

LESSON 3

PERSEVERING IN FAITH

Hebrews 4:1-6:20

Introduction

The Scriptures to be examined in this lesson reveal that the recipients of the Book of Hebrews were being tempted to turn from faith. If they were Israelites, they probably were contemplating a return to Judaism. Faith in Christ had not brought exemption from suffering nor immunity to prejudice and problems. Perhaps the believers were beginning to question what advantage there was in turning to Christ. The recipients may have been members of a larger body of believers which included Gentiles. If so, their own Jewish nationalism and traditions in Judaism were in conflict with the concept of being equally joined together with Gentiles in the Church. In addition, their faith in Christ had brought ostracism from other Jews who continued in Judaism and perhaps opposition from the Roman rulers.

By the time of the Jerusalem Conference in about A. D. 49, the conflict between Jews and Gentiles in the Church had become acute. Some Jewish believers continued to hold to the necessity of observing ceremonial laws which restricted Jewish relations with Gentiles. Although the four recommendations from the Jerusalem Conference alleviated Jewish insistence on Gentiles being circumcized and keeping ceremonial laws, they did not solve all of the problems of the Jewish-Gentile relationship within the same congregation. According to the Jerusalem solution, Jews were at liberty to keep their customs, but they were not to force them upon Gentile believers. The enactments of the Council served as guidelines, but they did not have the power to remove prejudice and loyalty to national traditions.

According to Hebrews 6, it appears that the recipients of the epistle had no problem in accepting the doctrines of repentance, faith, baptism, the laying on of hands, resurrection, and eternal judgement. Responding to these doctrines had led to their entering the Kingdom through the new birth: "those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost ... " (Heb. 6:4). They had failed, however, to go on to "things that accompany salvation" (Heb. 6:9). According to the Book of Acts, the bringing of Gentiles into the Church was the primary reason some Jews ceased believing in Jesus as the Messiah. Gentiles were given an even standing with Jewish believers. This new relationship was contrary

Use the following phrases to complete three problems which the Jewish Christians possibly were facing.

with Gentiles  
from other Jews  
from the Roman rulers

1. Their own nationalism and traditions may have been in conflict with the concept of being in churches \_\_\_\_\_.
2. They may have been ostracized \_\_\_\_\_.
3. They may have felt opposition \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The following indications are found in Hebrews 6:4 that the recipients of this book were Christians:

They were \_\_\_\_\_;

They had tasted of the \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_;

They had been made partakers of the \_\_\_\_\_.

(enlightened, heavenly gift, Holy Ghost)

to the background of the Jews; therefore, it was necessary for them to go beyond the basic doctrines of repentance and birth into the Kingdom. To renounce Christianity in order to avoid association with Gentiles as equals meant that they would forfeit God's promised rest. To continue in Christianity meant that they must come to terms with their prejudices by adhering to those teachings which accompany salvation (Heb. 6: 9).

The Believers' Rest

Hebrews 4:1-13

Unbelievers cannot enter (4:1-6)

Since the Israelites were not spared the consequences of their unbelief in the wilderness, Christians should not expect deliverance if they ignore God's Son. The present life is characterized by labour, toil, and conflict. Labour is distasteful only when affliction and persecution hinder progress. Conflicts may arise as the result of personal desires being denied. Not all personal conflicts originate from an outside opponent.

In contrast to the struggles of this life, the writer sets forth the New Age in terms of a Sabbath rest. He emphasized that it is still possible to enter the promised rest, but there is also the danger of stopping short of it (v. 1). An enduring faith in the word and promises of God is required for success.

When people become Christians, they normally expect God to protect and to bless them, and they expect wrong personal desires to disappear. Jesus said that He would be with His disciples to the end of the world, but He did not promise exemption from toil, afflictions, and difficult experiences. He did promise that at His return those who had been faithful to the end would share in His glory. Paul testified that his life as a Christian was a battle:

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing (2 Tim. 4:7f.).

The Good News is not that man shall experience blessings in this world, which is under the control of Satan, but that he will be delivered from the power of evil. Prejudice and other forms of sin will no longer dominate him. The blessings which God promises relate to His Kingdom. They are forgiveness,

Continue reading through the third paragraph of the text on this page.

Match the following by placing the correct letters in the blanks.

- |                                      |                        |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| ___ 1. Labour, toil,<br>and conflict | a. The New Age         |
| ___ 2. Promised rest                 | b. The present<br>life |

(b-1, a-2)

People who become Christians normally expect God to \_\_\_\_\_ and to \_\_\_\_\_ them.

(protect, bless)

Is this statement true or false?  
When one becomes a Christian, wrong personal desires disappear. \_\_\_\_\_

(false)

spiritual birth, and eternal life. Eternal life includes fellowship with God and man, provisions from God, and victory over death through resurrection. If man expects his faith to bring comforts and blessings in this world, which is under the rule of Satan, he will lose confidence in God's promises and will come short of the promised rest. Saving faith means to renounce one's sins and the evil ways of this world as a way of life in order to be forgiven and qualified for entering the Kingdom of God. When man enters the Kingdom, he experiences spiritual power and joy on a new level of existence, even though he may continue to experience physical affliction and temptation in this world.

The writer found two truths in Psalm 95:7-11 which applied to his readers: (1) Unbelief and stubbornness bar a person from entering God's promised rest—Hebrews 3:7-12. (2) Since the rest of God was not entered in the day of Moses, the fulfilment of the promise was projected into the future—Hebrews 4:6-9. Psalm 95 implies that God's promised rest would come at a later date. The writer of Hebrews interpreted the fulfilment of entering God's rest to apply to his day (v. 1).

The author warned that, just as the Israelites came short of inheriting God's rest because of unbelief, there was the danger that readers also would come short of it. God's promised rest referred to the land of Canaan which had been promised to the Israelites as their heritage. After the struggles and hardships of the forty years' wilderness journey, settling in the land which "flowed with milk and honey" was like a rest with ample provisions after a long and treacherous journey.

The author of Hebrews compared the Israelite hope of entering the land of Canaan with the Christian hope of entering God's Kingdom: "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them" (v. 2). The Israelites did not enter the Promised Land because they failed to believe that God could deliver the Canaanites into their hands; likewise, those of his day could fail to enter God's promised rest because of unbelief. God's promises to deliver His people from slavery and to give them a land of their own did not materialize apart from the belief of the people in Him. Neither would the Good News concerning God's Kingdom, which had been preached, profit those who did not trust Him (v. 2). Christian faith is not an assumption that God owes eternal life to the righteous but a confidence that God's promises will become a reality for those who believe. Only Joshua and Caleb believed that God could deliver the Canaanites into their hands; therefore, they were the only ones of their generation who entered God's promised rest.

God does not bestow His promised blessings upon those who reject Him in unbelief. Those who

Immediate blessings which believers receive are:

f \_\_\_\_\_,  
 spiritual b \_\_\_\_\_,  
 eternal l \_\_\_\_\_.

(forgiveness, birth, life)

Unscramble the letters in the following words to complete two truths the writer of Hebrews found in Psalm 95.

binulefe, bursntsenssb, deteren

1. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ bar a person from entering God's promised rest.
2. Since the rest of God was not entered in the day of Moses, it is yet to be \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers to the text.)

Hebrews compares the Israelite hope of entering the land of Canaan with the Christian hope of entering \_\_\_\_\_

(God's Kingdom)

depend on Him to keep His word enter His rest (v. 3). God has already made provisions for the rest (His Kingdom) which has been prepared from the foundation of the world (v. 3). After a life of toil and struggle with the evil power of this world, the man who commits his life to God enters His presence to live in fellowship with Him.

The writer also used the Sabbath (rest) day as an example to support his argument for a promised rest (vv. 4-6). God's labour in creation lasted for six days and was followed by a day of rest. The struggles of life in this world are compared to the toils of creation and will give way eventually to a period of rest. Man must toil before he can expect rest from his labours.

The writer pointed out another application of Psalm 95 to the situation of his readers (vv. 5-6). He concluded that since many to whom the promise was first given did not enter in because of unbelief, the promise was not fulfilled and the opportunity of entering God's rest remained open. He implied that God's promises do not fail, but they are applicable to succeeding generations until they are fulfilled. He explained that the promise was not fulfilled completely under Joshua, who led the Israelites into the land of Canaan, because David spoke later of it as still in effect (vv. 5-9; cf. Ps. 95:7-11). David would not have spoken of the promised rest in his day if it had been fulfilled under Joshua.

'Jesus' is a Greek translation of the Hebrew name 'Joshua'. It was Joshua who led the Israelites into the Promised Land after they had wandered for forty years in the wilderness under Moses' leadership. The New Testament Deliverer was not Moses but Jesus of whom the author of Hebrews wrote. Through this hermeneutical method, the author found Old Testament support for his doctrine that the Kingdom is God's rest for people of faith. Even if someone objected that Joshua accomplished what Moses failed to do by leading the Israelites into the land of Canaan, the author showed that the promised land of Canaan did not exhaust God's promised rest; otherwise, David would not have spoken of it many years later. Canaan was a type of the more perfect rest which God has provided for His people. Entering Canaan did not relieve man of the fear of death, defeat by sin, and freedom from toil and struggle.

The nature of God's promised rest (4:9-11)

When the author of Hebrews spoke of rest, he did not mean cessation from activity. He meant activity which is good and devoid of suffering and struggle. At the completion of His creative work, He pronounced all things good. The sin of Adam and the unbelief of

God's labour in creation is compared to the \_\_\_\_\_ of this \_\_\_\_\_.

The Sabbath (rest) day is compared to the promised \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

*Underline the correct word or words.*

*Canaan (did, did not) provide the perfect promised rest for God's people.*

*(did not)*

Israel were incompatible with God's satisfaction with His good creation. The new creation in Christ brings man back into harmony with God's work and purpose in creation. Christ has prepared a place in His Father's house for those who believe in Him. The old Israel did not enter into God's promised rest; therefore, there remains a "rest to the people of God" (v. 9; cf. Rom. 9:25; 11:1). True Israel inherits the promise by faith in Christ (cf. Gal. 6:16).

The introduction of the analogy of Sabbath rest as a prototype of God's promised rest is appropriate. The Lord's Day or first day of the week was adopted by the early Christians as a day of cessation from labours and of fellowship with God. Through worship, the Christian experiences the joy of a fuller awareness of the presence of God. In the Kingdom of God, which is promised in the Gospel, man experiences the abiding presence of God. The Lord's Day of worship (Christian Sabbath) is a foretaste of the promised heavenly rest. The readers were encouraged to make haste to enter the promised rest lest they would fail because of unbelief like the Israelites in the wilderness (v. 11).

Exhortation to enter God's rest (4:12-13)

The writer had already asked if the readers knew of any escape should they permit the great salvation in Christ to slip away (Heb. 2:3). He again turned to exhortation by pointing out that the Word of God is alive, energetic, and penetrating (v. 12). Words are commonly thought of as inanimate sounds, but the Word of God brought creation into existence (cf. Gen. 1:3ff.; John 1:1ff.). God's Word became flesh and provided for man's redemption. God's Word does not return to Him void but accomplishes the message which it enshrouds. The Law contains judgement. The actions of the sinner are examined in the light of the words of God's Law. The message of the Gospel also means judgement, calling sinners to repentance in faith. Those who refuse God's call are sealed in their condemnation.

The Word of God is the Old Testament and the Gospel of Christ made alive and effective by the Holy Spirit. The Word which became personal in Christ's incarnation and which is present in the Holy Spirit can penetrate to the inner being of man and judge his thoughts and desires. Even man's inner thoughts are exposed by the penetrating Word. The very thought of renouncing faith in Christ, God's Son, is known by God and is a serious affront to Him. Man knows only the outward actions and expressed thoughts of his fellow-man, but God knows the unexpressed thoughts and the most hidden desires of every man (v. 13).

The promised rest is inherited by \_\_\_\_\_  
in Christ.

(faith)

God's Word is a \_\_\_\_\_, e \_\_\_\_\_,  
and p \_\_\_\_\_.

God's Word brought \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

God's Word became \_\_\_\_\_ and provided  
for \_\_\_\_\_.

God's Word does not return to Him \_\_\_\_\_.

God's Word \_\_\_\_\_ man.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Encouragement to Continue in Faith

Hebrews 4:14-5:10

Christ as High Priest properly represents man  
(4:14-16)

Under the gaze of God's scrutiny, man has reason to fear. Since the very inner thoughts of man are laid bare before God, he cannot hope to plead innocent at the time of his judgement. On the other hand, his case is not hopeless because God in the Son has experienced the infirmities of man (v. 15). Jesus, the Son of God, who entered into the human experiences of temptation and death, was raised from the dead and was exalted to the right hand of God (v. 14). In His exaltation, Jesus did not lay aside the human nature, but he carried an experiential knowledge of man's situation into heaven before the throne of God. Without Christ's priestly representation before God, man stands hopeless in fear and trembling before the Holy Creator. However, with the Son of God as High Priest to represent him before the Heavenly Father, man has assurance of salvation and is encouraged to hold firmly to his profession (v. 14).

The purpose of a priest was to hear confessions and to make atonement for the confessed sins. Sinners are instructed to confess their sins to Jesus Christ whose death has provided atonement for them. Jesus is the perfect High Priest who represents sinful man before God. He understands man's situation and his great love for him. Jesus has already made an offering to provide for his forgiveness, and through obedience He has established His own righteousness which is acceptable with God. If man turns from Christ to some other means of acceptance with God, he loses assurance and hope. Legalistic ceremonialism treats all sinners alike and has no feeling for the down-trodden. Christ treats each individual according to his own need and situation (v. 15). He understands man's temptations because He lived on earth as man and experienced genuine human temptations.

The writer of Hebrews really believed that Christ is the sinners' friend. Through Him, every person has access to God's throne of grace where he can find mercy and help in time of need. In Judaism, Gentiles were not permitted to draw near to God's presence. Flagrant sinners could never hope to overcome their wrongs and find acceptance with God. But the Gospel of Christ excludes no nationality nor sinner regardless of how bad his deeds.

Because of the work of Christ, an earthly priest is not needed to intercede on behalf of man. Christ knows the heart and experience of every man much better than an earthly priest who is hemmed in by his own biases and conflicts. Christ is not beyond the

Christ as High Priest carried an experiential knowledge of man's situation into heaven before the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.

(throne, God)

Christ fulfils the purpose of a priest which was to hear \_\_\_\_\_ and to make \_\_\_\_\_ for sins.

(confessions, atonement)

Is this statement true or false?

Christ makes an earthly priest unnecessary.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Compare your answer with the text.)

reach of even the lowliest man who walks on this earth, nor is He too busy to heed the least among men. Although sinful man feels condemned and is afraid to confront the righteous Creator, he receives courage and boldness to approach God's throne because he knows that Christ understands his situation and will deal with his sins in mercy (v. 16).

The High Priest needs to be from among men (5:1-3)

There is no record that Christ was of the lineage of Aaron nor that His ministry took on a priestly character. Although the nature of Jesus' ministry and His ancestry gave no indication of His rights to the priestly office, the writer explained His qualifications as a high priest. The Levitical high priest ordinarily came from the tribe of Levi whereas Jesus was of Judah. The argument of the writer is not based upon ancestry but upon the fact that the high priests were taken from among men. Jesus qualified in this aspect.

The work of the high priest was to bring sinful man to God and to offer sacrifices in establishing man in the right relationship with God (v. 1). Although it was necessary for him to offer sacrifices for himself, his primary function was to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins on behalf of others. Since his ministry represented man he needed to have experienced the life and temptations of man in order that he could deal understandingly and gently with the wayward (v. 2). It is understandable that he had to offer sacrifices for himself since he was also guilty of sin (v. 3).

The High Priest must be divinely appointed (5:4-6)

The priestly office was by divine appointment. Man was not to seek the office on his own initiative, but he was to be called of God (v. 4). God appointed the tribe of Levi to serve as priests for the other eleven tribes. In order to replace the Levites and maintain twelve tribes of Israel, both of Joseph's sons were recognized as heads of tribes.

The Levites were set apart specially to approach God. As full sacrificing priests, Aaron and his descendants were of a higher order than other Levite families who performed subordinate duties. Aaron did not choose the office for himself but was appointed to it by God (v.4). Like Aaron, Christ did not exalt Himself but He was appointed to the priestly responsibility by God (5).

The author used two Psalms as scriptural authority for his point that Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Both Psalms 2 and 110 were interpreted messianically. Psalm 2:7, quoted in verse 5, identifies the Messiah as the divine Son of God.

*Christ was not from the tribe of Levi, but He qualified as High Priest by being taken from among \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(men)*

*Which two Psalms were used to prove that Christ qualifies as High Priest?*

*\_\_\_\_\_*  
*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

Psalm 110 begins with the statement, "The Lord said unto my Lord," a reference interpreted by Peter to refer to Jesus instead of David (cf. Acts 2:34ff.). The identification of the Messiah as Lord is followed by His identity as an eternal high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

During the reign of the Hasmoneans, the kingly ruler assumed the high priestly office as well. Generally the kings failed to live up to the moral requirements of the high priests. The sect of the Pharisees originated during the Maccabean revolt and was antagonistic towards the priests for their laxity in keeping the Law. They believed that the perfect keeping of the Law was a prerequisite for bringing God's intervention through the Messianic Kingdom. Expectations that a righteous priest would appear to lead Judah in righteous living increased. This hope was especially strong among the Qumran community members who contrasted the Teacher of Righteousness with the Wicked Priest. The Manual of Discipline mentions the "coming of the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel" (9:11), who were to appear at the end of the age. The Book of Hebrews identifies Jesus as the Priest who offered Himself as a sacrifice. The Messianic ideas of a prophet who would teach the Word of God, a priest who would lead the nation in righteousness, and a king who would lead the nation in victory were current concepts in Judaism.

Hebrews presents Christ as the Righteous Priest. In Melchizedek the author of Hebrews found justification for a priestly order apart from Aaron's descendants. In Psalm 2:7, God declared the Messiah as His Son. Psalm 110:1 was messianically interpreted, and verse 4 speaks of the Messiah as a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. Perhaps the Psalm was based on the fact that David and his successors appeared, after capturing Jerusalem from the Jebusites, to have acted as heirs to the dynasty of priest-kings of which Melchizedek was the best-known representative.<sup>1</sup> Although Jesus who was born of the tribe of Judah could not be an Aaronic priest of the tribe of Levi, the Christians interpreted the Messianic Psalm 110 as having been fulfilled in Jesus. The Psalm was thought to be a direct word from God which declared the Messiah's perpetual priesthood after another order.

Ordinarily, the genealogy of the priestly order was carefully preserved; however, there was no known record of Melchizedek. Since His priesthood did not come from an earthly genealogy, it was concluded that He was divinely appointed in a special way. Christ as High Priest supersedes the earthly high priests.

<sup>1</sup>F. F. Bruce, "Hebrews" in Peake's Commentary on the Bible (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962), p. 1012.

Write the number of the Psalm which identifies Jesus in each of the following ways:

- \_\_\_ 1. Messiah as the divine Son of God.
- \_\_\_ 2. Eternal high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

(Compare your answers with the text. See the first part of paragraph on p. 47.)

Current concepts in Judaism concerning the Messiah were:

- 1. A \_\_\_\_\_ who would teach the Word of God,
- 2. A \_\_\_\_\_ who would lead the nation in righteousness,
- 3. A \_\_\_\_\_ who would lead the nation in victory.

(prophet, priest, king)

The High Priest must be righteous (5:7-10)

In contrast to the Hasmonean priest-kings, Jesus' righteous life qualified Him to be the great High Priest. The primary functions of priests were to offer prayers and sacrifices for the sins of the people. In the Temple, the burning of incense represented the offering of prayers. The high priest approached the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies in a cloud of smoke from the burning of incense and sprinkled the blood of the atonement sacrifice on the Mercy Seat. Jesus as Priest "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death" (v. 7), an apparent reference to His agony in Gethsemane. Although Jesus requested that the cup of suffering pass from Him, He submitted to God's will in dying on the cross for man's sins. Jesus was God's Son, yet the Father's will for Him was to suffer (v. 8). His perfect obedience to God's will qualified Him as the righteous Priest who could offer an effective sacrifice to God. Unrighteous priests were ineffective in bringing men into a right relationship with God. As the High Priest who was perfect in righteousness because of perfect obedience, Jesus was able to offer an atonement which secured "eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (v. 9). God's addressing Him as High Priest was the recognition of that which He had become through earthly obedience (v. 10). This statement may have reference to the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of the Father where He has entered the heavenly Holy of Holies to make intercession for His people (cf. Heb. 7:25).

An Exhortation to Continue in Faith

Hebrews 5:11-6:20

The readers had failed to grow spiritually (5:11-14)

The author's discussion of the Son as High Priest is interrupted by this hortatory section. The readers had not appropriated the maximum benefits which Christ had made available to them. The author desired to say more about the superiority of Christ to Judaism, some matters which were difficult to interpret, but he needed to be sure that his readers were following his line of reasoning. He anticipated that they had become "dull of hearing" (v. 11). He paused to stir up their interest before going on with his argument in 7:1-28. It could be concluded from verse 11 that Hebrews is a sermon which was delivered orally before it was recorded.

Verse 12 implies that the epistle was addressed to a particular group within a larger fellowship. The background and opportunities of the readers should have prepared them for rapid progress in the Christian faith. They should have been teachers rather than

Earthly priests offered \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, but Jesus offered \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

(Heb. 5:7-8).

(prayers, sacrifices, prayers, supplications)

Jesus as High Priest was perfect in righteousness because of His perfect \_\_\_\_\_.

(obedience)

Verse 12 of Hebrews 5 implies that the author was writing to a \_\_\_\_\_ within a larger fellowship. (Compare with text)

needing the instructions of this epistle. Their growth in understanding Christianity had been hindered by some problem. They had not gotten beyond the fundamental principles of the faith (v. 12). The readers had been Christians long enough to have passed beyond the first principles of deeper doctrines. Milk represents the fundamental principles and meat the more mature doctrines of Christianity. Whether persecution, prejudice, or lack of interest was the hindrance is not stated. Apparently some problem caused them to question the value of continuing in the Christian faith. Their doubts resulted in a lack of growth.

The writer described his readers as needing milk, the food of infants, because they were "unskilful [inexperienced] in the word of righteousness" (v. 13). Perhaps moral truth is meant by "word of righteousness." The readers had received the first principles of the Gospel—the doctrines which enabled them to be saved. However, they had not matured to the point of expressing Christian attitudes in moral living. Some of their own actions were wrong because they had not grown to the point of being able to distinguish between good and evil (v. 14). It appears that the readers had been unable to overcome self-interest and prejudice with love which is concern for the unlovely.

It is not profitable to remain on salvation doctrines (6:1-6)

Although the author had been discussing basic salvation doctrines, he stated that it was time to leave those doctrines and to move on to deeper teachings (v. 1). Apparently the readers had repented of their sins and believed in Christ, but they had not received what they had expected as Christians. Since they were believers, the author saw no point in returning to a discussion of repentance from dead works, faith in God, and the doctrines of baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection, and eternal judgement (vv. 1f.). The immature readers would gain nothing by returning to the point where they were when they first heard the Gospel. If they slipped back to their previous condition in unbelief, no second beginning was possible (vv. 4-6).

The religious ceremonies and legalistic actions of the Jewish Christians, practised before their faith in Christ, perhaps constituted the "dead works" from which they repented. Likely, the "doctrine of baptisms" had reference to the baptism of Christians as contrasted to the ceremonial washings of the Jews. "Hands" symbolized strength or power. It was customary to place hands on a Christian's head and pray that he might be anointed by the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 19:6). The resurrection of the dead was held by the Pharisees and was a basic doctrine of Christianity. Eternal judgement was connected with the Day of the Lord.

*Hebrews 5:12 indicates Christian growth had been hindered by some \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(problem)*

*Going beyond the salvation doctrines was necessary because, if the readers slipped back into their previous condition in unbelief, no \_\_\_\_\_ was possible.*

*(second beginning)*

in which God would come to confront every man with his works. Those who had lived in rebellion against God's will would be condemned eternally.

Those who have been saved ("once enlightened"), have tasted of the heavenly gift, have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, have experienced the promises of God's Word and the spiritual power of the coming age cannot be renewed to salvation a second time. For this reason, the author proposed to move to doctrines beyond those of salvation (vv. 4-6). There is no question that he was speaking of those who had been born of the Spirit and had entered the Kingdom or New Age. If they turned aside from the salvation they had experienced in Christ, they could not be saved a second time. The author did not deny that it is hypothetically possible to lose salvation, but he emphatically denied that it is possible to be saved again if one loses his salvation. Apparently the Jewish Christians were contemplating turning deliberately from salvation in Christ and returning to the ways of Judaism. The author warned that to turn away from the great salvation in Christ would exclude them forever from God's heavenly gift. To renounce Him openly as the Son of God is to crucify Christ "to themselves," which is putting Him to "open shame" (v. 6). Since He is the Son of God, to renounce Him is to renounce God—the opposite of turning to God for acceptance. If man refuses to confess Christ before men, he will not be confessed before the heavenly Father as belonging to Christ.

Although the author did not say specifically that some who had believed had fallen away from salvation, he warned that there was the danger of such a possibility. His statement does not contradict the Biblical doctrine of the security of the believer. The Bible does not state that a believer will continue to be saved even if he renounces faith in Christ. Such a statement excludes the freedom and responsibility of man. "Once a person is saved he cannot be lost" is also an incorrect statement of the doctrine because it makes salvation mechanical and deletes man's will and freedom. The Bible does teach that once a man is saved he will not be lost because of the continuing activity of Christ as intercessor and the Holy Spirit as companion and guide. The same Spirit who brought man to conviction and to an understanding of the truth in Christ continues to deal with saved man in giving him grace for living the Christian life. The saved person is not left to himself to work out his own salvation; however, he is responsible for continuing in faith. The constant presence of the Holy Spirit enables him to resist temptations and to continue faithful to God.

Unbelievers receive God's curse (6:7-8)

The author illustrated the point that unbelievers are unfruitful and cursed of God by the

*Underline the statement which the author of Hebrews emphatically denied.*

1. *It is hypothetically possible to lose salvation.*
2. *It is possible to be saved a second time.*

*(2. should be underlined)*

*To renounce Christ as the Son of God openly is to \_\_\_\_\_ Him to oneself.*

*(crucify)*

*Write true or false before the following statements to indicate the meaning of "the security of the believer."*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. *A person will continue to be saved even if he renounces faith in Christ.*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. *Once a person is saved, he cannot be lost.*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. *A saved person will not be lost because of the continuing activity of Christ as intercessor and the Holy Spirit as companion and guide.*

*(false, false, true)*

illustration of land which receives rain. Good land yields a useful crop for those who till it. The fruitfulness of the land is described as a blessing from God. God bestows the same blessings of sunshine and rain on land which is unfruitful. This land bears thistles and thorns which are rejected. The end of the cursed land is burning. God bestows His blessings upon two kinds of people, but opposite results develop from them. One is fruitful and receives God's blessings. The other is unfruitful and receives God's punishment.

The faithful are encouraged to persevere (6:9-12)

Although the author warned the Jewish Christians of the consequences of turning away from salvation in Christ, he was persuaded that they would not turn away (v. 9). This verse reinforces the concept that the author was discussing a hypothetical situation and using it as a warning.

Verse 10 reveals that the Jewish Christians had participated in a work of love in the name of Christ. Perhaps they had participated in the love offering which was collected throughout Achaia, Macedonia, and Asia for the Jerusalem Christians who were experiencing poverty. The writer did reveal that the ministry or service of his readers related to saints (other Christians). In expressing the work of love in meeting the needs of saints, they were expressing love for Christ. Also, the work of love in which they had participated revealed that the Christ of love was abiding in their hearts and was working through them (v. 10).

The author encouraged each Christian to continue in that type of ministry which expressed the true spirit of Christianity (v. 11). Participating in such a ministry and experiencing the joy of serving would offset the distress of their trials. The loss of hope would result in slothfulness (v. 12).

The assurance of hope is based on faith. Hope based on faith is the source of patience which gives stability and endurance during the time of persecution, enabling the person to continue faithful and to inherit the promises (v. 12).

God's promises give hope (6:13-20)

God's promises are certain.—The author used Abraham to illustrate the long-suffering of faith and its reward. The Jewish Christians needed encouragement to bear up under their afflictions during the long delay of Christ's second coming. God promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation and would give to him the land of Canaan. When Sarah

*The Jewish Christians had probably participated in a love offering collected for the \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(Jerusalem Christians)*

*The assurance of hope is based on \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(Compare your answer with the text.)*



Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. What possible problems were the Jewish Christians facing? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Give three statements indicating that the recipients of the Book of Hebrews were Christians.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How does the present life differ from the New Age? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What do people normally expect when they become Christians? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What are the immediate blessings which believers receive? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Name two truths the writer of Hebrews found in Psalm 95:7-11. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How did the writer use the Sabbath rest to support his argument of a future promised rest?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. In what ways did Canaan fail to provide for the perfect promised rest? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Describe God's Word. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What hope does Christ as High Priest give to man? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. What were the purposes of a priest? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. How did Jesus' qualifications as High Priest differ from the requirements of the Law? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. How were Psalms 2 and 110 used to support the argument that Christ qualifies as High Priest?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. What three Messianic figures were expected by the Jews? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. Interpret Hebrews 5:7-8. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. Give two implications of Hebrews 5:12. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. What reason did the writer give for going on beyond the salvation doctrines? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
18. Interpret Hebrews 6:4-6. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
19. Reconcile the doctrine of the security of the believer with Hebrews 6:4-6. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
20. What work of love had the Jewish Christians probably participated in? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
21. Interpret Hebrews 6:15. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Supplementary activity (Level 2):

Read pages 33-46 in The Letter to the Hebrews by Bowman and answer the following questions.

1. What does the author's discussion of the promised rest assume about God's promises?
2. How did the concept of the nature of the promised rest change from the day of Moses to that of the Hebrew Christians?
3. Outline the qualifications of a high priest.
4. Why did the author of Hebrews conclude that it was unprofitable to lay again the foundation of the elementary doctrines of Christ? What are the elementary doctrines?
5. What would enable Christians to reach mature faith?

Advanced activity (Level 3):

Read pages 85-115 in Hewitt and answer the following questions.

1. Briefly summarize the author's purpose in discussing the promised rest. List the shades of meaning attached to the word 'rest'.
2. Name the qualifications of Christ as High Priest.
3. Name the three fundamental pairs of elementary truths, and state why it would be worthless to lay the foundation principles again.
4. List the evidences in 6:4-6 which indicate that the readers had experienced salvation in Christ.
5. In interpreting Hebrews 6:4-6, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the saved and lost theory, the non-Christian theory, and the hypothetical theory?

Seminar Discussion

1. What possible problems could have tempted the Hebrew Christians to renounce Christianity?
2. Describe the nature of the blessings people can expect when they become Christians.
3. Describe the nature of the promised rest expected in the day of Moses and that set forth by the writer of Hebrews.
4. How does Christ as High Priest give encouragement to the afflicted?
5. Why did the Hebrew Christians fail to grow spiritually?
6. Will a person be lost if he renounces faith in Christ? Be prepared to defend your view.