

# THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS <sup>a</sup>

*The Coming of God's Son—Who is far above the Angels*

**1** Long ago, God spoke to our ancestors many times, and in many ways, through the prophets. <sup>2</sup>In these 'last days,'<sup>b</sup> God has spoken to us through a Son. God has appointed the Son to inherit everything;<sup>c</sup> and through him, God created the universe.<sup>d</sup> <sup>3</sup>He's the brightness of God's glory, and the exact image<sup>e</sup> of God's nature. He holds everything in existence by his powerful word.<sup>f</sup> When he'd done a cleansing of people's sins,<sup>g</sup> he sat down at the right side of the Majestic One in the heavens. <sup>4</sup>He has become much greater than the angels, just as the name that he has inherited is much greater than theirs.

<sup>5</sup>After all, which of the angels did God ever say this to:<sup>h</sup>

You're my Son—  
I've become your Father today!<sup>i</sup>

<sup>a</sup> This traditional name comes from the fact that the letter seems targeted at Christian Jews. Hebrews doesn't say who it's from. Despite the older assumption that it's from Paul, its literary style is far more polished than any of Paul's letters, the theology appears to be independent of Paul's, and the author appears to say in 2:3 that he learned the good news from people who heard Jesus—something that Paul would probably never say. He insists that he got the good news in a heavenly vision of Jesus, directly, right when he was persecuting the Christians (Gal. 1:12; see Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-22 etc.). Could it be one of Paul's friends, such as Barnabas? Apollos? Aquila? There's nothing major to be said against any of these three as possible authors. One recent proposal is that Priscilla, married to Aquila, and a friend of Paul's and Timothy's (see Heb. 13:23), wrote it. But if that's so, she has carefully hidden the fact that she is a woman by referring to herself using the masculine gender.

<sup>b</sup> The "last days" is a way of talking about the end of history, the time leading up to God's hoped-for intervention to renew the creation and put an end to injustice.

<sup>c</sup> Lit. "has made him heir of all things".

<sup>d</sup> Lit. "the ages," or "the worlds".

<sup>e</sup> Lit. "the stamp".

<sup>f</sup> Lit. "he carries/bears all things by the word of his power".

<sup>g</sup> Lit. "the sins".

<sup>h</sup> Traditionally: "For to which of the angels did he ever say". Verse 5 is one long question.

<sup>i</sup> Ps. 2:7.

And this:<sup>a</sup>

I'm going to be his Father,  
And he's going to be my Son.<sup>b</sup>

6And when God sends the Firstborn into the world, God says,

And let all God's angels worship him!<sup>c</sup>

7And God says this about the angels:

God makes God's angels winds,  
And God's messengers flames of fire!<sup>d</sup>

8But God says this about the Son:

God, your throne is forever and ever,  
And justice is your royal scepter.<sup>e</sup>  
You've loved justice and hated lawlessness;  
9So<sup>f</sup> God, your God, has anointed<sup>g</sup> you with the oil of great joy,  
Blessing you more than your companions.<sup>h</sup>

10And this:

You laid the foundations of the earth in the beginning, Lord.

And the heavens are your creation.<sup>i</sup>

11They'll pass away, but you live on.

They're all going to get old like a piece of clothing,

12And you're going to roll them up like a blanket.

They'll get changed just like clothes.

But you are the same,

And your years are not going to come to an end!<sup>j</sup>

13And which of the angels did God ever say this to:<sup>k</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Lit. "And again".

<sup>b</sup> 2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chron. 17:13.

<sup>c</sup> Deut. 32:43 (LXX); see Ps. 97:7.

<sup>d</sup> Lit. "...the One who makes his angels winds, and his messengers flames of fire!" Ps. 104:4.

<sup>e</sup> Lit. "the scepter of justice is the scepter of your kingship". See "Bible Words" under "scepter".

<sup>f</sup> Lit. "Because of this".

<sup>g</sup> See "Bible Words".

<sup>h</sup> Ps. 45:6-7.

<sup>i</sup> Lit. "the work of your hands".

<sup>j</sup> Ps. 102:25-27.

<sup>k</sup> Traditionally: "For to which of the angels did he ever say".

Sit on my right, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Aren't the angels all spirits, on assignment for service?<sup>2</sup> Aren't they sent for the sake of people<sup>b</sup> who are going to inherit salvation?

*The Son of God Became a Human Being in Order to Save us*

**2** Because of this, we have to pay all the more attention to what we've heard, so we don't drift away from it. <sup>2</sup>Because even what was said through angels<sup>c</sup> turned out to be reliable—and every violation and act of disobedience got a fair punishment. <sup>3</sup>If that's true, how are we going to get away with neglecting a salvation as great as this? It got its start being taught<sup>d</sup> by the Lord;<sup>e</sup> then it was confirmed to us by those who heard him. <sup>4</sup>God testified alongside them—with miracles,<sup>f</sup> wonders, various sorts of displays of power, and outpourings<sup>g</sup> of the Holy Spirit by God's will.

<sup>5</sup>After all, we're talking about the world to come.<sup>h</sup> God didn't put that world under the authority of angels. <sup>6</sup>But somebody testifies somewhere in scripture,

What is humanity,  
That makes you notice us;<sup>i</sup>  
Or what is a human being;<sup>j</sup>  
That makes you take care of us?  
<sup>7</sup>You've placed humanity a little<sup>k</sup> lower than the angels;  
You've crowned us with glory and honor.  
<sup>8</sup>You've placed everything under our feet.<sup>l</sup>

Now, since God has placed everything<sup>m</sup> under humanity, God hasn't left anything that's not subject to humanity. Yet we don't now see everything subject to us<sup>n</sup> yet. <sup>9</sup>But in the words, "placed a little<sup>e</sup> lower than the angels," we see Jesus. Because he went through death, he was "crowned with glory and honor". He died so that, by God's grace, he could taste death for everyone. <sup>10</sup>After all, it's

<sup>a</sup> Ps. 110:1.

<sup>b</sup> Lit. "...service, because of those".

<sup>c</sup> That is, the Law given on Sinai. The author agrees with Paul (Gal. 3:19) and Stephen (Acts 7:38, 53) that God employed angels to help reveal the Law.

<sup>d</sup> Lit. "spoken".

<sup>e</sup> I.e. the Lord Jesus.

<sup>f</sup> Traditionally: "signs".

<sup>g</sup> Or "gifts"; Traditionally: "apportionments".

<sup>h</sup> He's referring back to 1:10-13, which looks to the transition to a new creation in which Christ rules.

<sup>i</sup> Lit. "it".

<sup>j</sup> Traditionally: "a son of man," i.e. a human being as such.

<sup>k</sup> Or "for a little while"

<sup>l</sup> Ps. 8:5-7. I've recast this quotation to make it gender-inclusive.

<sup>m</sup> Lit. "For in placing everything".

<sup>n</sup> Lit. "him".

<sup>o</sup> Or "placed for a little while"

because of God and through God that everything exists. So, in leading many children to glory, it was appropriate for God to perfect the champion<sup>a</sup> of their salvation through sufferings.

<sup>11</sup>After all, the One<sup>b</sup> who makes people holy and the people being made holy are all from one God. Which is why Jesus isn't embarrassed to call them brothers and sisters. <sup>12</sup>He says,

I'm going to tell your name to my brothers and sisters!

I'm going to sing about you when I'm worshiping with my community!<sup>c</sup>

<sup>13</sup>And again,

I'm going to put my trust in God.<sup>d</sup>

And again,

Look at me, with<sup>e</sup> the children God has given me!<sup>f</sup>

<sup>14</sup>So since the children are all flesh and blood human beings, he shared the very same form of existence.<sup>g</sup> That way, through his death, he could overthrow the one who has the power of death—in other words, the devil. <sup>15</sup>And he could set free those condemned to lifelong slavery by their fear of death. <sup>16</sup>After all, it's obvious that he doesn't help angels. No, "he helps Abraham's descendants."<sup>h</sup> <sup>17</sup>Because of that, he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way. That way he could be merciful to them, and be their faithful High Priest<sup>i</sup> in front of God. And he could accomplish the forgiveness of the people's sins. <sup>18</sup>After all, because he's suffered temptation himself, he's able to help people who are being tempted.

### *Jesus the Son of God is Far Greater than Moses*

**3** Holy brothers and sisters, we share a calling from God. In view of what we've been saying, think about Jesus, the Messenger and High Priest<sup>k</sup> that we profess.<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>He's faithful to the One who appointed him, just as "Moses was faithful in all<sup>a</sup> matters of God's household"<sup>b</sup>. <sup>3</sup>And Jesus has been found worthy of greater glory than Moses—just as much as a person who built a house

<sup>a</sup> Or "pioneer," or "author".

<sup>b</sup> That is, Christ.

<sup>c</sup> Lit. "In the midst of the congregation I will sing about you". Ps. 22:22.

<sup>d</sup> Isa. 8:17.

<sup>e</sup> Traditionally: "Behold, I and".

<sup>f</sup> Isa. 8:18.

<sup>g</sup> Lit. "So, since the children share in blood and flesh, he too, in just the same way [or, "similarly"], took part in the same things".

<sup>h</sup> Lit. "seed". Isa. 41:8-9.

<sup>i</sup> See "Bible Words" under "High Priest".

<sup>j</sup> Or "he could expiate," a sacrificial term for the same transaction. The author will later introduce the theme that Jesus offers himself as a sacrifice; here he's just introducing the role of high priest.

<sup>k</sup> See "Bible Words" under "High Priest".

<sup>1</sup> Lit. "Whence, holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the representative (traditionally: "apostle") and High Priest of our profession, Jesus".

has greater honor than the house. <sup>4</sup>(After all, every house is built by someone, and the One who has built everything is God.) <sup>5</sup>Also, “Moses was faithful as a servant in all matters of God’s household,”<sup>c</sup> to testify to<sup>d</sup> the things that were said by God. <sup>6</sup>But Jesus, on the other hand, is faithful as a Son who’s in charge of<sup>e</sup> God’s household. We are God’s household, if we hold onto our boldness, and to the public profession of our hope.<sup>f</sup>

*A Warning against Unbelief*

<sup>7</sup>So, just like the Holy Spirit says,

Today, if you hear God’s voice,  
<sup>8</sup>Don’t harden<sup>g</sup> your hearts, like they did in the rebellion,  
 On that day of testing in the desert.  
<sup>9</sup>That was where your ancestors really tested me,<sup>h</sup>  
 And they saw what I did for forty years.  
<sup>10</sup>So I was very angry with that generation, and I said,  
 “They’re always going off in the wrong direction<sup>i</sup> in their hearts,  
 And they don’t understand my ways.”  
<sup>11</sup>This is what I swore in my anger:  
 “They’re never going to come into my rest!”<sup>j</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Be careful, brothers and sisters, so that there’s not an evil and faithless heart in any of you—a heart that turns away from the Living God. <sup>13</sup>But encourage each other every day, as long as it’s still called “Today.”<sup>k</sup> That way, none of you will be hardened by the seductiveness of sin. <sup>14</sup>Because we’ve become Christ’s companions,<sup>l</sup> as long as we hold onto our original confidence, right to the end.

<sup>15</sup>It says,<sup>m</sup>

Today, if you hear God’s voice,  
 Don’t harden<sup>a</sup> your hearts, like they did in the rebellion.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Many mss lack the word “all”.

<sup>b</sup> Num. 12:7. Moses is seen as a kind of head servant in God’s household.

<sup>c</sup> Num. 12:7.

<sup>d</sup> Lit. “as a testimony to”.

<sup>e</sup> Lit. “over”.

<sup>f</sup> Or “if we hold onto our confidence and the pride of our hope”. But I don’t think he’s talking about inner attitudes. He’s challenging them to continue publicly identifying as Christians.

<sup>g</sup> Or “stiffen up”.

<sup>h</sup> “they tested me in a test,” the repetition being for emphasis; see Exod. 17:7; Num. 20:2-5.

<sup>i</sup> Lit. “going astray”.

<sup>j</sup> Ps. 95:7-11.

<sup>k</sup> He sees the prophetic invitation of Ps. 95:7b (Heb. 3:7) as currently active, so the word “today” still applies, and the opportunity to respond is still open.

<sup>l</sup> Or “we’ve become members of the community of Christ”.

<sup>m</sup> Lit. “In the saying”. It’s looking ahead to the question that follows the quotation in v. 16.

<sup>16</sup>Now, who heard and rebelled? Wasn't it everyone that came out of Egypt, led by Moses? <sup>17</sup>And who were those God "was very angry with for forty years"? Wasn't it the people who sinned—and "their bodies<sup>c</sup> fell down dead in the desert"?<sup>d</sup> <sup>18</sup>And who was it that God swore to, that they were never going to come into God's rest?<sup>e</sup> Wasn't it the people who disobeyed? <sup>19</sup>And we see that they couldn't come in because of their faithlessness.

*Entering the Rest That God Has Promised*

**4** So let's be extremely careful. Because the promise of coming into God's rest is still open, and none of you should appear to miss out on it.<sup>f</sup> <sup>2</sup>After all, we've had the good news preached to us just like them. But the message they heard didn't benefit them—because they weren't united<sup>g</sup> in faith with those who truly listened to it.<sup>h</sup> <sup>3</sup>Because it's those of us who have become believers<sup>i</sup> who come into God's rest. Just as God says,

This is what I swore<sup>j</sup> in my anger:  
 "They're never going to come into my rest."<sup>k</sup>

Yet God's work has been finished<sup>l</sup> since the creation<sup>m</sup> of the world. <sup>4</sup>Because this is what it says somewhere about the seventh day:<sup>n</sup>

And God rested on the seventh day, from all God's work.<sup>o</sup>

<sup>5</sup>And it says again in this place,

They're never going to come into my rest.<sup>p</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Or "stiffen up".

<sup>b</sup> Ps. 95:7-8.

<sup>c</sup> Lit. "whose bodies".

<sup>d</sup> Num. 14:29.

<sup>e</sup> Num. 14:22-23; Ps. 95:11.

<sup>f</sup> Or "should be judged to fall short" (by God). The implication is that a person's own negligence can theoretically deprive them of entrance.

<sup>g</sup> Lit. "they weren't mixed together," or "they didn't mix together"

<sup>h</sup> Lit. "...didn't benefit them, not being bonded [or "mixed together"] in faith with those who listened". "Listened," here, has to mean "really listened," or "obeyed". Later mss have, "...didn't benefit them, because it wasn't combined with faith within the listeners".

<sup>i</sup> Or simply, "who have believed".

<sup>j</sup> Lit. "As I swore".

<sup>k</sup> Ps. 95:11.

<sup>l</sup> Lit. "God's works have been done".

<sup>m</sup> Lit. "foundation".

<sup>n</sup> That is, someplace in scripture.

<sup>o</sup> Lit. "works". Gen. 2:2.

<sup>p</sup> Ps. 95:11.

6So some people still have to come into God's rest—because the first people who heard the good news didn't come in, because of their disobedience. 7So God sets another day, "today," speaking through David after all that time. That's what was said before:

Today, if you hear God's voice,  
Don't harden<sup>a</sup> your hearts.<sup>b</sup>

8After all, if Joshua had given them rest, David wouldn't have been talking about another day after that time.<sup>c</sup> 9So there's still a Sabbath<sup>d</sup> rest for God's people. 10Because whoever comes into God's rest has rested from their own work, just as God rested.<sup>e</sup> 11So let's do our best to come into that rest. That way, nobody will fall down by following their example<sup>f</sup> of disobedience.

12Because God's word is alive and active, and it's sharper<sup>g</sup> than any two-edged sword. And it penetrates right to the boundary between soul and spirit, to the boundary between joint and marrow.<sup>h</sup> And it's able to judge the inner ideas and thoughts of the heart. 13And there's no created thing that's invisible to the One we're dealing with—everything stands naked and exposed before God's eyes.

### *Jesus is our Great High Priest*

14So, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus, God's Son, let's hold firm to what we proclaim.<sup>i</sup> 15After all, we don't have a high priest that can't sympathize with our weaknesses: he's been tested in all the same ways as we have, without sin. 16So let's come boldly<sup>j</sup> up to the throne of grace. That way we can receive mercy, and find grace for help when we need it.<sup>k</sup>

**5** Now, every high priest is selected from among the people. He's appointed to deal with God on their behalf<sup>l</sup> and to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2He's able to be gentle with people who are ignorant and off base, because he's wrapped up in weakness himself. 3And because of that, he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins just as he does for the people's sins. 4And nobody takes this honor on for himself—far from it. They're called by God, just like Aaron was.

<sup>a</sup> Or "stiffen up".

<sup>b</sup> Ps. 95:7-8.

<sup>c</sup> Lit. "another day after these days" (the days of Joshua, who led the Israelites over the Jordan River and into the Promised Land of Palestine—see the biblical book of Joshua).

<sup>d</sup> See "Bible Words".

<sup>e</sup> Lit. "from their own works, just as God rested from his own".

<sup>f</sup> Lit. "the same example".

<sup>g</sup> Or "and it cuts better".

<sup>h</sup> Lit. "joints and marrows".

<sup>i</sup> Lit. "our confession/profession," i.e. our public affirmation of loyalty to God and Christ.

<sup>j</sup> Lit. "with boldness," or "with confidence".

<sup>k</sup> Lit. "and discover grace for timely help".

<sup>l</sup> Lit. "is appointed on people's behalf in regard to the things in front of God".

5In the same way, Christ didn't try to glorify himself by becoming high priest. No, it was God who said to him,

You're my Son—  
I've become your Father today!<sup>a</sup>

6Just like God also says in another place:

You're a priest forever,  
in the priestly line of Melchizedek.<sup>b</sup>

7When he lived physically on earth, Jesus came to God praying and pleading for help, with loud cries and tears. He knew God was able to save him from death, and his prayers were answered because of his reverence.<sup>c</sup> 8Even though he was a son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered. 9And he's been perfected, and has become the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey him. 10He's been welcomed by God as high priest, "in the priestly line of Melchizedek".

11We have a lot to say about this Melchizedek—and it's hard to explain, because you've gotten hard of hearing. 12After all, you should even be teachers by now. But you need somebody to teach you certain basic first principles<sup>d</sup> of God's revelations<sup>e</sup> again. You've become dependent on<sup>f</sup> milk, and not solid food. 13And everybody that lives on milk is ignorant when it comes to right<sup>g</sup> teaching, because they're still an infant. 14But solid food is for people who are mature. Mature people's senses have been trained, through practice, to distinguish what's good and what's bad.

### *The Danger of Falling Away*

6 So—let's leave behind the first lessons<sup>h</sup> about Christ, and move on to maturity. Let's not lay down the foundation over again, by talking about

- + a change of heart<sup>i</sup> from deathly behaviors,
- + faith in God,
- + 2teaching on baptisms,
- + laying on of hands, and
- + resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

<sup>a</sup> Ps. 2:7.

<sup>b</sup> Prn. *mel-kizz-a-dek*. Ps. 110:4; see Gen. 22:17.

<sup>c</sup> Heb. 5:7-10 is one long, complex sentence in Greek. Verse 7 reads, literally: "Who, in the days of his flesh, brought forth pleas and supplications to the One able to save him from death, with strong crying and tears, and he was heard because of his reverence". See Ps. 22.

<sup>d</sup> Some mss have, "to teach you which are the basic first principles".

<sup>e</sup> Lit. "the first principles of the oracles of God".

<sup>f</sup> Lit. "You've come to need".

<sup>g</sup> Traditionally: "righteous".

<sup>h</sup> Lit. "the first teaching/word".

<sup>i</sup> Traditionally: "repentance" (see "Bible Words").



3And we *will* move on, with God's permission.<sup>a</sup>

4Now, suppose people have already been enlightened: they've tasted the heavenly gift; they've shared in the Holy Spirit; 5and they've tasted God's good word, and the powers of the coming age. 6If they fall away after that, it's impossible to bring them back to a change of heart again.<sup>b</sup> Because they're hanging the Son of God on a cross all over again for themselves, and they're publicly disgracing him. 7After all, when the ground drinks up the rain that often falls on it, and it grows plants acceptable to the people it's farmed for, then it gets a blessing<sup>c</sup> from God. 8But if it produces thorns and thistles, then it's worthless, and it's close to being cursed.<sup>d</sup> It's destined to be burned.<sup>e</sup>

9Now, dear friends, even though we're talking like this, we're convinced of better things in your case. We believe you're holding on to your salvation.<sup>f</sup> 10After all, God isn't so unfair as to forget the things you've done, and the love you've shown for God's name. You've served the holy ones, and you're serving them *now*. 11We just really want each of you to show the same commitment to the fulfillment of your hope, right to the end. 12That way you won't get lazy, but you'll imitate<sup>g</sup> those who inherit the promises through their faith and patience.

*God's Promise is Certain to be Fulfilled*

13Now, God made a promise to Abraham.<sup>h</sup> Having nobody greater to swear by, God swore by God's very own self:

14I swear I'm really going to bless you, and I'm really going to multiply your descendants.<sup>i</sup>

15And so, when Abraham waited patiently, he got the promise. 16Of course, people swear by somebody greater than themselves. And for them, when an oath is sworn to confirm something, it puts an end to all argument. 17So when God wanted to demonstrate very clearly<sup>j</sup> (to those who inherit the promise) the unchangeableness of God's intention, God guaranteed it with an oath. 18So we, who have run<sup>k</sup> to take hold of the hope that lies ahead of us, can have strong assurance.

<sup>a</sup> Lit. "And this we will do, if God lets us".

<sup>b</sup> Lit. (vv. 4-6 are one long sentence): "For it's impossible to restore again to a change of heart [traditionally: "to repentance"] those who've once been enlightened, who've tasted the heavenly gift, who've shared in the Holy Spirit and have tasted God's good word and the powers of the coming age, when they fall away".

<sup>c</sup> Lit. "it gets a share of blessing".

<sup>d</sup> See Gen. 3:17-18.

<sup>e</sup> Lit. "Its end is for burning".

<sup>f</sup> Lit. "we're convinced of the better things concerning you, and things that belong to/hold to salvation".

<sup>g</sup> Lit. "...the end, so that you won't be lazy, but imitators".

<sup>h</sup> Gen. 22:16.

<sup>i</sup> Lit. "Since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying: 'Surely, blessing, I will bless you, and, multiplying, I will multiply you' (quoting Gen. 22:17). Repeating the verb, as in "Blessing, I will bless," is the normal way of making a statement emphatic in the original Hebrew language of the Old Testament.

<sup>j</sup> Lit. "to demonstrate all the more".

<sup>k</sup> Lit. "who have fled," or "who have fled for refuge". Verses 16-20 are one long, complex sentence in Greek, and I've simplified the structure.

We take our assurance from two unchangeable things: the promise and the oath. With each of them, it's impossible for God to lie.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Our hope is like an anchor for our life.<sup>b</sup> It's steady and secure, and it goes right in to the innermost place, behind the curtain.<sup>c</sup> <sup>20</sup>That's where Jesus has gone in first<sup>d</sup> on our behalf. He's become

a high priest forever,  
in the priestly line of Melchizedek.<sup>e</sup>

*The Ancient Priest-King Melchizedek Points Forward to Christ*

**7** Now, as for this Melchizedek,<sup>f</sup> “Melchizedek was the king of Salem,<sup>g</sup> and a priest of God Most High. He met Abraham as he was returning from the defeat of the kings. He blessed him,” and

<sup>2</sup>Abraham gave him a tenth portion of all the spoils.<sup>h</sup>

“Melchizedek,” in the first place, means “King of Justice.” Secondly, he’s also called “king of Salem.” That means, “King of Peace.” <sup>3</sup>He has no father, no mother, no genealogy;<sup>i</sup> And no beginning or end of his life is mentioned;<sup>j</sup> And like the Son of God, he remains a priest for all time.<sup>k</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Just think how great this person was. Abraham, our famous ancestor,<sup>l</sup> gave him a tenth of the spoils. <sup>5</sup>Now, some of Levi’s descendants are given the office of priest. According to the Law, they’re commanded to take a tenth from the people—that is, from their fellow Israelites.<sup>m</sup> That’s even though they’re Abraham’s descendants.<sup>n</sup> Yet Melchizedek, who’s not in their family line, has taken a tenth from Abraham! And he has blessed the one who has the promise! <sup>7</sup>And it’s beyond all dispute that the person with less status is blessed by the person with more status. <sup>8</sup>And in the one

<sup>a</sup> The point isn’t that God is forced to tell the truth, but that God used two self-commitment customs, the promise and the oath, to assure human beings that God will not back out of the promise.

<sup>b</sup> Or “for the soul”.

<sup>c</sup> He’s now introducing the concept of the heavenly Holy of Holies, corresponding to the holiest place in the Tent of Witness and the Temple. See Lev. 16:2-3, 12, 15.

<sup>d</sup> Or “has entered as a forerunner”.

<sup>e</sup> Prn. *mel-kizz-a-dek*. Ps. 110:4; see Gen. 22:17. The author has changed the words from the quotation so that it reads “high priest,” rather than “priest”.

<sup>f</sup> Prn. *mel-kizz-a-dek*.

<sup>g</sup> Prn. *say-lem*.

<sup>h</sup> Gen. 14:17-20. The author paraphrases slightly. “Spoils” are things captured in battle.

<sup>i</sup> See “Bible Words”.

<sup>j</sup> Lit. “...genealogy, with neither beginning of days nor end of life”. The author means that none of this is recorded in Genesis.

<sup>k</sup> Ps. 110:4.

<sup>l</sup> Lit. “Abraham the patriarch”. The Jews regarded Abraham as an extremely great man.

<sup>m</sup> Lit. “their brothers”. Levi was one of Israel’s twelve sons. His descendants were appointed as the people’s priests and Temple helpers. Num. 18:21.

<sup>n</sup> Lit. “they come from Abraham’s loins,” i.e. from his reproductive organs.

case mortal human beings collect a tenth. But in the other case, Melchizedek has the testimony of scripture that he's still alive.<sup>a</sup> 9 You could even say that Levi himself, the one who collects the tenth, has given a tenth through Abraham. 10 Because Levi was still unborn in his great-grandfather's body<sup>b</sup> when Melchizedek met Abraham.

11 Now, then: the Law was given through the Levitical priesthood. So let's say<sup>c</sup> perfection<sup>d</sup> was possible to achieve through that. Then what need would there be for somebody else to come along "in the priestly line of Melchizedek," not from<sup>e</sup> Aaron's line? 12 Because when the priesthood is changed, it's necessary for there to be a change in law too. 13 After all, the words, "You are a priest forever,"<sup>f</sup> are said to a person who comes from a different tribe—and nobody has ever served at the altar from that tribe. 14 Because it's clear that our Lord comes from the tribe of Judah. Moses never said anything to<sup>g</sup> the tribe of Judah about being priests. 15 And it's all the more obvious when a different priest, who's just like Melchizedek, comes along. 16 That person's identity is not based on a law with a command about who physically qualifies as a priest.<sup>h</sup> No, it's based on the power of a life that can't be destroyed. 17 Because the scripture says,<sup>i</sup>

You're a priest forever,  
in the priestly line of Melchizedek.<sup>j</sup>

18 So<sup>k</sup> on the one hand, the previous commandment is being set aside, due to its own weakness and lack of effectiveness. 19 Because the Law hasn't perfected anything. And on the other hand, there's the introduction of a greater hope. And through that hope we are coming close to God.

20 And it's significant that there was an oath sworn.<sup>l</sup> Because on the one hand, these folks, the descendants of Levi, have become priests without any oath being sworn. 21 Yet on the other hand, this other person<sup>m</sup> becomes a priest with the swearing of an oath by God, who said to him,<sup>n</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Lit. "that he lives".

<sup>b</sup> Lit. "his loins". See on v. 5.

<sup>c</sup> "Let's say": lit. "if".

<sup>d</sup> Or "if the fulfillment of the promise".

<sup>e</sup> Lit. "and not said to be from".

<sup>f</sup> Lit. "For these things".

<sup>g</sup> Or "in reference to".

<sup>h</sup> Lit. "...Melchizedek, who hasn't come according to a law of a physical command". He's referring here to the Law's requirement that one be physically descended from Levi through Aaron in order to be a priest.

<sup>i</sup> Lit. "For it is testified that".

<sup>j</sup> Ps. 110:4.

<sup>k</sup> Lit. "For".

<sup>l</sup> Lit. "And inasmuch as it was not without an oath sworn". This connects with v. 22: the significance of the oath is that it indicates that a much greater covenant is being created.

<sup>m</sup> That is, the person addressed as "my Lord" in Ps. 110:1. Our author sees this psalm as a prophecy of Jesus.

<sup>n</sup> Lit. "through the One who said to him".

The Sovereign One has sworn,  
And it will not be taken back:  
You are a priest forever.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>22</sup>So Jesus has become the guarantee of a covenant that's that much greater than theirs. <sup>23</sup>And there have been very many of those priests—because death prevents them from continuing. <sup>24</sup>But because he stays alive forever, he holds the priesthood permanently. <sup>25</sup>So he can also save, forever, those who come to God through him. Because he always lives to pray for them.

<sup>26</sup>After all, it's only right that we should have a high priest like Jesus:<sup>b</sup> he's holy, innocent, and pure.<sup>c</sup> He can't be corrupted by sinners,<sup>d</sup> and is now<sup>e</sup> higher than the heavens. <sup>27</sup>He's not like the Levitical high priests, who need to offer a sacrifice for their own sins day after day, and then offer a sacrifice for the people.<sup>f</sup> He doesn't need to do that. Because he sacrificed for the people<sup>g</sup> once and for all, when he offered himself. <sup>28</sup>Because the Law appoints people as high priests who have weaknesses. But the oath, that's sworn after the giving of the Law, appoints a Son who is perfect forever.

*Jesus is our High Priest and the Mediator of a New Covenant*

**8** Now, to sum up what's been said: that's what kind of high priest we have. He sits at the right of the throne of the Majestic One in the heavens. <sup>2</sup>He serves in<sup>h</sup> the Holy Place that's the true Tent of Witness.<sup>i</sup> The Sovereign One set that one up, not human beings. <sup>3</sup>Now, every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices. So it's necessary for him to have something to offer. <sup>4</sup>So if he were on earth, he wouldn't be a priest. After all, there are already people offering the gifts prescribed by<sup>j</sup> the Law. <sup>5</sup>They're serving a symbol and a shadow of the heavenly things. It's just like Moses was divinely instructed, when he was about to put together the Tent.<sup>k</sup> Because God says,

Make sure that you make everything according to the pattern that was revealed to you on the mountain.<sup>l</sup>

<sup>6</sup>But now, Jesus has received a much greater ministry, since<sup>m</sup> he's the mediator of a greater covenant. It's a covenant that's based on greater promises. <sup>7</sup>After all, if there had been nothing wrong with

<sup>a</sup> Ps. 110:4.

<sup>b</sup> Lit. "For such a high priest is appropriate for us".

<sup>c</sup> Or "undefiled".

<sup>d</sup> More literally, "...pure, being separate from sinners". The idea is that a trustworthy High Priest, who was like a Supreme Court chief justice, would refuse to have any contact with corrupt politicians and their agendas.

<sup>e</sup> Lit. "and having become".

<sup>f</sup> Lev. 9:7; 16:6, 15.

<sup>g</sup> Lit. "Because he did this".

<sup>h</sup> Lit. "He is servant of".

<sup>i</sup> See "Bible Words" under "Tent of Witness".

<sup>j</sup> Lit. "according to".

<sup>k</sup> See Exod. 25–27.

<sup>l</sup> Exod. 25:40.

<sup>m</sup> Lit. "to the degree that".

that first covenant, then there would have been no point in trying to make room for a second one.<sup>a</sup>  
 8 Yet God does indeed find fault. God says to them,<sup>b</sup>

Look! Days are coming, says the Sovereign One,  
 When I will make a new covenant with the family<sup>c</sup> of Israel,  
 And with the people of Judah.

9 It won't be like the covenant I made with their ancestors,  
 On the day when I took them by the hand  
 And led them out of the land of Egypt.  
 Because they didn't abide by my covenant,  
 And I stopped caring about them too, says the Sovereign One.

10 Now, this is the covenant that I'm going to make with the family<sup>d</sup> of Israel after that time,<sup>e</sup>  
 says the Sovereign One.

I'm going to give them my laws in their minds,  
 And I'm going to write them on their hearts.  
 And I will be their God,  
 And they will be my people.

11 And not one of them will ever teach their fellow citizen, or their brother or their sister,  
 by saying to them, "Know the Sovereign One,"

Because they're all going to know me,  
 From the weakest to the most powerful<sup>f</sup> of them.

12 Because I'm going to be merciful about their wrongdoings,  
 And I'm never going to remember their sins anymore.<sup>g</sup>

13 By saying, "new," it has made the first covenant "old". And what's aging, and getting old, is close to disappearing.

### *The Earthly and the Heavenly Holy Place*

9 Now, the first covenant used to have rules for worship<sup>h</sup> and an earthly Holy Place. 2 For example, it was set up so that the first part of the Tent had the lampstand,<sup>i</sup> and the table with the offering of the loaves.<sup>a</sup> That's called "the Holy Place". 3 But behind the second curtain is an inner tent called "the Holiest Place".<sup>b</sup> 4 It has a golden incense altar and the "ark of the covenant,"<sup>c</sup> which is

<sup>a</sup> Lit. "For if that first covenant had been faultless, no place would have been being sought for a second one".

<sup>b</sup> Some mss have, "Yet God does indeed find fault with them. He says".

<sup>c</sup> Lit. "house".

<sup>d</sup> Lit. "house".

<sup>e</sup> Lit. "after those days".

<sup>f</sup> Lit. "from the small to the great".

<sup>g</sup> Jer. 31:31-34.

<sup>h</sup> Lit. "service," i.e. formal religious service to God.

<sup>i</sup> Lit. "For a tent was set up, the first one, in which was the lampstand". See Exod. 25-26; Lev. 24:1-9.

<sup>j</sup> Lit. "and".

covered with gold all over. In it there's a gold jar that has the manna,<sup>d</sup> Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.<sup>e</sup> <sup>5</sup>Over the ark, the "cherubs<sup>f</sup> of glory" overshadow the "mercy seat."<sup>g</sup> We can't talk in detail right now about these things.

<sup>6</sup>Now, with things set up this way, the priests go into the first tent all the time as they carry out their worship duties. <sup>7</sup>But somebody goes into the second tent just once a year—only the high priest. And he always brings blood, on behalf of his and the people's unnoticed sins. <sup>8</sup>The Holy Spirit is showing us something here: as long as the first tent is still in place, the way into the Holy Place hasn't been revealed yet. <sup>9</sup>This is a symbol of the present time. During this time, gifts and offerings are being presented to God, but they're not able to clear<sup>h</sup> the conscience of the worshipers. <sup>10</sup>They're only about food and drink, and various washings. They're rules about physical things,<sup>i</sup> rules put in place until a time of restoration comes.

### *Christ Offers Himself in the Heavenly Holy Place*

<sup>11</sup>But Christ has arrived as the high priest of the good things that have come.<sup>j</sup> He has gone through the greater and more perfect tent—the one that's not made by human hands. In other words, it's not of this creation. <sup>12</sup>And he hasn't gone into the Holy Place with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, once for all. He has succeeded in purchasing people out of captivity for all time.<sup>k</sup> <sup>13</sup>After all, when people have become ceremonially unclean, the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkled ashes of a heifer, make them holy, so their flesh is clean. <sup>14</sup>Isn't Christ's blood much greater than that? He offered himself spotless to God, through the eternal Spirit. Won't his blood cleanse our<sup>l</sup> consciences from dead behaviors, so we can serve the Living God?<sup>m</sup> <sup>15</sup>And that's why he's the mediator of a new covenant. This is how it works: Jesus experienced death for people's release from their offenses against the first covenant. That way, those who are called could receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. <sup>16</sup>Because in the case of a will,<sup>n</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Or "the bread of the Presence". See Exod. 25:23-30; Lev. 24:5-9. There were always twelve loaves of bread on a table to represent the twelve tribes of Israel in God's presence.

<sup>b</sup> Lit. "Holy of Holies". Exod. 26:31-33. From here on, the author appears to use the term "the Holy Place" to refer to the "Holiest Place" (see Heb. 9:8, 12, 24, 25; 10:19; 13:11).

<sup>c</sup> See "Bible Words" under "ark of the covenant".

<sup>d</sup> See "Bible Words".

<sup>e</sup> See Exod. 16:33; Num. 17:8-10; Exod. 25:16; Deut. 10:3-5.

<sup>f</sup> See "Bible Words".

<sup>g</sup> See Exod. 25:18-22. A number of rituals involving forgiveness of sins and divine mercy are associated with the "mercy seat," which is the lid of the ark of the covenant. See e.g. Lev. 16.

<sup>h</sup> Lit. "perfect".

<sup>i</sup> Lit. "regulations of the flesh".

<sup>j</sup> Some mss have, "that are coming".

<sup>k</sup> Traditionally: "...once for all, having found/attained an eternal redemption" (see "Bible Words").

<sup>l</sup> Some mss have "your".

<sup>m</sup> Lit. "For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have become common make holy for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ—who offered himself spotlessly to God through the eternal Spirit—cleanse our consciences from dead works, leading to worship of the living God?"

<sup>n</sup> Or "where there's a covenant". In Greek, the same word means both "covenant" and "will".

the death of the person who made it necessary in order to bring it into force. <sup>17</sup>After all, a will is valid in the case of the dead—since it never has force while the person who made it is alive. <sup>18</sup>That’s why even the first covenant is established with blood.<sup>a</sup> <sup>19</sup>Because when Moses had read aloud every commandment in the whole Law,<sup>b</sup> he took the blood of calves,<sup>c</sup> together with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop.<sup>d</sup> And he sprinkled both the scroll and all the people. <sup>20</sup>He was saying,

This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>21</sup>And he also sprinkled the Tent, and all the worship equipment in it, with blood. <sup>22</sup>And nearly everything is cleansed with blood according to the Law. And without blood being shed, there’s no forgiveness.

<sup>23</sup>So it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be cleansed by these rituals. But the heavenly things themselves had to be cleansed with better sacrifices than these. <sup>24</sup>Because Christ didn’t go into the Holy Place made by human hands—into a copy of the real thing. No, he went into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. <sup>25</sup>And it’s not so he can offer himself lots of times—like the high priest, who goes into the Holy Place every year with blood that’s not his own. <sup>26</sup>(In that case, Christ would have had to suffer lots of times since the creation<sup>f</sup> of the world.) But now he has appeared once, at the wrapping up of the ages. He has appeared for the purpose of abolishing sin through his sacrifice of himself. <sup>27</sup>It’s the destiny of human beings to die once, and after that comes judgment. <sup>28</sup>And it’s the same with Christ. He has offered himself once for all, to bear the sin of many people; the second time around, he’s not going to appear to deal with sin. He’s going to appear for the salvation of those who are looking forward to his coming.

*Christ’s Self-Offering Takes Away our Sins Once and for All*

**10** Now, the Law has a shadow of the good things that are coming. But it isn’t the form of those things itself. Year by year, with the same sacrifices all the time, it<sup>g</sup> can never perfect the people who offer them. <sup>2</sup>After all, wouldn’t sacrifices have stopped being offered in that case? Because the worshipers wouldn’t be conscious of sins anymore. They’d have been cleansed once for all. <sup>3</sup>But it’s just the opposite—there’s a yearly reminder of sins in the sacrifices! <sup>4</sup>Because the blood of bulls and goats can’t take away sins! <sup>5</sup>So when Christ comes into the world, he says,

You haven’t wanted a sacrifice or an offering,  
But you crafted a body for me.

<sup>a</sup> Lit. “Hence not even the first covenant has been established without blood”.

<sup>b</sup> Lit. “For, every commandment in the whole Law having been spoken by Moses”.

<sup>c</sup> Some mss add, “and goats” (see 9:12).

<sup>d</sup> Lev. 14:4, 6, 49, 51; Num. 19:6, 18. See “Bible Words”.

<sup>e</sup> Exod. 24:8.

<sup>f</sup> Lit. “foundation”.

<sup>g</sup> Some mss have, “they,” referring to the sacrifices. More likely it’s talking about the Law.

<sup>6</sup>You don't value whole burnt offerings and sin offerings.

<sup>7</sup>Then I said, See, I'm coming!

It's written about me in the scroll.<sup>a</sup>

I'm coming, God, to do your will.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Now, he says above,

You don't value sacrifice or offering or whole burnt offerings or sin offerings, and you don't want them.<sup>c</sup>

(Yet those things are offered in line with the Law!) <sup>9</sup>But then he says,<sup>d</sup>

See, I'm coming to do your will.<sup>e</sup>

He takes away the first so he can set up the second. It's by this will that we've been made holy, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

<sup>11</sup>Now, every priest stands there every day serving in the Temple, and offering the same sacrifices time after time. Those sacrifices can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup>But Jesus offered one sacrifice for all time, and "sat down at God's right side."<sup>f</sup> <sup>13</sup>From that point on, he's been waiting "until his enemies are made<sup>g</sup> a footstool for his feet."<sup>h</sup> <sup>14</sup>Because through one offering, he's perfected those who are being made holy, for all time. <sup>15</sup>And the Holy Spirit testifies to us about this too. Because first<sup>i</sup> the Spirit says,

<sup>16</sup>"This is the covenant I'm going to make with them after that time," says your Sovereign.

"I'm going to give them my laws on their hearts, and I'm going to write them on their minds."<sup>j</sup>

<sup>17</sup>And then the Spirit says,

I'm never going to remember their sins and their rebellions again.<sup>k</sup>

<sup>18</sup>So<sup>l</sup> where there's forgiveness of these things, there isn't any offering for sins anymore.

<sup>a</sup> Lit. "in the roll of the scroll".

<sup>b</sup> Ps. 40:6-8.

<sup>c</sup> Ps. 40:6. The author has rearranged the words of the Psalm.

<sup>d</sup> Lit. "said".

<sup>e</sup> Ps. 40:7-8.

<sup>f</sup> Lit. "hand". Ps. 110:1.

<sup>g</sup> Lit. "placed".

<sup>h</sup> Ps. 110:1.

<sup>i</sup> Lit. "after".

<sup>j</sup> Jer. 31:33.

<sup>k</sup> Jer. 31:34.

<sup>l</sup> Lit. "And".



*Stay Strong Together in the Face of Persecution*

<sup>19</sup>So, brothers and sisters, we have confidence<sup>a</sup> to go into the Holy Place, thanks to the blood<sup>b</sup> of Jesus. <sup>20</sup>He has opened this new and living way for us through the curtain—in other words, his flesh.<sup>c</sup> <sup>21</sup>And since there's a great priest over God's house, <sup>22</sup>let's come to God<sup>d</sup> with true hearts, in the full confidence of our faith. Our hearts should be sprinkled clean from a bad conscience, and our bodies washed in clean water. <sup>23</sup>We should hold fast to the public profession of our hope—because the One who has promised us is faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let's be thinking about how we can stir each other up into love and into doing good things.<sup>e</sup> <sup>25</sup>Let's not stop meeting with each other, as some have.<sup>f</sup> Just the opposite—let's encourage each other all the more as you see the Day<sup>g</sup> getting near.

<sup>26</sup>Because if we sin deliberately after we've received the knowledge of the truth, there's no sacrifice for sins left anymore. <sup>27</sup>There's only the terrible expectation of judgment, and a furious fire that's going to burn up the enemies.<sup>h</sup> <sup>28</sup>If somebody defies the Law of Moses, they die without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup>But suppose there's somebody who tramples on the Son of God. Suppose they treat as unclean the blood of the covenant—the blood that made them holy. Suppose they insult the Spirit of grace. How much worse punishment do you think such a person will deserve? <sup>30</sup>After all, we know the One who said,

Revenge is for me alone.  
I will pay people back.<sup>i</sup>

And again:

The Sovereign God is going to judge God's people.<sup>j</sup>

<sup>31</sup>It's a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.

<sup>32</sup>But remember the early days.<sup>k</sup> In those days, when you'd just been enlightened, you held out through<sup>l</sup> a hard struggle with sufferings. <sup>33</sup>Sometimes you were publicly humiliated with insults

<sup>a</sup> Or "boldness".

<sup>b</sup> Lit. "in/by the blood".

<sup>c</sup> He's saying that Christ's body offered on the cross is the curtain, the access portal, to God's full presence.

<sup>d</sup> Lit. "come forward". This is standard language for approaching God to worship or offer a sacrifice.

<sup>e</sup> Lit. "And let's be thinking about each other for the purpose of stirring up love and good deeds".

<sup>f</sup> Lit. "as is the custom of some". Going to meetings in a time of persecution heightened the risk of exposure as a Christian.

<sup>g</sup> That is, the day of Christ's return as their savior (Heb. 9:28).

<sup>h</sup> Lit. "consume the hostile ones". See Isa. 26:11.

<sup>i</sup> Deut. 32:35.

<sup>j</sup> Traditionally: "The Lord will judge his people". Deut. 32:36; Ps. 135:14.

<sup>k</sup> Lit. "the former days".

<sup>l</sup> Lit. "you endured". But the word has an active sense, not simply a passive one.

and persecutions; at other times, you stood<sup>a</sup> with people who were being treated in those ways. <sup>34</sup>Because you suffered along with those who were in prison. And when your possessions were<sup>b</sup> taken away by force, you faced it with joy. You knew that you have possessions that are better and more lasting. <sup>35</sup>So don't throw away your boldness—there's a great reward for it. <sup>36</sup>What you really need is endurance, so you can do God's will and then get what's been promised. <sup>37</sup>After all,

in just a very short while,  
The One who's coming will come, and will not wait.  
<sup>38</sup>And my innocent ones will live by their faith.  
But<sup>c</sup> if they back off, I won't be pleased with them.<sup>d</sup>

But we're not about shrinking back towards destruction—no! We're about faith, that leads to our lives being saved.<sup>e</sup>

### *The Meaning of Faith*

**11** Faith is the assurance<sup>f</sup> of our hopes. It's the proof<sup>g</sup> of things we can't see.<sup>h</sup> <sup>2</sup>Faith is what the ancients were commended for.<sup>i</sup> <sup>3</sup>By faith we know that the universe was<sup>j</sup> crafted by the word of God, so that what we see<sup>k</sup> hasn't come from things that are visible.

### *Heroes of Faith*

<sup>4</sup>By faith Abel<sup>l</sup> brought God a better offering than Cain did.<sup>m</sup> Through faith Abel received God's testimony that he was in the right.<sup>n</sup> God testified about his offerings. Through faith, though he's dead, he still speaks.

<sup>5</sup>By faith Enoch<sup>o</sup> was taken up, so that he wouldn't face death.<sup>p</sup> And "he was nowhere to be found,"<sup>a</sup> because God had taken him up.<sup>b</sup> And<sup>c</sup> before he was taken up,<sup>d</sup> it was testified that "he was

<sup>a</sup> Or "you stood in solidarity"; lit. "you became partners".

<sup>b</sup> Or "your property was". People's houses and land could well have been confiscated.

<sup>c</sup> Lit. "And".

<sup>d</sup> Traditionally: "And my righteous one will live on the basis of [his] faith; and if he draws back, my soul is not pleased with him" (Hab. 2:3-4 LXX).

<sup>e</sup> Lit. "faith, leading to the preservation of life/soul".

<sup>f</sup> Or "substance," or "reality".

<sup>g</sup> Or "the certainty".

<sup>h</sup> Lit. "of matters unseen".

<sup>i</sup> Verse 2 logically belongs with the stories that begin in v. 4 below. In the recognized, ancient formal argument style that the author of Hebrews uses, it is standard practice to make a statement that hints of your new section before you wrap up the current section.

<sup>j</sup> Or "the ages were".

<sup>k</sup> Lit. "the seen".

<sup>l</sup> Prn. like "able".

<sup>m</sup> See Gen. 4:3-10.

<sup>n</sup> Or "that he was a person of integrity"; traditionally: "that he was righteous".

<sup>o</sup> Prn. *ee-nok*.

<sup>p</sup> Lit. "see death," that is, experience his own death.

pleasing to God".<sup>a</sup> And without faith, it's impossible to please God. Because the person that comes to God has to believe that God exists, and rewards<sup>e</sup> those who seek God out.

<sup>7</sup>By faith Noah was prophetically warned about things that weren't visible yet.<sup>f</sup> He respected God and built an ark,<sup>g</sup> which would save his family.<sup>h</sup> Through faith he condemned the world, and he became an heir to the integrity<sup>i</sup> that comes from faith.

<sup>8</sup>By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called, and set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.<sup>j</sup> And he set out without knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup>By faith he moved to the promised land, even though it was a foreign place.<sup>k</sup> He lived in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were co-heirs of the same promise. <sup>10</sup>He did it because he was looking forward to the city with real foundations. That city's architect and designer is God. <sup>11</sup>By faith, Sarah too, although she was infertile,<sup>l</sup> received the power to give birth—and beyond what was possible for her age!<sup>m</sup> She could do it because she regarded the One who had promised it to be faithful. <sup>12</sup>So from just one man—and practically a dead one at that—were born descendants

As numerous as the stars of heaven,  
And as countless as the sands of the seashore.<sup>n</sup>

<sup>13</sup>All of these people died in faith, without getting the promises. However, they saw them from far away, and welcomed them. And they admitted that they were strangers and visitors on the earth. <sup>14</sup>After all, people who talk like that are obviously searching for a home country. <sup>15</sup>And if they were remembering the place they had come from as their home country, they had time<sup>o</sup> to go back. <sup>16</sup>But now they were yearning for something better—in other words, what's in heaven. That's why God isn't ashamed of them, and is willing to be called their God. Because God has built<sup>p</sup> them a city.

<sup>a</sup> Lit. "he was not found".

<sup>b</sup> Gen. 5:24; see also Sir. 44:16; Wis. 4:10.

<sup>c</sup> Lit. "For".

<sup>d</sup> Lit. "before the taking".

<sup>e</sup> Lit. "becomes a rewarder of".

<sup>f</sup> See Gen. 6:9–8:22.

<sup>g</sup> See "Bible Words".

<sup>h</sup> Lit. "an ark for the salvation of his household".

<sup>i</sup> Or "innocent verdict"; traditionally: "righteousness".

<sup>j</sup> Gen. 12:1-5; see Acts 7:2-4.

<sup>k</sup> Gen. 23:4; 26:3; 35:12, 27.

<sup>l</sup> That is, she couldn't have children.

<sup>m</sup> There is uncertainty in the mss tradition around this verse. It's very possible that it originally had Abraham being given the power of fathering children.

<sup>n</sup> Gen. 15:5-6; 22:17; 32:12.

<sup>o</sup> Or "they would have had opportunity".

<sup>p</sup> Lit. "prepared".

<sup>17</sup>By faith Abraham offered up Isaac when he was tested. This man, who had accepted the promise, offered up his only child. <sup>18</sup>It was to Abraham that it was said, “Your descendants are going to be counted through Isaac.”<sup>a</sup> <sup>19</sup>He figured that God could even raise the dead! And so he did symbolically get Isaac back from death.

<sup>20</sup>By faith, Isaac also blessed Jacob and Esau<sup>b</sup> as to their future.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>21</sup>By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of Joseph’s sons. And “he prayed<sup>d</sup> as he leaned on the top of his walking staff”<sup>e</sup>

<sup>22</sup>By faith Joseph, when he was dying, spoke about the time when the Israelites would leave Egypt.<sup>f</sup> And he gave them instructions about what to do with his bones.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>23</sup>By faith, when Moses was born, he was hidden by his parents for three months. They’d seen his beauty, and they weren’t afraid of the king’s order.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>24</sup>By faith Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s<sup>i</sup> daughter!<sup>j</sup> <sup>25</sup>He chose to be treated badly along with God’s people, rather than to have the temporary pleasure of sin. <sup>26</sup>He regarded disgrace with Christ<sup>k</sup> as greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Because he was looking forward to his reward. <sup>27</sup>By faith he left Egypt without being afraid of the king’s anger, because he stayed focused on the One who can’t be seen.<sup>l</sup> <sup>28</sup>By faith he celebrated<sup>m</sup> the Passover.<sup>n</sup> And he had people spread blood on their doorposts so that the destroyer of the firstborn wouldn’t touch them.<sup>o</sup> <sup>29</sup>By faith they walked across the Red Sea as if on dry land. And when the Egyptians tried it, they were drowned.<sup>p</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Gen. 21:12.

<sup>b</sup> Prn. *ee-saw*.

<sup>c</sup> Lit. “about things to come”.

<sup>d</sup> Lit. “worshiped”.

<sup>e</sup> Gen. 48:15-16; 47:31.

<sup>f</sup> Lit. “called to mind the exodus of the children of Israel”. At that time, the exodus was something like 400 years in the future.

<sup>g</sup> Gen. 50:24-25; Exod. 13:19.

<sup>h</sup> Exod. 1:22; 2:2.

<sup>i</sup> Prn. *feh-roh-z*. Pharaoh was the king of Egypt.

<sup>j</sup> Exod. 2:10-12.

<sup>k</sup> Lit. “the disgrace of Christ,” which Moses himself faced when he renounced this-worldly power and status and chose service to the poor. See also Heb. 13:13.

<sup>l</sup> Or “because he endured as if he saw the One who can’t be seen”.

<sup>m</sup> Or “instituted”.

<sup>n</sup> See “Bible Words”.

<sup>o</sup> Lit. “By faith he made/has made the Passover and the smearing of blood, so that the firstborn-destroyer wouldn’t touch them”. Exod. 12:21-30.

<sup>p</sup> Lit. “swallowed up” (by the water). Exod. 14:21-31.

<sup>30</sup>By faith the walls of Jericho<sup>a</sup> fell down, when the Israelites had walked around<sup>b</sup> them for seven days.

<sup>31</sup>By faith Rahab<sup>c</sup> the prostitute welcomed the Israelite spies with friendship, and she didn't die<sup>d</sup> along with those who were disobedient.

<sup>32</sup>And what else should I say?<sup>e</sup> My time will run out if I tell about Gideon,<sup>f</sup> Barak,<sup>g</sup> Samson, Jephthah<sup>h</sup> and David—not to mention<sup>i</sup> Samuel and all the prophets. <sup>33</sup>Through faith they conquered kingdoms; they did justice-making; they got things that were promised. They shut the mouths of lions; <sup>34</sup>they couldn't be burned by fire;<sup>j</sup> they escaped the edge of the sword. They were empowered from a position of weakness; they became strong in battle; they toppled<sup>k</sup> foreign armies. <sup>35</sup>Women got their dead back by resurrection. Others were tortured, and refused to be set free, so they would gain a better resurrection. <sup>36</sup>And others faced ridicule, faced beatings with whips, and even faced chains and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup>They were stoned, tortured,<sup>l</sup> sawn in two. They died at the edge of the sword.<sup>m</sup> They wandered around in sheepskins and goatskins—destitute, persecuted, mistreated. <sup>38</sup>Here were people the world wasn't worthy of, wandering around deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

<sup>39</sup>And these people all received God's commendation through their faith, yet they didn't get what was promised. <sup>40</sup>Because God foresaw something better about us. They were not going to be brought to perfection apart from us.

### *Run the Race with Endurance*

**12** And as for us, we have this large cloud of witnesses around us. So let's get rid of everything that slows us down,<sup>n</sup> and the sin that so easily tangles us up. And let's run the race in front of us with endurance. <sup>2</sup>Let's keep our eyes on Jesus, who's the champion<sup>o</sup> and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay ahead of him, he endured the cross. He gave no notice to the shame of it, and has sat down on the right side of God's throne. <sup>3</sup>Just think about him—how he has endured such

<sup>a</sup> Prn. *jerr-a-koe*.

<sup>b</sup> Lit. "when encircled". Josh. 6:12-21.

<sup>c</sup> Prn. *ray-hab*.

<sup>d</sup> Lit. "perish".

<sup>e</sup> Or "Why should I say more?"

<sup>f</sup> Prn. *gidd-ee-an*.

<sup>g</sup> Prn. *ba-rack*.

<sup>h</sup> Prn. *jeff-tha*.

<sup>i</sup> Lit. "and even".

<sup>j</sup> Lit. "they quenched the power of fire".

<sup>k</sup> Or "overthrew".

<sup>l</sup> One of the earliest mss leaves out this word, which can also mean "tested".

<sup>m</sup> Lit. "They died by the murder of the sword".

<sup>n</sup> Or "every encumbrance". More literally, it's "everything bulky".

<sup>o</sup> Or "pioneer," or "author".

hostility from sinners against himself.<sup>a</sup> That way, you won't get tired and give up in your spirits.<sup>b</sup> 4So far, you haven't resisted sin to the point of shedding your blood. 5And you've forgotten the encouragement that's spoken to you as sons and daughters:

My child,<sup>c</sup> don't despise the discipline of the Sovereign One,  
 And don't give up when you're corrected by God.<sup>d</sup>  
 6Because the Sovereign One disciplines those who are loved,<sup>e</sup>  
 And punishes all those who are accepted as children.<sup>f</sup>

7Endure what you're going through as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons and daughters. And what child doesn't get disciplined by their father? 8And if you're above the discipline that everybody takes part in, then you're illegitimate children, and not sons and daughters. 9And we had physical fathers to discipline us, and we respected them. So shouldn't we submit ourselves all the more to the Father of our spirits, and live? 10After all, they disciplined us for a while,<sup>g</sup> however it seemed right to them. But God disciplines us for our own good, so that we'll share<sup>h</sup> in God's holiness. 11Now, for the moment all discipline seems painful, not joyful. But later, for people who've been trained by it, it bears the peaceful fruit of integrity.<sup>i</sup> 12So

Straighten up your droopy arms and weak knees,  
 13And make straight paths for your feet.<sup>j</sup>

That way, what's lame won't get injured,<sup>k</sup> but will get healed instead.

*A Warning Not to Turn Away from God*

14Really go for peace with everybody. And go for holiness. Without holiness, nobody is going to see the Lord. 15See to it that nobody comes short of the grace of God—that no poisonous<sup>l</sup> root grows up and causes trouble, so lots of people get corrupted by it.<sup>m</sup> 16Nobody should be sexually immoral, or godless like Esau.<sup>n</sup> He sold his birthright for a single meal.<sup>o</sup> 17And you know that

<sup>a</sup> Some early mss have "from people sinning against themselves," which is surprising, but could be what the author actually wrote.

<sup>b</sup> Lit. "souls".

<sup>c</sup> Lit. "son".

<sup>d</sup> Lit. "him".

<sup>e</sup> Lit. "those he loves".

<sup>f</sup> Lit. "and whips every son whom he receives". Prov. 3:11-12.

<sup>g</sup> Lit. "a few days".

<sup>h</sup> Lit. "for the sharing".

<sup>i</sup> Or "right living"; traditionally: "righteousness".

<sup>j</sup> Isa. 35:3.

<sup>k</sup> Lit. "put out of joint," or "sprained". A weak ankle or knee, for example, is vulnerable to getting "popped".

<sup>l</sup> Lit. "bitter".

<sup>m</sup> Or "—that no root of bitterness grows up and causes trouble, and through it many are polluted". Deut. 29:17.

<sup>n</sup> Prn. *ee-saw*.

<sup>o</sup> Gen. 25:33-34; 27:30-49.

afterwards he wanted to inherit the blessing, but was rejected: he didn't find any way to reverse his decision,<sup>a</sup> even though he looked for one in tears.

<sup>18</sup>After all, you haven't come to a place that can be physically touched, to a mountain burning with fire, to gloom and darkness and storm, <sup>19</sup>and to the sound of a trumpet and a voice speaking. When people heard that voice, they begged not to hear another word.<sup>b</sup> <sup>20</sup>Because they couldn't bear the commandment, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it has to be stoned."<sup>c</sup> <sup>21</sup>And the spectacle was so frightening that Moses said, "I'm terrified and shaking."<sup>d</sup>

<sup>22</sup>No, you've come to Mount Zion, to the City of the Living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem. And you've come to tens of thousands of angels gathered for the festival.<sup>e</sup> <sup>23</sup>You've come to the assembly of the firstborn,<sup>f</sup> whose names are recorded in heaven. You've come to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of people of integrity<sup>g</sup> who've been made perfect. <sup>24</sup>And you've come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more powerfully<sup>h</sup> than the blood of Abel.

<sup>25</sup>Make sure you don't ignore<sup>i</sup> the One who is speaking.<sup>j</sup> After all, those others<sup>k</sup> didn't get away with it when they ignored<sup>l</sup> the One who warned them on earth. So how much less will we get away with it, if we're turning away from the One who is warning us from heaven? <sup>26</sup>That time, God's voice shook the earth, but now God has given this promise:

I'm going to shake things one more time, and it won't just be the earth, but heaven too.<sup>m</sup>

<sup>27</sup>And when it says, "one more time," it's clearly about the removal of the things that are shaken—which are created things.<sup>n</sup> That way, what remains will be what can't be shaken. <sup>28</sup>So since we're receiving a royal realm that can't be shaken, let's be grateful. Let's serve God with appropriate gratitude, reverence and awe. <sup>29</sup>Because "our God is a consuming fire."<sup>o</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Or, less likely, "any room for a change of heart"; traditionally: "any place for repentance".

<sup>b</sup> Lit. "...trumpet and a sound of words, about which the hearers begged not to have another word added to them". See Exod. 19:16-22; 20:18-21; Deut. 4:11-12; 5:22-27.

<sup>c</sup> That is, killed by having stones thrown at it. Exod. 19:12-13.

<sup>d</sup> Deut. 9:19.

<sup>e</sup> Lit. "angels in festal assembly".

<sup>f</sup> By this I suspect he means the angels who have helped administrate the development of life on this planet. See Job 38:4-7, which calls them "the sons of God"; see Deut. 33:2-3; Dan. 7:10.

<sup>g</sup> Traditionally: "the righteous".

<sup>h</sup> Lit. "speaks better".

<sup>i</sup> Lit. "decline" or, more colloquially, "shine on".

<sup>j</sup> See v. 19 and the note there.

<sup>k</sup> Lit. "speaking, for if they". Verse 25 is one long sentence in Greek.

<sup>l</sup> Lit. "decline".

<sup>m</sup> Hag. 2:6.

<sup>n</sup> Lit. "the removal of the things that are shaken, as of things made".

<sup>o</sup> Deut. 4:24; Isa. 33:14.

*Final Challenges and Encouragements*

**13** Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. <sup>2</sup>Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers. After all, some people have taken in angels as guests without knowing it.<sup>a</sup> <sup>3</sup>Remember people who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them. And remember people who are being badly treated as though you were physically being treated the same way.<sup>b</sup> <sup>4</sup>Marriage should be honored by everyone, and sex<sup>c</sup> should be pure. Because God is going to judge people who are sexually immoral and people who are unfaithful to their spouses.<sup>d</sup> <sup>5</sup>Your lifestyle should be free from love of money. Be content with what you have. Because God has said,

I'm never going to desert you;  
I'm never going to leave you.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>6</sup>So we can be confident and say,

The Sovereign One is my helper, and I'm not going to be afraid.  
What can human beings do to me?<sup>f</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Remember your leaders, who have spoken God's word to you. Look closely at the outcome of their lifestyle, and imitate their faith.

<sup>8</sup>Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. <sup>9</sup>Don't get carried away with all kinds of strange teachings. Because it's good to strengthen your heart with grace—not special religious diets.<sup>g</sup> They've been no use to people who've followed them. <sup>10</sup>Those who serve in the Tent<sup>h</sup> don't have the authority to eat from the altar that we have. <sup>11</sup>After all, the high priest brings the blood for the sin offerings into the Holy Place, and the bodies of the animals whose blood it is are burned outside the camp.<sup>i</sup> <sup>12</sup>And that's why Jesus suffered outside the city gate: so that he could make the people holy by his own blood. <sup>13</sup>So let's go to him outside the camp! Let's bear the scorn that he was subjected to.<sup>j</sup> <sup>14</sup>After all, we don't have a lasting city here—we're looking for the one that's coming. <sup>15</sup>So let's continuously offer sacrifices of praise to God through Christ. That is, let's offer up lips<sup>k</sup> that publicly profess God's name.<sup>a</sup> <sup>16</sup>And let's not neglect doing good and sharing: God is pleased with those kinds of sacrifices.

<sup>a</sup> See Gen. 18:1-8; 19:1-3.

<sup>b</sup> Lit. "as though being the same in the body".

<sup>c</sup> Lit. "the bed".

<sup>d</sup> Lit. "adulterers". See "Bible Words" under "adultery".

<sup>e</sup> Deut. 31:6.

<sup>f</sup> Ps. 118:6.

<sup>g</sup> Lit. "not foods".

<sup>h</sup> He's referring metaphorically to the priests and Levites serving in the Jerusalem Temple without faith in Christ.

<sup>i</sup> Lev. 16:27. The author is making an analogy between the place "outside the camp" in the wilderness and outside the city gates of Jerusalem, where Jesus was hung on a cross.

<sup>j</sup> Lit. "...outside the camp, bearing his reproach".

<sup>k</sup> Lit. "the fruit of lips".



<sup>17</sup>Obeys your leaders and listen to them; they're watching over your souls, as people who are accountable to God. That way, they'll be able to do this ministry with joy, and not exasperation—which wouldn't do you any good.

<sup>18</sup>Pray for us. We're confident that we have a good conscience, and in every situation, we want to conduct ourselves well.<sup>b</sup> <sup>19</sup>And I'm asking you to pray<sup>c</sup> all the more, so that I will be given back to you as soon as possible.<sup>d</sup>

*Final Blessing and Greetings*

<sup>20-21</sup>Now may the God of peace outfit you with all goodness to do God's will. God is the One who brought back the Great Shepherd of the sheep from among the dead by the blood of the eternal covenant: our Lord Jesus. May God do in us what is pleasing in God's eyes, through Jesus Christ. May God get the glory forever and ever.<sup>e</sup> Amen.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Brothers and sisters, please accept this word<sup>g</sup> of encouragement, because I've written you just a few things.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>23</sup>You know that our brother Timothy has been set free—if he comes soon, I'll come see you with him. <sup>24</sup>Say hello to all your leaders and all the holy ones. The people from Italy say hello to you.

<sup>25</sup>May grace be with you all.

<sup>a</sup> Or "Christ's name". See Hos. 14:2; Ps. 50:23.

<sup>b</sup> Or "honorably".

<sup>c</sup> Lit. "to do this".

<sup>d</sup> Lit. "I'll be restored to you the sooner".

<sup>e</sup> Some important mss lack the words "and ever".

<sup>f</sup> Verses 20-21 are one long sentence; I've simplified the structure.

<sup>g</sup> Lit. "I ask you please to bear with this word".

<sup>h</sup> Lit. "for in fact I've written you briefly".