

Learning to Minister from the Old Testament

**Growing Godly Family Series
Manual 18**

By

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Growing Godly Families Series

This series of manuals is the result of a series of weekly e-mail topics that have been prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. They originally started out as a one page topic that gradually grew to the point where most topics are about three pages in length.

This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders to give them Biblical principles for the development of godly physical and spiritual families. Because they give Biblical principles for developing godly families, they are also helpful for new Christians that want to grow and become godly families.

Mark 10:43-45 says, "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." In these verses Christ taught that godly spiritual leaders do not have the attitudes of leaders in the world. Worldly leadership is based on power and authority and is designed to benefit the leader and place him above others. In contrast, godly spiritual leadership is designed to help every Christian reach their full potential in Christ. The following three statements give a summary of three styles of leadership. The purpose of this series is to help every family develop their full potential as godly families.

If we drive people, we will drive them until they can get out of our way.

If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone ourselves.

If we serve people, we will help each person develop their full God given potential and equip each person for the ministry that Christ has prepared for every Christian.

In the world people often measure success by the amount of things that they accumulate in this world before they die. However, they are unable to take any of those things with them when they die. Mark 8:36-37 says, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Success produces rewards until we die but it produces nothing for eternity.

In contrast, God measures effectiveness by our faithfulness and obedience. Matthew 6:19-21 says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Effectiveness produces eternal rewards. Mark 10:29-30 says, "So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life." I Corinthians 10:31 says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." The Growing Godly Families Series is designed to help your family life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

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1.

Understanding How the Father Views Christ

Today we are beginning a new series of topics on the book of Hebrews. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament the people offered many sacrifices as a covering for sin. However, those sacrifices could never take away sin. When John the Baptist introduced Christ in John 1:29, that verse says, “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Here we see that Christ came to do what the Old Testament sacrifices could never do. We will gain a much greater understanding of this as we see the relationship of the Old Testament to the ministry of Christ.

Hebrews 1:1-2 says, “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.” In the verses in the introduction to the book of Hebrews we see the way that God spoke in the time of the Old Testament contrasted with the way that the Father spoke to us through the ministry of Christ.

We begin by seeing that the Father spoke in various times in the Old Testament. The period of the writing of the Old Testament covered a period of between 1600 and 1800 years. In addition, some of the writers did not even fully understand what they were writing. Daniel 12:8-9 says, “Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, “My lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things?*” And he said, “Go *your way*, Daniel, for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end.” Here we see that Daniel was told that the things that he wrote were sealed until the time of the end.

The long length of time over which the Old Testament books were written also meant that there were many different cultures and different customs during the time that the various books of the Old Testament were written. In fact the books were written in several different countries. As a result, God gave us a picture of what He wanted to communicate with us through the things that were written in these various cultures, customs and countries.

The Father also spoke in various ways through the Old Testament writers. Some writers wrote in poetry. Others gave historical accounts or even shared visions or dreams. These things were written to the fathers by the prophets. II Peter 1:20-21 says, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.” The Father led these writers to write through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

However, God did something new when we come to the time of the New Testament. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Here we see that during the time of the New Testament that the Father sent His Son to live among the people of the world. Most of the New Testament writers had the opportunity to get to know Christ and travel with Him

because the Father spoke to those writers through His Son. They got to spend much time with Christ while He was here on this earth.

We see that the Father appointed the Son to be heir of all things. Psalm 2:7-8 says, "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give *You* the nations *for* Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.'" This Psalm promised hundreds of years in advance that Christ would be the heir of all things. Even though Christ is the heir of all things, He has promised to share that inheritance with the church. Romans 8:16-17 says, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together." Here we see that we are called joint heirs with Christ because He will share His inheritance with us throughout all eternity.

We are also reminded of the fact that Christ is the One who created the worlds. John 1:1-3 tells us, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." Christ was the Creator of all things and so He is the One who has all authority over His entire creation. In addition to seeing that Christ is the Creator, we see that Christ is the exact image of the Father.

Hebrews 1:3-4 says, "Who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." We are reminded of several things about Christ in these verses. First, we see that He is the source of light. The very brightness of God comes from Christ and gives light to the world. In John 8:12 Christ said, "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." Christ is the source of light for everyone in the world.

Second, we see that Christ is the express image of the Father. Although the word translated "express image" is only used here in the New Testament, in other uses it was used to speak of the image stamped on coins, in clay or through use of a metal or wooden image. Each of the things stamped by that same image would be an exact reproduction of the original. This is a clear statement that Christ is the exact image of the Father in every way. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Christ is God just as the Father is God because they have the same exact image.

Third, we see that Christ upholds all things by the Word of His power. Colossians 1:15-17 says, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." Here we see that Christ is the One who created all things whether those things are in heaven or on the earth. He created all things whether they can be seen or not. He is the One who places all rulers in their positions of influence and authority. In addition to creating all things, Christ created them for Himself.

Here we see that all things were created for His glory. Christ is the One who is before all things and He is the One who holds all things together.

Fourth, we see the purpose why Christ came to this earth. We see that He came and purged our sins. The word translated “purged” means to act rightly or to perform a promise. Christ came to keep the promise of the Father that He would take away our sins. Matthew 1:21 says, “And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” Christ came to save us from our sins and He fulfilled that promise by shedding His blood to pay the penalty for our sins.

Fifth, when Christ completed His ministry on this earth, Christ returned to heaven and is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High. The fact that Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father is a clear indication that He completed the work that He had been sent to do on this earth. It also indicates the authority that has been given to Christ. Hebrews 1:13 says, “But to which of the angels has He ever said: 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool'?” Here we see that Christ has been given the authority that no angel ever had. This quotation is a quote from Psalm 110:1 and is also the quotation that Christ used after the Jewish religious leaders questioned the authority of Christ in Luke 20. Christ spoke in Luke 20:41-44, “And He said to them, 'How can they say that the Christ is the Son of David? Now David himself said in the Book of Psalms: 'The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.' ' 'Therefore David calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?' The religious leaders knew this was a claim by Christ to be God.

As God, Christ was much greater than any of the angels. That is why Philippians 2:9-11 says, “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Christ is the One to whom everyone will one day bow.

Christ has also obtained a more excellent name than the angels by inheritance. In verse two we see that Christ became heir of all things because of the fact that the Father has appointed him heir. Christ spoke a parable to the Jewish religious leaders. In Luke 20:14-15 we read, “But when the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.' So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed *him*. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them?” The parable makes it clear that Christ is the One who was the Son. As we help our physical and spiritual children to understand these four verses that introduce the book of Hebrews, we help our children learn to explain one of the passages that clearly shows that Christ is the Son of God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children grow in their understanding of the deity of Christ.

2.

Understanding Why Christ is Greater than the Angels

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand how the Father views Christ. We saw that Christ is the express image of the Father and that Christ is God just as the Father is God. We also saw that Christ now sits at the right hand of the Father. Christ also has all authority because He is with God and He is God. Today we are going to see how to help our children understand and explain why Christ is much greater than the angels.

In Hebrews 1:5-7 we read, "For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son"? But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire." In just these three verses we have four quotations from the Old Testament. In II Samuel 7 God made a covenant with David. Five verses are quoted in this chapter that relate to that covenant. Instead of giving our own opinions or the opinions of some recent person, these verses show us the importance of backing up what we teach from the Word of God. That is important because all Scripture is inspired by God.

Psalms 2 talks about the time when Christ will come back to set up His kingdom on the earth. In Psalm 2:7 we read, "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You.'" Although the entire chapter talks about Christ, this verse makes it very clear that the Father calls Christ, My Son. David had many descendents that served as kings of Israel and Judah. However, the Father said that only the Son of God would rule over the entire world.

Then we see that the second quotation is taken directly from the covenant that God made with David. In II Samuel 5:12-14 God said to David, "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men." Verses 12, 13 and the first part of 14 talk about the fact that the Father would establish the throne of One Son forever. However, the second part of verse 14 shows us that the sons of David that served as kings of Israel and Judah would be disciplined if they sinned. That is why only the first part of verse 14 is quoted here in Hebrews to show that Christ is the Son of God.

God then shows in verses 6 and 7 that Christ is greater than the angels because the angels worship Christ. The writer of Hebrews then quoted from the Greek translation of Deuteronomy 32:43 to show that the angels would worship Christ. We see an example of this worship at the birth of Christ. Luke 2:13-14 says, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" The worship of Christ by angels showed that Christ is greater than the

angels. In fact the next quotation shows the ministry of angels. Psalm 104:4 says, “Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.” God created the angels to be His ministers or servants.

In contrast, Hebrews 1:8-9 says, “But to the Son *He says*: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions." These verses are a quote of Psalm 45:6-7 to show that Christ is the One who is the eternal ruler. Here we see that it is the Father who calls Christ, God. It is the Father who says that Christ will rule forever. The word translated “scepter” was used to speak of the walking stick (staff) that a shepherd used. When it was applied to kings it talked about the stick that they used to carry out their rule.

Here we see that Christ will rule with righteousness. Christ would do this because He loves righteousness and hates lawlessness. The Father then said that He is the One that anointed Christ with the oil of gladness. In verse 1 we saw that Christ is the Prophet who spoke for God. In verse 3 we see that Christ is the Priest who offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sins. In verse 8 we see that Christ is the King who will rule for all eternity. As a result, the anointing of Christ speaks of the fact that the Father is the One who has recognized that Christ has all three of these offices.

In fact the word “Messiah” means the anointed One. Isaiah 61:1-2 says, ““The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is upon Me*, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *those who are bound*; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn. Christ read these verses except the phrase, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, in the synagogue of Nazareth as He began His public ministry. Then Christ said in Luke 4:21, “And He began to say to them, Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” He stopped before He read the last part of verse two because He will fulfill that part at His second coming. Here we see another example of how to help our children learn to minister from the Old Testament by understanding the context so that they know why Christ stopped in the middle of the verse.

Hebrews 1:10-12 says, “And: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail.” These verses are quoted from Psalm 102:25-27. That Psalm was a prayer of David to the Lord during a time when he was suffering. In this verse David spoke of the fact that Christ was the Creator of the heavens and the earth. In the book of John, Christ is introduced as the Creator of all things. John 1:1-3 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” Christ was in the beginning with God and all things were made through Christ.

However, the writer of Hebrews points out that the present heavens and earth will not last forever. In contrast, Christ will remain forever. The present heavens and earth are growing old

just like a piece of clothing. The day will come when Christ will dissolve the present heavens and earth. That event is compared here in Hebrews to the folding up of an old coat or other outer garment. In fact the present heavens and earth will be changed. II Peter 3:10-13 says, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." Here we see that before Christ begins His eternal rule that He will create new heavens and a new earth in which there will be true righteousness throughout eternity.

In contrast to the eternal rule of Christ, Hebrews 1:13-14 says, "But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" Here we see that we are reminded again of the present position of Christ. Earlier in this chapter in verse 3 we saw that Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father at the present time. The day is coming when all of the enemies of Christ will become His footstool. Psalm 110:1 says, "The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool."" Christ is presently seated at the right hand of the Father. Here in Psalm 110:1 we see that the Father said to Christ that the day will come when the Father will also cause all of His enemies to become His footstool.

At the time of the final judgment all of the enemies will be forced to bow their knees to Christ. Philippians 2:9-11 says, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Here we see that at the final judgment all will be forced to bow the knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. This action will also bring glory to God, the Father. No angels will ever have people bow to them because the angels are actually servants that God has sent to minister to us who will inherit the eternal salvation that Christ has provided for us.

As we look at this first chapter of Hebrews, we are given many illustrations of how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to use the Old Testament to show that Christ is God. This chapter has shown us from the Old Testament that Christ is superior to all angels because He is the Son of God and is equal with God. We will see in the coming chapters how to show our children that Christ is superior to all others because He is God. As we help our children to grow in their understanding of the fact that Christ is God, they will be able to help others in their spiritual growth and understanding. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why Christ is greater than angels.

3.

Understanding the Danger of Neglecting the Gospel

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain why Christ is greater than angels. In fact angels are ministering spirits that are sent to minister to all those who will inherit salvation. In our topic today we are going to see that the writer warns of the danger of neglecting the salvation that God has provided through Christ.

Hebrews 2:1-4 says, “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?” Just as Christ deserved the worship and service of angels, the Hebrews (Jews) also needed to worship Christ. That is why the writer said that the Jews needed to especially pay attention to the things that they had heard. Otherwise the things that the Jews had heard might slip away from their minds.

The ministry of the angels is to serve those who will inherit salvation. Part of that service had been to deliver messages from God to the Jews at various times. Those messages spoken by angels for God had proved to be trustworthy because God had carried out those messages. Psalm 68:17 says, “The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *even* thousands of thousands; the Lord is among them *as in* Sinai, in the Holy *Place*.” Here we see that the angels were with Christ when He gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. The word translated “transgression” means the violating of the Mosaic Law. The word translated “disobedience” speaks here of disobeying anything that God has said. The word translated “just reward” speaks of the payment of wages. Here God is saying that those who disobeyed the commandments of the Lord received the wages that are due for sin. Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Christ paid those wages so that those who accept the gift of God receive eternal life. As a result, this is a warning to those who neglect this great salvation that Christ has provided.

This message of salvation was first spoken by the Lord while He was on this earth. After Christ returned to heaven, this message continued to be spoken by the apostles of Christ who had heard Him give that message. God confirmed the message of those eyewitnesses with signs, with wonders, with various miracles and with gifts of the Holy Spirit. The word translated “signs” means an unusual event that is not normal. I Corinthians 1:22-23 says, “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness.” On the Day of Pentecost the apostles and other eyewitnesses of the resurrection were able to share the Gospel in the languages of many different nations even though they had not learned those languages. That was a sign to the Jews.

The word translated “wonders” means a miracle done by any person. In II Corinthians 12:12 Paul said, “Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.” In II Thessalonians 2:9 we read, “The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders.” Here we see that the antichrist will deceive the world by doing various signs and lying wonders. Mark 13:22 adds, “For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” These verses show that wonders will be done by the antichrist, false christs and false prophets in the time of the end. As a result, we see that Satan will try to imitate the miracles of Christ and the apostles who saw Christ. This will deceive the world in the tribulation. This was a real warning to the Jews at the time that Hebrews was written.

Hebrews 2:5-8 goes on to say, “For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying: “What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.” For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.” Here we see that the writer quoted from Psalm 8:4-6. The thousand year rule of the world to come (earth) promised in Revelation 20:4-6 is not promised to angels. The earth at that time will not be placed under the angels. Instead the quotation from Psalm 8 shows that promise was made to Christ by the Father.

Christ is the One who was made for a little while lower than the angels. As Philippians 2:8 says, “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross.” However, it was only for a little while that Christ was made lower than the angels. Once Christ had paid the penalty for sin, the Father crowned Him with glory and honor. In fact Philippians 2:9-11 says, “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*, to the glory of God the Father.” The day will come when even all the people who reject Christ now will be forced to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. There is nothing that has not been placed under Christ.

That is something that causes Christians to rejoice and those who reject Christ to fear. As Christians, we know that Romans 8:38-39 promises us, “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” As a result, all Christians can rejoice.

The time when all things will be placed under the feet of Christ has not yet come. However, Revelation 20:11-15 says, “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death

and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” The final judgment is what causes those who reject that great salvation to fear.

We also see when Christ chose to become lower for a little while than the angels. Hebrews 2:9 says, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.” We see that there was a specific time when Christ was made a little lower than the angels. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” It was at that moment when Christ took on human flesh that He was made a little lower than the angels for a little while.

As Christians we understand that the purpose for that little time was so that He could suffer and die for our sins. It was due to that choice to be made a little lower than the angels that the Father has crowned Christ with glory and honor. I Corinthians 15:45-47 says, “And so it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven.” The first man Adam brought sin and death on all people. The second Man is the Lord from heaven who brought spiritual life to all people who repent of their sin and place their faith in Him.

This choice of Christ showed the greatness of the grace of God. Romans 5:15 says, “But the free gift *is* not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.” Then Titus 2:11 adds, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.” In these verses we see that the grace of God abounded to many through Christ. We also see that Christ is the grace of God because He is the One that brought salvation.

Christ brought this salvation by tasting death for every person. I John 2:1-2 says, “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” The word translated “propitiation” means that which satisfies. The Father was satisfied and said that the death of Christ was sufficient to pay the penalty for every person. However, each individual must choose to accept that gift by repentance of their sin of unbelief and the placing of their faith in the payment that Christ made for their sin. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how to use Scripture to warn unbelievers of the danger of neglecting that Gospel. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand how to help people understand their choice to accept or reject.

4.

Understanding Why Christ Delivers Us from the Fear of Death

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how to explain the danger of neglecting the Gospel to those who have not yet repented of their sin and placed their faith in Christ and the payment that He made for their sin. We mentioned in that topic that those without Christ have a real fear of death. In our topic today we want to help our children learn how to explain from the Scriptures that Christ has delivered all true Christians from the fear of death.

In Hebrews 2:10-13 we read, "For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." Here we see that it was fitting for the Father to provide our salvation through the sufferings of Christ. It is fitting because God is a holy God and must judge sin. It is fitting because the Father could be holy and yet still judge our sin in His own Son so that full payment was made for that sin.

That is why Christ can bring many people to heaven and all of its glory by His payment for our sins. That is why Christ is the captain of our salvation. The word translated "captain" means the chief leader, prince or author of anything. The word is used in Hebrews 12:2 where we read, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Christ is the captain or author of our faith because He is the One who took the lead to pay the penalty for our sin.

Christ was also made perfect through sufferings. As God, Christ was perfect and without sin. By becoming a man Christ also took on a human nature as the God-man. His human nature was perfected through the obedience that He showed to the Father by paying the penalty for our sin on the cross. II Corinthians 5:21 says, "For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Here we see that the Father made Christ to be sin for us so that the Father could place the righteousness of Christ on us.

The word translated "sanctifies" and "sanctified" means to be set apart. Christ set us apart from sin so that we are able to serve God. We have been set apart from sin so that means that we are now free to serve God. In fact Christ is not ashamed to call us His brethren. In John 20:17 Christ told Mary, "Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and *to* My God and your God.'" Christ could call the disciples brethren because He had already paid for their sins. Then Romans 8:29 says, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Here we see that Christ is the firstborn among all Christians because we become His brethren. Psalm 22:22 prophesied that we would become His brethren when that verse said, "I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You."

Verse 13 quotes two other Old Testament verses. Isaiah 8:17-18 says, "And I will wait on the LORD, who hides His face from the house of Jacob; and I will hope in Him. Here am I and the children whom the LORD has given me! *We are* for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion." Here we see that in becoming lower than the angels for a little while that Christ showed His human nature by His dependence on the Father that He demonstrated throughout His time on the earth.

We see why this is important for us in Hebrews 2:14-15 where we read, "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." We as humans with a human nature have flesh and blood. That is something that all humans share. In contrast, the word translated "shared" means to share something that is not related to what we are. We humans all had flesh and blood. Since Christ is eternal, He took on flesh and blood at the time He came to this earth. We see that the reason why Christ took on flesh and blood was so that He could be like us and die for us.

Through that death we see that Christ was able to destroy the one who had the power of death, the devil. In John 10:10 Christ said, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly." Satan came to destroy. In contrast, I Corinthians 15:55-57 says, "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Satan came to bring death. Christ came to destroy both Satan and death.

By His death, Christ also sets each Christian free from bondage. Before a person repents of sin and places his or her faith in Christ, that person is in bondage (the condition of being a slave). That bondage is the fear of death. In Isaiah 61:1-2a Isaiah wrote, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *those who are* bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." In Luke 4:18-19 Christ read these verses. Then He said in Luke 4:21, "And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."" Christ came among other things to open the prison for those who are bound and to proclaim liberty to the captives. At the moment that we placed our faith in Christ we received that liberty.

Hebrews 2:16-18 goes on to say, "For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." Here we see what Christ did by coming to this earth. The KJV translation is a more accurate translation where Hebrews 2:16 says, "For verily he took not

on *him the nature of* angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham.” Christ did not take on the nature of angels when He came to this earth. Instead He fulfilled the promise and took on Himself the seed of Abraham. Galatians 3:16 explains, “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, *And to your Seed,*” who is Christ.” Although this is a special promise for all Christians, this is an even greater promise for the Jews.

Then we see the reason why Christ had to take on human flesh and became fully man as well as fully God. This was necessary so that Christ could be a merciful and faithful High Priest. Hebrews 4:14-16 says, “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are, yet* without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” First, we see that Christ has passed into the heaven so that He can speak to the Father for us.

Second, we see that Christ is able to sympathize with our weaknesses because He was tempted in all of the same ways that we are tempted. I John 2:16 says “For all that *is* in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.” We are tempted by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. We need One who was tempted in the same three ways and resisted that temptation to sympathize with us in our weaknesses. We also need One who can give us the strength to have victory when we face temptation.

We also see that Christ was able to make propitiation for our sins. The Father was satisfied with that payment and showed His satisfaction by raising Christ from the dead. In fact the Father was more than satisfied. Hebrews 10:12-14 says, “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” Through the blood of Christ we have been made perfect in the sight of the Father even though we still sin in this world.

We also see that Christ is able to aid us when we are tempted. I Corinthians 10:13 says, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*. As Christians we all face temptations in this world. However, with every temptation God has provided a way of escape if we ask for His strength instead of depending on our own strength. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain this wonderful promise to Christians that may be struggling because they are depending on their own strength. The Lord will provide the way of escape as we yield to Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to help others learn to escape the fear of death and also help struggling Christians learn how to have victory over temptation.

5.

Understanding Why Christ is Greater than Moses

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Christ delivers us as Christians from the fear of death. That fear is present in every person that is not a Christian but as Christians we have been set free. Since that promise is in the section of Scripture which shows that Christ is greater than angels, we see that it was due to the fact that Christ was greater than angels that He was able to set us free. Today in our study we are going to see that Christ is also greater than Moses.

In Hebrews 3:1-2 we read, “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also *was faithful* in all His house.” Chapter 2 concluded by reminding us that Christ is a merciful and faithful High Priest. Christ made reconciliation with God possible so that we can come to the Father with boldness. Christ is also able to help us when we are tempted. As a result, all those who come to Christ are called holy brethren. We have been set apart from sin and set apart to God.

We are also partakers of the heavenly calling. The word translated “partakers” means a partner or one who shares in work or some other thing. Here we see that we share in a heavenly calling. Philippians 3:20-21 says, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” Since our citizenship is in heaven, we are able to focus our attention on heaven as we eagerly wait for Christ to come and take us to heaven and give us a new body like His glorious body.

The word “consider” means to attentively fix our eyes or mind upon something. Here we see we are to focus our mind on the fact that Christ is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. An apostle is one who is sent. Christ was sent by the Father to this world. The High Priest is the one who went into the Holy of holies in the Old Testament once a year to take blood first as a covering for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. Since Christ was without sin He has gone into heaven once for all and presented his blood to the Father because His blood has taken away our sins.

Moses was a faithful servant of God because He delivered the people of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt and set them free from that bondage. However, Christ is greater than Moses because He has paid the penalty for sin and is able to deliver from the bondage of sin all who will come to Him. Christ said in John 5:45-47, “Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is *one* who accuses you--Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” The Jews claimed that they trusted Moses but Christ said that Moses actually accused them of their sins because they did not believe what Moses wrote. However, Moses could not set them free from sin.

That is why Hebrews 3:3-4 says, “For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things *is* God.” Here we see that Christ was counted worthy of more glory than Moses. The word translated “counted worthy” means that which is fitting or right. Both Moses and Christ ministered to the family of the nation of Israel. Moses was and still is greatly honored by the Jews because of his ministry to the nation of Israel as he led them out of Egypt and through the wilderness.

These verses compare the nation of Israel to a house. Moses served the people of the house of Israel. However, Christ is the One who built the house of Israel and established it as a nation. II Samuel 7:12-13 says, ““When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” Then Romans 11:26-27 promises, “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”” Although God is presently blessing the church, God has not forgotten His promises to Israel. Christ will one day save and establish Israel as a righteous nation. As a result, Christ has more honor than Moses.

We are reminded that every house is built by someone. However, the One who built all things is God. Christ was the One who was the actual Creator. Colossians 1:14-17 says, “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.” Christ is the Creator of all things. As a result, He is the builder of all things.

This is why Hebrews 3:5-6 says, “And Moses indeed *was* faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken *afterward*, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.” Moses deserves great honor because he was faithful and did exactly what God called him to do. He was a faithful servant of God. Joshua 1:2 says, “Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them--the children of Israel.” God considered Moses a very faithful servant. However, the Son is much greater than even the most faithful servant.

In fact the greatest way in which Moses showed His faithfulness was the fact that He spoke of Christ who would come many hundreds of years later. The writer of Hebrews spoke of that faithfulness when he wrote in Hebrews 11:24-27, “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.” Here we see that Moses was faithful because he placed a greater value on being willing to suffer for Christ than he did on the value of all of the riches of Egypt. He did not fear the wrath of Pharaoh because He looked to Christ even though he could not see him with his physical eyes.

Then Hebrews 11:28 goes on to say, “By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.” The faith of Moses caused him to keep the Passover because He believed in the promise that Christ would come. I Corinthians 5:7 says, “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.” Although Moses probably did not fully understand that Christ would be our Passover, He showed his faith by his obedience to God.

John 5:46-47 says, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” Christ spoke to Moses when He said in Exodus 3:14, “And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” Christ made it clear to the Jewish religious leaders that He was the One who spoke to Moses when He said in John 8:58, “Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”” As Christ talked to Moses in Exodus chapters 3 and 4, Christ promised that He would teach Moses what to say so that Moses could tell Aaron. Exodus 4:15 says, “Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do.” Christ promised to tell Moses what to speak and what to do. As a result, Christ is much greater than Moses.

We see that we become a part of the house of Christ when we place our faith in Christ. I Peter 2:4-5 says, “Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Just as Moses was faithful as a servant, we are also to be faithful servants. I Peter 2:9 says, “But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Here we see that we are to proclaim the praises of the One who has called us.

The writer of Hebrews originally told the Jews that they were to hold fast to Christ with confidence and rejoicing of hope firm to the end. They were not to follow those Jews who were encouraging them to return to the sacrifices and ceremonies given in the book of Leviticus because Christ had fully provided salvation for them. They were to hold fast to that hope and confidence that had caused them to place their faith in Christ. In the same way we want to help our physical and spiritual children to learn to walk by faith. II Corinthians 5:7 says, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” We want to show our children by our own example what it means to walk by faith. Then they will have an example to follow for their own lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand why Christ is greater than Moses.

6.

Understanding the Danger of Unbelief

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Christ is much greater than Moses. Moses was a faithful servant in the house of God but Christ is the One who built that house. As a result, Christ is much greater because He is the builder of the house while Moses served as a faithful servant in the house. Today we are going to see that the writer of Hebrews went on to warn the Jews about the danger of unbelief.

In Hebrews 3:7-11 we read, “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, ‘they shall not enter My rest.’” Here we are reminded that the Holy Spirit is the source of all Scripture. II Peter 1:20-21 says, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.” As a result, the Holy Spirit was the source of the Scripture quoted in these verses.

This quotation came from Psalm 95:7-11. Verse 7 begins that section by saying, “For He *is* our God, and we *are* the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice.” The Hebrews who had placed their faith in Christ recognized that Christ was their God. They understood that they were His people and the sheep of His hand. However, the writer of Hebrews knew that there were many Jews who had not placed their faith in Christ. Those people were still trying to come to God through their own efforts. Those efforts included the keeping of the Levitical laws. As a result, the writer quoted from Psalm 95 to remind the Jews of an earlier rebellion against God.

The Lord had spoken to the people of Israel through Moses during the forty years that Israel wandered in the wilderness. They had not listened when God spoke to them because they had hardened their hearts. In fact the people had tested God for the entire forty years that they were in the wilderness even though they saw God perform many miracles to provide food and water for them as they traveled through the wilderness. Numbers 14:22-23 says, “Because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.” God was angry with that generation and allowed all those who rejected Him to die in the wilderness.

God here used the writer of Hebrews to give that same warning to the Jews who were failing to trust in Christ in the time of the New Testament. God said that those who had rejected Him in the Old Testament did not enter into His rest. The word “rest” is used in the New Testament to speak about the heavenly blessing that we will experience as Christians. That word is used nine times in the New Testament; eight times in Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 and the ninth time in Acts

7:49-50. Those verses say, "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the LORD, or what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things?" Stephen quoted these verses from Isaiah 66:1-2 to show that God was greater than the temple and they were rejecting God. As a result, they would experience the results of rebellion. That same warning is given here in Hebrews in these chapters.

Hebrews 3:12-15 goes on to say, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called *Today*," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." Here we see that the writer of Hebrews recognized that there might be some Jews who claimed to be Christians who were only professing Christians who still had a heart of unbelief. Today we still have many who claim to be Christians who have never repented of their sin of unbelief and so do not have a true faith in Christ.

Such people still have an evil heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Then Christ said in Matthew 15:19-20, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are *the things* which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man." We see that a professing Christian who still has a heart of unbelief will depart from the living God. Sometimes you will meet people who say that they tried Christianity and it did not work for them. Some may be very weak Christians who never had anyone help them in their spiritual growth. However, many of them probably still have an evil heart of unbelief. As I Samuel 16:7 says, "But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For *the Lord does not see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." God looks at the heart.

Since there is the danger of a person having a heart of unbelief, we are to encourage one another daily as Christians. The word translated "exhort" means to beseech, to encourage or to strengthen. Here we see that the writer of Hebrews was reminding the Jewish Christians that they needed to encourage each other daily. Some Jews were returning to their Old Testament system. Today all Christians need to continue to encourage each other daily. If there are some who have not truly repented of their sin of unbelief such encouragement may draw them to true repentance and faith in Christ. Otherwise, their hearts may become hardened. Hebrews 4:7 says, "Again He designates a certain day, saying in David, *Today*, 'after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." We see that statement is made a total of four times in Hebrews chapters 3 and 4. As we have seen, sin is very deceitful.

The word translated "partakers" means to share in something. Here we see that we have shared the life that is in Christ if we have made true decisions for Christ. For all those who have shared this life in Christ, our confidence can be steadfast. The word translated "steadfast" means to be stable or firm. Hebrews 6:18-19 says, "That by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*. This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and

steadfast, and which enters the Presence *behind* the veil.” God has promised that all who have true faith in their hearts can be steadfast. We can know that this hope is like an anchor to our soul.

God wants every true follower to rest in that assurance of the future blessing that we will experience when we are in the presence of the Lord for all eternity. That is true whether we are Jews or Gentiles. That is why Titus 2:13-14 says, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.” True Christians can know that Christ has paid the price to redeem us from every sin and lawless deed that we have committed. He has purified us for Himself and made us His own special people. He has given us a great desire to do good works that are pleasing to Him instead of the evil works that show that a person still has a heart of unbelief.

The possibility of that heart of unbelief is why Hebrew 3:16-19 warns again, “For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, *was it* not all who came out of Egypt, *led* by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” God said that those who heard in the time of Moses chose to rebel against God. There were many who had followed Moses out of Egypt that still had an evil heart of unbelief. As a result, of that unbelief, they experienced the anger of God.

God continued to remind the people of Israel of their unbelief throughout the forty years that they were in the wilderness. Every day there were people who died and their bodies were buried in the wilderness. Exodus 32:19-20 shows one of those times when the people showed their unbelief. Those verses say, “So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf *and* the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. Then he took the calf which they had made, burned *it* in the fire, and ground *it* to powder; and he scattered *it* on the water and made the children of Israel drink *it*.” Exodus 32:28 says, “So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.” Each time the people rebelled additional people died as well as those who were dying day by day.

God said that those who did not believe would not enter into His rest. That was true of the Hebrews in the wilderness. That is still true for every person today that has an evil heart of unbelief. God looks at their hearts and not their words. The Lord wants us to show our physical and spiritual children how to warn each person today of the choice that he or she must make. Those who have a true belief in their hearts will enter into the eternal rest that God has prepared. Those who still have an evil heart face eternal judgment and need to be warned of the danger of unbelief. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the danger of a heart of unbelief.

7.

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God here used the writer of Hebrews to give that same warning to the Jews who were failing to trust in Christ in the time of the New Testament. God said that those who had rejected Him in the Old Testament did not enter into His rest. The word “rest” is used in the New Testament to speak about the heavenly blessing that we will experience as Christians. That word is used nine times in the New Testament; eight times in Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 and the ninth time in Acts

7:49-50. Those verses say, “Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the LORD, or what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things?” Stephen quoted these verses from Isaiah 66:1-2 to show that God was greater than the temple and they were rejecting God. As a result, they would experience the results of rebellion. That same warning is given here in Hebrews in these chapters.

Hebrews 3:12-15 goes on to say, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called *Today*,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” Here we see that the writer of Hebrews recognized that there might be some Jews who claimed to be Christians who were only professing Christians who still had a heart of unbelief. Today we still have many who claim to be Christians who have never repented of their sin of unbelief and so do not have a true faith in Christ.

Such people still have an evil heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Then Christ said in Matthew 15:19-20, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are *the things* which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.” We see that a professing Christian who still has a heart of unbelief will depart from the living God. Sometimes you will meet people who say that they tried Christianity and it did not work for them. Some may be very weak Christians who never had anyone help them in their spiritual growth. However, many of them probably still have an evil heart of unbelief. As I Samuel 16:7 says, “But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For *the Lord does not see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”” God looks at the heart.

Since there is the danger of a person having a heart of unbelief, we are to encourage one another daily as Christians. The word translated “exhort” means to beseech, to encourage or to strengthen. Here we see that the writer of Hebrews was reminding the Jewish Christians that they needed to encourage each other daily. Some Jews were returning to their Old Testament system. Today all Christians need to continue to encourage each other daily. If there are some who have not truly repented of their sin of unbelief such encouragement may draw them to true repentance and faith in Christ. Otherwise, their hearts may become hardened. Hebrews 4:7 says, “Again He designates a certain day, saying in David, *Today*, ‘after such a long time, as it has been said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.”” We see that statement is made a total of four times in Hebrews chapters 3 and 4. As we have seen, sin is very deceitful.

The word translated “partakers” means to share in something. Here we see that we have shared the life that is in Christ if we have made true decisions for Christ. For all those who have shared this life in Christ, our confidence can be steadfast. The word translated “steadfast” means to be stable or firm. Hebrews 6:18-19 says, “That by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*. This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and

steadfast, and which enters the Presence *behind* the veil.” God has promised that all who have true faith in their hearts can be steadfast. We can know that this hope is like an anchor to our soul.

God wants every true follower to rest in that assurance of the future blessing that we will experience when we are in the presence of the Lord for all eternity. That is true whether we are Jews or Gentiles. That is why Titus 2:13-14 says, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.” True Christians can know that Christ has paid the price to redeem us from every sin and lawless deed that we have committed. He has purified us for Himself and made us His own special people. He has given us a great desire to do good works that are pleasing to Him instead of the evil works that show that a person still has a heart of unbelief.

The possibility of that heart of unbelief is why Hebrew 3:16-19 warns again, “For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, *was it* not all who came out of Egypt, *led* by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” God said that those who heard in the time of Moses chose to rebel against God. There were many who had followed Moses out of Egypt that still had an evil heart of unbelief. As a result, of that unbelief, they experienced the anger of God.

God continued to remind the people of Israel of their unbelief throughout the forty years that they were in the wilderness. Every day there were people who died and their bodies were buried in the wilderness. Exodus 32:19-20 shows one of those times when the people showed their unbelief. Those verses say, “So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf *and* the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. Then he took the calf which they had made, burned *it* in the fire, and ground *it* to powder; and he scattered *it* on the water and made the children of Israel drink *it*.” Exodus 32:28 says, “So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.” Each time the people rebelled additional people died as well as those who were dying day by day.

God said that those who did not believe would not enter into His rest. That was true of the Hebrews in the wilderness. That is still true for every person today that has an evil heart of unbelief. God looks at their hearts and not their words. The Lord wants us to show our physical and spiritual children how to warn each person today of the choice that he or she must make. Those who have a true belief in their hearts will enter into the eternal rest that God has prepared. Those who still have an evil heart face eternal judgment and need to be warned of the danger of unbelief. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the danger of a heart of unbelief.

8.

Understanding the Ministry of Christ as Our Great High Priest

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how to explain to others how to enter into the eternal rest that God has promised. We saw that people must enter that rest by faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. In this topic we are going to see that Christians can begin to enjoy this eternal rest immediately even though we are still here on this earth. This is due to the fact that Christ is our Great High Priest who speaks for us to the Father.

Hebrews 4:9-10 says, "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His." Here we see that the writer of Hebrews reminded the Jews that there is a rest (this word for rest is used only here in the New Testament so this is our eternal sabbath rest) for the people of God. Whether we are Jews or Gentiles, Ephesians 2:14-18 says, "For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." As a result, this rest is the privilege of all Christians whether we are Jews or Gentiles.

In Hebrews 4:3-4 we are reminded, "For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: 'So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,' although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh *day* in this way: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works'." God said that our eternal rest was finished before the foundation of the world. As a result, we enter that eternal rest at the moment of salvation. Just as God ceased from His works of creation and rested on the seventh day, as Christians we have ceased from our efforts to try and earn salvation. As a result, we entered the eternal rest that God has prepared for us at the moment that we placed our faith in Christ.

That is why we want to help our children begin to enjoy the spiritual blessings that God has given to all Christians. Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ." Here we see that we have already been blessed with every spiritual blessing because we are in Christ. Since those blessings are in the heavenly places, this chapter in Hebrews will tell us how to enjoy those blessing in the present.

Hebrews 4:11-13 says, "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature

hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account.” To be diligent to enter that rest means to make sure that we have stopped depending on our works and have come to Christ through faith. If someone has not entered that rest, that person is following the example of the disobedience of the people of Israel in the wilderness.

That is why we are to know that the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. A two-edged sword is sharp on both sides of the blade. It will reveal the heart of any professing Christian who is still depending on his or her own works for salvation. Since God looks at the heart, we see that God says that His Word will also discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. The Word will reveal to those people that are only professing Christians that their heart is still evil.

We see why the Word of God is able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart and show who believes and who does not. First, the Word of God is living. I Peter 1:23 says, “Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.” In this verse we see that the Word of God lives. In fact it is through the Word of God that the Holy Spirit brings conviction of the sin of unbelief according to John 16:9 which says, “of sin, because they do not believe in Me.”

Second, the Word of God is powerful. The word translated “powerful” means active or effective. Paul said in I Corinthians 16:9, “For a great and effective door has opened to me, and *there are* many adversaries.” Paul had an effective door opened for him to share the Gospel. In Isaiah 55:11 God said, “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.” God causes His Word to be effective because it goes right to the heart.

Since the Word of God reveals the thoughts and intents of the heart, the Word will bring conviction to the heart and the Holy Spirit will convict those who are professing Christians but have never really repented of their sin to realize that they face a choice. John 16:8-11 says, “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” Here we see that the Holy Spirit will convince them of their sin of unbelief. The Holy Spirit will also convince them that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One who paid the penalty for their sin. Then the Holy Spirit will convince them that Satan has already been judged and that those who continue to follow Satan will share in his judgment. At the same time this makes it possible for the Father to draw some of them to Christ because they realize the choice that they face.

For those who have repented of their unbelief and placed their faith in Christ, Hebrews 4:14-16 says, “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Here we see that every person that has become a true Christian has a greater high priest than Aaron, the first high priest. Christ is our great High Priest. A true

priest speaks to men for God and speaks to God for men. When Christ came to this earth He spoke to mankind for God.

Today Christ has passed through the heavens and is seated at the right hand of the Father. Romans 8:34 says, “Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Christ will certainly not condemn any true Christian. Instead we see that Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father. The word translated “makes intercession” means that Christ is speaking on our behalf to the Father. When Satan accuses us of sin, Christ says that He paid for our sin and that we accepted that payment by placing our faith in Christ. The Father says that He is satisfied with the payment and the accusation is dismissed.

We are also reminded that Christ understands each temptation that we face. The word translated “be touched with the feeling” means that Christ understands us when we are tempted and has compassion on us. He was tempted in the same three ways that we are tempted. I John 2:16 says, “For all that *is* in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.” Christ was tempted to satisfy His flesh by turning stones to bread when He was hungry. Christ was shown all of the kingdoms of the world and Satan offered to give them to Christ if Christ would worship him. Christ was tempted to pride when Satan told Him to jump off the highest point of the temple to show His greatness to the Jews. Christ was victorious over each of these temptations and answered Satan with Scripture.

Christ understands each temptation that we face. He has compassion for us and speaks to the Father for us. That is why we can come boldly to the throne of grace. Hebrews 7:24-25 says, “But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” The Father will always listen when Christ intercedes for a person that has placed their faith in Christ because the Father is satisfied with the payment that Christ made.

As we come boldly to the throne of grace, we will obtain mercy and the Father will show His grace to us in our time of need. Hebrews 10:19-22 says, “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” We can come into the presence of the Father because of the fact that Christ created a new way for us to come with His blood. He is our High Priest. We can now come before God with a true heart instead of avoiding God because of an evil heart. We can come by faith and know that our conscience has been renewed. We can also know that all of our daily sins are forgiven because Christ blotted out our sins and now provides daily cleansing as we confess our sins to Him. Understanding this will give our physical and spiritual children great boldness as they come to the Father. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the ministry of Christ as our Great High Priest.

Understanding Why Christ is Compared to Melchizedek

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children fully understand what it means to have Christ speak to the Father for us as our Great High Priest. We saw that Christ is a greater high priest than Aaron, the first high priest of Israel. That is why we can come to Christ with boldness. Today we are going to see that Christ is compared to Melchizedek instead of Aaron in order to show this greatness.

In Hebrews 5:1-4 we read, “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer *sacrifices* for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron *was*.” In the Old Testament we see that Aaron was selected by God to be the high priest of the nation of Israel. From that time the high priest of Israel was a descendent of Aaron. All of those who served as the high priest of Israel were selected to serve and offer sacrifices for the rest of the people.

Through the years there were many descendents of Aaron who served as the high priest of Israel. Hebrews 7:23-24 says, “Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.” These priests could not have a continuing priesthood because of death. The reason that they could not be a priest forever was due to the fact that they were also sinners and all eventually died. Hebrews 7:27-28 says, “Who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, *appoints* the Son who has been perfected forever.” All of these priests had to first offer a sacrifice for their own sins before they could offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people. In contrast, Christ only offered Himself once because He was without sin.

The high priests from the family of Aaron could have compassion on the people as they offered sacrifices for the sins of the people because they first had to offer a sacrifice for their own sins. This continually reminded the priests of their own weakness. They could understand the ignorance and the fact that the people were going astray because those priests experienced that same weakness in their own lives. Because Christ became a man, He faced the same temptations that every other priest faced. However, Hebrews 4:15-16 says, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Christ could sympathize with the sins of every high priest because He faced the same temptations. At the same time Christ was greater than Aaron or any of his descendents because Christ did not sin. That is why Christ could offer himself as the sacrifice for our sins and the sins of the whole world because He was without sin.

We are also reminded that none of the Old Testament priests could appoint themselves as priests. Instead they were chosen and called by God. Exodus 28:1 says, "Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron *and* Aaron's sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar." Here we see that God was the One who chose Aaron and His sons to serve as the priests of Israel.

As a result, Hebrews 5:5-6 says, "So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, *but it* was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You." As *He* also *says* in another *place*: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"." Christ is eternal with the Father. However, He chose to place Himself under the Father to carry out the will of the Father when He came to this earth. In Psalm 2:7-8 we read, "I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to Me, 'You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give *You* the nations *for* Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.'" All of Psalm 2 talks about the fact that the Father appointed Christ as the King over all the earth because He is the Son. This showed the fact that Christ did not appoint Himself when He came to this earth but instead He came to do the will of the Father.

However, Christ could not be like Aaron on his sons even though He was appointed by the Father to become our Great High Priest. That was due to the fact that Aaron and his sons were limited in their priesthood by the fact of their own sins. As a result, Psalm 110:4 says, "The LORD has sworn and will not relent, "You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.""" Here we see that Christ was a priest like Melchizedek instead of a priest like Aaron.

Hebrews 7:15-17 helps us to understand why it was necessary for Christ to be appointed a priest after the order of Melchizedek instead of being a priest after the order of Aaron. Those verses say, "And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. For He testifies: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.""" Aaron and his descendents were made priests according to the law. The other Old Testament priest of God was Melchizedek.

Genesis 14:17-20 says, "And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that *is*, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who *were* with him. Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all." Then Hebrews 7:1-3 explains, "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually." In these verses we see that Melchizedek was both king and priest. There is also no recorded beginning or ending to his life. As a result, Melchizedek provided an example of the ministry of Christ as our Great High Priest. Abraham showed that He recognized that Melchizedek was greater.

Since Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek instead of after the order of Aaron, Hebrews 5:7-10 goes on to say, "Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek"." The New Testament says many times that Christ spent a great deal of time in prayer as He communed with the Father.

The particular prayer that is mentioned here is found in Luke 22:42-44 where we read, "Saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground." As Christ faced the cross knowing that all of our sins would be placed on Him and it would be necessary for the Father to forsake Him for that time, Christ prayed in great agony. He dreaded the separation from the Father during the time that our sins would be placed on Him. However, Christ was ready to do the will of the Father even though it meant that time of temporary separation.

Christ was equal with the Father. However, He chose to humble Himself and learn obedience in all things. He chose to humble Himself and become a baby. He showed that humility again when He was tempted by Satan and defeated Satan. Philippians 2:8 says, "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross." In this way He chose to show obedience to the Father by humbling Himself and becoming the perfect sacrifice so that He could take our sins upon Himself. That is why Christ is able to fully understand what we face because He faced the same things and was victorious in every way. Christ showed that He was perfect in every way as He carried out the will of the Father.

As a result, Christ became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. The word translated "author" means cause. Christ was the cause of our eternal salvation. That is why salvation is available to all who will come to Christ by faith. Those who place their faith in Christ are immediately given a desire to obey Him. II Corinthians 5:14-15 says, "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." We also know He is continually making intercession for us at those times when we fail to obey Him. That is why He had to be a priest like Melchizedek instead of a priest like Aaron. As we help our physical and spiritual children understand these things, it will help them to understand more fully why Christ is our Great High Priest and is compared to Melchizedek. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why Christ is compared to Melchizedek.

10.

Understanding Why Some Christians do not Mature

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Christ is compared to Melchizedek. We saw that Christ is greater than Aaron or any of his sons who served as the priests of Israel. We also saw that Christ can fully understand every temptation that we face because He faced those same temptations. The writer of Hebrews wanted to show that Christ is greater than all because He is the Son of God. In our topic today we are going to see that many of the Hebrews found this difficult to understand because of a lack of spiritual maturity. Since there are also many Christians that have not grown to spiritual maturity today, our topic will help our children to understand why many do not grow to maturity so that they can help others mature.

Hebrews 5:8-11 says, “Though He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.” The writer wanted to teach the Hebrews much more about the relationship of how the High-Priesthood of Christ was like Melchizedek but the writer found it difficult to help the Hebrews understand. As a result, Hebrews 5:11-6:12 goes on to explain the reason why they did not understand.

As Jews, the Christians to whom this book was originally written were all very familiar with the Old Testament and what it said about Melchizedek. However, that did not mean that they understood either what the Old Testament taught or what the apostles and others were now teaching about Christ. The reason is given in verse eleven. It was hard to explain these things because many of the Jewish Christians had become dull of hearing. The word translated “dull” means sluggish and is only used two times in the New Testament. The other use is in Hebrews 6:12 which says, “That you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” This is the verse that concludes the section explaining why many Jews did not understand.

To be dull or sluggish in hearing means that a person can have something explained to him many times and still not understand. In verse 13 the writer calls the Hebrews babes. There are two words used for babes that we need to understand. In I Peter 2:2 we read, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” The word translated “babes (brephos)” in this verse speaks of a baby that is not yet born or one that has just been born. Here in Hebrews 5:13 the word translated “babe (nepios)” speaks of a young child “a toddler” that cannot speak clearly. This word is used four times to talk about the spiritual life of believers in the New Testament.

In I Corinthians 3:1-3 we read, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like

mere men?” In these verses we see that spiritual toddlers are carnal or fleshly which means that their actions were like those who were not even Christians yet. Those actions included envy, strife and divisions. The chapter goes on to teach the importance of building on the right foundation which is Jesus Christ.

In I Corinthians 13:11 we read, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” In this verse we see that the word for spiritual toddlers is used five times. The talking of a toddler is childish and hard to understand. The understanding of a toddler is very limited. The thinking of a toddler is what will make them feel good now because they do not think about the future. In this chapter we see that Paul is warning about selfishness and a lack of love and the chapter defines the meaning of godly love.

In Ephesians 4:14 we read, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” In this verse we see that a spiritual toddler is tossed to and fro by every false teaching just like a tumbleweed that is blown by the wind. We also see that spiritual toddlers are easily deceived by false teachers. This verse is in the middle of the passage that talks about equipping the saints for ministry. We see that a Christian that grows to maturity and is equipped for ministry is able to speak the truth in love and carry out the ministry for which he or she is equipped.

The fourth use of the word for spiritual toddlers is here in Hebrews 5:11-14 that we are looking at in this topic. As we have said in verse 11 we see that a spiritual toddler is a Christian that has become dull of hearing. One reason why Christians may become dull of hearing is given in Hebrews 6:1-2 where we read, “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” If a Christian only hears passages about salvation and judgment, that Christian is being given nothing to help him grow to spiritual maturity. If no one has shown a new Christian how to study the Word of God and meditate on it that Christian does not know how to feed himself spiritually.

Hebrews 5:12-14 gives us several other characteristics of spiritual toddlers. Those verses say, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” First, we see that this letter was written to Christians that had been Christians long enough that they should have been able to teach others. Here we are reminded that a Christian can be a Christian for a long time and fail to grow spiritually. A physical toddler has two favorite words – mine and no. A spiritual toddler has two favorite things that he thinks about – my needs and my problems. A Christian who fails to grow can still be focused on these two things many years later.

Second, a spiritual toddler needs someone to teach him again the first principles of the oracles

of God. The word translated “oracles” means the very words of God. I Peter 4:11 says, “If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” As we teach our children to help them grow we need to teach them the Word of God and how to apply the Word in their daily living and not just give them our own opinions or convictions.

Third, the writer of Hebrews said that the Hebrew Christians needed to be taught the milk of the Word because they were not yet equipped to understand the solid food of the Word. We saw earlier in this topic that those who are newborn babes because they have just become Christians need the milk of the Word to help them begin their spiritual growth. Here we see that verse 13 explains that a person that has been a Christian for a long time but has not grown spiritually partakes only of milk. Such a person only hears teaching on the things that make him feel good. As a result, such a Christian is unskilled in the word of righteousness. The word translated “unskilled” means inexperienced or without experience. The word which means the opposite is translated trial in Hebrews 11:36 where we read, “Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.” Many weak Christians are only taught the things that make them feel good instead of learning how to deal with tests, trials and tribulations.

The word that is translated “solid” in verse 14 means something that stands firm. In I Peter 5:8-9 we read, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” Here the word is translated steadfast. We see that we resist Satan by being steadfast in the faith. The word translated “full age” means brought to completion or to become mature. Ephesians 4:12-13 says, “For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Here the word is translated perfect. The primary ministry of the spiritual leaders mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 is to equip the saints for the work of ministry and help them to become mature Christians.

We see that Christians that have grown to spiritual maturity have their senses developed so that they are able to recognize what is good and what is evil. This was the great need of many of the Hebrew Christians. A Christian that remains a spiritual toddler will not be able to help others grow spiritually because such a Christian has not grown to spiritual maturity himself. In contrast the verses mentioned above show that a Christian that has grown to maturity has done so because he has built on the right foundation, he has learned to walk in love, he has been equipped to speak the truth in love and carry out the ministry that God has for him. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to grow in these ways so that they can help others grow also. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why some Christians do not mature.

11.

Understanding Why Salvation Accompanies True Belief

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why some Christians do not grow to spiritual maturity. In this topic we are going to see that salvation accompanies true belief. In contrast, we will see that those who hear about salvation but choose to continue to depend on their own works have rejected the only way that they can receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Hebrews 6:1-3 says, “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits.” The Old Testament prepared the way for a person to understand the way to come to Christ so the Jews had that background when Christ came. In fact we see that the Old Testament taught each of the things mentioned in these verses.

The doctrine of Christ is the teaching about the way to have salvation through Christ. In I Corinthians 3:11 we read, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” We must start on the right foundation in order to have eternal life. However, just like when you are building a house, the foundation of the building is not the final goal. It is just the beginning. The word translated “perfection” means moral or spiritual maturity. It comes from the same root word that is translated “full age” in the last verse of Hebrews 5. We saw in the last topic that word speaks about growing to spiritual maturity. Salvation is the beginning of our spiritual life but God wants us to then grow and become spiritually mature as we saw in our last topic.

First, the Old Testament taught repentance from dead works. Isaiah 64:6 says, “But we are all like an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” The Old Testament made it very clear that our own works are like filthy rags. Second, the Old Testament taught faith toward God. Hebrews 11:6 says, “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” The remainder of Hebrews 11 talks about the faith of various Old Testament saints.

Third, the Old Testament taught about the doctrine of baptism (washings). This word is only used 4 times in the New Testament and is not the word used for baptism. In Matthew 7:4 it talks about the washing of cups. In Matthew 7:8 it talks about the washing of pots. Then in Hebrews 9:7-10 we read, “But into the second part the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and *for* the people's sins *committed* in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It *was* symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience--*concerned* only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly

ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.” The Old Testament washings were to point forward to Christ and not a way to provide salvation.

Fourth, the Old Testament taught the laying on of hands. A person would lay his hands on his sacrifice to show his identification with it before the sacrifice was killed. Fifth, the Old Testament taught about the resurrection of the dead. In fact this was the key doctrinal difference between the beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Sixth, the Old Testament taught about eternal judgment. This was a second difference doctrinal difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

Hebrews 6:4-8 goes on to say, “For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briars, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned.” We see that a person could claim to believe all of the doctrines mentioned in the first verses but still depend on his own works.

Some of the Pharisees became Christians. Even those who were true believers continued to hold to the law. Acts 15:5 says, “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses.”” However, there were also Pharisees and others who were just professing believers who claimed to be Christians but were actually depending on their own works for salvation. Paul said about such individuals in Galatians 1:6-8, “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.” It is this group of Jews about whom the writer of Hebrews is speaking in Hebrews 6:4-8.

This group had been enlightened. The Gospel had been explained to them by Christ and the apostles. They had tasted of the heavenly gift. The word translated “tasted” means to enjoy the flavor of or to feel. Here we see that they had even made a profession of believing in Christ. They had seen how the Holy Spirit had worked through the ministry of Christ including such things as raising the dead. They had enjoyed hearing the Word of God as they listened to the teaching of Christ. They had even seen the Lord transform the lives of those who truly believed.

Even after seeing and hearing all of these things, the people such as those mentioned in Galatians 1:6-8 had chosen to fall away. The word translated “fall away” means to be totally unfaithful or to turn from the right path. These may have made a profession of trusting Christ but had always depended on their own efforts to keep the Jewish law and had tried to get others to continue to follow the law. They had rejected the death of Christ and the shedding of His blood as the payment for their sins. As a result, there was no more offering that could be made

for their sins. They are described in verses 7 and 8 as earth that had received the rain and instead of bringing forth food had brought forth thorns and briers instead. Their end would be eternal judgment.

Suddenly we see a change in Hebrews 6:9-12 where we read, “But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God *is* not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, *in that* you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Here we see that the writer of Hebrews now begins to speak again to those who have had true faith and are part of the beloved.

The writer was confident that the Jews to whom he was writing were true Christians because their lives demonstrated the things that accompany salvation even though many of them had remained immature. I Corinthians 13:13 says, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.” These are the three things that give evidence of a new nature. In I Thessalonians 1:3-4 we see that Paul thanked God for these things in the Thessalonians. Those verses say, “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.” Those things are evidence of spiritual life.

The writer said that God would not forget their work and labor of love. The Jewish Christians had shown their love for the name of God. In addition, they had also shown a love for the other saints. They had faithfully ministered to other saints. In fact they were continuing to have that ministry to other Christians. Christ said in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” The Jewish Christians demonstrated that love to one another.

Then the writer went on to encourage the Jewish Christians to show the same diligence in their hope. The word translated “diligence” means eagerness or striving after something. II Corinthians 8:16 says, “But thanks *be* to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.” Here we see the eagerness of Titus to help the Corinthians in their spiritual growth. The writer wanted the Jewish Christians to have this same diligence to strengthen their hope as they waited for the coming of the Lord.

The writer did not want the Jews to become sluggish (the word that was translated dull of hearing in Hebrews 5:11). Instead he wanted them to imitate the faith and patience of the Old Testament saints. For that reason Hebrews 11 will give many examples of the faith and patience of the Old Testament saints as they waited to inherit the promises of God. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to have this same love, hope and faith and be able to be an example that others can imitate. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain why salvation accompanies true belief.

12.

Understand Why Our Hope is Like an Anchor

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others why salvation accompanies true belief. However, we also saw that the desire of the Lord is that each one who believes will grow to spiritual maturity. In an earlier topic we saw that Melchizedek was introduced to help us understand how Christ serves as our Great High Priest. In the next several topics we are going to learn important lessons to help our children understand how Melchizedek teaches us many lessons about the ministry of Christ.

In Hebrews 6:13-15 we read, "For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, 'Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.' And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." Many of the Jewish Christians had grown up learning the laws that were given to Moses in the wilderness. This is illustrated when Paul came back and reported to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem what God was doing among the Gentiles. The leaders of the church in Jerusalem immediately responded in Acts 21:20, "And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, 'You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law.'" The Jewish Christians needed to understand how to grow in grace. As a result, the writer of Hebrews went back to Abraham who did not have the law.

God had promised Abraham several great blessings. Immediately after Abraham had been willing to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice because of his faith, God said to Abraham in Genesis 22:16-18, "And said: 'By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*-- blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.'" Here we see that because God could swear by no one greater that He swore by Himself. God promised to greatly multiply the descendents of Abraham. God also promised that Christ would bring blessing to all nations.

In Hebrews 6:12 we finished our last topic by seeing that the Hebrew Christians were encouraged to have a strong hope and imitate the patience of the Old Testament saints. Here in these next verses we see that Abraham is the first illustration of that patience. We see that Abraham patiently endured and had now obtained the fulfillment of the promise that had been given to Him. Hebrews 11:12-13 says, "Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born *as many* as the stars of the sky in multitude--innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Abraham did not see this promise fulfilled during his lifetime. In fact Christ was not born until about two thousand years after the death of Abraham. However, that patience was rewarded when Christ came two thousand years later.

It is important to understand why Abraham could have such faith in the promise of God. Hebrews 6:16-18 says, “For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.” When people make a promise, they swear by something greater that they will keep that promise. That is how mankind has settled disputes for thousands of years.

Through the years many people have sworn by God that they will keep their promise. We know that no one is greater than God. As a result, we see that God swore by Himself when He made this promise to Abraham. The word translated “immutability” means that which is unchangeable. The reason that God swore by Himself was due to the fact that God wanted to show Abraham and his descendents that He would not break His promise because His character and His Word are unchangeable. As a result, God gave His oath to show that His promise to Abraham was unchangeable.

Here we see that God gave Abraham two unchangeable things. The first was His promise and the second was His oath. We see that the writer of Hebrews also reminded the Jewish Christians that it is impossible for God to lie. As a result, His promise and oath provide strong consolation. The word translated “consolation” means encouragement or that which provides comfort. II Thessalonians 2:16-17 says, “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.” Here we see that the writer of Hebrews wanted to give the Jewish Christians the same encouragement that Paul gave to the Thessalonians.

As a result, the writer of Hebrews reminded the Jewish Christians that instead of fear that they could find a place of refuge if they will lay hold of the hope that is set before us. The word translated “to lay hold” means to get possession of or to hold in the hand. God wants all Christians to take possession of the hope that we have as Christians. The word translated “hope” means that joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation. Titus 2:13-14 says, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.” Here we see that when we are focused on that joyful and confident expectation of our eternal salvation that we have a strong desire to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord. We also are eager to serve the Lord.

That is why Hebrews 6:19-20 goes on to say, “This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence *behind* the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” Here we see that the Jewish Christians were reminded of the fact that the hope that they had in Christ is like an anchor of the soul. The word translated “anchor” means any stay or safeguard because it would make a boat stay in place and protect it. The word is only used four times in the New Testament. The other three times are all in Acts 27 when the ship

on which Paul was sailing was caught in a storm that was about to destroy the ship. In that case they put out the anchors to protect the ship until the light of morning so that they could see.

The writer of Hebrews wanted the Jewish Christians to see that the hope that we have as Christians is an anchor of the soul. That confident expectation that we have is like a safeguard of protection for our mind, emotions and will. First, see that our hope is sure. The word translated “sure” means that which can be relied upon. Philippians 3:1 says, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you *is* not tedious, but for you *it is* safe.” Here the word is translated safe. As Paul wrote to the Philippians he wanted them to know that the message that he wrote to them could be relied upon. The writer of Hebrews wanted the Jewish Christians to know that they could rely on the hope that we have in Christ.

Second, we see that our hope is steadfast. The word translated “steadfast” means stable or firm. The word is used in II Peter 1:19 where we read, “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” In this passage the word is translated confirmed. That passage goes on to tell us that we know that the Word of God is true because it was written by holy men of God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. This means that we can have the same confidence in the hope that Christ has given us as we have in the Word of God.

The reason that we can have that confidence in that hope is due to the fact that Christ has entered within the veil. Here we see that the writer uses an Old Testament illustration that the Jews would easily understand. In the Old Testament the high priest would go into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement once each year. He would take blood as a covering for His own sin and then blood as a covering for the sins of the people. Hebrews 7:26-27 says, “For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.” Here we see that Christ is our High Priest who offered His own blood to take away our sins.

That is also the reason why Christ had to be a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek instead of the order of Aaron. That is explained much more fully in Hebrews 7. Christ entered into the presence of the Father with His own blood as our High Priest. He now intercedes and speaks for us to the Father. I John 2:2 says, “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” The word translated “propitiation” means that which satisfies. That is why our hope is so certain because we know that the Father is satisfied with the blood of Christ as the payment for our sin. We want to help our physical and spiritual children rest in this hope as an anchor to their souls. We also want to help our children learn how to explain the importance of this hope to others so that they know that their protection is in Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand that our hope is like an anchor.

13.

Understanding Why Melchizedek is Greater than Aaron

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that the hope that we have in Christ is like an anchor to our souls. We can depend on that hope of our eternal salvation because it is unchangeable. That is due to the fact that Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek instead of a priest after the order of Aaron. In our topic today we will see what Melchizedek is a much greater priest than Aaron which also means that Christ is a much greater priest than Aaron.

Hebrews 7:1-3 says, "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually."

In this chapter we are going to see a comparison of the priesthood of Melchizedek and the priesthood of Aaron. We will see why Melchizedek gives us a real picture of Christ even though there is very little written about him in the Old Testament. Genesis 14:18-20 says, "Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all." In these verses we see that Melchizedek was both a king and a priest. He was the king of Salem (later Jerusalem). He was also a priest of the Most High God. Melchizedek met Abraham when Abraham was returning from the slaughter of the kings who had taken Lot and his family as prisoners. When Abraham met Melchizedek he gave one tenth of all of the spoils that the Lord had given to him to Melchizedek.

The name "Melchizedek" means king of righteousness. The name "Salem" means peace. As a result, the name Melchizedek, king of Salem, meant that he was both the king of righteousness and the king of peace. Then Psalm 110:4 says, "The LORD has sworn and will not relent, "You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." Here in the only other Old Testament passage that talks about Melchizedek we see that he was also a priest. That passage also points out the fact that Christ is a priest who is from the order of Melchizedek and not the order of Aaron. That meant that the priesthood of Christ is greater than the priesthood of Aaron.

There are several ways in which Melchizedek is different than Aaron. First, there is no recorded genealogy of the family of Melchizedek. The name of his father is nowhere recorded in any record in the world. The same is true of the name of his mother. In addition, there is not a genealogy record anywhere in the world that includes the name of Melchizedek. There is no record of the beginning of his life or the end of his life. This means that it is possible for Melchizedek to provide a model or copy for the priesthood of Christ. Aaron and all of his

descendants were priests for a period of time and then they died. Since there is no record of the death of Melchizedek he provides an example of the fact that Christ remains a priest continually.

Hebrews 7:4-7 says, “Now consider how great this man *was*, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.” We see that one of the things that revealed the greatness of Melchizedek was the fact that Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoils that they had gathered when they defeated the nations that had taken Lot and his family as captives.

The people of Israel gave tithes of the things that they possessed to the descendants of Levi. As a result, all of the descendants of Aaron received tithes from the people because they were priests and were descendants of Aaron. Numbers 18:21 says, “Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting.” The descendants of Levi received tithes as their inheritance because they were the ones who did the work of caring for the tabernacle and also other responsibilities throughout the entire country of Israel.

Levi and all of his family were descendants of Abraham. That meant that even though Levi and Aaron were not born at the time that Abraham met Melchizedek that they would one day come from his family. As a result, when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek he also served as a representative of all of his future descendants. In this way Aaron and the other priests gave tithes to Melchizedek even though they were not yet born. As Hebrews 7:9-10 says, “Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.” In fact every person that has ever come from Abraham participated in the giving of tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham.

Melchizedek received that tithe from Abraham and then he blessed Abraham. Abraham had been given the promises in Genesis 12:1-3 which say, “Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”” In Hebrews we see that in addition to this blessing from God that Abraham also received a blessing from Melchizedek.

That is why verse 7 says that the lesser is blessed by the better. Abraham was the father of the entire nation of Israel. He received the promise from God that Christ would come through his descendants. Yet he also recognized that Melchizedek was greater by giving him tithes. Melchizedek confirmed that he was greater than Abraham by giving Abraham a blessing. That is why the priesthood of Melchizedek was greater than the priesthood of Aaron. This is also why Melchizedek could be a picture of the priesthood of Christ.

Hebrews 7:8-10 goes on to say, “Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.” On this earth men who will die receive tithes from other people who will also die. Aaron received tithes as long as he lived but when he died he could no longer receive tithes. In contrast, the death of Melchizedek is not recorded anywhere in the Bible or in any other historical source.

The priesthood of Melchizedek continues because his death was never recorded. Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins but He had victory over death and rose from the dead. As a result, Christ is still alive to intercede for us. Hebrews 7:25 says, “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” Christ is our eternal High Priest because He will never die. He rose from the dead and is alive forevermore.

The descendants of Levi did receive tithes as long as they lived. However, Aaron died and every other priest of Israel eventually died or will die. Through the father of their nation Abraham, Levi and all of his descendants paid tithes through Abraham to Melchizedek. Abraham was representative of the entire nation of Israel. In that way Abraham is similar to Adam. Adam represented every person that would one day be born on this earth. Romans 5:12 says, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” In the same way Romans 5:19 says, “For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.” We need Christ as our High Priest because He is the only One that can make us righteous.

None of the family of Levi had been born at the time that Abraham met Melchizedek. As a result, all of the descendants of Levi were represented when Abraham gave tithes of the spoils to Melchizedek. Moses was given the law and Aaron was the first high priest to serve under the law. The law showed that all people are guilty of sin and needed a mediator to speak to the Father for them. In contrast, Christ established a new covenant with His own blood. Hebrews 8:6 says, “But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.” The old covenant could only bring death. The new covenant brings eternal life to all who place their faith in Christ. As a result, the ministry of Christ is much greater than the ministry of Aaron.

As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand why Melchizedek was a much greater priest than Aaron, we equip them to explain to others why repentance and faith produce much better promises than the old covenant. Those promises include forgiveness of sins in the present and eternal life in the future. As our children come to fully understand these better promises, they will give our children great encouragement as they continue to grow in the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand why Melchizedek is greater than Aaron.

14.

Understanding the Purpose of the Priesthood of Aaron

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Melchizedek was a much greater priest than Aaron. This is why God chose to use Melchizedek as an example of the ministry of Christ as our Great High Priest. In our topic today we are going to see that the writer of Hebrews explains why the priesthood of Aaron and his descendents was important to the nation of Israel but the priesthood of Melchizedek is important to the people of all nations because it helps us to understand the priesthood of Christ for us.

Hebrews 7:11-13 says, “Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.” The word translated “perfection” means the completion or the event that verifies a promise. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is Luke 1:45 where we read, “Blessed *is* she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.” Here we see that Elizabeth told Mary that God would complete His promise to her and give her a son.

If the Old Testament law could have made anyone complete, there would have been no need for Christ to come to pay for sin. However, the law that was given to the people in the Old Testament could not make them right with God. The Jews could only show their faith in the promises of God by offering blood as a covering for their sins until Christ came to take away the sin of the world. As a result, the priesthood of Aaron had a valuable purpose. People could show their faith in the promises of God by bringing sacrifices to Aaron and his descendents to offer them as a temporary covering for their sin. In contrast, Hebrews 9:12 says, “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” That meant that it was necessary to have a change in the priesthood.

That is why Christ had to be a priest who came from the order of Melchizedek instead of the order of Aaron. This meant that there was a change in the priesthood. That change in the priesthood also meant that there must be a change in the law so that there could be a different kind of priest. As Christ observed the last supper with His disciples, He said in Matthew 26:27-28, “Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Here we see that Christ was a new priest from a new tribe who offered a new sacrifice for a new covenant. That is another reason why Christ is called a priest from the order of Melchizedek. The sacrifice that Christ offered was Himself as He shed His blood for us. As these verses say, this was the blood of a new covenant that provided forgiveness of sins instead of just covering the sins. We read that Christ had to come from a tribe of another kind than the tribe of Levi.

We see that Christ was from the tribe of Judah instead of the tribe of Levi. However, much more important than the fact that Christ was from the tribe of Judah was the fact that He was a different kind of priest. This was why Christ had to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 7:14-17 says, “For *it is* evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. For He testifies: “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”” Moses never wrote anything about the possibility of someone from the tribe of Judah serving as a priest. That was due to the fact that God did not reveal that part of His plan to Moses.

In the same way Moses did not write about the fact that Christ would be in the likeness of Melchizedek. Aaron was a priest because of the commandment that God gave to Moses. He served as a priest because He was carrying out the responsibilities that had been given for all of the priests that came from the family of Aaron. They offered sacrifices for the people of Israel until Christ would come to take away sin. In contrast, Christ was not appointed a priest because He was from the family of Aaron. Instead, like Melchizedek, Christ was appointed a priest because of the power of an endless life. In Psalm 110:1 David called Christ his Lord. Then the quotation that Christ would be a priest forever in the likeness of Melchizedek came from Psalm 110:4. As a result, Christ was appointed as our High Priest because He will be a priest forever.

That is why Hebrews 7:18-19 goes on to say, “For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” The word that is translated “annulling” means to put away and that is the way it is translated in the only other place where this word is used in the New Testament. Hebrews 9:26 says, “He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” In this verse we see that Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Christ put away the former commandment related to the offering of sacrifices as a covering for sin because He came as the final sacrifice that put away sin permanently so that there is no need for continuing sacrifices.

The sacrifices of the Old Testament were offered in weakness because they could never take away sin. The Old Testament sacrifices were unprofitable or useless because they only provided a temporary covering for sin until Christ could come to take away sin. The reason for this is due to the fact that the law could never make anything complete or bring about forgiveness. Instead the purpose of the law was to show us that it was necessary to come to Christ. Galatians 3:24-25 says, “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” The law did show us that we were guilty of sin. The law made us aware of the fact that we needed our sins forgiven. However, once we come to Christ we are no longer under the law because Christ has made us complete.

In contrast, Christ brought in a better hope. We can now draw near to God. In the Old Testament Exodus 19:22 says, “Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate

themselves, lest the Lord break out against them.” However, Hebrews 4:15-16 says, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” In the Old Testament only the priests could enter into the tabernacle. Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies and only on the Day of Atonement.

Here we see that we can come to the throne of grace at any time and we will receive mercy and grace. We are able to draw near to God. James 4:7-10 says, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” We are also able to come to God with boldness instead of fear. Here we see that the Lord will not condemn us for our sins as Christians but will cleanse us and lift us up when we come to Him for cleansing.

Hebrews 7:20-22 says, “And inasmuch as *He* was not *made* priest without an oath (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: "The LORD has sworn and will not relent, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'"), by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.” The reason that we can come to God with boldness for cleansing is due to the fact that Christ is our High Priest who speaks to the Father for us. God did not give an oath or promise to the Old Testament priests or say that they would be priests forever. However, He did make that promise about Christ and then confirmed it with an oath.

In Psalm 110:4 we read, “The Lord has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” That is the promise that is quoted in these verses in Hebrews. In this verse we see that God gave the oath that Christ would be an eternal priest. The writer of Hebrews is making it clear here that God will not change and that His promise is certain. This is important for every one of us as Christians because we know that God will keep His promise to give us eternal life because of the price that Christ paid for our sins.

The word that is translated “surety” means one that makes a guarantee. Here we see that Christ guaranteed our salvation with His own blood. That means our covenant is greater than the old covenant given to Moses. Our salvation is certain because of that guarantee. We know that we have eternal life. As we help our physical and spiritual children understand the fact that Christ guaranteed our salvation with His blood, it helps them to realize that it is an eternal promise with an eternal guarantee. This will help them learn how to explain to others the guarantee that Christ made by shedding His blood so that this guarantee is eternal and means that our eternal life is secure. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the greatness of this guarantee.

15.

Understanding Why Christ is our Great High Priest

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the purpose of the priesthood of Aaron. We will learn more about the priesthood of Aaron in future topics. However, in our topic today we are going to see why Christ is our Great High Priest. These verses explain some of the many differences between the Old Testament priests and Christ and show us why Christ is much greater than any of the priests from the family of Aaron.

Hebrews 7:23-24 says, “Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.” Throughout the Old Testament there were many men who served as priests in the nation of Israel. However, none of those priests had a continual priesthood. They served as priests for a certain period of time and then died. As a result, they could not continue as priests so there may have been as many as 84 men who served as the high priest of Israel from the time of Aaron until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

In contrast, we see that Christ has an unchangeable priesthood. The word that is translated “unchangeable” means that it cannot be passed on to a successor. Here we see why Christ is called a priest forever. God gave Christ a priesthood that cannot be passed on to any other person. That is why it was necessary for Christ to have a priesthood that is after the order of Melchizedek instead of after the order of Aaron. Hebrews 9:14-15 says, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” Christ is eternal so there is no need for a successor.

That is why Hebrews 7:25 goes on to say, “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” The word translated “He is able” means to be powerful or to be able to do something. Hebrews 2:18 says, “For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” In this verse we see that Christ is able to help those who are tempted. Here in Hebrews 7:25 we see that Christ is able to save to the uttermost. The word translated “uttermost” means completely or perfectly.

Christ has all authority and power. He is able to save every person that comes to God through Him. Many people try to come to God in their own way. However, John 14:6 says, “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” This verse in Hebrews reminds us that Christ is the only One who is able to give salvation and make it possible for people to come to God through Him. We want to help our children learn to clearly explain why Christ is the only way to come to the Father and receive the salvation that Christ provided by His death.

The writer of Hebrews wanted the Jewish Christians to know that Christ spoke for them. Christ also makes intercession for us. The word translated “make intercession” means to speak or make a request on behalf of another person. In Romans 8:27 we read, “Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” Here we see that the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us so that our prayers are according to the will of God. Then Romans 8:34 says, “Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Here we see that instead of condemning us Christ speaks to the Father on our behalf and intercedes for us.

That is why Hebrews 4:14-16 promises, “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Christ understands what it is like to be tempted because Satan also tempted Christ. However, Christ defeated Satan each time that Satan tempted Him. As a result, Christ now speaks to the Father on our behalf when Satan accuses us.

We go on to see why Christ is able to save us completely because He is superior to any other priest. Hebrews 7:26-28 says, “For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.” Here the writer of Hebrews gives us a description of the reason why Christ is a High Priest who is fitting for us.

First, Christ is holy. In Revelation 15:3-4 we read, “They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.” In His relationship to the Father Christ is the only One who has never committed sin.

Second, Christ is harmless. The word translated “harmless” means without guile or free from any guilt. John 8:46 says, “Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?” None of the Jewish religious leaders could show that Christ was guilty of any sin. That was why Christ could become sin for us. II Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Christ is without sin and He is also able to place His righteousness on us so that we can stand before God without sin.

Third, Christ is undefiled. The word translated “undefiled” means unsoiled or free from any spot or blemish. I Peter 1:19 says, “But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Then I Peter 2:22 adds, “Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth.” Christ never committed sin or committed any form of deceit.

Fourth, Christ is separate from sinners. The word translated “separate” means to separate or depart. Christ can serve as our Great High Priest because He is without sin. I Peter 2:23-24 says, “Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.” Christ never sinned so He could have our sin placed on Him and die for our sins. In Christ we died to our sins and now have been raised to a new life through Christ.

Fifth, Christ was made higher than the heavens. Hebrews 8:1 says, “Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” Here we see that we now have a High Priest who is seated at the right hand of the Father. He is higher than the heavens.

In the Old Testament the Jewish high priest offered daily sacrifices in the outer court. On the Day of Atonement He offered a sacrifice first for his own sins. Then the high priest would take the blood from the outer court, through the holy place and into the holy of holies where he would place that blood on the mercy seat. He would do the same thing with the blood of the sacrifice for the sins of the people. These same sacrifices had to be offered every year because both the priests and the people continued to sin. In contrast, Christ did not offer a sacrifice for Himself. Instead He offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins so He only offered that sacrifice only once because He did not need to offer a sacrifice for Himself. He then ascended through the heavens and sat down on the right hand of the Father.

The Old Testament law appointed men who sinned themselves as high priests. These high priests offered their sacrifice for themselves first because of their own weakness and sin. Then they could offer a sacrifice on behalf of the people as a covering for the sins of the people. In contrast, God confirmed Christ as our Great High Priest forever with an oath because Christ could offer Himself as a sacrifice for us once for all. Hebrews 9:12 says, “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” Redemption has three parts. First, Christ bought us back from sin. Second, He removed us from further sale. Third, He set us free. Here we see that our redemption is eternal and will never need to be repeated again. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be able to explain to others clearly why this made it possible for Christ to be our Great High Priest. The ministry of Christ is so much greater than any other priest because it eternally took away our sin. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain to others why Christ is our Great High Priest.