to Jesus? (17)
19. In what things is Jesus “faithful” according to verse 17? (17)
20. “Propitiation” means to take away the wrath of God by a blood sacrifice, and bring reconciliation. What is the importance of this concept in the train of thought here in Hebrews 2:10-18? (17)
21. What insight does verse 18 give into the nature of Jesus’ sufferings? What does this verse teach you about temptation? What does it teach you about suffering with Christ? See also Romans 8:17. What if we don’t share in the suffering of temptation with Christ? (18)
22. How does Christ’s incarnation and ministry as high priest help you not to sin during times of temptation? See also Hebrews 4:15-16. (18)

III. SUMMARY

This section of Scripture describes in careful detail the unbreakable bond established between Christ and his brothers by the fact that he took on a human body. His entire purpose in taking on that body was to suffer temptation in the flesh, defeat it in every case, and to stand for us as our high priest offering his own blood to free us from the fear of death.

JESUS IS GREATER THAN MOSES

HEBREWS 3:1-6

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What is the main point of this section of Hebrews?
2. Why is it important that Jesus was greater than Moses?
3. In what sense are we “God’s house”?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. How does the word “Therefore” connect this section to the previous one? (1-6)
2. What is the significance of the title, “Holy brothers”? (1)
3. Read Romans 1:6-7, Romans 8:28, Romans 8:30, 1 Corinthians 1:24, 1 Corinthians 1:26, Ephesians 4:1, and Philippians 3:14. These verses all refer to a “call” or “calling”. What does this mean? How does it relate to Hebrews 3:1? (1)
4. What is the heavenly calling? How do we “share” in it? (1)
5. What does verse 1 command us to do? How does one “consider Jesus”? See also Hebrews 12:2-3. (1)
6. What titles does verse 1 bestow on Jesus? What is the significance of these titles? (1)
7. What does the word “confession” mean in verse 1? (1)
8. Why do you think the author discusses the faithfulness of Jesus to the one who appointed Him? Who was the one who appointed him? (2)
9. What comparison does verse 2 make between Jesus and Moses? How are they similar? (2)
10. What is the “house” referred to in verse 2? (2)
11. How does verse 3 compare Jesus and Moses? Do you think some Jews would be shocked that Jesus deserves greater honor than Moses? See Matthew 12:6, 12:41-42; John 3:30, 4:12, 8:53 for issues around Jesus’ greatness. According to verse 3, why is Jesus deserving of greater honor than Moses? (3)
12. Why does the builder of a house deserve greater honor than the house itself? (3)
13. What is the “house” being discussed in verses 3-4? (3-4)
14. Why does the author remind us that “the builder of all things is God”? How does that statement contribute to his train of thought? (4)
15. What role does verse 5 assign to Moses? According to that verse, how did Moses discharge his duties? (5)
16. What tasks did Moses discharge according to verse 5? How did Moses “testify to the things that were to be spoken later”? (5)
17. See John 5:45-47 about Moses’ testimony to Jesus. What does it say there? (5)

18. What title and honor does verse 6 give to Jesus? What does this verse teach you about Jesus' authority in the church? How should this concept affect church life? (6)
19. What is the "house" according to verse 6? (6)
20. What is the condition stated in verse 6? "We are his house *if...*" (6)
21. Why is confidence or "boasting" about Christ important in verse 6? What would the opposite be? (6)

III. SUMMARY:

The author urges his readers to realize that even faithful Moses was only a servant in God's house, but Jesus Christ is over all of God's house as the faithful Son. There is an infinite gap in the glory due to Moses, and the glory due to Jesus Christ.

DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS

HEBREWS 3:7-11

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. Why would some consider this to be among the most important passages of Scripture in the Bible?
2. What is the significance of the concept of “Today” in this passage?
3. In what sense do we hear the Holy Spirit speak to us “Today”?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. Verse 7 begins with what important word? What is the purpose of that word? What is the connection to the previous section? (7)
2. What is the significance of the author of Hebrews ascribing the OT quote (Psalm 95:7-11) to the Holy Spirit? According to Psalm 95’s inscription and Hebrews 4:7, who wrote this passage (7)
3. What is the significance of the verb tense “as the Holy Spirit *says*” as opposed to “as the Holy Spirit *said*”? (7)
4. What is the context of the OT quote (Psalm 95) What events does it describe? See Exodus 17:1-7, Deut. 6:16, 9:22, 33:8. (7)
5. What does it mean to “hear His voice”? (7)
6. What does it mean to “harden your hearts”? (8)
7. How did Israel test God in the desert? How is that experience relevant to the audience of the Book of Hebrews and of us today? (8-9)
8. What does the phrase “and saw my works for forty years” refer to? Does it refer to God’s provision for Israel for forty years (“Your clothes did not wear out...” Deut. 8:2-4), or God’s punishment of Israel—forty years of wandering in the desert for their sin of unbelief? (9)
9. Why was God angry with Israel then? What connection is the author of Hebrews making to the Jews of his day? (10)
10. In what way were their hearts always going astray? How does this connect to us today and to the injunction he’ll give in Hebrews 3:12-14 to watch over each other’s hearts? (10)
11. What causes our hearts to go astray? What is the remedy to this grave problem? (10)
12. What does it mean to “know God’s ways”? In Psalm 95, God says of Israel “they have not known my ways”? Why is that important based on what Israel did in the desert? (10)
13. How would “knowing God’s ways” help us not to turn away in unbelief when there is difficulty because of the word? (10)

14. What was God's responses to Israel's behavior? Why did God swear that they would never enter His rest? What is the application to the audience the author is writing to, and for us today? (11)

III. SUMMARY:

The author warns his readers to not harden their hearts, using the example of the Israelites in the wilderness who rejected God at the edge of the promise land and proceeded to harden their hearts for forty years.

WARNING AGAINST DECEITFULNESS OF SIN

HEBREWS 3:12-19

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What do these verses teach you about the responsibility we in the Church have to watch over one another in brotherly love?
2. What is the significance of the concept of “Today” in this passage?
3. How does the deceitfulness of sin harden hearts?
4. How does the author of Hebrews use the example of the Jews of old to motivate his readers?
5. What is the relationship between unbelief and disobedience?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. How would you describe verse 12 grammatically? Is it a command, question, statement, a plea... what is it? (12)
2. How do Scripture’s warnings help protect us from sin? (12)
3. What specifically does verse 12 warn about? (12)
4. How do we reconcile the idea of “falling away from the living God” with the concept of assurance of salvation taught in Romans 8, John 6, John 10 and other places? (7)
5. According to verse 12, what causes someone to turn/fall away from the living God? (12)
6. Do you see a corporate responsibility that each Christian has to other brothers/sisters in Christ in verses 12-13? How does that play itself out in church-life? (12-13)
7. What does verse 13 tell us to do for each other? How often should we do it? Do you feel that most churches and/or Christians follow this command? (13)
8. If we are secure in our salvation, why do we need to be warned and encouraged daily? (12-13)
9. What does it mean to be “hardened by the deceitfulness of sin”? How does sin harden us? How is sin deceitful? (13)
10. What does “as long as it is called ‘Today’” mean in verse 13? (13)
11. What does verse 14 teach you about how the Bible gives assurance of salvation? (14)
12. What is the time sense of the verse “We *have come to share* in Christ *if* indeed we hold our original confidence firm *to the end*”? How do the past and the future mingle in this verse? (14)
13. How is final perseverance the best proof of the genuineness of our profession of Christ? (14)

14. How does verse 15 support what the author has been saying in verses 12-14? (15)
15. What is the author driving at in opening up the examples of Israel's past rebellion in verse 16-19? How does looking at Israel's past help us today? See 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. (16-19)
16. What is the relationship between unbelief and disobedience? (16-19)
17. Why didn't the Israelites enter the Promised Land? How was their history physically like the situation spiritually of the Hebrews, hesitating to enter into the New Covenant and into open faith in Christ?
18. What role do "confidence", "faith," "assurance" have in this section? How do these things answer all fears that cause disobedience? How does this section relate to Hebrews 11?

III. SUMMARY:

The author of Hebrews uses David's Psalm 95 to provoke his hearers to stop their unbelief and the disobedience that comes from unbelief, and to come into a full life of faith-filled obedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit. He holds up the terrible example of the Israelites of old, who through unbelief and disobedience failed to enter the Promised Land. He also speaks to them as a community to watch over one another in brotherly love by *daily* encouraging each other to prevent the gradual hardening of their hearts through sin's deceitfulness.

ENTERING GOD'S REST

HEBREWS 4:1-11

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to “enter his rest” in these verses?
2. What does it mean to “fail to reach” God’s rest?
3. How does the Sabbath rest relate to eternal rest in heaven?
4. What (if anything) does this section teach us about Sabbatarianism, and the strict modern observance of the Sabbath rest on Sundays? See Colossians 2:16-17.

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. What is the significance of the “Therefore” in verse 1? (1)
2. How does the author prove that the promise of entering God’s rest “still stands” in this section? (1-11)
3. What does the author exhort the people to do in verse 1? (1)
4. What does it mean to enter God’s rest? (1-11)
5. What does it mean to fall short of entering God’s rest? (1)
6. How have we had the gospel preached to us? See Hebrews 2:1-4. Who is the “they” in verse 2? How did “they” have the “gospel” preached to them? What “gospel” was preached to them? See Numbers 13:30 and also Hebrews 4:6. (2)
7. Why did the message do that generation no good? What does it mean to combine a message with faith? (2)
8. Who enters the “rest” according to verse 3? (3)
9. Who believed and entered back then? How are they an example to the Hebrews? (3)
10. What does the phrase “although his works were finished from the foundation of the world” mean? How does that assertion fit into the author’s train of thought? (3)
11. What does verse 4 refer to? How does it relate to entering the Sabbath rest? (4)
12. How does verse 5 add to the author’s argument? (5)
13. What divided those who entered and those who did not? Does that distinction still remain true today? (6)
14. What is the significance of the concept of “Today” in verse 7? What is its purpose? How does the fact that David wrote Psalm 95:7-11 so many centuries after Joshua help contribute to the author’s concept of “Today”? (7)
15. Is the “rest” of Psalm 95 the entering of the Promised Land or something else? How can you be sure? What argument does the author make here? (8)

16. What conclusion does the author make in verse 9? How has he supported this claim? (9)
17. How do we “rest” from own works as “God did from His”? What “work” do we rest from? (10)
18. What final exhortation does the author make to his audience in verse 11? How do we “strive” to enter God’s rest? What effort is needed? (11)
19. Why didn’t the Israelites enter the Promised Land? How was their history physically like the situation spiritually of the Hebrews hesitating to enter into the New Covenant and into open faith in Christ?

III. SUMMARY:

The author of Hebrews proves that, since David’s Psalm 95 was written so long after the time of Joshua, yet David spoke of “Today”, there is a continual experience of “Today” which refers to the ongoing opportunity to respond to the gospel invitation to enter God’s rest through faith in Christ. The author then uses the Israelites bad example to provoke his readers to come into New Covenant faith in Christ.

LET US STRIVE TO ENTER GOD'S REST

HEBREWS 4:12-16

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. How is the Word of God “living and active”?
2. How does the author use the threat of Judgment Day to make his case?
3. How does Jesus’ ministry as our great high priest enable us to hold onto our faith?
4. What does it mean to “draw near to the throne of grace”? When should we do this?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. What is the connection between Hebrews 4:1-11 and Hebrews 4:12-13? Note the word “For” in verse 12. (12)
2. How is the Word of God “living and active”? How has the author been treating the Old Testament as though it were “living and active”? (12)
3. In what way is the word of God “sharp” and “piercing”? Why do we need it to do that? How does the sharp, piercing nature of the word of God protect us from the “deceitfulness of sin” expressed in Hebrews 3:13 and from “drifting away” in Hebrews 2:1?
4. What is the significance of “to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and marrow”? Does this verse teach you that “soul” and “spirit” are distinct? Note: This is actually a big theological debate. Is man three parts “Body, soul, and spirit” or two “Body and soul/spirit” with “soul/spirit” used interchangeably in scripture? (12)
5. What is the connection between the Word of God being living, active, and piercing and the fact that verse 13 says nothing is hidden from God’s sight? How does verse 13 fit into the author’s argument? (12-13)
6. What kinds of things do people usually consider (or act like) are “hidden from God’s sight”? See also Jeremiah 16:17. How does verse 13 motivate you to holiness? What does verse 13 teach you about judgment day? See also Romans 2:16. (13)
7. How might verse 13 be possibly an encouragement to people afraid of persecution? See also Matthew 10:26 and Acts 4:23-29. How might verse 13 be a charge to the Hebrews to live consistently open Christian lives, not the double lives of hypocrites? See Luke 12:1-3. (13)
8. What is the connection between verses 14-16 (Jesus the great high priest) and verses 12-13 (The penetrating Word of God)? Note the word “Therefore” begins verse 14! (14-16)
9. What does it mean that we have a “great high priest”? How is Jesus a “high priest” for us? (14)

10. What does it mean that Jesus has “passed through the heavens”? How is that significant? See Hebrews 6:19-20, 8:1, 9:24. (14)
11. What does the author exhort the Hebrews to do based on Jesus being “high priest”? How does Jesus help us to “hold fast our confession”? (14)
12. What does verse 15 teach you about Jesus? What encouragement does it give you? (15)
13. What does the word “For” tell us in verse 15? How does Jesus’ ability to sympathize with our weakness help us to “hold fast our confession”? (15)
14. What specific kind of sympathy does Jesus have for us in verse 15? How does the fact that Jesus lived a “normal” human life (i.e. physical body, temptations) help us to “hold fast our confession”? (14-15)
15. What final exhortation does the author make based on Jesus’ ministry as high priest and his nature as merciful in verse 16? (16)
16. What does it mean to “draw near to the throne of grace”? How does that happen practically? What demeanor should we carry with us according to this verse? (16)
17. What are we seeking to find at the throne of grace? What is our “time of need”? What “help” do we receive from the throne of grace? (16)
18. Do you find verses 12-16 an encouragement to you in your daily battle with sin? If so, how? (12-16)

III. SUMMARY:

The author of Hebrews culminates his exhortation in chapter 4 by meditating on the power of God’s word to uncover hidden sin and the power of Christ’s ministry as high priest to help us through our “times of need”. The author is thus exhorting the Hebrews to fight sin (unbelief and transgressions that come from unbelief) through the Bible and constant prayer in Jesus’ name. Jesus’ ministry as great high priest is opened up for the first time, with a focus on His sympathetic understanding of our weakness. All of this is powerful inducement to “hold fast our confession” in a hostile world that tempts us to forsake Christ.

JESUS IS THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST

HEBREWS 5:1-10

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What are the similarities and differences between Jesus as a high priest and human high priests?
2. Why is it significant that Jesus was called by God to be High Priest, just as Aaron was?
3. How does Jesus' suffering make him a perfect High Priest?
4. What does it mean to be a High Priest in the "order of Melchizedek"?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

HUMAN PRIESTS SYMPATHETIC BECAUSE OF SIN (VV. 1-3)

1. What is the author's overall goal in discussing the general ministry of a High Priest in verses 1-3? How does this connect to the end of Chapter 4? (1-3)
2. How does a priest represent the people to God? In Latin, the word for priest (*pontifex*) means "bridge-builder". How does a priest build a bridge between God and man? See also Job 9:33, "who might lay his hand on us both." (1)
3. What duties of the High Priest are described in verse 1? (1)
4. According to verse 2, why is a High Priest able to deal gently with sinners, to be sympathetic to their plight? How does verse 2 connect with Hebrews 4:14-16? Is Hebrews 5:2 making a comparison or a contrast between human High Priests and Jesus? (2)
5. Does verse 3 compare or contrast between human High Priests and Jesus? (3)
6. How does the fact that Jesus never sinned despite being so sorely tempted make Him actually a *superior* High Priest to human ones who have to offer sacrifices constantly for themselves? (3)

ALL PRIESTS CALLED BY GOD, AND SO WAS JESUS (VV. 4-6)

7. Why is no man permitted to take upon himself the honor of High Priest? What might this verse teach you about "callings" in the Christian life? (4)
8. How did God call Aaron to be High Priest? See Exodus 28:1-3.
9. Why does the author make the point that no one can take this honor upon himself? (4)
10. What does it teach you about Christ, that even He did not usurp the position of High Priest, but rather that He was also called by God to this honor? (5)
11. These verses make much of not taking a place of honor above what God intends for you in life. Americans tend to be very "upwardly mobile," feeling that even the highest position (President of the United States) might be possible if you earned it through skill and hard work. How do these verses and Luke 14:7-11 correct our boldness? (4-5)

12. Why does the author quote again Psalm 2:7 (“You are my Son...”), this time in conjunction with Jesus’ ministry as High Priest? (5)
13. What do the words “the LORD said” (in Psalm 2:7) and “He says also in another place” (verse 6 quoting Psalm 110:4) teach you about Scripture? (6)
14. About whom is Psalm 110 written? How does that context help us understand why the author ascribes the statement “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” to Jesus? (6)

JESUS SUFFERINGS MAKE HIM A PERFECT HIGH PRIEST (VV. 7-10)

15. What is the main idea of verses 7-8? How does that main idea fit into the author’s train of thought which he began in 4:14? (7-8)
16. What event from Jesus’ life does verse 7 remind you of? (7)
17. If verse 7 is speaking of Gethsemane, how did Jesus cry out to the One who was able to “save Him from death”? How did He show “reverence”?
18. According to verse 7, why was Jesus prayer heard? What does this teach you about your own prayer life? (7)
19. How does Jesus’ prayer to the One who could save Him from death serve as a model to encourage to the Hebrews, who were suffering persecution? (7)
20. Did God save Jesus from death? Yet, “He was heard...” (i.e. God heard His prayer). What does this teach you about so-called “unanswered prayer”? (7)
21. How did Jesus “learn obedience through what He suffered”? How did that make Him a “perfect” High Priest? (8-9)
22. Why does the author say “*Although* He was a son...”? Compare it with 2 Samuel 7:14 and Hebrews 12:4-10. Jesus never sinned or needed discipline, yet He suffered and learned obedience. How do you explain these verses? (8)
23. How is Jesus, having been made perfect through suffering, the source of eternal salvation? For who is He the source of eternal salvation? (9)
24. How does Jesus’ perfect life in the midst of temptation, and His role as our Great High Priest offering sacrifices for sins, combine to help us in our “time of need” in 4:16? Perhaps “time of need” = temptation while living on earth.
25. What then is the role of our obedience in our salvation?

III. SUMMARY:

The author describes Jesus perfect ministry as our great High Priest. He is able to deal gently with us sinners since He Himself was tempted, but He is better than an ordinary human priest because He never sinned, so He is mighty to defeat temptation. He did not exalt himself, but was appointed by God to the Priesthood. In his suffering, Jesus set an example for us, and by His meek, lowly attitude He was heard by God and saved through death (not “from death”). “Saved” meaning, “delivered from sin”. Thus Jesus is our eternal High Priest able to help us survive a life in the flesh on earth and bring us finally to heaven.

SHOULD BE MATURE, STILL NEED MILK

HEBREWS 5:11-6:3

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What problem is the writer dealing with in these verses?
2. What do these verses teach us about God's expectations of growth in the Christian life?
3. What is the significance of the distinction between "milk" and "solid food" in this passage?
4. What does the writer mean by "mature"? How do we "go on to maturity"?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. Why does the author interrupt his teaching about Jesus as High Priest "after the order of Melchizedek" to discuss his readers' lack of maturity? Note: Hebrews 5:11-6:20 is an interruption because he resumes discussing Melchizedek in 6:20. How would you characterize the author's whole attitude and communication in this section? What is he trying to accomplish?
2. What does the author mean by "it is hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing"? (11)
3. What expectation does the author reveal in verse 12? How would you feel if you were told "By this time you ought to be teachers..."? Do you think this would have an impact with his readers? (12)
4. God commands us to "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" in 2 Peter 3:18. Yet Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 its "only God who gives the growth." How do you reconcile our responsibility to grow in Christ with the fact that only God can make things grow? What specific duties are we called to that enable us to grow? What kinds of things hinder Christians today from making proper progress in Christ?
5. Why did the Hebrews need someone to teach them the "basic principals" of God's word all over again? What had happened to the Hebrews since they first learned those elementary truths? See Hebrews 2:3-4. What danger in the Christian life does this reveal? (12)
6. What is the significance of the distinction between "milk" and "solid food" in this passage? What is "milk"? What is "solid food" or "meat"? What does the fact that such a distinction exists show you about the Bible? (12-13)
7. What is the significance of the distinction between "infants" and "mature"? Are all Christians equally mature? Why or why not? What difference is highlighted between these two categories of Christians? What characterizes "infants" in this passage and what characterizes "mature"? (13-14)
8. What is the "teaching about righteousness" mentioned in verse 13? (1-3)

9. What does it mean to “distinguish good from evil? What does it mean to have a “constant practice” of this? What is the result? (14)
10. According to verse 14, what is the result of a constant diet of "meat"? (14)
11. Why do some Christians shy away from the "meat" of the Word? (14)
12. How does the author apply this to the Hebrews? What does he want them to do in 6:1-3? Note the word "Therefore"! (6:1-3)
13. What are the "elementary doctrines Christ"? See verses 1-2. In what sense are we to "leave" these elementary teachings? (1-2)
14. How might this passage speak to modern evangelical preachers who focus in every sermon on "getting people saved"? Should a preacher focus on "elementary truths" or on "solid food"? How would you support your answer? (1-2)
15. How are these "elementary doctrines" a "foundation" for the Christian life? What does the analogy of "foundation" imply about these doctrines? (1)
16. How do we obey the exhortation to "go on to maturity"? What light does Ephesians 4:11-16 shed on the journey from infancy to maturity?
17. What is spiritual maturity? How would you define it? What are its mental, spiritual, and practical components? What aspect does the author focus on here in Hebrews 5-6?
18. The very basis of Christianity is repentance from sin (called "dead works") and faith in God. In what sense do we never leave these behind? In what sense do we leave them behind?
19. Why does the author mention "laying on of hands" here? What does that refer to? (2)
20. Among the list of basic doctrines is "resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment." What does this teach you about the way the gospel was preached back then? (2)
21. What is the significance of the author's statement: "And this we will do, if God permits." Do what? Why does he say “if God permits”? What does this teach you about the Christian life? (3)

III. SUMMARY:

The author strongly exhorts the Hebrews to leave their infancy and go on to maturity. He would like to teach them more weighty doctrines but they are not able to accept them because their minds are not properly trained though "constant practice" of solid food-advanced Christian doctrine. This is a word of rebuke to the modern evangelical church which can never seem to get out of the same infancy of basic Christian truths.

TASTING THE GOOD GIFTS, WITHOUT TRUE CONVERSION

HEBREWS 6:4-9

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. Does this passage teach that true believers in Christ can lose their salvation?
2. If not, what does this passage warn against?
3. How should a healthy Christian take this warning to heart?
4. How should people who claim to be Christians but who are backsliding take this warning to heart?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

Please see the Appendix for an overview of Hebrews 6:4-9.

1. Verse 4 begins with the connector “For.” What is the connection between verse 3 and verse 4? (4)
2. What does the word “impossible” mean in this sentence? What does the author claim is “impossible”? Why is this idea of “impossible” difficult for people who emphasize free will (Arminians)? Why is it difficult for Calvinists who emphasize that God is sovereign over salvation? (4)
3. What does it mean that these people have “once” been “enlightened”? What is the significance of the word “once”? Is it possible to be “enlightened” without being saved? Note: Compare Luke 4:22 and 4:28-29 for people who marveled at Jesus’ teachings and a very short time later tried to kill Him! (4)
4. The author adds “who have tasted the heavenly gift.” For more on this, see the appendix. In what sense can people “taste the heavenly gift” and not be saved? Or do you believe this definitely means they were saved? Support your statement. (4)
5. In what way can someone “Share in the Holy Spirit” but not be a Christian? For more on this, see the appendix. What are the dangers of experiencing aspects of the Holy Spirits’ ministry in the church while remaining unconverted? (4)
6. Next, the author says these people have “tasted the goodness of the word of God.” What do you think this refers to? How do you think it relates to the previous phrases? (5)
7. Finally, the author speaks of “tasting... the power of the age to come.” What do you think this refers to? See the appendix for more on this. What is the “age to come”? What insights does this give you into the “coming age”? (5)
8. If the author had been meaning to refer to Christians, why does he give this rather unusual list, with such verbs as “enlightened, tasted, shared” rather than “believed, regenerated, born again, etc.”? Does this list give you insight into the nature of congregations? (4-5)

9. The text says, “And then have fallen away...” What does it mean to “fall away”? Some interpreters feel the list of qualities does refer to true Christians, but that none of them meet the condition “if they fall away.” In other words, this whole section is merely a hypothetical which never occurs. Do you think this is a valid interpretation? Why or why not? (6)
10. Again, what is it “impossible” to do for these who fall away? According to the verse, why is it impossible? (4-6)
11. What is the significance of “*to restore* them again to repentance”? Does this mean at one time they repented, now they have unrepented, and if so, they can never repent again? (6)
12. What does it mean that they have “they are crucifying one again the Son of God to their own harm, and holding him up to contempt”? See also Hebrews 10:26-31 (6)
13. Why does the author go on to discuss farmland in verses 7-8? What do these verses contribute to his argument? (7-8)

Note: The appeal to fruit as final proof of the validity of conversion is a constant theme in the New Testament. For example, John 15:1-8 is an extended treatment on the subject and shows that fruitless branches are burned in the end. John 15:8, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” In other words, “if you have no fruit, you are not my disciple.” Why is fruitfulness the best criteria for assessing heart condition? See also Matthew 12:33. Matthew 12:33-37 and Romans 2:5-11 which teach that while we are not saved by our works, we will be *assessed* on the basis of our works.

14. What does the field in Hebrews 6:7 represent? What does the field in Hebrews 6:8 represent? (7-8)
15. How does verse 9 help interpret the entire passage for us? What does “better things” refer to? What does “things that belong to salvation” show you about the people the author was referring to? What are “things that belong to salvation”? (9)

III. SUMMARY:

The author Hebrews gives his readers a stern warning regarding the dangers of seeing the blessings of Salvation, and in some way, participating in the experience of the Holy Spirit's presence, without true conversion. Those who fall away and reject Christ after such experiences will not be easily brought to repentance and faith, since they have already seen all the blessings of Christ, and it bore zero fruit in their lives.

GOOD WORKS ARE THE MARKS OF REGENERATION

HEBREWS 6:9-12

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. How do these verses help interpret the verses that precede them, which some think teach that Christians can lose their salvation?
2. What are the marks of true regeneration, the “things that belong to salvation”?
3. How does God’s “justice” guarantee that God will not forget our service to Him? What does this imply for Judgment Day?
4. How big a threat is laziness in the Christian life? What are its symptoms, and how can it be avoided?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. How do verses 9 & 10 connect with verses 4-8? How do they help interpret the issue of whether or not Christians can lose their salvation? (9-10)
2. What does “Though we speak in this way...” mean? If the writer “feels sure of better things”, why does he “speak like in this way” to the Hebrews? (9)
3. What is the significance of the phrase “we feel sure”? The word means “we have been persuaded.” How can we be “persuaded” that someone else is a Christian? Note: Paul uses the same language about Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:5, and also of the Romans (Rom. 15:14), the Galatians (Gal. 5:10), Philippians (Phil. 1:6). Perhaps the strongest statement comes from 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 “For we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but in power...” The whole section of 1 Thess. 1:2-10 describes the changes God worked in the Thessalonians. How does this shed light on how the author to Hebrews could say “yet in your case...we feel sure of better things...”? (9)
4. What does he mean “better things” in verse 9? Better than what? (9)
5. What is the significance of the phrase “things that belong salvation”? does that give any insight into the issues of verses 4-8? (9)
6. What are “things that belong to salvation”? In other words, what are the “marks of regeneration? (9)
7. What is striking to you about the phrase “God is not unjust”? How does the author apply the justice of God in verse 10? Fill in the blank based on what the author seems to say in verse 10. “God would be unjust if He _____.” Note: for another surprising use of the issue of God’s justice, note 1 John 1:9, where it seems to say God would be unjust to not forgive us our sins and cleanse us if we confess them to Him! (10)
8. What does the author mean by saying that God will not overlook the ways we’ve helped His people? “Overlook” in what sense? (10)

9. What does verse 10 teach you about Judgment Day? What (if anything) does this passage have to do with the “Sheep and the Goats” passage in Matthew 25:31-46? (10)
10. Why do you think the author focuses on how the Hebrews have “helped His people”? Helped in what way and in what circumstances? See Hebrews 10:32-39 for a strong parallel to this passage. How does that passage shed light on this one? What insight do both passages give us to the circumstances the Hebrews were facing in their lives? (10)
11. How does helping God’s people show love for God? How is there “labor” or “work” involved in helping God’s people? (10)
12. Why is it important for the Hebrews (and us) to “continue” to help God’s people? What is the author concerned about in verse 10-11? (10-11)
13. What is the relationship between perseverance in good works and a sure hope as a Christian? (11)
14. What does it mean “to have the full assurance”? Does it imply that if you don’t keep going in the Christian life, you have no full assurance salvation? How does this relate to Jesus’ statement in Matthew 24:13 “the one who endures to the end will be saved”? See also 2 Peter 1:10 where we are told to “confirm your calling and election.” How does one do that according to 2 Peter 1:3-10 and Hebrews 6? (11)
15. What is “earnestness” (also translated “diligence”) in the Christian life? Why is it important? (11)
16. How great a threat is spiritual laziness in the Christian life? What are the symptoms? How can one reverse the trend of laziness if one detects it in their own life? Perhaps the key indicators are the “means of grace” and the fruit which comes from these means: consistent Bible intake and meditation, Spirit-filled prayer, heart-felt worship, consistent obedience to the leadership of the Spirit, fellowship in corporate worship, confession of sin, acts of service to God’s people, and witnessing. (12)
17. What role should imitation of godly role models play in the Christian life? How does it connect to Hebrews 11, and Hebrews 13:7? Why do we need examples in the Christian life? See also Paul’s statements in Philippians 3:17, 4:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9; and 1 Corinthians 11:1. (12)
18. How are promises inherited according to verse 12? (12)

III. SUMMARY:

The author encourages his readers with the conviction that the barren fruitlessness that characterizes false profession of Christ does not characterize them. Rather, they have shown a pattern of fruitful obedience in the past (and even the present). But he is concerned that they continue the pattern of obedience up to the end, thus proving their faith to be genuine and making their hope sure.

THE UNCHANGEABLE CHARACTER OF GOD'S PROMISE

HEBREWS 6:13-20

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. How do these verses connect to the previous section?
2. How should the certainty of God's promise serve as a strong encouragement to persevere to maturity in the Christian life?
3. How does Christian hope serve as an anchor for our souls?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM: PATIENTLY WAITING FOR GOD'S CERTAIN PROMISE (VV. 13-15)

1. What is the logical connection between verse 12 and verse 13? (12-13)
2. What aspect of Abraham's experience with God does the author hold up to the Hebrews as an example to them? How is it an example to us today? (13)
3. What point is the author seeking to make emphasizing that God's "swore by himself"? (13)
4. What is the significance of the statement: "since there was no one greater by whom to swear by, He swore by Himself..."? (13)
5. What promise did God make to Abraham? How does this connect to Paul's use of Abraham as our example of faith in Romans 4:3 "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness"? (14)
6. Why is Abraham's patient waiting to inherit the promise important to the Hebrews and to us? (15)
7. Why is the fact that Abraham eventually did receive the promise important? Was Abraham alive or dead when the promise of verse 14 was fulfilled? See Hebrews 11:12-13. (15)

GOD'S UNCHANGEABLE PROMISE (VV. 16-20)

8. Why do people put oaths on the end of a promise? (16)
9. Why did God put an oath on His promise? Does this surprise you? (17)
10. Why is it important for God's people to know that God's promise will never change and cannot be broken? What "promise" does the author have in mind here for the Hebrews? (17)
11. What are the two unchangeable things the author refers to in verse 18? (18)
12. What effect should the unchanging nature of God's promises have on our faith? On our daily life in this world? (18)
13. What is the theological significance of the fact that it is "impossible for God to lie"? (18)

14. The author mentions that Christians have “fled for refuge” to Christ. How is that true for the Hebrews? How is that true for every Christian? (18)
15. How does Christian hope serve as an anchor for our souls? (19)
16. What is the “curtain” mentioned in verse 19? How does our hope reach “behind the curtain”? (19)
17. Now the author returns to consider Melchizedek and Christ’s high priestly ministry. How does it conclude his argument in chapter 6?

III. SUMMARY:

The author of Hebrews points to the surety of God’s promise as the reason for the steadfast hope that we Christians have. He looks to the promises made to Abraham as an example of God’s unshakeable fidelity to his promises.

**THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD SUPERIOR
TO THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD
HEBREWS 7:1-10**

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. According to these verses, in what way was Melchizedek a type of Christ?
2. Was Melchizedek actually a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ Himself?
3. How do these verses prove that Christ's priesthood is greater than the Levitical priesthood?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

THE UNIQUENESS OF MELCHIZEDEK: PRIEST-KING "LIKE THE SON OF GOD" (VV. 1-3)

1. What is the purpose of this section of Hebrews (7:1-10) in the flow of the author's overall argument in the book? (1-10)
Note: the author has resumed the topic he began in 5:10; thus 5:11-6:20 is a parenthesis in the flow, although the parenthesis really is the point of the overall letter! i.e. "Grow up! Stop being immature!"
2. How does the author use Melchizedek in the point he's trying to make?
3. What points of similarity are there between Melchizedek and Christ listed in verses 1-3? (1-3)
4. What two offices does verse 1 ascribe to Melchizedek? Why is this significant, given the nature of the Old Covenant? (1)

Note: there was in the Law of Moses a strong distinction between the Levites and all the other tribes. Only Levites (and even more specifically, descendants of Aaron) could be priests. Verse 14 will make it clear that the Kingly line came from Judah, thus Jesus could not have been a priest under the Old Covenant. Several times in Israel's history, Jewish kings sought to usurp the privileges of the priesthood, and were severely rebuked. The most notable is Uzziah, who tried to burn incense and was struck with leprosy in 2 Chronicles 26:16-23. However, There was a prophecy in Zechariah 6:9-15 that someday the priesthood and the kingship would come together.

5. Of what city was Melchizedek King? Note: some scholars feel this was Jerusalem, and it probably was. See Genesis 14:18-20 for the story. (1)
6. What was the nature of Melchizedek's priesthood, according to verse 1? Were there believers in God apart from Abraham's lineage on the earth at that time? (1)

7. What incident does the author to Hebrews focus on in verses 2-10? Why is this significant in his argument? (2-10)

ABRAHAM PAID TITHES TO MELCHIZEDEK (VV. 4-10)

8. What is the significance of the names in verse 2? (2)
9. Verse 3 is a very challenging verse exegetically. What do you think it means that Melchizedek was “without father or mother”? What do you think it means that he had no genealogy, no beginning of days or end of life? How do you interpret this? (3)
10. Some people believe that Melchizedek was actually pre-incarnate Christ, appearing as He did sometimes as the “angel of the Lord.” What are some advantages to this interpretation? What are some disadvantages? (3)
11. How would the phrase “like the Son of God” be a disadvantage for that interpretation? How would the fact that Melchizedek was “King of Salem” and that Salem was a literal city with its own people and its own history also be a disadvantage to this view? (3)
12. What proof does the author give that Melchizedek was great in verse 4? (4)
13. How does the author use the Mosaic law requiring the Levites to collect the tithe to prove Melchizedek’s greatness? (5)
14. It actually seems that the author is comparing not just Melchizedek and Levi, but Melchizedek and Abraham in verses 4-7. If so, according to the author’s logic, who was greater, Melchizedek or Abraham? How does this matter fit into the author’s overall argument in the Book of Hebrews? (4-7)
15. What point is he making in verse 8? This is a consistent theme in comparing the priesthood of Christ to that of the Levites: see the word “forever” in Hebrews 5:6, 6:20, 7:3, 7:17, 7:21. It especially culminates in 7:23-25. What is the power of this argument? (8)
16. How do verses 9-10 fit into the author’s case? According to these verses, who is greater than whom? (9-10)
17. What does it mean that Levi “was still in the loins of his ancestor”? What insight does this give into the doctrine of original sin as explained in Romans 5:12-21? (10)

III. SUMMARY:

The author resumes his argument that Christ’s priestly ministry is superior to the Levitical priesthood because it is patterned after Melchizedek. Melchizedek’s sudden appearance in the Genesis narrative makes it like he has “no beginning and no end.” The real issue here is that Levitical priests all die, but Christ (like Melchizedek) lives forever.

JESUS' PRIESTHOOD SUPERIOR TO AARON'S: PART 1

HEBREWS 7:11-19

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What is the goal of the author in this section? What is he seeking to prove concerning Jesus and Melchizedek?
2. Why was it important for first-century Jewish believers in Christ to know that the Aaronic priesthood has been superseded by Christ because it was “weak and useless”?
3. How do these verses speak assurance and confidence to us today, who are mostly of Gentile origin?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

THE IMPERFECTION OF THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD (VV. 11-14)

1. What is the “perfection” the author refers to in verse 11? (11)
2. How does he prove that this “perfection” could not have come through the Levitical or Aaronic (Old Covenant) priestly ministry? What does he mean by saying “under it the people received the law”? (11)
3. How do we know that the new priest, came *after* the establishment of the Aaronic priesthood? Why is it significant that it came later? (11)
4. The author reaches for even more in verse 12. What else has changed other than that there is a new priesthood? (12)
5. What is this new “law” referred to in verse 12? (12)
6. What point does the author make in verses 13-14? How does it point to the need for a new covenant? (13-14)

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE NEW PRIESTHOOD (VV. 15-19)

7. How does Christ's appearing in history help complete the author's argument? (15)

Note: In verse 15, the author turns to the greatest argument for the truthfulness of the Christian message: the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy through the historical events surrounding the life of Christ. Christ has appeared, He fulfills the type of Melchizedek, and now the scripture becomes even more clear. This is more evidence that the Book of Hebrews was written before the temple was destroyed, or else the author would have made much of that historical fulfillment as well. Such as, “What we've been saying is now proven clearly by the fact that the Temple is now destroyed, thus ending forever the Old Covenant sacrificial system.”

8. According to verse 16, what is the basis for Christ's priesthood? What was the basis for the Old Covenant priesthood? How is Christ's priesthood thus superior? (16)
9. What does "the power of an indestructible life" (KJV: "endless life") mean? Why is it the basis for Christ's superior priestly ministry? See verse 25 for the author's answer! (16)
10. What is the key word in verse 17, such that the author inserts it here after talking about Christ's "indestructible life"? (17)
11. What does the author say about the Old Covenant in verse 18? Is what way was the law "weak and useless"? What does it mean that it was "set aside" or "disannulled"? (18)
12. How would the Pharisees and teachers of the law have felt about verse 18? (18)
13. What additional statement does the author make about the limitations of the law in verse 19? (19)
14. How is the New Covenant a "better hope" than the Old Covenant? What does it do that the Old Covenant could never do? (19)
15. How did the Old Covenant actually prevent worshippers from "drawing near" to God? In what ways did it erect barriers and obstacles?

III. SUMMARY:

The author proves that the Old Covenant was flawed in that it could never make its worshippers perfect, and its obsolescence was planned by God from the beginning. The author shows that, in order for Christ (descended from Judah) to be a priest, there must be a New Covenant, and the Old Covenant must become obsolete. The author sets forth the clear superiority of Christ's priesthood over the Old Covenant priesthood in that it is a *permanent* priesthood based on the power of Christ's indestructible resurrection life, and in that it is able to bring us near to God in ways the Old Covenant never could.

JESUS' PRIESTHOOD SUPERIOR TO AARON'S: PART 2

HEBREWS 7:20-28

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What evidence does the author give us in these verses of the superiority of Christ's priesthood over the Old Covenant priesthood?
2. How is the fact that Christ lives forever and is constantly interceding for you an encouragement in your Christian life?
3. How does the perfection of Christ as a person make His priesthood suitable for our needs?
4. How is Christ's sacrifice superior to any offered by the Old Covenant priests?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD SUPERIOR BECAUSE OF DIVINE OATH (VV. 20-22)

1. The author continues to wring meaning out of every part of Psalm 110:4. What does he focus on in verses 20-22?
2. The author has already mentioned the divine oath God made to Abraham in 6:16-18. Why did God, who cannot lie anyway, bother to make an oath to Abraham according to those verses? How does it relate to Christ's priesthood? (20-22)
3. How did Aaron become the first Old Covenant priest? See Exodus 28:1. What is missing from that occasion? What point does the author make about that in verse 20? (20)
4. When did the oath God swore about Christ occur? (21)
5. Why does it say, "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind"? What does this teach you about Christ's priesthood? (21)
6. How does the swearing of an oath by God increase the dignity of Christ's priesthood over that of Aaron's? How does God's oath-swearing relate to the command from Christ "Do not swear at all" in Matthew 5:34-37, or from James in James 5:12? (21)
7. How does the author extend the application in verse 22? What does he assert? Note: the superiority of Christ and of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant is the central point of the entire argument of Hebrews! (22)
8. What is a "guarantee" or "surety" of a covenant? How is Christ the "guarantee" of the New Covenant? See Genesis 43:8-9/44:32-33 for how Judah acted as surety for Benjamin, and Philemon 18-19 for how Paul acted as surety for Onesimus. (22)

CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD SUPERIOR BECAUSE OF PERMANENCE (VV. 23-25)

9. What point does the author turn to in verses 23-25 to prove his main point? Remember, the main point is that Christ and His New Covenant are superior to the Old Covenant) (23-25)
10. Read Numbers 20:22-29. Why do you think God wanted Aaron's death and the transfer of his priestly office to Eleazar to be done "in the sight of the whole community"? Read Joshua 24:33. See also Numbers 35:25-32. What do these Old Testament verses teach you about the High Priestly office of the Old Covenant? Note: Josephus estimated that there were 83 high priests from Aaron to the time of the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.
11. How is Christ's office contrasted to theirs in verse 24? (24)
12. What application does the author make of Christ's indestructible life in verse 25? How does this show His priesthood to be superior? (25)
13. Read Luke 22:31-32. What insight does this give into Christ's ministry of intercession for us?
14. Read 1 John 5:15-16. How does praying "according to God's will" guarantee a favorable answer from God? Does Christ "pray according to God's will"?
15. Read Romans 8:33-34 and John 17. What do these verses teach you about Christ's intercessory ministry?

CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD SUPERIOR BECAUSE OF CHRIST'S PERFECTION (VV. 26-28)

16. What main point does the author make in verses 26-28? How do these verses prove Christ's superiority to Aaron's priesthood?
17. What does verse 26 teach us about Christ's nature? What does it mean that it was "fitting" that we should have such a high priest? What does that teach you about us and our needs? (26)
18. How does verse 27 prove Christ's personal superiority? Read Leviticus 16:6, and Leviticus 4:3. (27)
19. How does verse 27 prove the superiority of the sacrifice Christ offered? Note: Hebrews 1:3, 2:17, and 5:1 have told us Christ would sacrifice for us. This verse at last tells us what the sacrifice was... what was it? (27)
20. Read Isaiah 53:10. How does this verse support the fact that Christ would sacrifice himself? (27)
21. How does verse 28 sum up the author's argument? What contrast does he draw between Christ and the Old Covenant priests? (28)

III. SUMMARY:

By reason of Jesus indestructible life, priestly appointment by oath, constant intercession, and offering of atonement, Jesus is an infinitely better High Priest than any other who came before him, and Jesus' Priesthood continues forever.

THE EARTHLY TENT WAS PATTERNED AFTER THE HEAVENLY TENT

HEBREWS 8:1-7

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. How does the author prove the superiority of Jesus Christ over earthly high priests in this section?
2. What is the significance of the words “the true tent that the Lord set up, not man”?
3. How do these verses show the inherent weakness of the Old Covenant, and therefore the need for a New Covenant?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. How does verse 1 connect with the argument the author has just completed in chapter 7? (1)
2. Why does the author say “We have such a high priest”? How does this help accomplish his purpose in the lives of the Hebrews reading this? How does it relate to the point he makes in 7:15-16? (1)
3. Why is it significant that our high priest is “seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in Heaven”? Why is the fact that he is sitting important? Why is the place of the sitting important? (1)
4. How does verse 2 highlight the superiority of Jesus Christ over Old Covenant priests? (2)
5. What is the significance of the words “the true tent that the Lord set up, not man”? (2)
6. What kind of “gifts and sacrifices” did Old Covenant priests have to make? Why does a priest have to make such gifts and sacrifices? What is the significance of the word “appointed” or “ordained” as the KJV says? (3)
7. Why is verse 4 true of Jesus Christ? Would it have been lawful under the Old Covenant for Christ to have been a priest? (4)
8. How does verse 4 prove that the Temple was still standing when Hebrews was written? (4)
9. How was the Old Covenant sanctuary a “copy” of what is in heaven? How is it a “shadow”? (5)
10. Read Exodus 25:40, Acts 7:44, and 1 Chronicles 28:19. What do these verses teach you about the Old Covenant sanctuary?
11. What conclusion does the author draw from the fact that the Old Covenant sanctuary was merely a “copy and shadow” of what is in heaven? How does he use it to prove the superiority of Christ and the New Covenant to the Old? (6)
12. How do you think both Stephen in Acts 7:44-48 and the author here want to apply this to Jews of the first century? Read Jeremiah 7:1-11 and Acts 6:11-7:1. In what ways were the Jews trusting falsely in the temple of the Lord? Did

Christ come to destroy the Holy Place and change the Mosaic customs as the Jews accused Stephen in Acts 6:14?

13. In what way could Hebrews 8:6 be called the summary verse of the entire book of Hebrews? How would the author want the Hebrews to believe/behave as a result? (6)
14. What concept does the author introduce in verse 7? Was there something wrong with the first covenant? If so, what was it? (7)

III. SUMMARY:

The author proves the superiority of Christ's priestly ministry and His New Covenant over the Old Covenant and its ministry by proving that the Old Covenant sanctuary was merely a "copy and a shadow" of the true tabernacle in heaven, where Christ serves.

THE NEW COVENANT

HEBREWS 8:8-13

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What do these verses teach about the Old Covenant and New Covenant?
2. According to this extended quote from Jeremiah 31, what are the central differences between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant?
3. How do you see the New Covenant promises made to Jeremiah in your life?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. What is the significance of the phrase “For he finds fault with them”? What does it teach you about why there was the need for a New Covenant? (8)
2. What fault did God find with the people? (8-9)
3. How does the quote from Jeremiah begin? According to this, when will the New Covenant come? (8)
4. What is the impact of the promise “*I will establish a new covenant*”? What does it show you about this covenant, and God’s role in its institution? (8)
5. With whom does God say He will make this new covenant? How do Gentiles fit into this? See Romans 11:11-24. (8)
6. Why does God tell Jeremiah that it will be “Not like the covenant I made with their fathers...”? Why is it important to underscore the differences between the Old and New Covenants? (9)
7. Why does God say that He “took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt”? What image does this give you of God’s relationship with Israel and His feelings about their unfaithfulness to Him and to the covenant? Do you feel that God has “led you by the hand” out from bondage to sin? (9)
8. What reason does God give for the change in verse 9? What was God’s response to Israel’s unfaithfulness to the Old Covenant? (9)
9. What does God say about the New Covenant in verse 10? How does this differ with the Old Covenant? What does it mean that God will put his “laws in their minds and write them on their heart”? (10)
10. Read Ezekiel 11:19-20 and Ezekiel 36:25-27. How do these verses relate to Jeremiah’s “New Covenant”? What does it mean for God to give us a new heart? How does God cause us to walk in his ways? Do such people still have “free will”? How do you explain this doctrine of the “new heart”?
11. In what way does Christ do this (give a new heart) for people today?
12. Read Romans 8:1-4. How does these promises in Jeremiah and Ezekiel relate to what Paul says the Spirit does in the believer’s life related to the Law?
13. The promise in Jeremiah says “I will be their God and they shall be my people.” This began in the Exodus, and is stated clearly in Leviticus 26:11-12 and Deuteronomy 7:6. It is also recurring theme in the prophets: see Jeremiah 11:1-

- 4, 24:7, 31:1, 32:38; Ezekiel 11:20, 14:11, 32:23-27; Zechariah 8:8. It is spoken of the church in 2 Corinthians 6:16 and it is finally established in Revelation 21:3 as our eternal state. What is the significance of this issue in the Bible? In what way is it a major feature of the New Covenant in Christ? What does this teach you about your own relationship to God in Christ? (10)
14. How does verse 11 expound and follow up on verse 10? In what way does “I will be their God and they shall be my people” imply that no teaching will be needed when the New Covenant is fulfilled? (11)
 15. What is the meaning of the promise, “They shall all know me”? See Christ’s prayer in John 17:3. When will this knowledge of God be perfected? (11)
 16. What is the final promise of the New Covenant in Jeremiah, quoted here in Hebrews? What is the significance of “I will be merciful toward their iniquities and remember their sins no more”? How is this New Covenant promise an improvement over the Old Covenant? (12)
 17. In what way is the total forgiveness of sins made possible by the New Covenant? Read Hebrews 9:22, Acts 2:38, 5:30-31, 10:43, 13:38, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:13-14. What do these teach you about the forgiveness of sins? How valuable is this to an individual soul? How valuable is it to you? Do you know for certain that your sins are forgiven? (12)
 18. What final point does the author make in verse 13 about the “New Covenant”? What adjectives does he use to describe the “Old Covenant”? What adjectives had he used earlier in Hebrews 7:18? Do you think these adjectives would have been offensive to Jews? (13)
 19. What is the significance of the words “growing old” and “ready to vanish away” when ascribed to the Old Covenant? What does it teach you about when the Letter to Hebrews was written? What does it teach you about the Old Covenant now? In what sense has the Old Covenant “vanished”? (13)
 20. Is there a contradiction between Hebrews 8:13 and Christ’s promise that “until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass away from the law until all is accomplished” in Matthew 5:17-18? How do you relate these statements? (13)

III. SUMMARY:

The author proves from Jeremiah’s promise of a “New Covenant” that there would come a time when the Old Covenant would be obsolete. The promise to Jeremiah lists the reason for the change: the people were unfaithful and broke the Old Covenant. The promise also describes the essential changes between the New Covenant: 1) total forgiveness of sins; 2) the law of God written on the hearts and minds of the people (i.e. a changed nature from within by the power of God); 3) a permanent lasting relationship with God. Therefore, the author concludes that the Old Covenant would soon disappear.

THE EARTHLY TABERNACLE: RESTRICTED ACCESS

HEBREWS 9:1-10

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What point is the author trying to make with this section (verses 1-10)?
2. What purpose did the Tabernacle serve in God's overall redemptive plan for the world?
3. How does this section help the author's overall purpose, namely, to prove the superiority of the New Covenant to the Old Covenant?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

THE PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENT OF THE TABERNACLE (VV. 1-5)

1. What topic is the author addressing in this section? Why does he go into detail about this at this point in his argument? (1-5)
2. Why do you think God had "regulations for worship" in the Old Covenant? What do these regulations teach you about approaching God? (1)
3. Why did God also have an "earthly place of holiness" in the first Covenant? What purpose did that physical sanctuary serve for Israel? Why do you think the author emphasizes that it was an "earthly" sanctuary? (1)
4. What is a "tent"? What is the difference between a tabernacle (tent) and a temple? (2)
5. Verses 2 and 3 describe very carefully two different rooms in the tabernacle, a "first section" and a room "behind the second curtain." Why is this important? (2-3)
6. What does the author tell us was in the "first section"? What is the name of the first section? Why is there such an emphasis on the issue of holiness in the whole sacrificial system? Note: the word "holy" may be considered the major theme of the Book of Leviticus. For example: Leviticus 11:44-45 says "Be holy because I am holy" and the word appears 75 times in that book! (3)
7. What is the difference between the "Holy Place" and the "Most Holy Place" (traditionally, the "Holy of Holies")? (3)
8. What was in the "Most Holy Place"? Why do you think he focuses on the gold of the incense altar and the ark? See Matthew 23:16-17 on this topic. (4)
9. What information does the author give us about the ark? Why do you think he tells us this? Are the contents of the ark described anywhere else in the Bible? See Exodus 25:16, Deuteronomy 10:5 for the Testimony in the Ark. The story of Aaron's staff is in Number 17; the jar of manna is Exodus 16:32-34. (4)
10. What was above the ark? What are "cherubim"? How does the author describe them here? See Exodus 25:17-19. See also 1 Kings 6:27, 8:6-7. (5)

11. What is the “mercy seat” (sometimes translated “atonement cover”)? What was it used for in the Old Covenant? See Exodus 25:17, 26:34, 30:6; Leviticus 16:2, 13-16; Numbers 7:89. (5)
12. Why does the author not discuss these things in detail now? If not, why does he mention the details he already has? (5)

LIMITED ACCESS! THE WAY IN NOT YET DISCLOSED (VV. 6-10)

13. How does verse 6 contribute to the author’s argument? Why is the business of the priests in the outer room of interest to the author? (6)
14. What contrast does the author draw from verse 6 to verse 7? Note the word “But” in verse 7. (6-7)
15. What is the overall impression the author wants to give in these verses of the Old Covenant in terms of access to God? (6-7)
16. What is the significance of the words “and not without taking blood” in verse 7? See also Hebrews 9:22. Note: the word “blood” appears twelve times in this chapter. Why is there such a focus on blood in this chapter? (7)
17. Why does the author mention the people’s unintentionality (or ignorance) in conjunction with their sin in verse 7? See also Acts 3:17, 17:30; Ephesians 4:18 (7)
18. How does verse 8 sum up the entire argument the author is making? What is the significance of the words “not yet opened”? In what way were the people closed off from close fellowship with God? What had not yet been opened? What “Holy Place” does the author mean in verse 8? (8)
19. Could the physical tabernacle/temple, then, be a hindrance to true faith?
20. Who is the teacher of these spiritual truths? (8)
21. What does the author call the tabernacle in verse 9? Note: various translations call this an “illustration,” “symbol”, “figure”. How is the Old Covenant a “symbol” of true spiritual things? (9)
22. For whom is the “illustration” or “symbol” given, according to the author? What lesson does it teach? How does it teach this lesson? (9)
23. What is “conscience”? Why does it need to be “perfected” or “cleansed” or “cleared”? How can the conscience be cleared? See Hebrews 10:22, 13:18. (9)
24. According to verse 10, what were these regulations for? Until when did they apply? What is the “new order” or “time of reformation”? (10)

III. SUMMARY:

The author lays out the arrangements of the tabernacle as prescribed in the Old Covenant, then proceeds to show that the whole system was actually one of restriction, not free access to God. He is setting up yet another argument for the superiority of the New Covenant in that Christ’s blood provides perfect cleansing of the conscience and unlimited, free access right into the very presence of God.

ETERNAL REDEMPTION THROUGH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

HEBREWS 9:11-14

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. One commentator has said Hebrews 9 was written to prove the proposition that Christ is the substance of the Levitical shadows. How does this section show Christ in that way?
2. What is the significance of the phrase “eternal redemption”?
3. In what way is the superiority of Christ’s priestly ministry demonstrated in this passage?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. Why does the author to Hebrews connect verse 11 to the preceding section with the word “But”? How does this section contrast the previous one? (11)
2. What “appearing” does the author refer to in verse 11? “When Christ *appeared* as high priest”? Note also, the verse says “*through* the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands...)” What do you make of these movement words “appeared” and “through”? (11) Note: see also Hebrews 4:14 which says that Christ has “passed through the heavens.” (11)
3. In what way is Christ the High Priest of the “good things that have come”? What good things is it referring to? (11)
4. What is the “greater and more perfect tent” in which Christ did His High Priestly ministry? What else does the author tell us about it? How does this verse support the “Levitical-shadow vs. Christ-reality” contrast that is central to Hebrews? (11)
5. What does it mean when it says this greater tabernacle is not “made with hands” and “not of this creation”? Why is that significant? (11)
6. It says that he did not enter *by* the blood of goats and calves. What does the word *by* signify? See verse 7 to show the connection between entering and blood. (12)
7. By what blood did Christ enter? How does this too show the superiority of the New Covenant? (12)
8. Into what did Christ enter? What are “holy places” or as the KJV says, “Holy of holies” referred to in verse 12? (12)
9. The word “redemption” is a key word in New Testament theology. The word “redemption” here in this verse is “lutrosis” in Greek, found elsewhere only in Luke 1:68 and 2:38. The word is derived from the Greek “lutron” meaning “ransom”, used by Jesus of Himself in Matthew 20:28 and also Mark 10:45. The other forms are “lutrousthai” meaning “to ransom” (Luke 24:21, Titus 2:14, 1 Peter 1:18), “lutrotes” meaning “redeemer” (Acts 7:35) and “antilutron” meaning “a ransom instead of another” (1 Timothy 2:6). The most common word in this word group is “apolutrosis” meaning “redemption” is used ten

times in the NT, including Hebrews 9:15 and 11:35. The most noteworthy use is in Romans 3:24 “and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the *redemption* that is in Christ Jesus”. What do these words teach you about the work of Christ on the cross? (12)

10. In what way is the redemption in Christ Jesus “eternal”? How has Christ provided an “eternal redemption” by His blood? Note: see also Hebrews 5:9 which speaks of “eternal salvation.” How is the eternal redemption by Christ’s blood contrasted with the blood sacrifices of the Old Testament? (12)
11. In what way were the blood sacrifices of the OT effective? What did they actually accomplish? In what way were they limited? Note: See verse 9 for a reminder! See also Hebrews 10:4. (13)
12. What is the logical significance of the phrase “much more will...”? What is the author seeking to prove in verse 14? “If _____ is so, how much more is _____ so!” (14)
13. What does the blood of Christ do that the blood of bulls and goats could never do? See again verse 9. (14)
14. How did Christ offer Himself “through the eternal Spirit”? What do the words “through the eternal Spirit” mean? (14)
15. Why is it important that He offered Himself “without blemish”? To whom did Christ offer Himself? (14)
16. What is conscience? How does it function in human experience? What are its limitations? See Acts 24:15-16, Romans 2:15, 9:1, 13:5; 1 Corinthians 4:4, 8:7-12, 10:25-29; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Timothy 1:19, 4:2; and Titus 1:15. (14)
17. What does it mean to have your conscience cleansed or purified? How does this affect your life? Conversely how would it affect you to have a defiled conscience? (14)
18. From what are our consciences cleansed, according to the text? What are “dead works,” or as the NIV says “acts that lead to death”? Are they merely ceremonial works of the Old Covenant, or sins? Note: see Romans 6:21-23, James 1:14-15. (14)
19. According to the verse, what is the result of our cleansing by Christ’s blood? How does Christ’s cleansing allow us to “serve the living God”? (14)

III. SUMMARY:

The author continues to prove the superiority of Christ’s ministry over that of the Old Covenant by proving that Christ’s blood was offered in the true spiritual sanctuary set up by God not man, and that Christ’s blood is effective in cleaning conscience from sin (the very thing the blood of bulls and goats never could have done). The end result is that we are able to serve the living God.

THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT

HEBREWS 9:15-22

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What is a “mediator”? What are the advantages of having Christ as our mediator?
2. What is the difference between a “covenant” and a “testament” or “will”? How are both “covenant” and “will” valid aspects of what Christ has accomplished for us?
3. Why is it true that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins”?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

CHRIST THE MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT (VV. 15)

1. What does “Therefore” mean in verse 15? For what reason is Christ the mediator of a new covenant? (15)
2. What is a mediator? How do we use the word in common language? Think of perhaps labor/management disputes. See 1 Samuel 2:25, Job 9:33, Galatians 3:19-20, Hebrews 8:6 & 12:24. (15)
3. What are the advantages of having Christ as our mediator? See 1 Timothy 2:5. (15)
4. How does verse 15 answer the question of how Old Testament saints (like David) were saved, if OT sacrifices were not effective? See also Romans 3:24-26. (15)
5. What “eternal inheritance” did the OT saints receive? Why was Christ’s death necessary in order for them to receive this inheritance? According to verse 15, who receives the “eternal inheritance”? (15)
6. What is the significance of the repeated word “eternal” concerning the works of Christ? See 5:9 “eternal salvation”, 6:2 “eternal judgment”, 9:12 “eternal redemption”, 9:14 “the eternal Spirit”, 9:15 “eternal inheritance”, 13:20 “the blood of the eternal covenant.” (15)

CHRIST’S DEATH REQUIRED FOR COVENANT BLESSINGS TO COME (VV. 16-17)

7. What is the difference between a “covenant” and a “testament” or “will”? How are both “covenant” and “will” valid aspects of what Christ has accomplished for us? (16)
8. Do verses 16-17 speak more of a covenant or a will? Why is this significant? (16-18)
9. Compare verse 16 with Romans 7:1-4. (16)

10. What point is the author seeking to make in verse 16-17?
11. How does this section relate to Romans 6:23 and Ezekiel 18:4? (16-17)
12. How did the Jews commonly conceive of the coming of Messiah? A time of weakness or power? How does this section seek to answer the stumbling block that the death of Messiah was to the Jews? (16-17)

CHRIST’S BLOOD REQUIRED FOR FORGIVENESS OF SINS (VV. 18-22)

13. Read Leviticus 17:11-14. What does that passage teach you about blood? See also Deuteronomy 12:23.
14. If “the blood is the life” how does shed blood atone for sin? See Deuteronomy 19:21, “life for life”. See also Judah’s offer in Genesis 43:8-9, 44:30-34. How does the theme of substitution fit in here? (18)
15. Read Exodus 24:6-8. Why did Moses sprinkle the people with blood? See also Exodus 29:12, Leviticus 8:15, Leviticus 16:14-19. What do these passages teach you about the role of blood in the Old Covenant? (18-19)
16. Why did God mandate the thorough cleansing of absolutely every physical element of the Old Testament ritual system? What was God teaching Israel? (21-22)
17. What is the connection to the New Covenant? See Christ’s statement in Matthew 26:28. How does Christ connect His blood to the New Covenant about to be established?
18. What is the overall lesson of this section? One commentator said the overall lesson here is that forgiveness is extremely expensive. Would you agree? How should that affect the way you live? See also 1 John 2:1-2. (22)

III. SUMMARY:

The author teaches that Christ is the mediator of a New Covenant, established by His death and the shedding of His blood.

CHRIST'S ONCE-FOR-ALL SACRIFICE IS SUFFICIENT

HEBREWS 9:23-28

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. How does this section show the superiority of Christ over the Old Covenant sacrifices?
2. How should the certainty of death affect the way we live our Christian life?
3. How does Christ's once for all sacrifice show the superiority of the New Covenant? What does this section have to say to the Roman Catholic concept of the Mass as a "bloodless sacrifice"?
4. How does the doctrine of the second coming give strength to persecuted Christians?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. Why was it necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be cleansed with animal blood? (23)
2. Why are animal sacrifices not sufficient to cleanse the heavenly things? (23)
3. We must be careful not to misread the author here and conclude that the author felt the heavenly things needed cleansing. Actually, it was the hearts and consciences of the worshipers that needed cleansing in order to be fit for heavenly worship. How do Hebrews 3:6, 1 Peter 2:5 and Ephesians 2:22 help shed light on the spiritual house of God? (23)
4. How is the blood of Christ shed on the cross sufficient for the cleansing of the heavenly things? (23)
5. According to verse 24, where did Christ enter to do His ministry? Why did He go there? (24)
6. What is the significance of the phrase, "now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf"? (See Hebrews 4:14-16) (24)
7. How does verse 25 contribute to the author's efforts to show the superiority of Christ's ministry to that of the Old Covenant? (25)
8. How does verse 25 help us see the Roman Catholic Mass as an error? (25)
9. How does verse 26 also contribute to the sense of the total effectiveness of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice? How does it also show that the earth is the only inhabited planet for which Christ offered Himself a sacrifice? (26)
10. What does it mean "he has appeared, once for all"? What "appearance"? (26)
11. What is the significance of the phrase "at the end of the ages"? See also Hebrews 1:2, Deuteronomy 4:30, 1 Peter 1:20, 1 John 2:18. (26)
12. How does Christ's sacrifice "put away sin"? Is this too sweeping a statement? How does Christ's sacrifice "put away sin"? (26)
13. How does verse 27 fit into the flow of the author's train of thought? (27)

14. How could you use verse 27 as witnessing to unbelievers? (27)
15. How does verse 27 refute the concept of reincarnation? (27)
16. How should the certainty of death and judgment affect the way we live our Christian life? See Acts 24:15-16, and 2 Corinthians 5:6-11. (27)
17. What parallel does the author set up in verses 27-28? How does the word “once” help to unify these concepts? (27-28)
18. How does Christ’s sacrifice take away sins? For whom is Christ’s sacrifice effective, according to verse 28? (28)
19. What other doctrinal issue does the author bring up in verse 28? How does it function in his argument to the Hebrew Christians in persecution? Why is it important that He will not bear sin in His second coming? (28)
20. What salvation does Christ bring in verse 28? To whom does He bring it? How should this be a form of exhortation to these suffering Christians? (28)

III. SUMMARY:

The author of Hebrews highlights the fact that Christ entered the heavenly arena and appeared in the presence of God on our behalf, bringing with him his own blood by which he secured atonement and redemption for his people in a once for all sacrifice.

SUPERIORITY OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

HEBREWS 10:1-10

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. How does this section show the superiority of Christ over the Old Covenant sacrifices?
2. What point is the author making in quoting Psalm 40:6-8?
3. What is the significance of the statement “a body have you prepared for me”?
4. How does the sacrifice of the body of Christ once for all make us holy?

THREE GREAT LESSONS OF THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM:

- 1) All sin deserves the death penalty.

Demonstrated by the fact the animals *died*. Hebrews 9:22, “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin.”

- 2) The death penalty can be paid for by a substitute.

Demonstrated by the fact the animals died, not the sinners who brought them.

The root concept is that guilt for sins can be *transferred* to the substitute.

Leviticus 16:21, “Aaron [the high priest] shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And put them on the head of the goat.”

- 3) Animals can not be the substitute.

Demonstrated by the fact that animals were offered again and again, proving their deaths were symbolic only. Hebrews 10:4, “It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

THE LAW ONLY A POWERLESS SHADOW, NOT THE POWERFUL REALITY (vv. 1-4)

1. How is the law (meaning the sacrificial system here) only a “shadow” of the good thing that were coming, not the reality? Note: perhaps “foreshadow” would be better. (1)
2. What point does the author seek to make in verses 1-4 concerning the repeated nature of the sacrifices. What lesson does he draw from the endless repetition of the sacrifices? (1-4)
3. It speaks of “those who draw near.” How does the matter of “drawing near” factor in concerning the sacrificial system? Were the people able to “draw near” in the Old Covenant, or were there restrictions of access to God? How have those restrictions of access been removed in Christ? (1)
4. What is the importance in verse 2 of the worshipers still having a consciousness of sin, even after presenting the offering? How does this relate to not being

cleared of a guilty conscience in Hebrews 9:9? How is the inadequacy of animal sacrifices to clear guilty consciences proved by David's statement in Psalm 51:16-17? (2)

5. How were the sacrifices only an "reminder of sin every year"? Why did God desire the people to be reminded year after year of their sinfulness without actually cleansing their consciences by means of animal blood? (3)
6. Why is it "impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." NOTE: a goat which symbolizes that God can "take away" sin is in view in Leviticus 16:21-22. The author here is saying that the dead and live goat did not actually do anything at all... it was only symbolic! (4)

CHRIST SUPERIOR TO THE PRIESTS (VV. 5-10)

7. To whom does the author ascribe the Psalm 40 quote in verse 5? When did Christ make the statement, according to verse 5? (5)
8. How does the author use Psalm 40:6-8 to make his point here? (5-7)
9. Why do the English versions have a different translation for Psalm 40:6-8 than the author to Hebrews uses? (5-7)
10. How does "sacrifices and offerings you have not desired" and "in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure" help make the author's point of the insufficiency of animal sacrifices? (5-6)
11. What is the significance of "a body have you prepared for me"? How does this connect to Hebrews 2:14-15 and Hebrews 10:20? (5-6)
12. What do you learn about the methodology of handling scripture the author uses in verse 8-9? What is the author doing with the OT text? (8-9)
13. Why does the author point out that the law required sacrifices to be made? See Psalm 51:16-17 compared with Psalm 51:19. (8)
14. How does the statement "behold, I have come to do your will" serve to "do away" with the first to establish the second? What do each of these words mean? "The first"? "The second"? "Do away"? "Establish"? (9)
15. By what will have we been made holy, according to verse 10? What is the author connecting verse 10 to when he says "By that will we have been sanctified"? (10)
16. How does the once for all sacrifice of Christ's physical body make us holy? (10)

III. SUMMARY:

The author continues his argument about the superiority of Christ and of the new covenant by demonstrating that animal sacrifices were ineffective simply by their endless repetition. He also shows that Christ came speaking the words of Psalm 40, putting an end to animal sacrifice by His once for all sacrifice. By that once for all sacrifice we have been made holy, our consciences cleared, and our access to a perfectly holy God established.

THE FINALITY OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE

HEBREWS 10:11-18

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. Why does the author contrast the standing of the Levitical High Priests with the sitting of Christ?
2. What is the significance of the perfection mentioned in verse 14?
3. What is the significance of verse 18, declaring that there is no more sacrifice for sins?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. How does this section (verses 11-18) connect with the previous section (1-10)?
2. What does the author say about the Old Covenant priests in verse 11? Is there anything new being said here that he'd never mentioned before? (11)
3. Why can the animal sacrifices "never take away sins"? Why then does the priest keep offering them? (11)
4. What contrast does the author draw in verse 11 and 12? What is being compared? What points of comparison are there? (11-12)
5. What is the significance of the phrase "for all time" in verse 12? (12)
6. Why does the author contrast the standing of the Levitical High Priests with the sitting of Christ? Note: The author has mentioned Christ's sitting posture two other times in the epistle (1:3, 8:1), but only now does he bring out the significance. (11-12)
7. Why does the author mention that Christ sat at the right hand of God? (12)
8. What does verse 13 tell us about Christ in heaven? The Greek construction says that He is "expecting, anticipating, awaiting" something. What is it? How does it fit into the author's train of thought? (13)
9. Concerning the enemies of Christ being made a footstool for his feet, this is a major theme in the Scriptures. The original statement is found in Psalm 110:1, but it is quoted in many places: Matthew 21:44, Luke 20:43, Acts 2:35, Acts 7:49, Hebrews 1:13, and here. In every case, who is it that is making Christ's enemies a footstool under His feet? What does that process entail? However, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 says something different. How do you reconcile 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 with the other quotes? Who puts the enemies down? (13)
10. What does the word "for" connect to in verse 14? In other words, what is the flow of thought from verses 11-13 and into 14? (14)
11. Is the author making a new point in verse 14, or merely emphasizing one he's already made? (14)
12. What is the significance of the perfection mentioned in verse 14? How is it accomplished? For whom is it accomplished (14)

13. What does the word “sanctified” or “made holy” mean in verse 14? The same word is used in Hebrews 2:10-11. There, the author says that the “author (or captain) of our salvation” had to be made perfect through sufferings in “bringing many sons to glory.” 2:10 thus implies a journey the “many sons” are traveling. Verse 2:11 then calls them “those who are sanctified”... i.e. those who are making the journey to glory. However, Hebrews 10:10 says by the sacrifice of Christ we have been sanctified or made holy once for all time. This is a momentary setting aside of people unto God, people for His own possession. This “once for all” setting apart unto God is called “sanctification” in a *different sense* than the gradual growth in holiness we usually use the word to mean. It is used in this “once for all, past-tense” sense in 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 6:11. Is the use here in verse 14 the “once for all setting apart unto God” or is it “gradual step by step progress into holiness”? Note: gradual sanctification is definitely in view in Hebrews 12:10. (14)
14. How do verses 15-18 complete the author’s argument here? (15-18)
15. Why does the author bring up Jeremiah 31 again? (16-17)
16. To whom does the author ascribe the Jeremiah quote? What is the tense of the verb in verse 15? What is the significance of this? (15)
17. What is the significance of the verse 18, declaring that there is no more sacrifice for sins? (18)

III. SUMMARY:

The author of Hebrews contrasts the futility of the Old Covenant priestly sacrifices with the once-for-all nature of Christ’s sacrifice. Christ’s sacrifice truly sanctifies believers and ushers in the New Covenant.

LET US DRAW NEAR

HEBREWS 10:19-25

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What is the main exhortation (“Let us”) of this passage?
2. What inducements does the author give to support this exhortation?
3. What other exhortations (“Let us”) does the author give?
4. According to this passage, what role does “meeting together” with other Christians have in the Christian life?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. As you look over this whole section, how many “Let us” statements are there? What are they? (19-25)
2. What does the author call this letter in Hebrews 13:22? How do these “Let us” statements fit into the author’s overall purpose in Hebrews? (19-25)
3. The author begins with “Therefore.” How does this section connect to the train of thought leading up to this point? What causes does the author give for his exhortation? See the appendix for notes on “therefore”. (19)
4. What does it mean to have “confidence to enter the holy places”? Would Jews before Christ have had this “confidence” to enter the most Holy place? What reason is given for confidence? See the appendix for more. (19)
5. What “curtain” does the author refer to in verse 20? How did it symbolize the exclusion from God’s presence that was central to the Old Covenant? See Exodus 26:31-33, Hebrews 6:19 and 9:3. See also Matthew 27:51. (20)
6. According to verse 20, what is the “new and living way that he opened for us”? Why is it a “living” way? Note that “way” is the same word Jesus used in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life...” (20)
7. How is the fact that we have a great priest an inducement to confidence? In what sense is he “over” the house of God? See Hebrews 3:6. (21)
8. What is the main “Let us” of this section? What does it mean to “draw near”? In what way is this a new exhortation, not found in the Old Covenant? (22)
9. How do we obey this exhortation to “draw near” to God, in daily life? (22)
10. The great dangers warned against are “drifting away” through neglect of the word (2:1), “turning away” through the hardening of hearts by the deceitfulness of sin (3:12-13), and “falling away” by willful rejection of the gospel (6:6). How does the exhortation of verse 22 relate to the dangers? (22)
11. What does it mean to draw near to God “with a true heart”? Compare it to John 4:23-24, and Matthew 15:7-9, Jeremiah 12:1-2. (22)
12. Is it possible for sinners to have “true hearts”? What does Jeremiah 17:9 say about the heart? How does verse 22 answer this problem? (22)

13. What is “full assurance of faith”? See Colossians 2:1-2. What happens when we feel ashamed before God? What effect does it have on our life? (22)
14. Why does the author mention “hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience” concerning this matter of drawing near to God? See also Hebrews 9:9, 14. What does it mean to “have our bodies washed with pure water”? What does this relate to? Hint: Internal and external cleansing. (22)
15. How were the Hebrews being tempted to let go of their “confession of their hope”? What is “wavering”? What causes people to “waver” in their confession of hope in Christ? (23)
16. How does the fact that God is faithful help us not to waver, especially in time of testing? See also 1 Corinthians 10:13. To what is God faithful in verse 23? What “promise” does He refer to? (23)
17. What further exhortation does the author give the Hebrew congregation in verse 24? Its literally “Let us consider one another...” We are to think about (consider, ponder, notice) each other, how we may “stir up” love and good deeds”. How can we practically obey this exhortation in our churches? (24)
18. What does it mean to “stir up” or “spur” or “provoke” someone to love and good deeds? How does a spur work? How does a “provocation” make someone feel? Why does the author use this kind of language? (24)
19. How is verse 24-25 the other (positive) side of the coin of the exhortation found in Hebrews 3:12-14? Hebrews 3 exhorts us to guard each other against sin, Hebrews 10 to spur each other on to good works? Why, then, is the local church essential in the Christian life? (24)
20. Why are “love and good works” so important in the Christian life? See Ephesians 2:10. What kind of “love and good works” were the Hebrews stopping? See Hebrews 10:32-35. (24)
21. What is the next exhortation the author gives, in verse 25? Why is church attendance and energetic involvement absolutely essential to the Christian life? Why were these Hebrews tempted to stop attending church? Why do so many Christians fail to see the value and necessity church membership and attendance? What is a “habit” of skipping church? How does this relate to the “drifting away” mentioned earlier? (25)
22. But instead, what should we do for one another? This is the same word “encourage” that the author uses in 13:22. What does “all the more as you see the Day drawing near” mean? What “Day” does this refer to? (25)

III. SUMMARY:

The Author urges the readers to see that the New Covenant in Christ opened the way for us to approach God, which was previously closed in the Old Covenant. Through Christ we have confidence to approach Holy God. Also, the gathering of the church and the spurring of fellow believers must not be neglected.

SINNING DELIBERATELY IS DANGEROUS BUSINESS

HEBREWS 10:26-31

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. Why does the author use such harsh language in this passage? Is he trying to “scare us straight”? Does this passage teach us anything about the role of fear in the Christian life?
2. What is he warning against?
3. Is it healthy for Christians to consider deeply the wrath of God?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. What is the connection between this passage and the previous series of exhortations the author gave us in verses 19-25? (26-31)
2. What does it mean to “go on sinning deliberately” in this context? (26)
3. Does this imply that Christians should never sin? What sin does the author have in mind? (26)
4. How would you relate the point the author is making in verses 26-27 to 2 Peter 2:20-22? What does it mean “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins”? (26-27)
5. What does verse 27 teach you about God? How does this verse line up with statements that “God is love”? (27)
6. What would it be like to live day after day under the “fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire”? (27)
7. How would you relate verse 27 to 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10? (27)
8. Does verse 28 imply that God is not merciful? If not, then what function does it have in the author’s argument? (28)
9. What does the series of descriptions of verse 29 refer to? Is this describing someone who rejects the Gospel or something else? (29)
10. What does it mean to “trample underfoot the son of God”? (29)
11. When it speaks of the “blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified” does it imply that this is a person that was once saved but has now lost his salvation? If not, why not? (29)
12. What does it mean to “outrage the Spirit of grace”? (29)
13. How do the statements about God in verses 30-31 strengthen the point the author is trying to make? (30-31)
14. Compare verse 30 with 1 Peter 4:17-18. What does it teach you about how God deals with those who claim to be His people? (30)
15. What evidences are there from the Old Testament that “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”? What evidences from the New Testament? (31)

16. How would you summarize the whole argument of verses 26-31?
17. How would understanding these verses help you in your Christian life?
18. How would these verses help you in evangelism?

III. SUMMARY:

The author warns his readers of the dangers of deliberately continuing in a pattern of sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth. He shows from scripture that God takes vengeance on his enemies and even judges His own people when they apostatize, and that being on the receiving end of the judgement of God is a fearful thing.

EXHORTATION TO ENDURANCE

HEBREWS 10:32-39

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What overall exhortation is the author giving the Hebrews in this section?
2. What does this section teach you about the circumstances of the Hebrews?
3. What would cause one to “joyfully accept the plundering of their property”?
4. What does it mean for someone who claims to be a Christian to “throw away their confidence”? What would cause someone to do this?
5. Why do Christians need to have perseverance?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

EXHORTATION TO ENDURANCE: BASED ON PAST COURAGE (VV. 32-34)

1. What is the author seeking to do in this section? (32-34)
2. What does this section teach you about the circumstances the Hebrews were facing? (32-34)
3. How had the Hebrews faced these trials in the past? (32-34)
4. How would you face such trials? Would they cause you to pull back in your commitment to Christ? Do Christians still face these kinds of things? (32-34)
5. How does this remembrance help the Hebrews to endure for Christ? (32-34)
6. Why does the author single out the fact that the Hebrews were “partners” with those who were treated badly? Why does he point out that they helped prisoners? See Hebrews 13:3. Why is this commendable? (33-34)
7. Why does it take courage to stand with suffering Christians? What does it show about you if you are unwilling to do so? How would you relate this matter to the exhortation he gives in 13:13? See also 2 Timothy 1:8 and 2 Timothy 1:16.
8. What would cause someone to “joyfully accept the plundering of their property”? What is the source of that “joy”? Not merely stoic acceptance of bad circumstances, but actual, true *joy*? See also Acts 5:40-41. (34)

EXHORTATION TO ENDURANCE: BASED ON PROMISED REWARD (VV. 35-36)

9. What is the significance of “confidence” in the book of Hebrews? See the appendix. Are we talking about just any kind of confidence, or is it specifically confidence in Christ? What does it mean to “throw away your confidence”? Why does the author use such a strong term, “throw away”? Is it a willful choice to throw away your confidence? Why is it so serious? (35)
10. Why does confidence have such a great reward? What is the great reward of confidence in Christ? (35)
11. Why is reward such an important theme in Hebrews? See Hebrews 11:6, 26. Should we be motivated by reward? What is the reward of healthy confidence in Christ? (35)

12. In many ways Hebrews 10:36 is yet another statement of the main exhortation of this book. What is the endurance the author refers to here? Why do Christians need endurance? (36)
 13. What does it mean to have “done the will of God” in this context? How does the need for endurance relate to doing the will of God? See Acts 13:36; Ephesians 2:10; Acts 20:24; 2 Timothy 4:7-8. (36)
 14. What is promised to those who have “done the will of God”? (36)
- EXHORTATION TO ENDURANCE: BASED ON THE COMING OF CHRIST (37-39)***
15. What does the author use to exhort the Hebrews in verses 37-39? (37-39)
 16. What is he quoting in these verses? What is the context this passage in Habakkuk? (37-39)
 17. How does the author intend his readers to understand “For, yet a little while, the coming one will come and will not delay”? What is he referring to? Do the phrases “yet a little while” and “will not delay” surprise you? (37)
 18. The quote from Habakkuk 2, “The righteous shall live by his faith” is one of Paul’s most important quotes in Romans 1:17. How does Paul use it there? How does the author use it here? (38)
 19. What does it mean to “live by faith”? (38)
 20. What does it mean to “shrink back”? Compare it to “drift away” (Hebrews 2:1), “turn away” (3:12) and “fall away” (6:6) about which the author warned earlier? In this context here in 10:32-39, what would cause someone to shrink back? See Revelation 12:11. Shrinking back from pain and death is totally normal and understandable. Why is it such a big crime in this context? (38)
 21. What does God say is His reaction to anyone who shrinks back through unbelief? What does it mean that “my soul has no pleasure in him”? (38)
 22. According to verse 39, what is the penalty for shrinking back? What is the alternative to shrinking back? (39) How does faith enable someone to “stand firm to the end” (Matthew 10:22) in such a situation? (39)
 23. How is verse 39 a note of hopefulness for the Hebrews? Note how it is reminiscent of a similar statement in Hebrews 6:9? (39)
 24. How does faith “preserve the soul”? (39)

III. SUMMARY:

The author exhorts the Hebrews to perseverance in the face of great suffering and trial. He does not coddle them with soft words saying he knows how hard it is to stand firm for Christ when losing everything of earthly value. Rather, he shows them their past courage, their future reward, and he warns them of the grave danger of shrinking back in unbelief. More than anything, he points them to faith, the only force strong enough to enable them to survive the onslaught of suffering.

FAITH: ASSURANCE AND CONVICTION

HEBREWS 11:1-7

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What purpose does this entire chapter (sometimes called the “Hall of Faith”) serve in the author’s overall message to the Hebrews?
2. How does the author define faith? How does he put faith on display?
3. Why is faith essential to pleasing God?
4. Why are the rewards of faith mentioned so prominently in this section?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

INTRODUCTION: THE NATURE OF FAITH (VV. 1-3)

1. How does this section (verses 1-3, or even all of chapter 11) relate to Hebrews 10:19-39, the section we just finished studying? How does it relate to the overall argument of the book?
2. The first verse gives us a definition of faith. What does the phrase “assurance of things hoped for” convey to you about the nature of faith? How does faith relate to what we hope for? Is faith connected only to positive things? For more on the definition of faith, see the appendix. (1)
3. The definition of faith also says “the conviction of things not seen.” Why does faith connect to invisible things? How does this verse relate to 2 Corinthians 5:7 “we walk by faith, not by sight”? How does a strong confidence in the reality of the invisible world relate to faith? The word “conviction” comes from a Greek word usually translated “reproof” as in 2 Timothy 3:16, and John 16:8. It means to be convicted for sin in most cases. Could this somehow relate to the negative side of faith? Like Noah’s warning in verse 7? How does faith warn us of negative things? See also Matthew 18:15, Luke 3:19, John 3:20, John 8:46, Ephesians 5:11, 1 Timothy 5:20, 2 Timothy 4:2, Hebrews 12:5 for uses of the verb form “to reprove.” (1)
4. How does verse 2 serve to unify the people of the Old Testament with the people of the New? Why does God commend people for faith? (2)
5. How does faith relate to understanding? Does faith teach us anything? (3)
6. What does faith teach according to verse 3? How does verse 3 relate to the creation-evolution debate? The word “created” or “formed” or “framed” is fascinating. According to this verse, the worlds in the universe were arrayed in perfect order by God’s word. What does this teach you about God and the universe? What does it teach you about the word of the Lord? Note: the same word is used in Hebrews 10:5 and 13:21! See also 1 Peter 5:10. (3)
7. How does verse 3 relate the unseen world to the visible world? How does it connect back to Hebrews 1:10-12? How should it cause us to live in this present physical world? See 2 Peter 3:11. (3)

FAITH AT WORK IN PRE-FLOOD PEOPLE (VV. 4-7)

8. What is the significance of the author starting with Abel's sacrifice as an example of faith? What did Abel's faith motivate him to do? What would the Hebrew's faith motivate them to do concerning animal sacrifice? (4)
9. Why was Abel's sacrifice better than that of Cain? What is the connection between Abel's righteousness and his faith? Who gave the testimony about Abel that he was righteous? Why is this significant for the Hebrews, and for us today? (4)
10. How does Abel still speak to us today, even though he is dead? (4)
11. What is confirmed here about Enoch that is not openly stated in Genesis 5? Read Genesis 5:22-24. What does it mean that "Enoch walked with God"? What does it mean for your life personally? Would you characterize yourself as someone who "walks with God"? For more biblical examples of "walking" with God, please see the appendix. (5)
12. How was Enoch pleasing to God? Is it possible for sinners like us to be "pleasing to God"? (5)
13. What does verse 6 teach us about non-Christians and the good works they do? Note: Martin Luther said that all good works done apart from faith in Christ are actually sins to be repented of. Do you think that is true? How does Romans 14:23 relate to verse 6? (6)
14. What reason does the author give for stating "Without faith it is impossible to please God"? What must we believe in order to please God? (6)
15. Why is it essential to pleasing God that we believe that He rewards those who seek Him? What would the opposite state of mind be? (6)
16. What does the example of Noah contribute to the author's exposition of faith? Noah is more motivated by fear of a warning than by desire for reward. Why is this also a valid aspect of faith? Note that there have been many serious warnings already in the Book of Hebrews. What does a man or woman of faith do with such warnings? What does unbelief do? (7)
17. What does "in reverent fear" show about Noah's building of the ark? (7)
18. What does the author say Noah accomplished by the building of the ark? (7)
19. How did Noah's faith condemn the world? How did it make him an heir of the "righteousness that comes by faith"? (7)
20. Why is the phrase "heir of the righteousness that comes by faith" so crucial in the New Testament? See also Romans 1:16-17, 3:21-22, 4:5, 4:9, 9:30, 10:6, Galatians 5:5. What is the significance of the word "heir"? (7)

III. SUMMARY:

The author defines faith, and then displays its nature and rewards by the example of men who lived before the Flood.

FAITH: LOOKING TO THE HEAVENLY CITY

HEBREWS 11:8-12

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What does Abraham's example teach us about the relationship between faith and obedience?
2. What does this section teach us about this present world as compared with the city which is faith's promised reward?
3. Why is it important that Sarah's faith as well as Abraham's is highlighted here?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. Why does Abraham stand in the New Testament as the paradigm of a man of faith? Note: Abraham's trust in God is used by Paul as the example of how a man is justified by faith in Romans 4. (8)
2. What aspect of Abraham's faith does the author highlight here? Why does he make much of the fact that Abraham obeyed by faith? (8)
3. What does Abraham's example teach us about the relationship between faith and obedience? (8)
4. According to the text, did Abraham know he would receive the land as an inheritance when he left his home? What caused him to leave his home? (8)
5. Why is it significant that Abraham did not know where he was going? Does God ever call us to do things without explaining fully the final destination or the road we will take to get there? Why does He do that? What does this teach you about God's guidance in life? (8)
6. What point is the author making in verse 9 about Abraham and the Promised Land? How does it help his overall message to the Hebrews in their time of testing? How does this concept relate to the phrase "sojourners/strangers and exiles" which Peter uses in 1 Peter 2:11 and which is also found in this chapter, Hebrews 11:13? (9)
7. How would embracing such a concept change the way you think about your life: your time, your possessions, your body, your health, your career, your family, your friends, your mission and calling on earth? (9)
8. How does the author contrast the living conditions of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with the promised inheritance, "the city with foundations."? (9-10)
9. What does the author tell us about their outlook in verse 10? How does this "looking forward" mindset relate to the definition of faith in verse 1 and the reward of faith in verse 6? (10)
10. What does the author tell us about the "city" they were looking forward to? The Greek implies it is identified by the fact that it has "foundations." What does this mean, and what does it teach you about this present world order? How

would this have been especially encouraging to Hebrews who had lost their homes in the persecution? See Hebrews 10:34. (10)

11. What does it mean that the city has God as its “designer and builder”? Note that this concept has already been related to the church in Hebrews 3:3-4. What is an “designer” or “architect”? How does the work of an architect relate to that of a builder? Why is it significant that God is both? (10)
12. How does the contrast between human cities (whose architect and builder are men) and the heavenly city (whose architect and builder are God) relate also to the earthly vs. heavenly tabernacle discussion earlier in Hebrews 9:1, 11? (10)
13. Why does the author also talk about Sarah’s faith? How would this have been a special encouragement to the women among the Hebrews? (11)
14. Does the Old Testament highlight Sarah’s faith? If not, why does the author mention it so prominently? Would it have been possible for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham (stated in verse 12) without Sarah’s faith? (11-12)
15. What is the author quoting in verse 12? What is the significance of that quote? See Genesis 15:5, and also Genesis 22:17. (12)

III. Summary:

The faith of two Old Testament heroes, Abraham and Sarah, are put on display as an encouragement to the Hebrews. The central lesson is that faith is obedient regardless of knowing the way ahead, resulting in a place in an eternal city whose builder and maker is God. Life on this planet is totally temporary, and in that sense we all live in tents. Faith accepts and even revels in that truth!

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE HEAVENLY COUNTRY

HEBREWS 11:13-16

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What do these verses teach about our perspective on earthly life?
2. What does it mean to live like a “stranger and exile on earth”?
3. How does faith in a future heavenly “country” or “city” affect everyday life and overall purpose for those who trust in Christ?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. Who does verse 13 refer to when it says “*These all* died in faith...”? (13)
2. Why is it important to the author’s overall purpose to state that none of these great heroes of the faith received what God had promised them while they were on earth? (13)
3. The author makes a basic point here that faith is essentially forward-looking, always hopeful for something yet to come. How did these heroes of the faith see and welcome the promises from a distance? In what sense did they see them? How did they “see and greet them from a afar”? (13)
4. What does it mean that these heroes of faith “acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth”? To whom did they make that acknowledgement? See Genesis 17:8, 20:13, 21:23, 23:4, 28:4; Deuteronomy 26:5. (13)
5. Is this matter of being an “stranger and exile on earth” still applicable to believers today? What does it mean to live an earthly life as an alien and a stranger here? What would the opposite mentality be? Peter uses this same phrase in 1 Peter 2:11. How does he use the concept to command people to be holy? (13)
6. One translation of “strangers” is “pilgrims”. What is a “pilgrim”? How do people of faith live like pilgrims in the world? See Genesis 47:9. (13)
7. Why is it a great danger to the soul to get too comfortable here on earth or to feel too attached to earthly circumstances? Perhaps this is what Paul had in mind by his strange command in 1 Corinthians 7:29-31. How can we grow in “heavenly-mindedness”?
8. What does the author say about their “confession” in verse 14? What does he say it shows about their mindset? (14)
9. In what way were they “seeking” or “looking for” a country of their own? Since the author says the heavenly city is the answer to their quest, in what sense will that be “homeland”? How do believers possess or own the heavenly country? See Matthew 5:5, Romans 4:13, Hebrews 10:34, Luke 16:9-12, Revelation 21:7 (14)

10. What does it mean to not be “thinking” of the country they had left? Why is that important, namely, that they counted what they had left behind of little importance? See Luke 9:62, 17:32-33, Philippians 3:8-9, 3:13-15. For heavenly-mindedness, see Colossians 3:1-4. (15)
11. Why does the author mention that the heroes of the faith “would have had opportunity to return” to the country they had left, if they had wanted to? How does that relate to the Hebrews situation in facing persecution, and the dangers of “drifting away, turning away, falling away” in Hebrews 2, 3, and 6? (15)
12. What ultimately motivated these heroes of the faith to count their past homes worthless and not worthy of their consideration? In what ways is the heavenly country a better country? (16)
13. How do you relate the fact that they were not looking for an earthly land to the fact that God *had* in fact promised Abraham precisely that, an earthly patch of ground for his descendants? Did Abraham not care about that? How do you reconcile the author’s obvious emphasis on a heavenly country here in 11:13-16 with the physical land that they were promised? (16)
14. According to verse 16, why is God not ashamed to be called their God? What about their mindset does God find worthy of praise? (16)
15. This is the second time that the author has mentioned the issue of God “not being ashamed” to be associated with us. The other is in Hebrews 2:11, in which Christ is not ashamed to be called our brother. See also Mark 8:38. Is it amazing to you that God would not be ashamed at sinners like us? Why then are we ever tempted to be ashamed of Him? (16)
16. What is the nature of the city that God has prepared for them? See Revelation 21:2, 9-27; John 14:1-6, Ephesians 2:19-22, 1 Peter 2:5.
17. Do you have the same deep longing for living in the heavenly country, in the city God has prepared for you? How do you express that longing? (16)

III. SUMMARY:

This passage shows that a deep and constant longing for heaven and a disaffection with earth is at the core of true faith, causing us to look on our lives here on earth as of small value in comparison with the riches of the future.

FAITH: ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB

HEBREWS 11:17-22

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. How did Abraham resolve the seeming conflict between God's command and God's promise concerning Isaac?
2. How is Abraham's faith in resurrection a particular encouragement to the Hebrew Christians who were suffering persecution?
3. Why does the author focus on the deathbed scenes from Isaac, Jacob and Joseph's lives?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. Why did God test Abraham? The test is found in Genesis 22:1-2, which says, "After these things God tested Abraham and said to him... 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love... and offer him there as a burnt offering.'" What is the role of tests and trials on the development and display of faith? (17)
2. How did Abraham do in his test of faith? How was Abraham's response an example to suffering Christians? (17)
3. The author says that "By faith Abraham... offered up Isaac." Did Abraham actually offer him? Why does the author say he did? (17)
4. Why does the author bring in the fact of the promises centered around Isaac at this point? See Galatians 4:28 for the statement of Isaac being a "child of promise." (17)
5. How did Abraham resolve the seeming conflict between God's command and God's promise concerning Isaac? (17)
6. What is the significance of the phrase his *only* son? Why does the author use that kind of language here? (17)
7. How does verse 18 add to the point the author is making? How does this specific statement help Abraham to resolve the tension, leading to verse 19? (18-19)
8. The Greek word for "considered" or "reasoned" in verse 19 is "logizomai", a very significant word in Romans 4:3 and 6:11 and many other places. What does verse 19 teach about the relationship between faith and reason? How does someone reason by faith? (19)
9. In what way was Isaac a "type" or "example" or "pattern"? (19)
10. How is Abraham's faith in resurrection a particular encouragement to the Hebrew Christians who were suffering persecution? (19)
11. What aspect of Isaac's life does the author focus on in verse 20 as an example of faith? How was the blessing of each of his two sons a display of faith? (20)

12. Do you consider it odd that the author zeroes in on Isaac's blessings of his sons given the fact that Jacob and his mother conned Isaac by deception? How does Isaac display faith even in those circumstances? See Genesis 27:33. (20)
13. What does the author focus on in Jacob's life as a display of faith? Why does he pass over the wrestling with the angel or the vision of the ladder to heaven, or even the desire he had for the birthright and the blessing? Why instead does he concentrate on the blessing of Joseph's sons in particular? What was unique about the circumstances of that blessing of Manasseh and Ephraim? See Genesis 48:1-8. It's especially interesting that the author passes over the prophetic blessing Jacob made of each of his twelve sons in Genesis 49. (21)
14. Why is it important that Jacob worshiped as he was dying? How does this help the Hebrews in their challenges? (21)
15. Finally, why does the author concentrate also on Joseph's death bed command to carry his bones out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus? How does this request show great faith? How is it connected with the promises of God? See Genesis 50:25. (22)
16. Why does the author pass over all the other amazing displays of faith in Joseph's life: his dreams, his holiness in Potiphar's house, his willingness to stay yielded to God despite all the trials, his interpretation of the baker and cupbearer's dreams, his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, his administration of Egypt's grain, his gracious forgiveness of his brothers and his understanding of God's sovereign purposes as the cause of his troubles, etc.? (22)

III. SUMMARY:

The author continues to set before the Hebrew Christians demonstrations of faith from Scripture: Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac based on his reasoning by faith that God would raise him from the dead, and the deathbed statements of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. The cumulative effect of these examples is to give suffering Christians courage to face death with their confidence in God's unfulfilled promises intact.

FAITH: MOSES, JOSHUA, RAHAB

HEBREWS 11:23-31

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What does Moses' example teach us about resisting the "pleasures of sin"?
2. How is Moses' love for heavenly over earthly rewards essential to saving faith?
3. In what ways did the people of Israel display faith, and how would that have been motivational for the Hebrews?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

THE FAITH OF MOSES (VV. 23-28)

1. How did Moses' parents demonstrate faith? How did their faith conquer fear of punishment? (23)
2. What does it mean and why is it important that "they saw that the child was beautiful"? (23)
3. How did Moses come to the conclusion that he should refuse to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter? How did faith enable him to make this decision? What was at stake? How does this speak to modern Christians, especially to those with "career opportunities" that may lead them to make ethical compromises? (24)
4. What was the nature of Moses' "choice" as described in verse 25 (i.e. what were his options as described in this verse)? What is the nature of the suffering with God's people that Moses chose? How would this have spoken a direct word to the Hebrews who were themselves suffering persecution? (25)
5. What does it mean "rather...than enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin"? What "pleasures" did Moses have to turn his back on? What is the significance of the word "fleeting"? (25)
6. Is this issue of choosing suffering rather than sinful pleasure still before us? How does Hebrews 11 help us to make the correct choice? How does faith enable a proper choice?
7. In what way does Moses' life line up with Paul's on this issue: If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied, 1 Corinthians 15:19. In other words, how does Moses show us an "otherworldly" mindset willing to suffer now for reward later? (25)
8. In what way does *your* life demonstrate this?
9. How was Moses' suffering "the reproach of Christ" if Christ hadn't even been born yet? (26)
10. What value did Moses put on Christ? What value did he put on "the treasures of Egypt"? How does this relate to the parables of the Treasure Hidden in the Field and the Costly Pearl in Matthew 13:44-46? (26)

11. How important is Moses' mindset in verse 26 to conversion and true saving faith? (26)
12. How does Moses' yearning for reward honor and glorify God and thereby please Him greatly? See also Hebrews 11:6. (26)
13. What caused Moses to leave Egypt? How did he, like his parents, conquer fear of Pharaoh? (27)
14. What is the relationship between faith and perseverance in verse 27? How is that one of the main goals of the author in Hebrews 11? See Hebrews 10:36. (27)
15. How did Moses' faith enable him to keep the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood? How did that enable him to survive the judgment of God? How does that relate to Christ? (28)

THE FAITH OF THE EXODUS AND THE CONQUEST (vv. 29-31)

16. How did the passing through the Red Sea demonstrate faith on the part of the people? (29)
17. How do you reconcile the fact that the people showed faith in passing through the Red Sea, yet God was not pleased with most of them and their bodies ended up being scattered all over the desert because of their unbelief in refusing to enter the Promised Land? See also 1 Corinthians 10:1-6. (29)
18. How did the fall of Jericho display the people's faith? (30)
19. How was Rahab a marvelous example of faith, so much so that James also cites her as an example in James 2:25? (31)
20. How does the author relate disobedience to judgment in verse 31? See also 2 Thessalonians 1:8, 1 Peter 4:17.

III. SUMMARY:

Moses' faith is put on display as an example of living courageously and wisely in the present evil age: willing to forego earthly power, possessions, prestige, and pleasures for heavenly reward, even if the resultant life is a life of great suffering. So also the faith of the Exodus and the Conquest of the Promised Land is displayed to encourage the Hebrews to persevere.

HEROES OF THE FAITH, THROUGH VICTORY AND SUFFERING

HEBREWS 11:32-40

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What is the unifying lesson of the many examples of faith the author cites in verses 32 through 40?
2. How does faith lead to different results in these verses, sometimes victory and sometimes great suffering? How can both results still be the result of a life of faith?
3. What does verse 40 mean, “since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us, they should not be made perfect”?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. What impression does the author want to give of the life of faith by the examples he cites in quick fashion here? (32)
2. Who were Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah? Do you find any of them an odd choice to make the “Hall of Faith” of Hebrews 11? (32)
3. Do you find it interesting that David receives such a passing mention here? Consider the faith he showed in taking on Goliath for the glory of God, of patiently enduring the long time of fleeing from Saul, of conquering so many foreign nations militarily, of desiring to build a temple for God, of receiving the promise of the future of his household, of humbly submitting to God’s discipline through Absalom, etc. Why only a simple mention here? (32)
4. What general lesson emerges from the summary of verses 33-34? How would you summarize the triumphs listed there? (33-34)
5. How would verse 35a be a particular encouragement to the suffering Hebrew Christians? How would it especially encourage women? (35a)
6. What sudden shift do you notice midway through verse 35? (35b)
7. What is the significance of the summary from verse 35b to verse 38? How would it strengthen the perseverance of persecuted and suffering Christians? (35b-38)
8. How would you relate these examples of suffering to Paul’s statement of deferred reward in 1 Corinthians 15:19? (35-38)
9. What does it mean “that they might rise again to a better life” in verse 35? Does this imply that martyrs are in some way at an advantage on resurrection day? (35)
10. Why does the author mention “mocking” in verse 36? Are verbal insults significant? Why, or why not? (36)
11. What do you think it would be like to be “sawn in two”? How could a loving and powerful God allow that to happen to His people? (37)

12. What other type of suffering is mentioned in 37-38? How would this answer to the “health and wealth” mentality of American Christianity which equates poverty with a lack of faith, and prosperity with a strong faith? (37-38)
13. Do you personally know anyone that is living the kind of faith-filled life of suffering described in verses 35b-38? Have you read of or know of people alive today who are living like this? Are you personally willing to live this kind of life? (35b-38)
14. What does it mean, “Men of whom the world was not worthy”? (38)
15. Why does the author say they were commended for their faith? What does this remind you of in Hebrews 11? (39)
16. Why does the author point out that they all died in faith without receiving what had been promised? What promise is he referring to? (39)
17. What is the “something better” that God had planned in verse 40? According to the verse, for whom did God plan that “something better”? (40)
18. What question does the “so that” answer in verse 40? (40)
19. What does it mean “apart from us they should not be made perfect”? What does “made perfect” mean? Compare with Hebrews 12:23. Compare also with 1 Thessalonians 4:15, Romans 8:18-25 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-57. What does verse 40 teach you about the saints in heaven now? (40)

III. SUMMARY:

The author finishes his vast sweep of Biblical history to summarize many “heroes of faith”, not by name but by the character of their lives and their courageous, other-worldly actions. He shows that sometimes a life of faith results in earthly success, and sometimes in great earthly suffering. He completes the chapter by saying that all believers can only be made perfect together, at the final resurrection, when they receive their perfected bodies.

LAYING ASIDE WEIGHTS AND SINS, LOOKING TO JESUS

HEBREWS 12:1-4

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. How does this section of Hebrews connect with Hebrews 11?
2. What is the central exhortation of Hebrews 12:1-3?
3. How does Christ's example help us persevere in the Christian life?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. What is the logical connection between Hebrews 12:1-3 and Hebrews 11? (1)
2. What does "since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" mean? Does this mean that dead saints are around us always, watching what we do? Are they "witnessing" us? Is there another way to understand this verse? (1)
3. What appeal does the author make based on the fact that we are "surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses"? What does he command them to do? (1)
4. How does this command relate to Hebrews 10:36? Would you say that the command to persevere in the Christian life is the central "exhortation" of the whole letter? Hebrews 13:22 calls the letter a "word of exhortation." (1)
5. What does the author tell us to do in order to run with endurance? What "weights" or things that "hinder" us does he intend that we should deal with? What does it mean practically to lay or throw them off? (1)
6. Notice that the author includes "weights" and "sins". Is it possible to carry a weight that hinders our growth, but that is not necessarily sinful? What should we do with that weight? (1)
7. In what way does sin "cling so closely" to us? How does sin hinder the running of the race of faith? (1)
8. The author calls on the Hebrews to run with "endurance" or "perseverance". What does this teach you about the nature of the Christian life? See also Acts 20:24, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 and 2 Timothy 2:5 and 4:7. (1)
9. In what way is the race "set before us"? How is the course of the Christian life clearly marked? Relate it to John 14:6 and Ephesians 2:10. Compare it with Hebrews 6:18 and also the very next verse, Hebrews 12:2. What is "set before" us in verse 1? What was "set before" Christ in verse 2? (1-2)
10. What is the central advice the author gives for completing the race in verse 2? How does fixing our eyes on Jesus help us to persevere? How can we "look to Jesus" if we have never seen Him? How do we do this practically in our daily struggles with sin? (2)
11. What descriptions does the author use of Jesus in verse 2?
12. How is Jesus the "founder" or your faith? How is He the "perfector" of your faith? How would meditating on these titles help you to persevere in your race with endurance? (2)

13. What aspect of Christ's example does the author highlight in verse 2? There are so many ways Jesus is our example. What does He focus on? (2)
14. According to verse 2, what was Christ's motivation for going to the cross? How would that help you face trials and the sufferings involved in finishing your race of faith? (2)
15. What joy was set before Jesus on the other side of the cross? (2)
16. How important is joy in the Christian life? Suppose you do your Christian service and life out of duty rather than joy. Why would that be a problem?
17. What was Jesus' approach to the actual experience of the cross itself? Did He "enjoy" that? What does that teach you about our approach to suffering in our lives? (2)
18. What does it mean that Jesus endured the cross, "despising the shame"? How would you define "shame"? What shame was associated with the cross? What does it mean that Jesus despised it? The Greek word translated "despised" could also be translated "thought little of". What does this teach you about Jesus' love for his Church? What should that teach you about concern for public opinion? How does it relate to Hebrews 13:13? (2)
19. What was the final outcome of Jesus' patient endurance of His immense trial? Where did He end up? How would focusing on Christ's patient endurance of the cross and His final glory on the throne in heaven help Christians endure their own trials? (2)
20. What command does the author give in verse 3? What does it mean to "consider Him"? The Greek word means to reason it over, mull it over, ponder, work it over in your minds with careful meditation. What role does this kind of careful thinking have in the endurance of a Christian? (3)
21. Note that the author tells us to "consider Him" not to "consider this or that doctrine..." How do we consider Christ? (3)
22. What aspect of Christ's life does the author highlight in verse 3? What conclusion does the author want the Hebrew Christians to draw from Christ's sufferings? (3)
23. What does it mean to "grow weary and fainthearted"? How is it related to the central exhortation of the letter, which is "patient endurance"? (3)
24. How does verse 4 put the Hebrew's sufferings in perspective? (4)
25. What is their "struggle against sin"? What does it mean to "resist"? See James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:9. (4)

III. SUMMARY:

The author exhorts the Hebrews Christians to persevere in the Christian life through their sufferings by laying aside sin and fixing their thoughts on Jesus Christ. Christ's example at the cross is sufficient for all suffering Christians everywhere to persevere in their trials.

THE LORD DISCIPLINES US AS CHILDREN

HEBREWS 12:5-13

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. How is this section on God's discipline an "exhortation"?
2. What does this section teach us about God's discipline?
3. What is God's overall goal for us in Christ, and how does discipline help achieve this goal?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. How does verse 5 relate to verse 4? What is the connection between their "struggle against sin" and the passage that follows? (4-5)
2. Why does the author ask if they have "forgotten" the exhortation? Does he assume they've forgotten it? (5)
3. The author calls the quotation from Proverbs 3:11-12 an "exhortation." How is the concept of God's discipline a source of encouragement to us in our struggle against sin? (5)
4. What does verse 5 teach you about the author's view of the Old Testament, and how we should read it today? In other words, to whom is Proverbs 3:11-12 addressed? (5)
5. What are the two opposite errors (bad ways of reacting to God's discipline) that verse 5 highlights concerning the Lord's discipline? (5)
6. What does it mean to "regard lightly" the Lord's discipline? How would one do that? Why would it be a terrible way to react to the Lord's discipline? (5)
7. What does it mean to be "weary"? Why would that also be a terrible way to react to the Lord's discipline? (5)
8. Are there examples of Christ rebuking His disciples? (5)
9. What reason does the author give for not losing heart at the Lord's discipline in verse 6? How is discipline evidence of the Lord's love? (6)
10. The word "discipline" is "paideia," a very important word in Greek culture having to do with the proper training of children, and also the shaping and preparation of disciples for their lives. How does this help you understand God's purposes in discipline? (5-6)
11. The word "chastises" in ESV is "scourges" in other versions. It is a very strong word, usually translated "flog" or "beat" and frequently used of Christ's own sufferings and those of His apostles on mission. See Matthew 10:17, 20:19, 23:34. What insight does this give you in how the Lord deals with us as His children? (6)
12. It says the Lord disciplines everyone he "receives". The word can also be translated "welcome" or "accept", as one would welcome a visitor to a home.

- In what sense does the Lord “receive” us? What does this teach you about your relationship with Him? (6)
13. What command does the author give in verse 7? With what attitude does the author want us to “endure” the discipline that we are going through? What encouragement does he give in this verse? (7)
 14. What is the main point of verses 7-9? (7-9)
 15. Why does the author talk about the discipline we received from our earthly fathers? What point does he make concerning our relationship with God as our Father? (8-9)
 16. In verse 9, what is the proper response to discipline? What does it mean to be “subject”? What happens if we don’t submit to God during discipline? (9)
 17. How does the author compare the discipline our earthly fathers gave us with that the Lord gives in verse 10? Is there a difference between the two, and if so, what is it? Note the word “but” in verse 10, clearly contrasting our the discipline of our fathers with that which God gives. (10)
 18. According to verse 10, what is God’s overall motive for discipline? How does this help shape your own understanding of the discipline process? (10)
 19. Is it possible to grow to maturity in holiness without the Lord’s chastening? Why or why not?
 20. What is the difference between the discipline described here and the “testing of your faith” in James 1:2-4?
 21. What insight into discipline does verse 11 give you? According to this verse, what is an absolutely essential aspect of discipline, without which, there is no discipline? (11)
 22. What is the ultimate result of the discipline process? Does it happen right away? What does this teach you about the need for patience in the discipline process? (11)
 23. What closing exhortations does the author give the Hebrew Christians? How would these exhortations be carried out? (12-13)
 24. Does verses 12-13 have a corporate application? Is there something we should be doing for each other here? What does it mean to “make straight paths for your feet”? How does it relate to verse 1 of this chapter? (12-13)

III. SUMMARY:

The author encourages the Hebrew Christians concerning the discipline they have to undergo in their Christian lives, teaching them that it is part of being a true child of God, it is wisely apportioned out, it is painful not pleasant, it takes a long time to take effect, and it has the ultimate purpose of holiness. The end result is that we should submit to it gladly, neither taking it lightly nor getting crushed with discouragement. We should strengthen ourselves for the journey of holiness, walking the way God has laid out.

STRIVE FOR HOLINESS, WITHOUT WHICH NO ONE WILL SEE THE LORD

HEBREWS 12:14-17

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What does this section teach about human striving in holiness?
2. What is the author warning against in this section?
3. How is Esau an example of the godlessness that is the enemy of true faith?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. How does this section (12:14-17) relate to the section that immediately precedes it? In other words, how does the warning here relate to the teaching on the discipline of the Lord and the need to “lift up your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees”? (14-17)
2. What is the significance of the verb translated “strive” or “Follow” or “Pursue”? What does it teach you about the Christian life? (14)

Note: the word for “strive” is “diōkō”, which is also translated “persecute” or “chase.” It implies running after something so hard you can’t be turned away by anything: following hard after it, chasing it, hunting it, harrying with intense zeal, like Asahel pursuing Abner in 2 Samuel 2:19, “Turning aside neither to the right nor the left.”

3. What are we told to pursue in verse 14? (14)
4. What does it mean to strive for “peace with everyone”? See also Romans 14:19 and Ephesians 4:3, both of which speak about making effort to keep peace among brothers in Christ. Better is Romans 12:18, “So far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” How do we obey that verse in such a wicked, Christ-hating world? Is this a hard command for you personally to obey? (14)
5. What is the significance of the fact that we are to strive for holiness? Are we not already perfectly righteous in Christ? What kind of holiness does this verse speak of? How are to obey this verse practically, in our every day lives? See Romans 6 (yes, the whole chapter!) for the answer to this question. (14)
6. What does it say about the holiness which we must pursue? What does it mean “Without which, no one will see the Lord”? Does this make our salvation dependent on our own works? How do you relate the holiness which comes by great effort in Hebrews 12:14 with the righteousness which comes from God and is by faith of Philippians 3 and Romans 3? (14)
7. What would you say about the spiritual state of someone who is not pursuing holiness at all in their personal lives? (14)

8. What does it mean to “see the Lord”? Does this prospect excite you? See Psalm 11:7, Psalm 17:15, 1 John 3:2 and 1 Corinthians 13:12, Revelation 22:4. (14)
9. What command does the author give in verse 15? The Greek word translated “see to it” is related to the word for “overseer” in Acts 20:28, Philippians 1:1, and 1 Timothy 3:2. It is used in the verb form in 1 Peter 5:2 “Shepherd the flock of God that is among you.” What does this teach you about our spiritual responsibility to each other? (15)
10. What does it mean to “fail to obtain the grace of God”? Other translations for “fails to obtain” are “lack”, “come short of”, “fail”, and “miss.” (15)
11. What else does the author command the Hebrews to do in verse 15? What is a “root of bitterness” which springs up? See also Acts 8:23, Romans 3:14, Ephesians 4:31. What effect does such bitterness have on a church body? How can this be avoided? (15)
12. How does verse 16 relate to verse 15? Is sexual immorality the bitter root referred to in verse 15? How does a sexual immoral, godless man like Esau cause trouble and defile many in a church body? (16)
13. In what way is Esau the exact opposite of the heroes of faith described in Hebrews 11? What are his attributes and how do they differ from those held up for esteem in Hebrews 11? (16)
14. Do you think American churches are defiled by “Esau-ish” tendencies or people? How would you relate the example of Esau to the enemies of the cross “whose god is their stomach” in Philippians 3:19? (16)
15. Why is it significant that Esau sold his inheritance rights for a single bowl of stew? (16)
16. What point does the author make about Esau in verse 17? Why does he focus on Esau’s bitter regret? The “final end” of people who live for sensual pleasure is a regular theme of warning in the Bible: Psalm 73:17-20, Philippians 3:19, Proverbs 5:11-14, 1 Corinthians 6:9, etc. (17)
17. Whose “repentance” or change of mind did Esau seek? His own? Or Isaac’s? How earnestly did he seek it? How will this be replayed on Judgment Day, when heaven is closed and hell opened before those who lacked the grace of God? (17)

III. SUMMARY:

The author exhorts his readers to strive for personal holiness, for holiness is a necessary companion of true faith. He gives the negative example of Esau who valued temporary pleasures over the blessings of God.

MOUNT SINAI VS MOUNT ZION

HEBREWS 12:18-24

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What is the author talking about in this section? What comparison is he setting up and why?
2. What does the mountain of terror represent in verses 18-21?
3. What does the mountain of joy represent in verses 22-24?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

THE MOUNTAIN OF TERROR (VV. 18-21)

1. What mountain is the author to Hebrews referring to in verses 18-21? How do you know? (18-21)
2. Read Exodus 19:16-25. What is the overall impression you get of that account? What was the Lord seeking to do in the hearts of the Israelites? Why was He seeking to do this?
3. Read also Deuteronomy 5:22-29. What does that account describe? What does God “wish aloud” for His people in Deuteronomy 5:29? Why does He want that?
4. How does the author begin his description of the mount of terror in verse 18? Why does he begin negatively, “For you have *not* come to what may be touched”? (18)
5. What does it mean that they have not come to a mountain that can be touched? What does that teach you about the second mountain in verses 22-24? (18)
6. What other descriptive phrases does the author use in verse 18 and 19? How do you think you would have felt to be at that mountain that day? (18-19)
7. Why was Moses so terrified? What was the threat that hung over all of them that day? How does the mention of the stoning of the animals highlight their terror? (20-21)
8. What does it teach you that even someone as godly as Moses said “I tremble with fear”? (21)
9. What does this passage teach you about what Judgment Day will be like for the lost? (18-21)
10. What does the mountain of terror symbolize? (18-21)

THE MOUNTAIN OF JOY (VV. 22-24)

11. By contrast, how does the author begin the second section in 22-24? In what way had they come to the heavenly mountain? (22)
12. What is “Mount Zion”? What does it represent? (22)
13. What is the “heavenly Jerusalem”? Is this the “New Jerusalem” described in Revelation 21? How does the author describe the “heavenly Jerusalem”? (22)
14. What else have they come to? How does the author describe the angels? (22)
15. What is the “assembly of the firstborn”? What does the term firstborn mean here? What is the significance of the fact that their names are written (“enrolled”) in heaven? See Luke 10:20; Revelation 13:8, 17:8, 21:12, 21:27. (23)
16. What does the author say about God here? Why do you think he mentions that God is the judge of all men? (23)
17. What is the significance of the phrase “spirits of righteous made perfect.” What does this teach you about heaven now? What does this teach you about perfection, about resurrection bodies, about “righteous men” who are in heaven “made perfect”? (23)
18. Finally, the author brings in Christ. What does he mention about Christ in verse 24? How does he describe His covenant and His blood? (24)
19. How does Jesus’ blood “speak” at all? In what way does it speak a better word than the blood of Abel? What is the “blood of Abel”? (24)
20. How does this comparison between the physical mountain of terror and the spiritual mountain of joy serve the author’s overall purpose in the letter to the Hebrews?

III. SUMMARY:

The author compares Mount Sinai and Mount Zion; the first represents the Law of Moses, which only brought terror and condemnation, so much so that even the Lawgiver himself, Moses, was trembling with fear; the second represents heaven, a place of joyful assembly and perfection through the blood of Christ. The implied message is, “Why would you ever want to go back to the Old Covenant”?

A KINGDOM THAT CANNOT BE SHAKEN

HEBREWS 12:25-29

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What is the central command of this section of Hebrews?
2. What does it mean to offer God “acceptable worship”?
3. How should the fact that our God is a “consuming fire” affect our lives, our theology, our worship and our battle with sin?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. How do verses 25-29 connect to the previous section, verses 18-24? (25)
2. What does it mean in the context of the overall message of Hebrews to “refuse him who is speaking”? See also Hebrews 2:2-3. (25)
3. What is the “how much less” argument the author makes in verse 25? How does that argument fit into the overall argument of the superiority of the New Covenant to the Old Covenant made throughout the book? (25)
4. What is the future shaking of the earth the author refers to in verse 26? See Haggai 2:6 for the quote in original context. See also Isaiah 2:19-23 and 24:17-23. Compare it to Matthew 7:24-27. How does the author use it to command the Hebrews to persevere in the New Covenant? (26)
5. What specifically is the author referring to in verse 27? How does it relate to Hebrews 1:10-12? See also Revelation 6:14, and also think of all the plagues in Revelation. (27)
6. What is the contrast between the physical world and the kingdom of God that the author draws in verse 28? (28)
7. How does the fact that the Kingdom of God cannot be shaken serve as a great encouragement to persecuted Christians? How does it help all Christians to persevere? See Daniel 2:44 and 7:14. (28)
8. How do these verses help us defeat materialism and other worldly temptations? Relate this concept to 1 Corinthians 7:27-31 and 1 John 2:15-17. (28)
9. How does the author apply the eternal nature of the Kingdom to our worship life? (28)
10. What does it mean to offer God “acceptable worship”? Is there such a thing as “unacceptable” worship? What makes worship “unacceptable”? (28)
11. Why is thankfulness the proper response to receiving an eternal kingdom? Do you feel as thankful as you should be for this gift of grace? (28)
12. What role should “reverence and awe” play in our worship? Do you feel that modern corporate worship is characterized by “reverence and awe”? How could this be improved? How could you grow in your own sense of awe toward God? (28)

13. What does it mean that “Our God is a consuming fire”? How has God displayed this in the Bible? How will He yet display it in the future? (29)
14. How should the fact that our God is a “consuming fire” affect our lives, our theology, our worship and our battle with sin? (29)

III. SUMMARY:

The author urges his readers to look forward to the eternal kingdom that cannot be shaken. He reminds them that God has promised to shake this world once more, but that the Hebrews are receiving a heavenly kingdom, therefore they should endure suffering and reproach while looking to the eternal kingdom with faith.

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW COVENANT

HEBREWS 13:1-6

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. Why does the author conclude this letter with a series of practical commands?
2. How important is brotherly love to all Christians, and especially to those in persecution?
3. How can non-persecuted Christians stand with and give sustenance to brothers and sisters suffering persecution?
4. Why does the author mention such things as sexual purity and freedom from greed here?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

1. Why does the author conclude this letter with a series of practical commands? (1-6)
2. Why were these ethical commands so important for the Hebrews Christians to obey, given their circumstances? (1-6)
3. Why are they important for all Christians in all times to obey, regardless of their circumstances? (1-6)
4. Why does the author begin with brotherly love? What does he command about brotherly love, and what does it teach you about these Hebrews? (1)
5. How important is brotherly love to all Christians, and especially to those in persecution?
6. Why was hospitality so vital to the Christian church back in the first century culture? See Matthew 10:11-15, Matthew 10:40-42, Matthew 25:35-45, Acts 16:15, 2 John 10-11, 3 John 5-8. (2)
7. What do you think the author means when he says “Some have entertained angels unawares”? What Biblical story is this most likely referring to? Why was it significant in that case that the angels were treated hospitably? See Genesis 19:1-3. Should we expect to encounter angels in our daily lives? (2)
8. How does the command to “remember those in prison” especially relate to the context of a persecuted church? The second word, “Those who are mistreated” refers directly to persecution. How did this relate to the Apostle Paul’s life, like when the Philippians met Paul’s needs? (3)
9. Is there a tendency to avoid association with imprisoned brothers or sisters in Christ during times of persecution? What is the motive of that avoidance? How can Christians overcome it? (3)
10. Does verse 3 say anything to us about ministry to Christians who are in prison not because of persecution but for other reasons? How should this help us to do prison ministry? (3)

11. What is the basic Christian virtue that underlies the command of verse 3 “as though in prison with them... since you also are in the body”? How does it relate to the command to “Love your neighbor as yourself” and the Golden Rule? See also Romans 12:15. (3)
12. Why was the issue of sexual purity important for the Hebrews? Why is it important for all Christians of all times? Why is it especially important for American Christians in the early 21st century? (4)
13. What does it mean “Marriage should be honored by all...”? What are some ways that marriage can be dishonored? See 1 Timothy 4:1-3 for one way, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6 for another. (4)
14. What threat does the author make here? See 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Ephesians 5:5, Matthew 5:27-30, Revelation 21:8, Revelation 22:15. Should a lustful professor of Christianity fear hell? (4)
15. What ethical issue does the author mention next? Why does he bring greed up at this point? How would greed and love for material things be especially damaging to Christians who are being persecuted by means of the loss of property? See Hebrews 10:33-34. (5)
16. What is “contentment”? Why is it the antidote to greed? What else is contentment the antidote for? How can a Christian develop a heart of contentment? Why is contentment of far greater worth than material possessions? Are you characterized by contentment concerning your material possessions? If not, how could you bring about a change of heart? (5)
17. What scripture verse does the author give us to help us be free from the love of money? How does that verse help us expel covetousness? (5-6)
18. Why does a strong, faith-filled sense of Christ’s immediate presence at every moment of our lives free us from fear, covetousness, anxiety, complaining, cowardice, and a host of other character flaws? (5-6)
19. What does it mean “I will not fear; What can man do to me”? Can fear of man be conquered by a proper thought life and commitment of the will? (6)

III. SUMMARY:

The author brings his epistle to a close with a series of ethical commands to these persecuted Christians. The very fact alone shows that suffering persecution and other grievous trials does not free us from the Lord’s commands to live holy and upright lives in this present age. If anything, the persecution greatly heightens the need for purity and holiness because 1) we are being put on display before a watching and hostile world, and every little sin will be greatly magnified; 2) we have maximum need of the Lord’s closeness, tenderness, love and sustaining grace, so to offend him with noxious sins would be extremely unwise; 3) we have great need for healthy Christian fellowship, to lean on each other during this time of suffering, so to offend our brothers and sisters with noxious sins would again be extremely unwise.

BEARING THE REPROACH OF CHRIST

HEBREWS 13:7-16

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. In this concluding section of Hebrews, why does the author focus on the examples of Christian leaders and of the changeless Christ?
2. What are the true sacrifices of a New Covenant believer, a Christian?
3. Why does being with Jesus mean bearing the reproach He bore? How would living this out affect your daily life? How would it affect your evangelism? How would it affect standing up for the truth on tough issues such as abortion and homosexuality?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

EXAMPLES TO FOLLOW (7-8)

1. Why does the author bring up the “your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God” to the Hebrews? Who do you think these people were? (7)
2. What does the author urge the Hebrews to do concerning these leaders? (7)
3. What does it mean to “consider the outcome of their way of life”? How does it relate to the series of examples of Hebrews 11? (7)
4. Is it possible to “imitate” someone’s *faith*? If so, what does this teach you about the nature of faith? How does it relate to Hebrews 11 and to James 2:14-26? (7)
5. Why are role models so important in the Christian life? See the following verses that deal with the issue of role models: John 13:15, 1 Peter 2:21, 1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 3:17, Philippians 4:9, 1 Peter 5:3, 1 Timothy 4:12, Titus 2:7. (7)
6. Have you had any Christian role models in your life who have demonstrated a faithful Christian life on which you could pattern your own walk? Are you doing that for anyone else?
7. Do you think the Christian church does a good job in modeling the Christian life to those young in the faith? If not, how could we improve this?
8. Why does the author mention Christ’s unchangeable nature at this point? How does it relate to what went before? How does it relate to what come next? (8)
9. What is the theological significance of the unchangeability of Christ? (8)
10. Is Christ presented as a role model or example to follow here? (8)

THE TRUE SACRIFICES OF A CHRISTIAN (9-16)

11. What is the overall point of this section of Hebrews (9-16)
12. Why does the author talk about sacrifices here? (9-16)
13. What “diverse and strange teachings” does the author have in mind in verse 9? What do they have to do with food? See also 1 Corinthians 8:8. (9)
14. What does he compare and contrast in verse 9? What actually establishes and strengthens the hearts of New Covenant believers? (9)

15. Why have ceremonial foods “not benefitted to those devoted to them”? (9)
16. What altar does Paul refer to in verse 10? Whom is Paul referring to when he says “they” have no right to eat from it? Why do they have no right to eat from it? (10)
17. Verses 11 through 13 should be taken together. If they are, what main point do they make? How does that point help these Jewish professors of faith in Christ? (11-13)
18. Why were the bodies of the beasts carried outside the camp? What spiritual lesson did that teach concerning the death of Christ? (11)
19. What does verse 12 teach you about the shedding of Christ’s blood? What was the purpose according to this verse? (12)
20. What does it mean to “go out to him [Christ] outside the camp, and bear the reproach he endured”? Do you find this hard to live up to in your own life? (13)
21. How would verse 13 help you withstand the unpopularity and societal rejection that are inevitable for anyone who makes a strong stand for Christ in his or her generation? Does that rejection hurt? Can that rejection be withstood successfully? (13)
22. What additional motivation does the author give for bearing up under persecution and rejection in verse 14? How does an eternal perspective like this help us stand rejection of this world? (14)
23. What do verse 15-16 teach you about the Christian life? Why do you think the author uses sacrificial language here? (15-16)
24. What sacrifices does the author mention in these verses? Why is verbal praise so important in the Christian life? (15-16)
25. What other sacrifices does the author mention in verse 16? Why sharing what you have with other Christians who need it more seen as “sacrifices”? Why is God “well-pleased” with such sacrifices? (16)

III. SUMMARY:

The author continues his closing exhortations to the Hebrews by urging them to imitate the faith of their leaders, to draw confidence from Christ’s unchanging nature, and to live a life of faithful New Covenant sacrifices, not meat sacrificed on an altar, but courageous witness to a rejecting world, verbal offerings of praise, and material sharing with other Christians. God is pleased with these kinds of sacrifices, not with animals anymore.

FINAL REMARKS
HEBREWS 13:17-25

I. MAIN QUESTIONS:

1. What closing commands and guidance does the author give the Hebrews?
2. Why is submission to spiritual leaders such an important feature of a healthy Christian life?
3. What can we learn from the doxology of Hebrews 13:20-21 about the role of God's sovereignty in our sanctification?

II. VERSE BY VERSE:

SUBMISSION TO SPIRITUAL LEADERS (VV. 17)

1. What two commands does verse 17 make on Christians? What do "obey" and "submit" mean? Are there limits to this submission? (17)
2. What reasons does the author give for obedience and submission? (17)
3. Do you think the author has spiritual leaders here in mind, or any kind of leader (such as governors, emperors, kings, or other authority figures)? (17)
4. What serious responsibility do these leaders bear? What does it mean that they are "keeping watch over your souls"? How is this done? The word "keep watch" is also used in Mark 13:33, Luke 21:36, and Ephesians 6:18. It means literally "to lose sleep over". See also Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2. (17)
5. What danger is alluded to if the Hebrews do not obey and submit? Why is it important for spiritual leaders to see their ministry as a joy and not a burden? (17)

REQUEST FOR PRAYER (VV. 18-19)

6. Why does the author request prayer? Why is it significant when strong, fruitful leaders continually ask for prayer support from people? See Paul's repeated request: Ephesians 6:19, Colossians 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:25, 2 Thessalonians 3:1. (18)
7. Why does the author talk about their own clear conscience in connection with the request for prayer? (18)
8. What is the role of a clear conscience in the Christian life? See Acts 23:1, 24:16. What are the limitations of a clear conscience? See 1 Corinthians 4:4. (18)
9. Do you find it interesting that the author says he is "sure" that he has a clear conscience? (18)
10. What urgent request does he make in verse 19? What insight does this give you about the author of the letter? (19)

PRAYER AND DOXOLOGY (20-21)

11. What is the main prayer request in verse 20-21? In other words, if you could simplify verse 20-21 into one prayer request, what would it say? (20-21)
12. What titles/descriptions does the author give to God in verse 20? Why do you think he chooses these to refer to God? (20)
13. What does he call Jesus Christ in verse 20? (20)
14. What is the significance of the phrase “the blood of an eternal covenant”? What is the eternal covenant? (20)
15. What does it mean to “equip” you or “make you perfect” (KJV)? For what does the author want the Hebrews to be thoroughly equipped? Note: The word “equip” is also used in Hebrews 10:5 “a body you *prepared* for me,” Hebrews 11:3 “the universe was *formed* by the word of God,” and Luke 6:40 “A student, when he is *fully-trained* will be like his master.” (21)
16. How does God thoroughly equip us for doing His will? What role does the word of God play in that equipping? See 2 Timothy 3:16-17. (21)
17. How is God “working in us what is pleasing in His sight”? What does this teach you about the relationship between God’s sovereign activity in the soul of a believer and the believer’s life of pleasing good works? (21)
18. How does Hebrews 13:21 relate to Philippians 2:13? (21)
19. What is the significance of the phrase “through Jesus Christ”? (21)
20. What does the doxology teach you? What does the phrase “to whom be the glory” mean? (21)

PRAYER AND DOXOLOGY (22-25)

21. How does the author close this letter? (22-25)
22. Why does he urge them to “bear with” the letter he wrote? In what way is Hebrews a “word of exhortation”? What do you think of the fact that he says “I have written you briefly”?! (22)
23. What insight does verse 23 give you about this letter, and about Timothy? See 2 Timothy 1:8. (23)
24. What hope does the author have for himself personally? (23)
25. Whom does the author salute at the end? What does verse 24 teach you about the author’s circumstances? (24-25)
26. What is the final verse in the letter? Why do so many New Testament epistles end this way? (25)

III. SUMMARY:

The author closes his letter by exhorting the Hebrews to obey their leaders gladly, to pray for the author, and to keep their minds focused on God’s power through Christ to work every good work in them by His great power.

Appendix

Hebrews 6:4-9: Overview

Hebrews 6:4-9 is a very difficult passage for many people to understand, because it seems to teach that Christians can lose their salvation. Because other verses so clearly teach that Christians can never lose their salvation (e.g. Jesus' statements in John 6:39-40 "I should loose nothing..." and John 10:27-29 "They will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand), this passage stands as a quandary. Arminians (who tend to emphasize free will and human effort) cite this as the key passage for the concept that true Christians can "fall away" and be lost. The key statement is "It is impossible... and then have fallen away, to restore them to repentance." The verses also list five things about those who may fall away, and those five characteristics (in verses. 4-5) seem to indicate that they are true believers. But I don't believe so. Rather, I think the author is describing people who partake in the Christian community and enjoy its benefits without having genuinely been born again by the Holy Spirit. [Examples of this were "disciples" in John 6, who were deeply offended by His teaching "Unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of man and drink my blood you have no life in you" and they stopped following Jesus.] Their participation means they've been "inoculated against" the Christian message, because they've already heard it and ultimately rejected it. A parallel passage is 1 Corinthians 10:1-11 in which Paul describes Israelites who traveled with the true children of God in the Exodus and partook in all the miraculous powers without actually repenting and believing in God. Hebrews 6:4-8 is a stern warning to "professors" of Christianity, those who claim to be Christians and who go to church regularly without genuine saving faith. They are in the most danger of all humanity. The key verse for showing that Hebrews 6:4-5 does not refer to true Christians is Hebrews 6:9.

Hebrews 6:4-9: "Tasted the Heavenly Gift"

The author adds "who have tasted the heavenly gift." This may refer to general benefits of being in the Christian community, or it may refer (along with the next phrase, "shared in the Holy Spirit" and the last one "tasted ... the powers of the age to come") to receiving the benefits of the miracles mentioned in Hebrews 2:4. The "heavenly gift" would relate to Israel's experience with the manna. The word "taste" would connect with, for example, people among the 5000 that Jesus fed. They "tasted" the bread and fish that day, but that didn't make them saved. In John 5, Jesus healed a paralyzed man, then warned him later "See you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you..."

Hebrews 6:4-9: “Shared in the Holy Spirit”

The author says these people have “shared in the Holy Spirit.” Some people claim this is the strongest evidence of all that the author is describing true Christians. The problem with that is that Jesus says the Holy Spirit will “be with you forever” in John 14:16. The word “shared” means “partaker” and can mean everything from a loose association to a transforming presence. In what sense can someone “share in the Holy Spirit” and not be a Christian? [See Matthew 12:28, in which Jesus says “but if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.” And Matthew 12:43-45 speaks of the experience of a man or nation from which demons have been driven out, only to return with more later. Those healed people “shared in the Holy Spirit” by having demons driven from them, but they were not saved.] If one can have the indwelling Spirit one day, and lose Him the next, can any Christian have security of salvation? Therefore, sharing in the Holy Spirit here in Hebrews 6:4 cannot speak of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that happens to when one comes to faith in Christ.

Exegetical note on the word “Therefore”

When an author says “Therefore” but then immediately follows (or precedes) it with “since”, he is telling you how the “therefore” is being used logically. A “therefore” by itself causes us to look at the preceding train of thought. A “therefore...since” (like in Hebrews 10:19) or a “since therefore” (like in Hebrews 2:14) causes us to look at what follows the word “since”.

On the word “Confidence”

The word “confidence” appear six times in the ESV’s translation of Hebrews: 3:6, 3:14, 4:16, 10:19, 10:35, and 13:6. Look at these passages and describe how the author uses the word confidence. See also Ephesians 3:12. The same word is sometimes translated “boldness” (meaning “without fear of reprisal, openly, without shame, without secrecy”) See word used in John 7:13, John 7:26, John 18:20, Acts 4:13, Acts 4:29-31, Acts 28:31, 1 John 2:28, 1 John 3:21, 1 John 4:17, 1 John 5:14 (Note: the 1 John passages bear most directly on Hebrews’ use of the word, especially in Hebrews 10:35). God cares whether or not you are “confident” in your faith to draw near to Him. Sin has drastic effects on our confidence before God. See Hebrews 10:35, 1 John 3:21 and 4:17. What “feeling” did sinful Adam have in the Garden of Eden when he heard God approaching? Hebrews 10:22 the opposite of Adam’s response.

On the Definition of Faith

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1.

Concerning “assurance”, the word translated “assurance” by most modern English translations (including the NIV, NASB, RSV and others) is translated “substance” by the KJV. However the word is “hupostasis” in the Greek and also used in 2 Corinthians 9:4 and 11:17 (translated there, even by the KJV as “confidence” or perhaps “confident boasting”). It is also used in Hebrews 3:14 as “confidence” when the author writes, “if we hold firmly to the end the *confidence* we had at first.” The one alternate use of “hupostasis” however is found in Hebrews 1:3, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his *being*...” The possible translations “being” or “nature” or “person” perhaps led the KJV translator to choose “substance of things hoped for.”

Concerning “Things” not seen, The Greek uses the word “pragmaton” from which we get “pragmatic”, meaning “things, matters, events”. Why does faith connect to invisible things? How does this verse relate to 2 Corinthians 5:7 “we walk by faith, not by sight”? How does a strong confidence in the reality of the invisible world relate to faith?

Concerning “conviction”, the word “conviction” comes from a Greek word usually translated “reproof” as in 2 Timothy 3:16, and John 16:8. It means to be convicted for sin in most cases. Could this somehow relate to the negative side of faith, like Noah’s warning in verse 7? How does faith warn us of negative things? See also Matthew 18:15, Luke 3:19, John 3:20, John 8:46, Ephesians 5:11, 1 Timothy 5:20, 2 Timothy 4:2, Hebrews 12:5 for uses of the verb form “to reprove.” (1)

Examples of the Christian/Godly life as a “Walk”

Deuteronomy 10:12, Micah 6:8, John 6:66, John 8:12, John 12:35, Romans 4:12, Romans 6:4, Romans 8:4, Romans 13:13, 2 Corinthians 5:7, 2 Corinthians 6:6, Galatians 5:25, 1 John 1:6-7, 1 John 2:6, 2 John 6, Revelation 3:4.

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