

LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

The Water Crosser

The book of Hebrews is one of the most revealing of the epistles in its definition of Jesus Christ. Each chapter contains a further revelation of Christ, the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of mankind. It reveals Jesus Christ as both the Son of God and the son of man. As much higher than the Angels. Greater than Moses. Much superior to Aaron the high priest. He Himself is our sacrifice and God's final sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Only His blood is adequate to take away sins and cleanse our conscience so we may serve the Living God. In this way the testimony of Christ unfolds throughout the letter.

There is no indication who wrote the letter. Some attribute it to Paul but it may be significant that no one knows. Possibly God has hid the human writer to emphasize that God in these last days has spoken through His Son.

The letter originally was not addressed to any group but it was clear to those that assembled the scriptures that it was written to the Hebrews. Since we assume there are no accidents in scripture, the name must be significant. In the law of first mention, we find the first mention in scripture is significant to our unfolding understanding. The first mention of the word **HEBREW** is found in Gen 14:13. GEN 14:13 Then a fugitive came and told Abram **THE HEBREW**. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram. GEN 14:14 And when Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

The word Hebrew is taken from a root word which means to pass over or cross over. Some believe it refers directly to a river crosser. Abram was born in Ur of the Chaldeas, in the area of the ancient site of Babylon. In the area that is now called Iraq, where the gulf war was fought. God called Abram out of that country to a land He would show him. The land of Canaan, the area of the state of Israel. Between Chaldea and Canaan was the river Euphrates. This was a great river that flowed from north to south and separated that idolatrous, devilish and satanic area from the land God established for Himself.

JOS 24:2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived **beyond the river**, { namely, } Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. JOS 24:3 'Then I took your father Abraham from **beyond the river**, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac.

A Hebrew is a person who has crossed the river and is now living in God's appointed land. A Jew then is not necessarily a Hebrew. This is a preview and picture of Israel crossing the Red Sea, and after forty years of wandering, crossing the Jordan river.

This is also a picture of our believer baptism. There is a body of water between the world and Satan's authority and God's promised land. God's salvation is to bring us out of the place Satan has possessed and into a place that is adequate for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. How do we pass over? By proper water baptism. We are not all Jews but we should all be Hebrews. Water crossers.

In the New Testament Hebrew is only used in reference to the language of the Jews except in one place Paul said he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Paul was a water crosser. If this epistle was just written to the Jews it should have been addressed to the Jews. But, rather it is addressed to the **Hebrews**. The letter was written to Jews who were believers and therefore water crossers.

This is emphasized again in Noah and his passage through the waters in the Ark. He passed out of a wicked and perverse land into a new land of God's choosing.

1PE 3:20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through {the} water. 1PE 3:21 And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.... Even John the baptist, who was a forerunner, helped believers become river crossers when he baptized them in the Jordan river.

When Israel came out of Egypt they crossed the Red Sea, stayed a year at Mt. Sinai, and God would have taken them directly into Canaan at Kadesh-Barnea. However after forty years of wandering, all those over twenty years old died in the wilderness. The next generation could not cross at Kadesh-Barnea but had to cross at the Jordan river. There was water between Israel and the promised land. After they crossed Jordan they also were Hebrews, river crossers.

This may seem a strange introduction to a study on the book of Hebrews. However the context of the book reveals these "Hebrews" were converts who believed in Jesus Christ as their Messiah but also wanted to hold to their old Jewish religion. The context shows us the message is; You must leave the traditions of Judaism and cross over to stand with Jesus Christ only. This is emphasized in **FIVE** distinct warnings throughout the book.

HEB 10:32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, HEB 10:33 partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. HEB 10:34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. Church history is full of accounts of persecution by the Jewish religious leaders. They were especially disturbed by Jews who had become believers in Jesus. Several accounts are given in the book of Acts of Paul defending himself against the religious leaders. It was for this cause Paul was martyred. Paul's letter to the Galatians was to convince them to stand firm in their faith in Jesus Christ. He challenged them in chapter 3. GAL 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? GAL 3:4 Did you suffer so many things in vain-- if indeed it was in vain? GAL 3:5 Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

He uses the argument that they never received the Holy Spirit by keeping the law but by the hearing with faith. The miracles that God was doing among them was not produced by the law but through the hearing with faith. He goes on to show the foolishness of going back to the law by showing the promise made to Abraham was 430 years before the covenant made at Mt. Sinai. He says the inheritance was based upon **PROMISE** long before the law came.

If the persecution came from the Roman officials or from the heathen, the believers could more easily stand. But it was coming from their own religious leaders who were supposed to know

what was right. It would be easy to conclude that maybe we are wrong. However Paul's argument is; GAL 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Does Jesus Christ dwell in your hearts or not? If He does, it is not by law but by faith! Paul was telling them; You can't have it both ways. Flee from the law and walk by the Spirit. Law and flesh go together and Spirit and life go together. You cannot mix law and Spirit. Therefore you must" **CROSS OVER**" from the law to the Spirit. The same kind of argument given here is repeated in the book of Hebrews.

Many of the symbolism of the law, the sacrifices, the priests, the tabernacle, Moses, Aaron, the blood of bulls and goats and the Old Covenant are given to show the superior qualities of Jesus Christ over any and all other things. In Heb. 11 the writer shows all these men were recognized by God because of their faith, and not because of their adherence to the law. The admonition then is to **PASS OVER** from all these things to Christ because He is all God has to offer us for so great a salvation. Each warning is against going back to Judaism. In each example, the writer shows the superiority of Christ. Christ and the religion of the Jews are not compatible. Therefore forsake the religion of the Jews and do not shrink back from following Jesus Christ. Stand firm in your faith.

HEB 1:1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, HEB 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in {His} Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. HEB 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; HEB 1:4 having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

The first comparison is between Christ and the prophets. In ages past God did speak through the prophets and in many instances He used angels to speak. But in these last days God has spoken in His **SON**. Then the writer explains the far superior quality of Christ, who he is and where He sits.

Then the writer says Christ is much better and much higher than the angels and quotes some different scripture. HEB 1:5 For to which of the angels did He ever say, "**THOU ART MY SON**, Today I have begotten Thee"? And again, "I will be a Father to Him And He shall be a Son to Me"? HEB 1:6 And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God **WORSHIP HIM**." HEB 1:7 And of the angels He says, "Who makes His angels winds, And His ministers a flame of fire." HEB 1:8 But of **THE SON** {He says}, "**THY THRONE O GOD**, is forever and ever, And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.

In chapter 2 the writer says even the word of angels was impossible to alter and God held all to that word, therefore, how much more the Word of His Son. The emphasis of Hebrews is that it is God Himself who has spoken, not man. God the Father reveals Himself to us by **SPEAKING**. It should not be something incredible for God to speak to us but rather something normal. In these last days God has spoken to us in His son. More precisely, Jesus said it is the Holy Spirit who is speaking but just what He hears.

JOH 16:13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. JOH 16:14 "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose {it} to you. God's Word contains all His attributes and His Word imparts Life to us as

He speaks. The point is this; The speaking of God through the Angels and through the prophets is entirely different than God speaking in His Son. God speaks directly in His Son who is **THE WORD OF GOD**.

The revelation of the Son is both of His person and of his work. God has appointed Jesus Christ to be the rightful heir of all things. All things means **ALL things**. He is the one through whom God made the universe and it is through Christ that all things hold together by the word of His power. Jesus Christ is the **RADIANCE OF GOD'S GLORY AND THE EXACT REPRESENTATION OF GOD'S NATURE**. Christ is God's Son and also His legal heir and therefore will inherit all that belongs to God. When we see Christ we see God's glory and we see God's nature in visible form. Obviously words fail to express the magnitude of what the writer wants to say. Our minds can hardly contain the thoughts.

When Christ made purification of sins on Calvary and what followed, He took His seat at the right hand of the **MAJESTY ON HIGH**. This denotes that Christ is seated in the highest place of God's universe. Right beside God and equal with God and the Heir of all things. The further argument about angels seems to be lost after this description of Christ. Who can even think of the greatness of angels after comparing them with the greatness of Christ. One of the Jewish traditions was to speak much about angels, much about the prophets, much about Moses, much about Aaron and also about Joshua. How could the superiority of Christ be questioned after this tremendous description of Jesus Christ is given? however, the writer doesn't stop there. He says "Let all the angels of God worship Christ".

The writer of Hebrews finds ample proof in scripture of who Jesus Christ really is. Then he says HEB 2:1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away {from it.} **LEST WE DRIFT AWAY FROM IT**, is the reason for the overwhelming proof given. We must pay close attention to the **WRITTEN WORD** that God spoke. Even the word of angels, once spoken, could not be revoked. How much more the **WORD OF GOD**? Then Christ Himself spoke the words. Then the Apostles spoke the words and the Holy Spirit confirmed the words with various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit. In other words: How much more proof do you need?

Still the writer goes on to show that Christ is much superior to Moses. Moses was a servant over his house but Christ is a Son over His house. Moses was a part of Christ's house but Christ is the very builder of the house. Therefore Christ is counted worthy of more glory than Moses.

Because of what was said there is also a warning. HEB 3:12 Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, **in falling away** from the living God. HEB 3:13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is {still} called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. HEB 3:14 For we have become partakers of Christ, **IF** we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end;

This exhortation warns of an evil and unbelieving heart. The result of an evil heart is unbelief and the result of unbelief is to fall away from the living God. This whole walk is a walk of faith. Without faith we quickly go backwards. When men turn to their own reasonings they soon turn to the LOGIC of unbelief. The history of Israel is a record of a people of faith who began to walk according to their own understanding and fell into unbelief. Then disobedience and rebellion follows. Therefore the writer says Israel hardened their heart, they provoked God, He was angry

with them for forty years and God swore they would not enter His Rest. The reason given is because of their unbelief.

The warning continues in chapter 4. Let us **FEAR** lest any of you seem to have come short of it. That is short of entering into His rest which must be entered by faith. The warnings are directed to those who turn back to the Old Covenant but includes all who do not maintain an active faith and continually mix faith with the word we hear. As the word of God comes to us, we must **MIX FAITH WITH IT** or it won't profit us.

Heb 4:12-13 should be included in the warning because he says the word of God is able to penetrate right into the very center of our inner person and discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart. No creature is hidden from His sight and is laid open and bare to the eyes of God. In other words you can't pretend to follow Jesus Christ but also participate in the old ways. There must be a clean separation between the old and the new. You must be a Hebrew who has crossed over to Christ and not returned.

Now in verse 14 the writer takes up the argument of our great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. He said we don't have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness but one who was tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. If you feel your faith slipping, draw near to the throne of grace and mercy to receive grace and help in time of need.

Chapter 5 continues the same theme so Heb 4:14-15-16 should have been included in chapter 5. He says the reason God took the high priest from among men was because he could deal gently with the ignorant and the weak because he also was ignorant and weak. Therefore God ordained that the high priest had to offer up sacrifices for his own sins before he could offer sacrifices for others sins. He was constantly reminded of his own weakness and therefore could deal gently with the weakness of others.

This is still true today. Those ministers who are not convicted of their own weakness will be very hard and critical of the weakness of others. He will minister condemnation instead of mercy and grace.

Then the writer takes up the way the Old Testament priests were appointed. God did not ask for volunteers. God specifically called Aaron. Whom God calls and ordains is His prerogative alone. God had called and ordained Christ to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. This calling was first recorded in Psalm 2:7 and again in 110:4. All this was decided by God before Calvary. From this we see that Jesus Christ was not a volunteer to be High Priest.

After all that, the writer reveals that even though Jesus was the Son of God He still had to be perfected (as a man) in order to qualify as High Priest. This High Priest, after the order of Melchizedek, must also be **a real man** so He could sympathize with the weakness and frailty of mankind. This High Priest had to be taken from among men and completes His work as the Son of Man rather than as the Son of God. It was necessary for Jesus Christ to suffer many things and come to perfection **AS A MAN** in order to be the source of **ETERNAL SALVATION** to all those who **OBEY HIM. DISOBEDIENCE MAY DISQUALIFY US FROM ETERNAL SALVATION.**

This can be taken as yet another warning to add to all the others in this epistle.

There was much more that needed to be revealed about Melchizedec and His eternal priesthood but the writer felt that these believers were not ready for any advanced teaching. It appears that at one time they may have been able to hear it but they seem to have **become dull of hearing**. He felt that they could only receive a baby's formula of milk and not yet solid food, which was held back for the mature.

In chapter 6 we generally only see the warning from verse 4 through verse 8 but we may discern that the warning begins in verse 1. The warning is advance from the primary and elementary teachings about Christ and "GO ON TO MATURITY" or the completion of the full Christiamn life. The 6 foundations listed here are (1) Repentance (2) Faith (3) Baptisms ,plural, (in water and in the Holy Spirit) (4) Laying on of hands (5) Resurrection from the dead (6) Eternal judgement. After all these truths are firmly and experientially in our life we have just begun with the foundation. We haven't built anything yet! We could say we are just up to ground level!

Then the writer gives this very sharp and severe warning to any who have become lax in their pressing into God and living within the revelation they have received. The warning is given to those who have experienced these 5 levels of growth. (1) Been enlightened (2) Tasted of the heavenly gift { this is same word used in " Jesus tasted death"} [He voluntarily experienced death]. (3) Made partakers of the Holy Spirit (4) Tasted the good Word of God. (5) Experienced the powers of the ETERNAL AGE. These believers had certainly advanced beyond what we would consider the baby stage. This at very least indicates considerable growth.

The warning is that there is no possible excuse for turning back or falling away or backsliding at this stage of growth. He presents the question of how will this level of backslider will be able to be "RENEWED AGAIN TO REPENTANCE" and begin again. This would require the sacrifice of Jesus Christ the second time because the first time had already been used up.

While that warning seems unduly severe the next is even harsher. He says in effect if a field has been planted and a crop is beginning to grow but it produces nothing usable to the one who planted it, it is rooted up and cast into the fire and is destroyed.

The writer affirms that they probably have not gone that far off course as yet and that they will yet produce the fruit that accompanies salvation. To say that these people were not "SAVED" is gross ignorance.

From verse 10 he indicates that God will certainly reward those who faithfully continue to manifest love and service or ministry to the saints. However, the desire is that each one show forth that same fruit of service and not get lukewarm in their faith and patience and go on to inherit the promises.

Abraham then is given as an example of one who had received tremendous promises, confirmed with an oath from God, but he also had to patiently wait until the full time until he could obtain the promise.

In that same way now we have been presented a great and magnificent promise connected with God's eternal purpose and God has also sealed that promise with His own oath. Not only is it impossible for God to lie about it, He also confirmed the reality of it with an oath. Now, by these two unchangeable things, the promise and the oath, we may have a certain and strong encouragement to lay hold of those promises and make them a reality in our experience. This

confirmed contract builds up an overwhelming HOPE in us which becomes an anchor in our soul. A hope both sure, certain and steadfast and a hope that enters inside the the third veil (that was torn when Jesus was crucified) where the Man Christ Jesus has already entered as the first runner among many, and has taken His seat at the right hand of God. He is the High Priest of a whole Kingdom of priests after the order of Melchizedec that will also overcome and take their seat with Him on His throne. That is the **HOPE SET BEFORE US** that becomes **an anchor** for our soul.