

# WitnessKit 3

## God and Religions

Integrating the Worldviews of the Old and New  
Testaments,

Guided by the Book  
*Letter to the Hebrews*

### Class 17

## Hebrews Chapter 4—Faith and Entering God's Rest

# I Thessalonians 5:21

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

# Comparing Messiah and Moses

- There is a promise in the Old Testament that God would raise up a Prophet like Moses, and that everyone **MUST** listen to Him—Deuteronomy 18:15. "**The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear,** (NKJV)
- Hebrews chapter 3 compared Moses and Jesus Christ. (Of course, it is **logical** to listen to the real Messiah, because of who He is. If He is real, then we must listen to Him. The real Messiah is a deliverer, a Savior, sent from God to rescue people.)
- Is there a passage *in the Old Testament* that compares the ***promised Messiah*** and ***Moses***? If so, that passage would confirm that Deuteronomy 18:15 is speaking of Messiah, and that everyone must listen to **Him**.

# The answer is yes.

- **Isaiah chapter 49** compares Messiah and Moses. This is a very important chapter in the Old Testament, packed with many valuable insights.
- It is written to Gentiles. It gives an overview God's perspective about Messiah's work on behalf of Gentiles who believe in Him.
- It also gives God's perspective about His Jewish people and **His continuous love for them**, no matter what their circumstances.

# Isaiah 49

# and

# Comments

**<sup>1</sup> "Listen, O coastlands, to Me, And take heed, you peoples from afar!**

**The LORD has called Me from the womb; From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name.**

Verse 1 directs the passage to Gentiles, telling **Gentiles** to listen to Messiah. When we see the word *peoples*, that refers to people groups, or Gentiles.

This verse also gives a clue about Messiah, tying His identity to the “Seed of the Woman” in Genesis 3.

God named the Baby while He was still in His mother’s womb. This was fulfilled both for Mary and Joseph separately, Luke 1:31, Matthew 1:21. His name would be **Jesus**, meaning Savior, because He would save His people **from their sins. Who ELSE but God could do that?**

# Isaiah 49

and

# Comments

<sup>1</sup> **And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword;**

This statement about Messiah's mouth like a sword is explained in **Isaiah 11:1-5**. The first appearance shows Messiah's **words** as wise counsel. Later in the passage **His words** bring both judgment against evil and rescue for the helpless. Who but God can speak, and it is so?

# Isaiah 49

and

# Comments

In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, And made Me a polished shaft (arrow); In His quiver He has hidden Me." <sup>3</sup> "And He said to me, 'You *are* My servant, O Israel, In whom I will be glorified.'

Here is the comparison to Moses. God concealed Moses in the shadow of His hand when He revealed His glory—Exodus 33:12-23.

God hid Messiah in heaven from eternity past until the time to reveal His glory—through a purposeful sending from heaven to earth, sent like an arrow.

God calls Messiah "**Israel**" because He is the Prophet from **among Moses' brethren**—The nation of Israel—Deuteronomy 18:15.

# Isaiah 49

and

# Comments

<sup>4</sup> Then I said, 'I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain; Yet surely my just reward *is* with the LORD, And my work with my God.'

Messiah is speaking, reporting a sense of utter loss, almost despair, but with faith in God's perfect goodness carrying Him through. Jesus experienced this in the suffering of the cross.

This is totally unexpected for Messiah, Who will be so powerful according to the promises. God gave this clue ahead of time to help with the unexpected suffering of Messiah.



# Isaiah 49

# and

# Comments

"And now the LORD says, Who formed Me from the womb *to be* His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, So that Israel is gathered to Him (For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, And My God shall be My strength),

Messiah gets ready to report what God says, and also reports one of His purposes: to bring the nation of Israel back to God, gathered to Him. Saying Messiah was **formed from the womb** is the same as calling Him the **Seed of the Woman**. This shows that the incarnation and the Virgin Birth are true.

He also reports His source of strength while in human form and experiencing some human limitations. (Philippians 2:5-11) His source is God the Father.

# Isaiah 49

and

# Comments

<sup>6</sup> Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.' " <sup>7</sup>

These are God the Father's words:

Messiah's purpose goes far beyond raising the tribes of Jacob (at the resurrection of the righteous), and restoring the nation of Israel to the promised land. Messiah is infinite, and will be a light to the **Gentiles to BE God's salvation to all people and for all time.**

Messiah is **for** everyone.

# Isaiah 49

and

# Comments

<sup>7</sup> Thus says the LORD, The Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One,  
To Him whom man despises,  
To Him whom the nation abhors,  
To the Servant of rulers:  
"Kings shall see and arise, Princes also shall worship,  
Because of the LORD who is faithful, The Holy One of Israel;  
And He has chosen You."

God is the kinsman Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One. This passage predicts that the nation will reject His Messiah for a time.

Messiah is the Servant to whom earthly kings will bow in worship. Messiah is for all classes of people, from the lowliest to the most powerful.

Messiah is for everyone.

The LORD is faithful, **trustworthy**, to overcome the futility Messiah would feel during His suffering.

# Isaiah 49

# and

# Comments

Thus says the LORD: "In an acceptable time I have heard You, And in the day of salvation I have helped You;

I will preserve You and give You As a covenant to the people,

To restore the earth, To cause them to inherit the desolate heritages; <sup>9</sup> That You may say to the prisoners, 'Go forth,' To those who *are* in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' “

Here it seems that God the Father is speaking to Messiah in His time of despair, saying that Messiah will triumph over His suffering, and God will make Messiah a COVENANT to the people, to restore the earth—and Isaiah 11 confirms this purpose of Messiah, to restore creation to its good state.

God, through Messiah, is **for** the prisoners. Messiah is **for** everyone. Messiah frees from the darkness of hell and of death.

# Messiah is Our Covenant

Psalm 50:5 defines the godly ones as those who have made a Covenant with God by sacrifice.

**“Gather My godly ones to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.”**

Messiah’s suffering is the sacrifice of the New Covenant. It is infinite.

Thus, Messiah’s sacrifice and triumph over death ratified God’s eternal covenant for all who will accept it.

Sign on the dotted line! Requirements are repentance and faith.

# Isaiah 49

and

# Comments

They shall feed along the roads, And their pastures *shall be* on all desolate heights. <sup>10</sup> They shall neither hunger nor thirst, Neither heat nor sun shall strike them; For He who has mercy on them will lead them, Even by the springs of water He will guide them. <sup>11</sup> I will make each of My mountains a road, And My highways shall be elevated.

Here we see Messiah, the Good Shepherd, leading His sheep home.

This has at least two pictures superimposed. One picture is re-establishing Israel in their Promised Land. The other picture is leading all His sheep into the Promised Land of His eternal kingdom after the resurrection of the righteous.

# Isaiah 49

and

# Comments

**<sup>12</sup> Surely these shall come from afar; Look! Those from the north and the west, And these from the land of Sinim." <sup>13</sup> Sing, O heavens! Be joyful, O earth! And break out in singing, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people, And will have mercy on His afflicted.**

Ezekiel chapter 37 does the same kind of superimposing of ideas: resurrection of the nation, and eternal resurrection of the righteous, also brought to the land in the restoration Messiah will one day accomplish.

Here we see Messiah is also like Moses.

# Isaiah 49

and

# Comments

**Surely these shall come from afar; Look! Those from the north and the west, And these from the land of Sinim."**

**<sup>13</sup> Sing, O heavens! Be joyful, O earth! And break out in singing, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people, And will have mercy on His afflicted.**

Notice that the sheep come from all over the world.

Sinim was the far east. Even today, God has gathered Jewish people to the land from India. In the resurrection of the righteous, those who have trusted Him will come from all over the world. Heaven and earth will be filled with joy.



# Isaiah 49

and

# Comments

But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, And my Lord has forgotten me."

<sup>15</sup> "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. <sup>16</sup> See, I have inscribed you on the palms *of My hands*; Your walls *are* continually before Me.

In the meantime, Israel feels forsaken and forgotten by God. Wrong! God NEVER forgets Israel. God always loves Israel.

God inscribed Israel on the palms of His hands. Messiah took the bruise on His heel to crush the serpent's head—to defeat evil. He took the nails in His hands because He LOVES ISRAEL. He WILL rebuild Israel.

# Isaiah 49

and

# Comments

Your walls *are* continually before Me. <sup>17</sup> Your sons shall make haste; Your destroyers and those who laid you waste Shall go away from you.

<sup>18</sup> Lift up your eyes, look around and see; All these gather together *and* come to you. *As I live,*" says the LORD, "You shall surely clothe yourselves with them all as an ornament, And bind them *on you* as a bride *does*.

God will rebuild Israel both in terms of geography and in terms of people. God will give Israel children from afar that they do not even know about.

Even from among their *perceived* enemies, some people will become family members, and will be like extra jewels adorning them—family members with a difference.

The sense of being forsaken by God leads to feeling like everyone is an enemy, but that is not the case. People in tune with God's love also love Israel.

# Isaiah 49

# and

# Comments

*As I live," says the LORD,  
"You shall surely clothe  
yourselves with them all  
as an ornament,*

*And bind them on you as a  
bride does.*

*<sup>19</sup> "For your waste and  
desolate places,*

*And the land of your  
destruction,*

*Will even now be too small  
for the inhabitants;*

*And those who swallowed  
you up will be far away.*

(This is clearer in other translations such as the New American Standard Version and in the next set of verses.) Some unexpected family members may be children by adoption from the Gentiles, since Messiah adopts us into God's family. In Ezekiel's prophecies about the reign of Messiah, there is room set aside for His family—the princes who must never oppress others—Ezekiel 45:7-10. Of course, the passage could refer to the princes of the house of David from the past who were in the resurrection of the righteous. This gives a sense that the Millennial Jerusalem will be filled with people.

Enemies will be far away in the eternal kingdom.

# Isaiah 49

and

# Comments

<sup>20</sup> The children you will have,  
After you have lost the others,  
Will say again in your ears,  
'The place *is* too small for me;  
Give me a place where I may dwell.'  
<sup>21</sup> Then you will say in your heart,  
'Who has begotten these for me,  
Since I have lost my children and am  
desolate,  
A captive, and wandering to and fro?  
And who has brought these up? There  
I was, left alone;  
But these, where *were* they?' “

In the time of the  
Kingdom of Messiah,  
the land will be filled  
with family members.  
Israel will be  
respected and  
beloved. The nation  
will survive into  
eternity—the  
captivity did not  
destroy the nation.

# Isaiah 49

and

# Comments

<sup>22</sup> Thus says the Lord GOD:  
"Behold, I will lift My hand in  
an oath to the nations, And set  
up My standard for the  
peoples;

They shall bring your sons in  
*their* arms,

And your daughters shall be  
carried on *their* shoulders;

<sup>23</sup> Kings shall be your foster  
fathers,

And their queens your nursing  
mothers;

They shall bow down to you with  
*their* faces to the earth,

And lick up the dust of your feet.

Enemies of Israel and  
enemies of God will be  
defeated and ashamed.  
The Gentile nations will  
have nurtured Israel's  
family for eternity—  
even leaders of those  
nations who did not  
favor Israel. This is a  
promise from God—an  
oath. God's standard is  
a banner or signal that  
the Gentiles can see  
and recognize. (Isaiah  
11:12 and 18:3)

# Isaiah 49

# and

# Comments

Then you will know that I *am* the LORD, For they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me."

<sup>24</sup> Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, Or the captives of a tyrant\* (NASB) be delivered? <sup>25</sup> But thus says the LORD: "Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, And the prey of the terrible be delivered;

For I will contend with him who contends with you, And I will save your children.

Everyone will know at that time who the REAL GOD is. Those who trust Him and wait for Him will NOT be defeated or ashamed.

They will **feel** defeated by tyranny, but tyranny will ultimately fail. This may refer to the terrible time of trouble that takes place before Messiah returns.

God is able to rescue from tyrants. The good news is that He will do so for all eternity.

\*Manuscript note: the older MSS and Dead Sea Scrolls have the word **tyrant** here, and it matches the meaning of the passage.

# Isaiah 49

# and

# Comments

**<sup>26</sup> I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh, And they shall be drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine.**

**All flesh shall know  
That I, the LORD, *am*  
your Savior,**

**And your Redeemer,  
the Mighty One of  
Jacob."**

□ Isaiah 49:1-26 (NKJV)

Everyone will know at that time who the REAL GOD and the REAL SAVIOR is. Oppressors will ultimately fail.

God is able to rescue from tyrants. The good news is that He will do so for all eternity.

The wicked will receive justice in eternity, and everyone will know that God loves Israel.

Messiah is Savior and God is Savior, and God is the ONLY Savior—so Messiah is God-with-us. Hosea 13:4. The idea of the Trinity makes all the verses consistent.

# Notice that God gave this passage

For a time when Israel would feel forsaken by Him. God understands and cares about the suffering of His people.



Jesus Christ gave us a heavenly calling,  
similar to the calling God gave Israel.

Exodus 19:6a says “And you shall be to Me a  
kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

1 Peter 2:4-11 applies that calling to us, who believe  
in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

*“And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by  
men, but choice and precious in the sight of God,  
you also, as living stones, are being built up as a  
spiritual house for a holy priesthood, ...But you are  
a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a  
people for God’s own possession, that you may  
proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you  
out of darkness into His marvelous light.*”

# We learned in our last lesson, Hebrews chapter 3,

That we must meet certain challenges to be able to fulfill that heavenly calling.

1. We must understand who Jesus is.
2. We must persevere in faith and encourage one another to persevere.
3. We must avoid the danger of a hardened heart, either due to the deceitfulness of sin or the sin of unbelief.

# Therefore we should fear

Our **potential** for failure to meet the goal of our heavenly calling. We should fear falling short of entering God's rest, in the metaphor of entering the Promised Land, by coming short of that goal through unbelief. The Promised Land was called the place of God's rest.

Hebrews 4— *“<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. <sup>2</sup> For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.”*

# Faith was the Key.

Faith was the key for those who were able to enter the promised land. Only Joshua and Caleb, the **persevering believers** of their generation, were able to enter the new land after the 40 years wandering in the wilderness.

If you are not familiar with that part of the Bible, read Numbers chapters 13 and 14 and Deuteronomy 29 and Joshua 14.

It was a turning point, and it turned **upon the faith** of the people.

# Faith was the Key.

God gave Joshua and Caleb the strength and the right to enter that rest—even in their old age and under battle conditions—five years of battle. They obtained an inheritance in the land where their efforts were rewarded, and where slavery and futility were over.

We can ask God to give us more faith! He will hear and answer “Yes!” That is exactly what He wants to do.

# Why was faith the key?

- **That is an essential question.** The remainder of the *Letter to the Hebrews* will open up an answer to that question. We will not try to answer it now, except to give a reason from scripture found in another letter.
- **Ephesians 2** says that **faith is egalitarian and humble**. Nobody has a right to boast before God because we access His grace by faith, not by achievements. God made a way for **EVERYONE** to access His grace, no matter their skill level at anything. We have an inherent sense that human equality before God is right. For that to be possible, faith is the key for everyone.
- We see that principle in action in the lives of Joshua and Caleb.

# In human talents

We are unequal. In human wealth, we are unequal. In human strength, we are unequal. In human achievements, we are unequal.

- Yet we have written on our hearts that we are equal before God with other human beings in rights and in responsibilities. Societies based on that truth are **much better** than those which are not—so collective **experience** validates the idea.
- **The Bible** validates that idea—heaven is a gift for the asking. We access heaven by faith, not by achievements. We are equal before God in potential for heaven. We are valued by Him on that potential.

# We must strengthen our faith

## Goals

Because our faith is vital for meeting goals:

1. The goal of entering God's rest in the future world.
2. The goal of entering God's rest in the present world.
3. The goal of freedom from God's judgment.
4. The goal of effective prayer.



# The metaphor of the promised land: Review

The ancient Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and they suffered terribly for a large part of 400 years.

In the meantime, the nations living in the land of Canaan became more and more corrupt.

God gave one **reason for the delay** in rescue from slavery: *“the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet complete.”*—Genesis 15:16.

The other nations living in that land had already become very corrupt—as described in Leviticus 18:24-25 and the rest of that chapter.

# Review: Principle and Trade-Offs in a Fallen World

- God could *not justly* bring the Israelites in to displace the Amorites and 9 other nations, so long as the Amorites were maintaining righteousness, but only when God's righteous judgment was fully deserved. He knew the Amorites would fail Him. He waited until justice could be satisfied. So we see both justice and mercy and delay of judgment in His decisions. And we see suffering in this world.
- God does not approve slavery. He rescues from it. He delivers from the tyrant.

# We live in a fallen world, but God is righteous.

- Our fallen world and eternity are disconnected. God wants people to be His forever. Heaven is a place of righteousness, and Hell is a place of justice—where evil receives just recompense.
- God wants heaven for people, and sometimes He allows what He does not want to happen, in order that more people can find heaven as their ultimate destination. 2 Peter 3:8-9.

# We live in a fallen world, but God is righteous.

- God could *not justly* bring the Israelites in to displace the Amorites and 9 other nations so long as the Amorites were maintaining righteousness, but only when God's righteous judgment was fully deserved. This was a decision that **impinged on eternity** for individuals among the Amorites.
- God explained this ahead of time to Abraham, so that His people would be able to “hang on” to their faith in the time of trouble they were about to face.

# Review: During the course of those 400 years

The Egyptians also became increasingly corrupt.

Not only did they enslave others, but they proceeded to the complete **evil** of forced infanticide of male infants.

The time came when God could bear the Israelites' suffering no longer. He raised up a deliverer—Moses—to lead them out of slavery. God used a series of dramatic and terrifying miracles to reinforce His demands for their freedom.

# Review: During the course of those 400 years

- The Egyptians' choices were real. The Amorites' choices were real. God knew what they would choose.
- God intervened miraculously when the suffering became unbearable.
- God's action during the present life does not negate the eternal judgment those individuals face in eternity. In eternity, all of evil will receive justice. Individual after individual will receive perfect justice.
- Mercy is better than justice, in this life and the next. Mercy requires repentance. Repentance stops injustice.

# Review: Principle and Trade-Offs in a Fallen World

- Egypt was the most powerful nation on earth at that time.
- Consider that the release of slaves in our nation, founded on principles of freedom and equality that **should** have **prevented** slavery in the first place, required a desperate civil war. It was the war with the worst number of casualties in our entire history.
- Then consider that God used terrifying miracles to accomplish a similar release in ancient Egypt—and **with the purpose** of letting the Egyptians know who the real God is—Exodus 7:5, Exodus 12:12.

# Review: The Israelites had plenty of evidence.

Of God's power and of His concern for them. They had GOOD REASON to trust His word as delivered through Moses—even though they had suffered as slaves.

The group instead chose to disbelieve that He could give them the rest He had promised in the land of Canaan. They allowed their fear to overwhelm their faith.

Their slavery had conditioned them to expect futility—but God demanded that they believe the evidence of His rescue from slavery.



# Review: The Israelites had plenty of evidence.

They refused to act with faith. They believed the ten discouraged spies and disbelieved the two spies that were full of faith.

God reacted in **grieved anger** to their disbelief, and God required that they wander in the wilderness until they died.

He still supplied their needs—manna and clothes that did not wear out, and feet that did not swell in the desert heat. But they wandered in futility until death. He still loved them.

# Why did God choose this path for them?

God does not explain everything or answer every question we may have. If He has answered that question in His word, I have not found the answer.

**But without God, all of life adds up to futility.** It is **always to our benefit** to trust Him. Their futility is a picture of our own futility when we make the wrong decision about trusting Him.

**With God, life always has meaning.** It may not always be easy, but it IS meaningful. No matter what our circumstance, we can make meaningful choices that impact eternity, both for ourselves and for others.

# About 500 years later, David wrote Psalm 95

- ***6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. 7 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: 8 "Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, As in the day of trial in the wilderness, 9 When your fathers tested Me; They tried Me, though they saw My work.***

# About 500 years later, David wrote Psalm 95

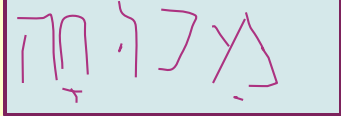
- *<sup>10</sup> For forty years I was grieved with that generation, And said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, And they do not know My ways.'*
- *<sup>11</sup> So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.' "*

# These things were written to help us.

- We need to consider that God always loves us. God always wants the best for us, with eternal goals in mind. Faith is the unexpected key that unlocks His best plans for us. If we will not trust Him, we lose His best plans.
- So we need to be aware of the concerns in *The Letter to the Hebrews*. We need to avoid hardening our hearts. We need to choose to trust God.
- Part of faith is an honest search for truth. Part of faith is commitment to truth, and a decision to trust God. Part of faith is **perseverance in trust**.

# These things are written for our examples.

We have at least two forms of spiritual rest that we need to find: the eternal form in heaven, and the temporal form here and now.

Place of Rest: *Menuchah*,  Place without war or trouble, victorious place of security, a fixed and tranquil place to live after wandering in futility.

# What is God's rest?

Hebrews Chapter 4<sup>1</sup> *Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.*  
*2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.*

What is God's rest? It is a promised place for those who believe.

Hebrews Chapter 4<sup>13</sup> *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.*



# What is God's rest?

<sup>4</sup> *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";*  
<sup>5</sup> *and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest."* <sup>6</sup> *Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience,*

# ***Today*** in Psalm 95 was written **after** Joshua's time.

*<sup>7</sup> 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." <sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.*

(This implies a rest awaiting believers beyond the land of Israel—an eternal place of safety and tranquility in which to live.)

# What is God's rest?

- <sup>9</sup> There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. <sup>10</sup> For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.*
- <sup>11</sup> Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.*

(Here we see a paradox. **Diligence** is required to enter the God's place of rest—Diligence to avoid the disobedience of unbelief.)

# Key phrase: Ceased from his own works.

- The place of rest was actually being compared to the time of conquest—where God fought for His people, and they followed His directions instead of their own plans for battle.
- We don't ordinarily think of a battle as a rest. But in the battles of life, God's rest involves trusting Him and letting Him fight the battles, and following His directions.
- So diligence in rest also implies diligence in the battles of life, to let God be in charge and supply the power for the conflicts.

# Thus FAITH is necessary

To receive that eternal place in God's place of rest for us. And the faith that is necessary is a DILIGENT form of faith. A FAITHFUL form of faith, a faith that perseveres during the conflicts of life.

# Faith and Commitment are related.

- In a marriage, if there is no commitment, conflicts are scary—the prelude to loss of the marriage through abandonment or divorce.
- If the resilient commitment of true love and faith fills the marriage, conflicts are a form of honesty. They are the vehicle for really getting to know your spouse. They are the vehicle for telling the spouse what needs to be heard, not just what is pleasant.
- So we see all around us the value of faithful commitment. Later in Hebrews, it says that “Faith is Substance.” Faith is bedrock reality.
- Faith is the key to rest during conflict.

God spoke of another day of His rest. Joshua also spoke of another day in his writing.

After Joshua brought the Israelites into the promised land, and the land was divided among the tribes, he called an assembly.

- <sup>14</sup> *"Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!*
- <sup>15</sup> *And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, **choose for yourselves this day** whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. **But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.**"*
- (Joshua 24:14-18 )

# The Israelites responded.

<sup>16</sup> *So the people answered and said: "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; <sup>17</sup> for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed. <sup>18</sup> And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. **We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God."*** Joshua 24:14-18 (NKJV)



# The Diligence of Belief...

Implies diligence in service.

We will SERVE the LORD.

The diligence of belief implies believing in the correct God—the LORD.

Not just any god will do. We need God's word to understand this concept correctly. We must have communication from Him, and we must be able to know it is from Him, and then we must believe it.

# We must strengthen our faith

## Goals

Because our faith is vital for meeting goals:

1. The goal of entering God's rest in the future world.
2. The goal of entering God's rest in the present world.
3. The goal of freedom from God's judgment.
4. The goal of effective prayer.

# The goal of entering God's rest in the present world.

When the Israelites entered the promised land, the rest promised to them—of a tranquil home with security from enemies—did not happen immediately.

Instead, **God fought** their battles **for them** while they were available for each conflict under His direction.

Life is like that. We can find rest in the middle of the battlefield of life **by receiving God's help.** We receive His help by faith—trusting Him as we ask for His help.

# God promised that they would be able to take Holy Holidays.

- God promised that He would give them enough security/ rest to be able to go to the temple for festivals to worship Him there, including their wives and children and employees. (Deuteronomy 12:10-12.)
- God was determined NOT to treat His people like slaves. He wanted them to consistently have holy holidays and to make holidays a priority.
- God actually **COMMANDED** that they take vacations. That is the kind of God we serve.

# Rest was not the absence of work.

The promised land was a place where they had to work. They had to work hard to plant and cultivate and harvest crops, and to care for animals.

The difference between the promised land and slavery was freedom and reward for their effort.

The promised land was a place of rest—a tranquil place where they could work to provide for their families and where they could freely worship the true and living God—and where He fought for them.

# Jesus talked about that kind of rest this way.

Matthew 11:28-30 *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*  
(NKJV)

A yoke joins two in pulling a load. If we take Jesus' yoke upon us, He is pulling the rest of the load. **Therefore**, His yoke is easy for us, and His burden is light for us.

What kind of work is the yoke for?

What is the purpose of Jesus' yoke?

# Jesus Christ gave us a heavenly calling.

Exodus 19:6a says “And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

1 Peter 2:4-11 applies that calling to us, who believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. *“And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, ...But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”*



# The Sabbath Rest:

- The Sabbath rest was a rest from work. Hebrews 4:4 and 10 discuss a Sabbath rest as well.
- Here in this life, we are to spend time resting according to God's plan—taking time off from work to spend time with God and His word.

# The Sabbath Rest:

- Isaiah 56:1-5 tells the purpose of the Sabbath—to be able to take hold of God's salvation, and to obtain an everlasting name which will not be cut off. Verses 6-8 extend that purpose and promise to foreigners who seek God.
- We must take time to seek God in order to find Him and to find His salvation.
- Psalm 22:26 “Those who seek Him will praise the LORD. Let your heart live forever!”

# We must strengthen our faith

## Goals

Because our faith is vital for meeting goals:

1. The goal of entering God's rest in the future world.
2. The goal of entering God's rest in the present world.
3. **The goal of freedom from God's judgment.**
4. The goal of effective prayer.

We must strengthen our faith to meet **the goal of freedom from God's judgment.**

*<sup>12</sup> 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.—Hebrews 4:12.*

God gave us His word so that we would believe it. We humans need that kind of help. We need a way of accessing God's point of view and believing what He wants us to believe, and of understanding ourselves as He does.

# Believing His word helps us avoid His judgment.

Hebrews 4:13 *“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.”*

We need faith in His good word to meet His requirements for our lives.

# We must strengthen our faith

## Goals

Because our faith is vital for meeting goals:

1. The goal of entering God's rest in the future world.
2. The goal of entering God's rest in the present world.
3. The goal of freedom from God's judgment.
4. The goal of effective prayer.

# Persevering Faith is Necessary to Meet The goal of effective prayer.

**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.*

□ Heb 4:14-16 (NKJV)

# Persevering Faith is Necessary to Meet The goal of effective prayer.


- You have to ask to receive. You have to seek to find. You have to knock for the door to be opened. He knows what you need before you ask. He wants to answer—answering lets you know Who the REAL God is.
- He wants you to come **BOLDLY** to His throne of **GRACE**. The boldness in prayer is a measure of faith. If your prayer is not what He wants, in His goodness, He will answer “No.”



**Persevering Faith is**  
**Necessary to Meet The goal of**  
**effective prayer.**

Persevering faith is not the only requirement for answered prayer, but it is a necessary part of the requirements.

# Because of who Jesus Christ IS



Faith in Him is effective for obtaining help through prayer.

Jesus is our Great High Priest who intercedes for us in heaven. He has experienced our frailty. He understands the difficulty of facing temptation. He is able and understanding and willing to help. Therefore, we can be **BOLD** when we pray. He will give us grace and mercy to meet the need.

# The Diligence of Belief...

Implies diligence in service and boldness in prayer.

We will SERVE the LORD.

The diligence of belief implies believing in the correct God—the LORD.

Not just any god will do. We need God's word to understand this concept correctly. We must have communication from Him and we must be able to tell it is from Him, and then we must believe it.

We have already seen in a  
previous course,

In WitnessKit 1, Class 8, that the God of the Hebrew Scriptures and the God of the Greek Scriptures is exactly the same God. **The God of Israel IS the God of Christianity.**

Both sets of Scriptures are perfectly consistent regarding God's identity.

We grow in faith as we pursue truth about God.

We want to cover a few main points from that class.

# The same God is revealed by both sets of Scripture.

In both Testaments He is both

- Guiding Shepherd who takes care of His sheep and carries the lambs—and
- Totally Righteous Judge who hates evil and fights against evil and who loves righteousness.

The same vivid, complicated, amazing picture of God is presented both places.

# Both Sets of Scripture

Tell us God is completely good.

Both sets tell us He cares about us, and that we are alienated from Him through sins, and that we must repent and receive His atonement for sins by faith.

We make a covenant with Him by sacrifice to become His godly ones, as we discussed in Week 14's lesson. As Christians we understand that sacrifice to be Messiah's infinite sacrifice. That is the infinite sacrifice for **EVERYONE!**

# The same God is revealed by both sets of Scripture.

- Isaiah 53:6 says, “All we, like sheep, have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way. But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”
- The big question is whether both sets of Scripture present the same idea about the Trinity.

# We can know that the Bible is

Three truths about who God is

- **Trustworthy** by discovering three truths about God's identity:
  1. **God's identity as a complex Unity in the Hebrew Scriptures.**
  2. The identity of Messiah as more than human in the Hebrew Scriptures.
  3. **The identity of the Good Shepherd.**



# Truth #1: God's Complex Unity in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Isaiah 48:11-17 God does not give His glory to another. God is the First and the Last. God is creator of the earth and heavens. ... From the first God has not spoken in secret.

Then the speaker changes, without changing.

“From the time it took place, I was there. And now the LORD GOD has sent Me and His Spirit.”

This passage reveals the same truth as John chapter 1 – that Messiah is God and with God, and was present in the beginning with God.

# Truth #1: God's Complex Unity in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Zechariah 2:10-11 has the same technique:

<sup>10</sup> "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," **says the LORD.**

" Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become *My* people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the **LORD of hosts** has sent *Me* to you. Zech 2:10-11 (NKJV)

Messiah will dwell in your midst, sent from the LORD of hosts—yet there is no change of pronoun from the LORD who is speaking.

# Truth #1: God's Complex Unity in the Hebrew Scriptures.

For comparison, John 1:1 and following 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. And all things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being....”

Then in verse 14 it says, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

These are parallel passages.

# Truth #1: God's Complex Unity in the Hebrew Scriptures.

- Also for comparison, Genesis 1:2 describes the Holy Spirit as being God and as being present in the beginning. The **complex unity** of God's identity is visible in the Hebrew Scriptures as well as the Greek.
- ***Elohim*** is a word for God in Hebrew that is plural, but takes a singular verb, and thus also expresses His complex unity.

# Truth #1: God's Complex Unity

- His Presence on earth is made known in the Hebrew Scriptures, where God is pictured as filling heaven and earth, yet as dwelling with Israel in the temple.
- In the New Testament, believers are compared in metaphor to the temple, where we become God's temple on earth because of His Holy Spirit in our lives.

# We can know that the Bible is

Three  
truths  
about  
who  
God is

- **Trustworthy** by discovering three truths about God's identity:
  1. God's identity as a complex Unity in the Hebrew Scriptures.
  2. **The identity of Messiah as more than human in the Hebrew Scriptures.**
  3. **The identity of the Good Shepherd.**

## Truth #2: Messiah is more than merely human in the Hebrew texts.

- Psalm 2:7,12 “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD; He said to Me, “Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee.” ... Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry and you perish in the way, ...how blessed are all who take refuge in Him!” --- Here in the Psalm as a whole, we see that the Son was declared begotten of God long before the Incarnation. We also see that the Son is either our refuge or our judge.

## Truth #2: Messiah is more than merely human in the Hebrew texts.

- Psalm 110:1-7 Messiah is David's Lord, a priest forever, and yet incarnate – human.
- Zechariah 6:13 Messiah is a priest on His throne. Even though Messiah is from the lineage of David, He is also a priest who intercedes for us.



## Truth #2: Messiah is more than merely human in the Hebrew texts.

Isaiah 11:1-5 *“<sup>1</sup> There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.*

*<sup>2</sup> The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. <sup>3</sup> His delight is in the fear of the LORD,*

## Truth #2: Messiah is more than merely human in the Hebrew texts.

*And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; <sup>4</sup> But with righteousness He shall **judge** the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;*

*He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the **breath of His lips** He shall slay the wicked.”*

(Only God can speak reality into existence.)

# We can know that the Bible is

Three  
truths  
about  
who  
God is

- **Trustworthy** by discovering three truths about God's identity:
  1. God's identity as a complex Unity in the Hebrew Scriptures.
  2. The identity of Messiah as more than human in the Hebrew Scriptures.
  3. **The identity of the Good Shepherd.**

# Truth # 3: The Identity of the Good Shepherd

- Ezekiel 34:1-31 The flock is God's people and the Good Shepherd is God. Verses 15-16 say that the Good Shepherd will feed His flock in good pasture and will lead them to rest.

# Truth # 3: The Identity of the Good Shepherd

- He will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken, and strengthen the sick, but He will feed the wicked with judgment.
- Verses 23 and 24 say Messiah is their Prince and their Good Shepherd.
- So here we see God and Messiah BOTH called The Good Shepherd.

So we see in both sets of  
Scriptures that God is

**A complex One.** Neither set of  
Scriptures presents more than One.  
Both present a complicated One—  
*Elohim.*

God is Infinite—throughout all time, all space, all eternity

He is ONE INFINITE GOD.

Yet He is complex—three Persons—God the Father, God the Son our Messiah, and God the Holy Spirit who is able to live within our hearts.

God is BOTH TRANSCENDANT and IMMANENT.

# We studied two chapters today, plus many other references.

- If one hurries in reading those chapters, they do not make a big impact on one's thinking.
- But if you search the Scriptures to understand how their words fit with other Scriptures, they make amazing, detailed sense. They are almost like puzzles partially put together, that require finding other puzzle pieces from all over the Bible, and then a beautiful picture emerges.



# We studied two chapters today, plus many other references.

- For that technique to work, the Bible has to be from an amazing Author. That Author is able to anticipate our questions and provide answers in unexpected places. Given that the Bible was written over a span of about 1500 years, by many different human authors, the beautiful picture that emerges gives us reason to trust God.
- Prayer is like that, too. He is able to anticipate our prayers and prepare for them. So we can pray about ANYTHING. We can ask Him for answers to real questions.

# If faith is the key to unlock God's good plan for us,

- And if sin hardens hearts
- And if unbelief is wrong, given the evidence we have,
- Then encouraging one another to have faith is a very good thing.
- Sometimes we go through a difficulty that is so long in duration, we become conditioned to expect bad experiences—just like the escaped slaves in the wilderness who called themselves grasshoppers compared to the giants in the land. The Egyptians had treated them like grasshoppers, but they were **people God loves** in reality.

# If faith is the key to unlock God's good plan for us,

- When we find ourselves responding with despair or skepticism instead of faith, we must NOT allow our negative emotional expectation to win. Feeling a certain way does NOT make it so.
- We need to keep a mental record of the good stuff God is doing in our lives—clothes and shoes that didn't wear out and food every morning in the case of the Israelites. We need to hang onto evidence that encourages faith, and we need to say no to discouragement.
- We choose to trust God and we choose to pray. Even if we have never prayed before, now is a good time to start. Unbelief is a temptation and a sin. Guess Who wants to help with that?

# 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

In 3 sets

# Homework Class 17 Set 1

- Read Chapter 8 in Hebrews. In chapter 7 we saw that Jesus Christ fulfills the prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures about having both offices of King and Priest. Chapter 8:1-5 brings up an objection to those prophecies.
- What is the objection, and how did Jesus Christ overcome it?
- In verse 2, what is the true tabernacle?
- Verses 6-13 of Hebrews 8 contrast the Old Covenant of Law with the New Covenant of Grace. What are some of the differences in the two covenants as mentioned in these verses?

# Homework Week 17 Day 1

- In Christian belief, according to Romans 8:28-30, one of God's purposes for the life of each Christian is to use our lives' events to make us more like Christ in character. Romans 8:28-30 states, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

# Homework Class 17 Set 2

- Read Chapter 9 in Hebrews.
- What do verses 1-5 mean by the first covenant?
- In verses 6-10, the duties of priests are summarized. What are some of those duties?
- According to verses 11-14, where did Jesus Christ enter the Most Holy Place to offer atonement for sins? What blood did He sprinkle?
- In verses 15-17, the word Covenant is used in the same meaning as the word Testament in our legal term “Last will and testament.” What point is being made by this usage?



# Homework Class 17 Set 2

- In what way was the Old Covenant inaugurated with blood?
- What general statement was made in the Torah about forgiveness and the blood sacrifice of a pure animal?
- In verse 23 of Hebrews 9, the copies on earth, meaning the tabernacle and temple, were cleansed with the blood of a pure animal sacrifice, but the heavenly things required a better sacrifice – Messiah's offering of Himself in our place. What do verses 26 and 28 say this accomplished?

# Homework Class 17 Set 3

- Read Chapter 10 in Hebrews. In Hebrews 10:1-3, the Law is described as the **shadow of the good things to come** rather than **the very form of things**. This implies that the goals of righteousness in the moral Law will reach their true form in heaven. The good society envisioned by perfect obedience to the Law will be realized in heaven, where evil is absent. The Law required yearly general atonement for sins, AND specific atonement for specific sins as an individual repented of specific wrongs. Sacrifices were offered on a daily basis, and the yearly fast of the Day of Atonement offered formal sacrifice for the nation as a whole, and for sins committed unintentionally.
- Why was repeated sacrifice required, according to Hebrews 10:1-10?
- What, according to verses 10 and 14, brings us sanctification, or holiness?

# Homework Class 17 Set 3

- What is the witness of the Holy Spirit in this matter, in Jeremiah 31:33-34, Joel 2:28-29, Romans 8:16, and John 16:8-13?
- What should our responses be to His witness, according to verses 19-25?
- What can those expect who know the truth, and reject it, and choose to go on sinning willfully, according to verses 26-31?
- Verses 32 through 39 describe encouragement to be \_\_\_\_\_. The example praises those who \_\_\_\_\_. Living by faith is contrasted with \_\_\_\_\_.

# 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.”