

WitnessKit 3

God and Religions

Integrating the Worldviews of the Old and New
Testaments,

Guided by the Book

Letter to the Hebrews

Class 19

Hebrews Chapter 6—The Most
Controversial Chapter in the New
Testament—What Does It Mean?

I Thessalonians 5:21

But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.

A verse to read together:

Hebrews 4:14-16

- ¹⁴ 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.
- ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (NKJV)

Read Hebrews chapter 6.

- Read this chapter three times in a row to fix the words in your mind. This is considered the most controversial chapter in the Bible by some.
- Why do you think this chapter is controversial?
- Do you see anything in the chapter that is scary?

Read Hebrews chapter 6.



- Don't worry, we will not be controversial today!
- We will cover the OBVIOUS truths of the chapter.
- We will sidestep the controversy by finding cross references to other passages of scripture. The Bible explains itself.

In our last lesson,

We talked about the need to press on toward maturity in understanding God's word. Being able to take in the "meat of the word" rather than just the "milk of the word" helps us do three things.

1. We can correctly discern good and evil, by fully understanding God's word.
2. We can teach or influence others for whom we are responsible.
3. We can understand the details of Scripture, going beyond first principles.

Today

- We want to see how Hebrews chapter 6 defines “*the meat and milk of the word.*”
- What are the “milk” topics we need to know so thoroughly that we can be ready to move on to more difficult and “muscle building” topics?

Hebrews 6

- ¹ 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,
 - ▣ ² of the doctrine of baptisms,
 - ▣ of laying on of hands,
 - ▣ of resurrection of the dead,
 - ▣ and of eternal judgment.
- ³ And this we will do if God permits.

This elementary list covers

Necessary topics for beginning the Christian life:

- *of repentance from dead works*
- *and of faith toward God,*

The beginning of the Christian life is an **inward transformation** that takes place when a person repents of sins and accepts the atonement for sins accomplished on Christ's cross. He then receives the Holy Spirit into his life, by faith, and receives Christ's righteousness as a gift.

The elementary List Covers

Necessary topics for serving God in the churches:

- *2 of the doctrine of baptisms,*
 - This must include studying the topics both of water baptism **as a symbol** of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, and our being included in His atonement,
 - PLUS the baptism of the Holy Spirit **when we receive Him into our lives.**
 - The word "Baptisms" is plural. Each believer should prayerfully consider these baptisms and their importance. Study the Bible and all that it says about them.

The elementary List Covers

Necessary topics for serving God in the churches:

- *of laying on of hands*,
 - This symbolic action is the formal recognition, in front of a church, of being **called** by God into certain **forms of ministry**, such as evangelist, pastor, deacon, or missionary, and being ordained or commissioned or licensed by a church to fulfill each calling.
 - Everyone has a ministry, a place of service in God's kingdom.
 - Certain ministries demand the backing of a church, the agreement of the church that an individual meets the qualifications for such offices. This is the description of the formal ceremony in front of a church showing an individual meets the requirements.

Being Called by God for Specific Ministries

- The Torah reports Bezalel as called by God, called by name, to accomplish the artistic design and implementation for the tabernacle. Exodus 31:1-11 uses this term.
- Jeremiah was called by God in his youth, to be a prophet to the nations, but he was appointed by God for that ministry before he was even born—Jeremiah chapter 1.
- The Apostle Paul used similar words describing his calling in Galatians 1:15-16.

This elementary list in Hebrews 6 covers

Necessary topics for understanding eternal destiny:

- ▣ *of resurrection of the dead,*
- ▣ *and of eternal judgment.*

All of these things are tremendously important to understand. However, our Christian maturity requires going on to other important topics as well.

Sometimes people get stuck

On these elementary topics. It is important for a church to progress beyond them, rather than to keep going over the same things and holding others back from reaching maturity.

- It is also important to go back to the basics periodically, to allow newer believers to catch up, because the topics are vital.
- And it is tremendously important to talk about these elementary topics to outsiders—so that they have the opportunity to find God.

We need to press on toward spiritual maturity

Reasons to Press on toward Spiritual Maturity

For several reasons.

1. People cannot be saved over and over.
2. God will discipline those who reject His instructions for reaching maturity.
3. God sees our works and rewards fruitfulness.
4. God wants us to be diligent and to persevere.
5. God keeps His promises.

Hebrews 6: People cannot be saved over and over.

- ⁴ For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ 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.

People cannot be saved over and over.

Jesus Christ made atonement for our sins ONCE FOR ALL. His infinite sacrifice covers all sins. Hebrews 10:10-14 covers this idea in more detail.

Our salvation for eternity is ONCE FOR ALL.

We cannot be saved over and over.

We don't need to try to "convince someone to be saved" when they have "gone back to their old ways."

If they have truly received the Holy Spirit into their lives and have received the atoning work of Christ, salvation from sins is **not** the problem.

People cannot be saved over and over.

So continually focusing on the elementary topics is counter-productive.

The weak Christian needs “to go on to maturity, to have his or her senses exercised to understand good and evil.”

Of course, each one of us will need to repent of specific wrongs on a daily basis, but the foundational level of repentance—of that desire to be one’s own king—is already taken into account. (Psalm 51—the covenant by sacrifice is already in force.)

People cannot be saved over and over.

The issue in Hebrews 6:4 is people who have truly been saved—**“who have tasted the heavenly gift of salvation from their sins, who have become partakers of the Holy Spirit.”**

They need encouragement to persevere in their faith and to be diligent about that.

The next verse gives warning as well—of discipline. It is dangerous to ignore God. His Holy Spirit works with us when we mess up. He clears away the hindrances. We need to pay attention.

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God will discipline those who reject His instructions for reaching maturity.

- This topic will be addressed again later on, in Hebrews chapter 12. Chapter 6 introduces the topic.
- We are compared to **good ground**, as Jesus discussed in the **Parable of the Sower**. We will look at the **Parable of the Sower** in detail because it **clarifies** this chapter in Hebrews.
- Good ground is fruitful, and responds to the rain by growing plants and producing a harvest.
- The **poor ground**, where the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word of God—the poor ground brings forth thorns and briars. Thorny plants had to be burned off so that the ground could become productive again.

God will discipline.

- Burning off the briars and thorns compares to discipline from God, so that a person becomes productive again. The purpose is fruitfulness, not suffering for the sake of suffering.
- Sometimes God uses drastic measures to clear away distractions that prevent us from being fruitful.

Hebrews 6: Fruitful and unfruitful ground

- “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; ⁸ but if it bears thorns and briars, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned.
- ⁹ But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.”

The Land of Promise v. the Wilderness

- The Land of Promise was different from the Wilderness, and the third and fourth chapters of Hebrews discuss entering God's Rest in the Promised Land. This idea connects the earlier chapters with chapter 6.
- The biggest difference between the Wilderness and the Promised Land was the potential for productivity.
- Productivity required diligence. Otherwise, thorns and briars would take over, and the land would not be productive.

The Parable of the Sower—Luke 8:5-15

- ⁵ "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it.
- ⁶ Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture.
- ⁷ And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it.
- ⁸ But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

The Parable of the Sower: Luke 8:5-15

- ⁹ Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?"
- ¹⁰ And He said, "To you it has been given to **know** the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.'*
- ¹¹ "Now the parable is this: **The seed is the word of God.**
- ¹² Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

The Parable of the Sower: Luke 8:5-15

- ¹³ But the ones on the rock *are those* who, when they hear, **receive** the word with joy; and these have **no root**, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.
- ¹⁴ Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.
- ¹⁵ But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience. (NKJV)

The Parable of the Sower:

Luke 8:5-15

- Notice that Jesus' parable has 4 categories of persons, where Hebrews 6 only talks about two categories.
- Think about the 6 categories and match them according to their descriptions.
- The Old Testament has a similar description of plant growing and fruitfulness. Compare and contrast it, with the awareness that the original readers of Hebrews would be familiar with the Old Testament.

The same kind of description in the Hebrew Scriptures:

- Isaiah 27:2-6 In that day sing to her, "A vineyard of red wine! ³ I, the LORD, keep it, I water it every moment; Lest any hurt it, I keep it night and day. ⁴ Fury *is* not in Me. Who would set briers *and* thorns Against Me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. ⁵ Or let him take hold of My strength, *That* he may make peace with Me; *And* he shall make peace with Me."
- ⁶ Those who come He shall cause **to take root** in Jacob; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.
Isaiah 27:2-6 (NKJV)

Here we see the fruitful ground

Contrasted with the briars and thorns that must be burned away—in this case planted by an enemy in spiritual battle.

- The recommendation is to **seek God and His strength, and make peace with God, so that fruitfulness results.**
- Why do people need peace with God? Because our sins get in the way of His good purposes.

In this section of Hebrews 6

- *We see that discernment is needed to help a friend who has stepped away from his or her commitment to Christ.*
- We need to know **whether the person is in category 1, 2, or 3 of the parable of the sower.** Each category needs a different kind of encouragement. Category 1 needs to understand the message of salvation. Category 2 needs to make a real commitment—to become rooted and grounded in the faith. Category 3 needs to get rid of the distractions and press on toward maturity.

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2. God will discipline those who reject His instructions for reaching maturity.
3. **God sees our works and rewards fruitfulness.**
4. God wants us to be diligent and to persevere.
5. God keeps His promises.

1. God sees our works and rewards fruitfulness.

□ Hebrews 6:9-10 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.

God sees our works and rewards fruitfulness...

- God promises blessing to those who persevere in being fruitful for Him.
- “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;”—Hebrews 6:7.
- God’s justice includes reward, or blessing, for righteousness and fruitfulness.

Rewards are not always visible to others.

- We cannot be simplistic about this. Sometimes the reward is a special fellowship with Christ's sufferings, or a closer friendship with Christ—Philippians 3:7-11. In times of persecution, fellowship with God is life-saving.
- Rewards may include things like open communication with God in prayer, where formula prayers were typical before.
- Rewards can include things like contentment in place of dissatisfaction, or insights on matters that are difficult.
- The fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5) are both results and rewards of walking in the Spirit.

Heaven

- Heaven is a free gift. The judgment of each believer will bring **rewards** in Heaven, seen in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, according to his works.
- This is a topic that is complicated, because Heaven is a free gift, yet judgment is according to works. Being qualified to enter Heaven is based on Messiah's qualifications, not our own. But rewards in Heaven are built up, in this life, by our choices.
- Rewards are both in the present and in eternity.
- Reality is complicated, including spiritual reality. God uses our awareness of judgment by works to draw us toward His gracious gift of eternal life.

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Hebrews 6

- ¹¹ And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,
¹² that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

God wants us to be diligent and to persevere.

- God **wants to bless** us. He wants us to be faithful and persevering so that He **can** bless us and we can inherit the promises.
- Patience in the Greek Scriptures implies patient perseverance.
- He blessed Abraham by multiplying his family, even promising that his family would outnumber the stars.
- Think about the perseverance necessary to keep briars and thorns out of a vineyard. Diligence and hard work are rewarded, and regular weed removal before the weeds grow large is a huge help.

God wants us to be diligent and to persevere.

Two kinds of fruitfulness are expected in those who are mature in faith:

- **the fruits of the Holy Spirit**—the power of God visible in the life of the believer to rise above circumstance—and
- **more new believers.** The church is SUPPOSED to grow. We need God to bless us by multiplying us.

God wants us to be diligent and to persevere.

- We have a very good reason to press on toward the goals of Christian maturity—so that we can reach people who need to find God.
- We need to make eternal purposes our purposes.
- We may need to weed out some briars and thorns, so that we can become fruitful.

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Hebrews 6

- ¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴ saying, "*Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.*" ¹⁵ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

God keeps His promises.



We can be confident when we persevere under trial, because God's promises are certain.

God can multiply our numbers and grow us up in His truth and loving kindness.

God will keep His promises about our eternal destiny. We can trust Him forever.

We should press on toward maturity in an attitude of trust.

This is not always easy.

Hebrews 6: God's Oath is His Solemn Promise.

- ¹⁶ For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute.
- ¹⁷ Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise **the immutability of His counsel**, confirmed *it* by an oath,

God keeps His promises.

- God's counsel is immutable—unchangeable. His advice holds true. His universals hold true. He is not capricious. We can trust Him because He is always good. He always has our **eternal best interest** at heart.
- His oath is His solemn promise. He will keep it.
- The first immutable thing is God's counsel based on His character—and His oath is grounded in His character.

God keeps His promises.

- The most certain item in the cosmos or outside of it is God's Character. It never changes.
- Everything else is in flux all the time.
- We live in uncertain times, but God's character is more unchanging than the heavens. His good character is our ultimate Security.
- When circumstances hide His character, we often become angry. We need His security based on His goodness more than life itself.

Hebrews 6

- ¹⁸ 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*.

God keeps His promises.

- God is always honest. God cannot violate His good character. God cannot lie.
- God's counsel, confirmed by His oath, and His honesty are immutable. They are secure aspects of His goodness that we can depend upon.
- He is our refuge and our hope. We can receive His consolation during difficulty because He is always good.
- We can lay hold of hope. We can choose to always be hopeful.

Hebrews 6

- ¹⁸ 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*.
- ¹⁹ This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence *behind* the veil, ²⁰ where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

(NKJV)

God keeps His promises.

- Our hope reaches into heaven itself, into the Presence of God, behind the veil of the tabernacle in heaven.
- Jesus Christ has gone into that MOST HOLY PLACE of all—for us—and made atonement for our sins with His own blood.
- He is our link with God's heavenly Presence. He secures our hope. He is our "Jacob's Ladder" connecting heaven and earth.
- Thus He is our High Priest forever.

God keeps His promises.

The beautiful picture of God's grace depicted in the ancient temple—

God wants to be present among His people,

□ and He provides a way to atone for sins so that ordinary people can come into His Perfect Presence—

That picture was completed in heaven when Jesus Christ entered that Most Holy Place for us and became our High Priest forever.

We Cannot See into Heaven.

- God gave us inside information through Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead. We can trust the account of Jesus' priestly work in heaven for us because the resurrection is true. God wants us to know that.
- We need Jesus Christ as our Mediator, our Priest. His prayers for us are a direct blessing.
- Thus, Jesus' resurrection validates the system of atonement in the ancient temple. It makes the ancient temple system make sense.

Modern Human Beings Disregard Ancient Religions.

- We tend to think ancient religions are irrelevant or primitive. Unless we study carefully, we tend to automatically disregard the Old Testament as an example of such a religious system.
- Amazingly, the life of Christ makes the entire Book stand out among all religions, because the Old Testament reveals who the real Messiah is—centuries ahead of time.

Modern Human Beings Disregard Ancient Religions.

- Many clues are found throughout its pages, and all the tiny pieces of the puzzle fit, to keep us from accepting false messiahs, and to show us who is the correct Savior. We saw in chapter 5 of Hebrews that one form of “meat of the word” was understanding the details about King-Priest Melchizedek in the Old Testament.
- Many other details in the Old Testament help us know that Jesus Christ is the only One who fits the prophecies about Messiah.

Jesus Christ our Priest

- ❑ The symbolism of the Old Testament gives a sense of human distance from God, with the Most Holy Place only for God and separate from the rest of the temple, except on the Day of Atonement. No one could enter the Most Holy Place except the High Priest, and he could enter only once per year, to make atonement for the people, after making atonement for his own sins.
- ❑ Jesus' life and His office in Heaven as our Priest Forever—Jesus Christ is our link to God, who takes away that terrible distance due to our sins. Jesus makes God accessible to humans.
- ❑ Jesus also shows us what God's character is like.

The Facts about Christ's Life

- One description of Jesus' life is that "He went about doing good."—Acts 10:38 "He was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. He healed all who were oppressed by the devil."
- Everywhere He went, He preached about the kingdom of heaven. He healed the sick. He raised the dead. He gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf. He healed every kind of illness and handicap.

The Facts about Christ's Life

- Huge crowds followed Jesus and listened to Him teach.
- He gathered a group of followers who traveled with Him, and He designated 12 of them as apostles to carry on His teaching.
- He called Himself “the Son of Man” as a designation for Messiah, in reference to the description of Messiah in Daniel 7:13-14.

The Facts about Christ's Life

- He taught directly in the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew chapters 5 – 7. This long sermon explains how to apply the Law of God to human hearts.
- God sees the heart. He wants us to obey Him from the heart because we love Him.
- Jesus taught in many short, “punch line” stories called parables. These stories required searching for answers about what they meant.

The Facts about Christ's Life

- Jesus said of Himself in Luke 9:56 “For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”
 - His purpose in coming to earth was to provide for the eternal salvation of human beings.
- He taught His followers to pray to God
- ▣ as Our Father in Heaven, and to pray
 - ▣ In Jesus’ name. He is our link between heaven and earth. He is our “Jacob’s Ladder.”
- He taught that God knows our hearts, and He knows the number of hairs on our heads, and He loves us.

The Facts about Christ's Life

- He taught His followers that “God the Father has chosen gladly to give us the kingdom of heaven,” in Luke 12:32.
- He said that catastrophic events—such as the fall of the tower of Siloam, killing eighteen people—were not evidence that they were worse sinners than other people, but that all people must repent. “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” He viewed ALL death as a tragedy, and repentance as the key to avoid eternal death.

The Facts about Christ's Life

- Jesus Christ treated women as equals with men. When Mary wanted to listen to Jesus teach rather than help her sister Martha with meal preparation, Jesus said, in Luke 10:41, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

The Facts about Christ's Life

- Thus Jesus showed that the eternal salvation of women was based upon their response to the message of salvation, and that their response was the most important thing in life—the **one necessary thing**.
- Jesus chose women to carry the news of His resurrection to His disciples—even though the culture of the time did not accept women's testimony.
- Women ministered to Jesus throughout His life. (They were the bravest of His followers, at the cross, when most of the apostles were hiding.)

The Facts about Christ's Life

- Jesus called individuals to follow Him. He was of such character and goodness that people immediately left their occupations and followed Him, to hear Him teach and to see the miraculous healing signs He performed, which validated His claims to be Messiah.
- We are still called to follow Him—to listen to Him through His word, and to imitate His goodness.

The Facts about Christ's Life

- Jesus lived on this earth during the Roman Empire.
- Because of fear of a crushing Roman attack, the political and religious leaders of the day were afraid of the crowds Jesus gathered about Him.
- First they tried to discredit Him by tricking Him into saying something wrong, and by criticizing things like healing on the Sabbath. When those tactics did not work, they decided to arrest Him and put Him on trial for blasphemy.

The Facts about Christ's Life

- Jesus knew they would follow that course of action. He knew that God the Father wanted His life to be a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. He willingly laid down His life for us.
- The political and religious leaders of the day set into motion the course of action predicted in Old Testament prophecies.
- The leaders tried to find witnesses to condemn Jesus, but could find no agreement among His enemies' testimony.

The Facts about Christ's Life

- When that did not work, they demanded that Jesus answer the question, “Are You the Christ, the Son of God?”
- Jesus’ answer was “**You have said it yourself.**”
- Their actions in putting Him on trial, in fulfillment of prophecy, said that He is Messiah.
- For that response and Jesus’ next words, they condemned Jesus for blasphemy. **If He were not Messiah, it *would* have been blasphemy.**

The Facts about Christ's Life

- Jesus' words were, "You have said it yourself. Nevertheless, I tell you, hereafter you shall see **THE SON OF MAN** sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

The Facts about Christ's Life

- Because He truly was and is Messiah, they condemned an innocent Savior.
- They were not allowed to execute prisoners. That status was reserved for the Roman overlords.
- They took Jesus to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate.
- Blasphemy was not an offense for capital punishment under Roman law. Pontius Pilate chose political expediency over justice, and condemned Jesus. The verdict was the cross.

The Facts about Christ's Life

- Jesus' disciples ran away in fear—with a few exceptions. Peter followed but tried to hide his faith by denying Jesus multiple times. John, Jesus' best friend, watched as Jesus died. Some women who ministered to Jesus were at the cross, including His mother Mary. From the cross, Jesus asked John to take care of His mother.
- Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man, supplied the tomb. Nicodemus, from the Sanhedrin, supplied the grave clothes and 75-100 pounds of spices for the preparation.

Through the centuries,

Christians have sometimes carried serious resentment toward the Jews because of Christ's crucifixion. This is a terrible mistake with serious consequences.

In the first place, only the individuals involved in obtaining an unfair execution were guilty. **Guilt is accounted on an individual basis, not a group basis.** Only those leaders making the decision carry blame for it. The apostle Peter offered forgiveness to those very individuals—Acts 3:12-26.

In the second place,

Jesus laid down His life for us—and He said in John chapter 10 that **“no one took it away from Him.”** He **“had the authority to lay it down”** and He **“had the authority to take it up again.”** He proved that claim by coming back to life.

It was necessary for Him to suffer in fulfillment of prophecy, so that people could know that He is the real Messiah.

In the third place,

- Jesus Christ does not want us to carry enmity toward anyone regarding His suffering on the cross. He would have gone through the same suffering under any circumstance, because we all NEED His atonement for our sins and He loves us.
- God wants us to be grateful that Jesus willingly suffered on the cross in our place.
- The Jewish people are Jesus' relatives, and we should love them because He loves them. This is not optional. It is required.

Jesus is Messiah for the Jews and for the Gentiles.

- He is FOR us all, not against us.
- Romans 15:8-9 “For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy.”

Jesus is Messiah for the Jews and for the Gentiles.

- He is FOR us all, not against us.
- Romans 15:16-17 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith.’”

Jesus is Messiah for the Jews and for the Gentiles.

- He is FOR us all, not against us.
- Luke 2:32 calls Jesus “a light of revelation to the gentiles and the glory of Thy people, Israel.”

The Facts about Christ's Life

- Jesus Christ was buried.
- The political leaders requested security over the tomb from the Roman governor. Pilate supplied a Roman soldier guard—“koustodia” – a word from Latin, and a seal on the stone that served as a door.
- On the third day an earthquake occurred, and the guards were struck motionless by fear of the sight of an angel, who rolled away the stone.
- Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

The Facts about Christ's Life

- For the next 40 days, Jesus Christ appeared to various of His followers, including 500 at one time. They became courageous witnesses of His resurrection. Psalm 22 predicted that Messiah would “tell of God’s Name among His brothers and in the midst of the assembly I will praise You.” This prediction is after the description of the crucifixion.
- Jesus’ resurrection proved His claim about being Messiah. Anyone can make such a claim, but only the True Messiah had authority to come back to life.
- After 40 days, He ascended into heaven in view of His followers.

The Facts about Christ's Life

- About 50 days after the crucifixion, on the day of Pentecost, He sent the Holy Spirit to empower His followers.
- The Holy Spirit gave them courage and eloquence to proclaim the message of Jesus' atoning death, burial, and resurrection to the world.
- The message continues in our world today.
- We are each responsible to recreate God's goodness in our own lives through the power of His Holy Spirit. We are to follow Christ's example to reveal God's goodness to our world.

Christ's Life is an example for Christians. We should imitate

Life Characteristics to Imitate

1. His righteous actions.
2. His faithful obedience to God the Father.
3. His love for all people.
4. His willingness to stand for the truth, even to the point of laying down His life.

In Christianity, Christ is our Example.

We are to imitate His righteous actions.

His life was pure and holy. His enemies were never able to demonstrate any sin on His part, even though they tried very hard to do so.

He lived in a very strict society, in the midst of an empire that was very sinful.

Yet He met the highest moral standards and was so **obviously righteous** that He had the freedom to mingle with all sorts of people, for their good.

In Christianity, Christ is our Example.

We are to imitate His righteous actions.

He fought against evil—by curing disease, by healing handicaps, by teaching the perfection of God's law, by accepting the repentant outcasts, by raising people from the dead, and MOST OF ALL, by conquering death itself on our behalf.

We do not face Camus' dilemma described in his book, *The Plague*, because Jesus is our example. Camus asked "Was it right to fight the plague and thus to fight against God's will, or was it right to allow the plague to take its course?" OF COURSE IT IS RIGHT TO FIGHT THE PLAGUE.

In Christianity, Christ is our Example.

- Jesus Christ fought against evil on an eternal scale.
- He became sin for us—He took upon Himself the curse of sin—to deliver us from sin and death and hell.
- We are to fight against evil, too, by resisting temptation, by rescuing the oppressed, by giving to help the poor, by doing good and helping those who suffer, and by proclaiming the message of salvation so that others can have eternal life as Jesus' gift to them.

In Christianity, Christ is our Example.

- We are to imitate His faithful obedience to God the Father.
- Jesus walked on this earth in perfect fellowship with God the Father. He did not claim to act on His own initiative, but to follow God's directions.
- John 8:28-29 Then Jesus said to them, "**When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and *that* I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. ²⁹ And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.**"
John 8:28-29 (NKJV)

In Christianity, Christ is our Example.

We can know and understand God's will as expressed through His word—and we have the beautiful example of Jesus' perfect life to help us interpret His word correctly.

We can consider how to apply the principles of the Bible by comparing the way Jesus Christ applied them.

God's purpose for us is to become conformed to the image of His Son.—Romans 8:29.

In Christianity, Christ is our Example.

Jesus taught us to pray “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

- This implies that God’s will is not the puppet-on-a-string kind of will such as Camus’ book talked about. God’s will allows things on earth as part of human freedom of choice and as consequences of the broken world, which are NOT things He wants at all. God allows evil, but evil is NOT what He wants. Heaven will be free of evil. The people in heaven want to please God and have open communication with Him.

In Christianity, Christ is our Example.

- We are to imitate Jesus' love for all people—even our enemies.
- Everything Jesus Christ did was in demonstration of His eternal best wishes for everyone. No price was too high for Him to pay so that they and we could have eternity in heaven.
- We, in the power of His Holy Spirit, extend His loving ministry of salvation to our own generation and the next.

In Christianity, Christ is our Example.

- We are to imitate His love for all people.
- ⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, '*You shall love your neighbor* and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven;

In Christianity, Christ is our Example.

- for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others?* Do not even the tax collectors do so? ⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. Matthew 5:43-48 (NKJV)

In Christianity, Christ is our Example.

- We are to imitate His willingness to stand for the truth, even to the point of laying down His life. Jesus' willing sacrifice occurred at the hands of powerful people who wanted to silence Him. They wanted to silence the truth, because of their fears.
- Jesus instructed us to take up our cross and follow Him. The truth always matters. We are to always be truthful. Truth is so much a part of Jesus' character He said, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life."**

In Christianity, Christ is our Example.

- People cannot escape the sentence of hell without God's help.
- We have to tell them.
- They often do not like to be told. Sometimes that endangers us. We are to tell them anyway—because it is true and eternally important.

In Christianity, Christ is our Example.

- We notice that the things about Jesus Christ that we are to imitate are **core principles**. We don't have to be homeless and gather followers and do miracles. We don't have to imitate details of daily life—where to go to pray, for example, or how to organize 5,000 people for a meal.
- **We DO have to imitate His essential goodness and His eternally kind truthfulness and His willingness to place the eternal well being of others above His own well being.**

In Christianity, Christ is our Example.

- We do have to imitate His courage in reaching out to others for their eternal good.
- We have to care the way He cared.

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Homework

In 3 sets

Hebrews 2:18

“For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- ❑ **Read this essay: How Do Judaism and Christianity Fit Together from the Perspective of the Bible?**
- ❑ The Messiah is the key figure who brings together the Old and New Testaments. The Hebrew Scriptures are filled with clues that enable us to recognize who He is, and that help us avoid believing in anyone who would make a false claim to that office.
- ❑ The Messiah, called the Christ in Greek, would be the One who would bring the Gentiles to salvation. Isaiah 49:1-7 speaks of God's Servant, Israel, meaning inclusively the nation, the faith, and the Messiah. God called the Messiah from the womb for three purposes spoken in these verses.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- What were those three purposes? Which verses state them?
- First, Messiah would reveal _____, yet the Messiah would appear to be treated unjustly.
- Second, Messiah would restore _____.
- Third, the Messiah would be _____ to the Gentiles, so that _____ would reach to the end of the earth.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- The Messiah is seen as paradoxically being abhorred by the nation, yet receiving homage from kings and princes. These verses state that bringing the nation of Israel back was ***too small a thing*** for Messiah to accomplish. He would ***also*** bring the Gentiles to faith, so that God's salvation would "reach to the end of the earth."
- This demonstrates that the real Messiah is for both Jews and Gentiles—for EVERYBODY.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- This theme is stated in Isaiah 11:10 as well. Messiah, the root of Jesse, from King David's family, will be someone the nations of Gentiles will seek. In verses one through five of the same chapter, Messiah is shown as a righteous Judge, who will decide with fairness for the poor and afflicted of the earth, and who will punish the wicked.
- Then in verses six through nine, Messiah will restore the earth to its peaceful perfection, as described in the Garden of Eden.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- *This means Messiah cannot merely be a man.*
Only God can restore the earth to that state.
Only God can perfectly judge the wicked and rescue the poor and afflicted from the oppressor.
- Note that judgment – striking the earth with the rod of His mouth – precedes restoration, when the lion will lie down with the lamb, and the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- The meaning of “the rod of His mouth” is that Messiah can speak, and it will be so, just as God can speak events and matter into existence. The implication is that Messiah is God-with-us – Immanuel.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- Near the time frame -“on that day”- when Messiah appears as Judge and King, the nation of Israel will be restored to its land for the second time, according to verses eleven through sixteen of Isaiah chapter 11. Read this chapter now.
- The first restoration occurred in the time of Cyrus the Great, ruler of the Medes and Persians, as reported in the books Ezra and Nehemiah.
- The second restoration began in the late 1940's, but the events of the rest of this chapter are incomplete.
- Both restorations were miraculous, both following a time of seemingly total defeat and helplessness.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- The specifics of these verses are intriguing. The twentieth century dams on the Euphrates River make it possible for a drought produced by a strong (as in persistent?) east wind to strike the river into seven streams, with dry spaces in between.
- The current events in the Middle East leave open the possibility of a Free Iraq that might allow refugees to pass through as well. The location of Jewish refugees in Russia and the Republics of the former Soviet Union, many having already returned to Israel, seem to fit these verses as well. Because the events of this *day* are ongoing, the word *day* here must mean a specified period of time rather than a twenty-four hour day.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- We know that many Jews from other nations around the Middle East returned when Israel became a nation. Many were expelled from the other nations at that time, and found refuge in the newly formed nation of Israel. Part of this passage has been fulfilled.
- We also can remember that when the resurrection of the righteous occurs, many Jews will return to Israel, restored to life. At that time, many believing Jews from the past will be restored from the nations listed in Isaiah 11. So this passage has potential for future fulfillment.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- Sometimes the Old Testament superimposes Messiah and the Nation Israel. Isaiah chapters 52 and 53 and Ezekiel chapter 37 use this technique.
- Ezekiel was a prophet of the LORD who was taken into captivity in Babylon. The nation of Israel had been annihilated from the land of Israel, and only a few people - a remnant - had been taken to Babylon.
- Ezekiel had been captured before the fall of Jerusalem, and he was in provincial Babylon at the time of that fall.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- A saying among the captives was “Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.” God gave Ezekiel a vision of dry bones that came back to life, and made clear that He was promising a resurrection of the nation of Israel. That resurrection as a nation took place during the reign of Cyrus the Great of Persia.
- (Another resurrection—a physical future resurrection of righteous individuals is also in view here. Often prophecies have a dual fulfillment which includes and end time event.)

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- In Isaiah chapter 52, God predicts the restoration of Israel as a nation after captivity, and then in verse 13 through 15, God states that Messiah will similarly suffer and astonishingly be restored. So the resurrection of the nation and of Messiah are both implied.
- Isaiah 53-53 promises that He will provide atonement for many nations of Gentiles – He will sprinkle many nations. “Sprinkling many nations” is a reference to the sprinkling of the blood of the lamb in the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement, yet **this** atonement applies to Gentile nations!

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- Isaiah chapter 53 describes the Messiah's suffering, and tells that He clearly would suffer while being innocent. His suffering would atone for the sins of others. His suffering would even include death. Yet life afterwards is clearly promised, and Messiah will justify the many because He bears their iniquities.
- These two chapters seamlessly weave together Messiah's suffering and Israel's suffering as a nation, and bring out the idea of resurrection by implication.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- The description of Messiah's suffering matches the description of Jesus' suffering leading up to and including the crucifixion.
- The promise of restoration of life matches the New Testament record of Jesus' resurrection. Even His enemies had to admit they could not locate the body.
- The description of Isaiah chapter 53 can be compared to the last few chapters in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the details match.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- The people who still believe in the Torah are believing Jews and evangelical Christians. This certainly matches the idea of Messiah bringing Gentiles into the faith.
- The first major controversy of the Christian church was whether to allow Gentiles to join without going through the rituals to become Jews, since the early church was all Jewish. This record is found in the book of Acts in the New Testament.

□

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- One of the questions which believers in the Torah must answer is “How can God have established the system of worship at the temple for atonement of sins, and then have allowed the temple to be destroyed? Since God is *Good*, and His Word is *True*, how could He allow the Most Holy Place to be destroyed? Don’t people need atonement for sins in order to reach Him? How can God’s people reach Him without the temple?”

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- The New Testament book, The Letter to the Hebrews, answers that question. This book was written to Jewish Christian believers who were scattered in the Roman Empire – thus the name of the book.
- The amazing answer begins with the idea that the temple in Jerusalem was a copy of the Prototype Temple in Heaven, and the Most Holy Place in Heaven is the one that really matters.
- Messiah entered that Most Holy Place with His own blood, and sprinkled His blood for the atonement for ALL human sins, once for all. He was able to do that because He is infinite God as well as perfect Human.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- The sacrifice system of the Torah is symbolic of the infinite atoning sacrifice of Messiah. Therefore, the temple in Jerusalem is unnecessary for the atonement of sins after Messiah's death and resurrection.
- At the time of the writing of Hebrews, that system was passing away—implying that the book was written while the temple was still in existence. Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection completed the requirements of the temple system of worship – and also are sufficient to allow Gentiles as well as Jews to reach God.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- Remember from Isaiah 11:10 also that Messiah is the Judge, who will judge all the wicked of the earth.
- The Judge Himself was willing to pay for the sins of us all. If we receive His atonement, we are given right standing with God, and are able to enter His eternal salvation. He has conquered death for us.
- God, through Messiah, has done His part in providing the atonement that we need. Our part is summed up in the word faith.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- Chapters one through nine of the book of Hebrews talk about God's part, and chapter eleven talks about faith.
- This chapter demonstrates that faith was the essential requirement of the Torah as well.
- Isaiah chapter 50 verses four through eleven speak of the suffering of Messiah and the requirement to trust in the name of the LORD and to rely on God rather than kindling one's own fire – relying on one's own goodness – to reach God.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- The New Testament amplifies the meaning, because more was clear, once Messiah had died and then risen from the dead.
- The book of Romans, chapter 9 verse 30 through chapter 10 verse 17, explains that we cannot possibly establish our own righteousness by our own good works because our righteousness cannot be perfect. Instead, we must submit to the perfect righteousness of God through faith.
- The righteousness of good works requires perfection, which we cannot achieve on our own. Submitting to the righteousness of God gives us perfection, because He is perfect.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- If we confess with our mouth that Jesus is LORD, and believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead, we shall be saved. With the heart, people believe, resulting in righteousness....
- And “there is no distinction any more between Jew and Gentile, because the same LORD is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him.”
- “Everyone who calls on the Name of the LORD will be saved.” God wants each of us to pray to Him about this.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- We call out to Him in prayer, asking for forgiveness, and asking that His atonement apply to us, believing His promise of salvation to all who call upon Him.
- Remember that Messiah is also King and Judge. When we receive His atonement, we receive the Judge's mercy, and we welcome the King's sovereignty over our lives. Jesus said that His Kingdom is within us. He sends His Holy Spirit to live in our hearts.

Homework Week 19 Day 1

- Suggestions for further study:
- Continue studying The Epistle to the Hebrews and
- Galatians 3: 6-29,
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-8,
- Romans 8:1-17,
- 2 Corinthians 2:14-17, 3:1-18, 4:1-7, 5:17-21,
- Zechariah 2:10-11,
- Isaiah 16:1-5, 32:1-4 & 17-22,
- John 14:16-27.

Homework Week 19 Day 2

- We want to start looking at the subject of prayer in the Bible. We are indebted to a workbook called *DISCIPLES PRAYER LIFE: Walking in Fellowship with God*, by T. W. Hunt and Catherine Walker, for revealing the richness of prayer in the Bible. This workbook is difficult to purchase, but is available at times through Lifeway Press. It is one of those resources that should be on everyone's lifetime list—it is so rich and lovely. Buy it if you find it for sale. As we look at the world around us, effective prayer is vital.

Homework Week 19 Day 2

- Let's begin with Abraham's prayers regarding the promise of a son, and regarding the destruction of Sodom. One thing that is very evident in Abraham's prayers is transparent honesty with God. Read Genesis 12:1-9, Genesis 15:1-21, Genesis 17:1-27, and Genesis 18:16-33.
- What principles do you notice that Abraham spoke about as he prayed?
- Why did God say He planned to talk to Abraham about the destruction of Sodom?

Homework Week 19 Day 2

- Next look at Jacob's prayers. Read Genesis 28:10-22, and Genesis 32:1-32.
- How did Jacob test the validity of his dream in the Genesis 28 passage? What commitment did he make?
- In Genesis 32, in the midst of Jacob's fear of his brother Esau's wrath, and after a report of 400 men with Esau coming to meet him, Jacob saw a vision of an army of two companies of angels – the meaning of Mahanaim.

Homework Week 19 Day 2

- At the end of the chapter, Jacob wrestled with one angel, and the angel was more powerful. He injured Jacob's leg so that Jacob had the reminder of a limp for the rest of his life. How did Jacob's prayer in verses 9-12 refer obliquely to the vision of angels?
- What basis did Jacob use in requesting God's protection for his family?
- What did Jacob ask from the Angel of the LORD?

Homework Week 19 Day 2

- ❑ In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was God's abiding Presence in the Temple. Here are some Bible references for the deity of the Holy Spirit. Make notes about ideas you notice in these verses. How do you think the Holy Spirit is involved in our prayers?
- ❑ Acts 5:3-4
- ❑ Psalm 139:7-12, I Corinthians 2:10-11.
- ❑ Genesis 1:2.
- ❑ John 3:5-6, Romans 8:9 Titus 3:5-7.
- ❑ Matthew 28:18-20.
- ❑ 2 Corinthians 12:11.

Homework Week 19 Day 2

- What aspects of the personality of the Holy Spirit are revealed in the following Scriptures?
- John 14:26, 16:13.
- John 14:26, I John 2:27, John 16:7-11, Ephesians 4:30.
- I Corinthians 2:10-11, 12:11, and Ephesians 4:30.
- John 3:5, Ephesians 4:30, Titus 3:5-7.

Homework Week 19 Day 3

- ❑ In Isaiah 9:6, Messiah is a child born for us. He is called *Mighty God*. Thus if Jesus is Messiah, Jesus is Deity.
- ❑ Jesus Himself claimed Deity in a number of ways.
- ❑ He claimed the authority to forgive sins, and backed up His words with a miracle of healing, in Mark chapter 2:1-12.
- ❑ In John 8:58. Jesus said, “Before Abraham was born, I am.” Not only was He explaining His prior existence from eternity past, He was also using a phrase reminiscent of God’s NAME YHVH as revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:13-15.

Homework Week 19 Day 3

- In John 10:27-30, He said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish. And no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father who gave them to Me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”
- In that same chapter, He said He is the Good Shepherd. In Ezekiel 34:11-31, the Good Shepherd is God and also Messiah. See especially verses 11-12 and 23-24 of Ezekiel 34.

Homework Week 19 Day 3

- ❑ He accepted worship. Matthew 8:2, 9:18, 14:33, 15:25, 20:20, Mark 5:6, John 20:28
- ❑ He said He was given all authority in heaven and earth according to Matthew 28: 18-19.
- ❑ He instructed His followers to pray in His name, according to John 15.
- ❑ What are some ways His followers acknowledged His Deity?
- ❑ Compare that idea in Zechariah 12:10 and John 19:37 and Revelation 1:7.

Homework Week 19 Day 3

- Compare Isaiah 45:22-23 and Philippians 2:10.
- John 1
- Colossians 1:17.
- Jesus' name is used in benedictions throughout the New Testament, such as II Corinthians 13:14.
- Ephesians 1:21
- In Daniel's time, he was in captivity in Babylon, yet he prayed facing the direction of the Temple in Jerusalem. How is this action similar to praying in Jesus' name in the New Testament?