

## **Hebrews in One Lesson**

(Overview of the Letter to the Hebrews)

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### **I. Background for This Lesson**

- a. Over the past year we have referred to the core of **Hebrews** many times, in connection with our expository studies on **Exodus** and **Leviticus**. For that reason, we are now very well prepared to consider the message of the book of **Hebrews**.
  - i. We have discussed the tabernacle and its service in connection with **Exodus 25-31** and **35-40**.
  - ii. We have discussed the sacrificial system, the High Priest and the priests in connection with **Leviticus 1-10**.
  - iii. In preparation for our recent lessons on **Leviticus 16** (on the Day of Atonement) and **Leviticus 17** (on the importance of blood), we read from **Hebrews 9-10**.
    - 1. There it explains how the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place once per year, on the Day of Atonement, with the blood of animals.
    - 2. That practice foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ, who would enter heaven itself (the presence of God, the Father) with His own blood.
    - 3. "...how much more shall the *blood of Christ*, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, *cleanse your conscience from dead works* to serve the living God?" (**Hebrews 9:14**, NKJV)
    - 4. "And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and *without shedding of blood there is no remission.*" (**Hebrews 9:22**, NKJV)
    - 5. "For it is *not possible* that the *blood of bulls and goats* could take away sins." (**Hebrews 10:4**, NKJV)
    - 6. "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest *by the blood of Jesus...*" (**Hebrews 10:19**, NKJV)
  - iv. Recall that in **Leviticus 17:11** it says, "The life of all flesh is in its blood... *blood makes atonement for your souls.*"

- b. **Questions:** Who wrote **Hebrews**? Also, who was the primary, original intended audience?
- i. We cannot tell for sure who the author was. However, from fairly early in Christian history, many have thought it was written by the apostle Paul.
1. While it does not identify in the letter who it was from, the original recipients knew who was writing this letter.
    - a. The author wrote, “*Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably. But I especially urge you to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.*” (**Hebrews 13:18-19, NKJV**)
    - b. Obviously, for the audience to pray for the writer, they had to know who the letter was from!
    - c. Therefore, although it is clear that the original recipients knew who the author was (it was not an anonymously written letter), it remains a mystery to us.
  2. The author knew Timothy personally; and had been in Italy at or before the time of writing this letter. (**Hebrews 13:23-24**)
  3. Note that Eusebius and some earlier sources attributed this letter to Paul (see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, book 6, chapter 14). However, that was not universally agreed to in the early church (see *Ecclesiastical History*, book 3, chapter 3; and book 6, chapter 25).
- ii. Based on some statements in the letter, it is commonly assumed it was written some time *prior to AD 70*, when the temple and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed by the Romans. That was in fulfillment of the prophecy of **Daniel 9**, and also as foretold by Jesus in **Matthew 24** and **Luke 21**.
1. Consider the statement: “We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp.” (**Hebrews 13:10-11, NKJV**)
  2. That suggests that at the time the author was writing, the temple sacrifices *were still being offered* by the Jewish priests.

iii. **Questions:** Who was the author writing to? Who was his primary intended audience? What do we know about them?

1. From the title, 'Letter to the Hebrews', everyone assumes this is written to people from a Jewish background who were Christians.
2. The author assumed that those receiving this letter had an exceptionally broad and deep understanding of the Old Testament. Beyond the abundant direct quotes from the Old Testament, there are dozens of indirect references that assume the reader will know what is being referenced.
3. I have heard it said that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the book of **Hebrews** is either direct quotes from, or references to, passages from the Old Testament. My guess is that may be *a low estimate!*
  - a. One of the benefits of having a good foundation in the Old Testament is that you will get a lot more out of reading **Hebrews** than those Christians who do not have that understanding.
4. It is clear that those addressed in this letter were *already Christians*.
  - a. This may seem obvious to us, but those who want to defend the false doctrine of 'once saved / always saved' (a/k/a unconditional eternal security) often try to assert that the people being addressed were not yet "saved", since this book clearly and repeatedly speaks of the dangers of those being addressed potentially losing their salvation.
  - b. However, it is clear from the text that most of those being addressed had been Christians for some time; and had successfully made it through some extreme trials and persecution in the past.
    - i. "For though *by this time you ought to be teachers*, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their

senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”  
(**Hebrews 5:12-14**, NKJV)

- ii. “But recall the former days in which, *after you were illuminated*, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that *you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.*” (**Hebrews 10:32-34**, NKJV)
5. The author assumed that those receiving his letter were reading the Septuagint (LXX), a Greek version of the Scriptures that had been translated by Jewish scholars about 200 years before the time of Christ. Consider how he quotes from that LXX when referencing Old Testament passages. Two examples follow.
- a. Read **Hebrews 10:5-10**.
    - i. Comparing the New Testament text here with the Old Testament of the Masoretic Text (MT) versus the LXX (**Psalms 40:6-8** in the MT; designated **Psalms 39:7-9** in the LXX).
    - ii. The *whole point* being made here by the author of **Hebrews** is tied to the phrase, “*but a body you have prepared for me*”, which the Hebrews writer says was a prophecy referring to the body of Jesus, which was offered once for all!
      - 1. That critical phrase quoted by the **Hebrews** writer is in the LXX, but not in the MT.
  - b. Read **Hebrews 10:35-39**.
    - i. Once before a group of Bible teachers I read this passage and asked two questions:
      - 1. **My First Question to Them:** Where in the Old Testament does it say, “The righteous (*or the just*) shall live by faith”?

- a. **Their Answer: Habakkuk 2**
- 2. **My Second Question to Them:** Where in the Old Testament does it say, “But if anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”?
  - a. **Their Answer:** Silence. (Imagine the sound of crickets; blank stares and shuffling pages.)
  - b. **My Follow-Up Challenge to Them:** See me after the class; and *show me in your Bible* where this is found. And if you can’t find it, I will show it to you *in my Bible*.
  - c. Terry Troutt’s follow up retort: “Let me see that Bible in your hand!” (which was based on the LXX).
- ii. Compare **Habakkuk 2:1-5** from the NJV (based on the MT); and compare with **Habakkuk 2:1-4** from the Orthodox Study Bible (translated from the LXX text).
  - 1. The *entire point* made by the **Hebrews** writer is based on the LXX text, not the MT.
    - a. He refers to “The *one* (masculine gender) *who is* coming”, NOT the *thing* “it” (neuter) *that is* coming!
    - b. The key statement, “If anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him”, is the basis for the challenge that follows in **Hebrews 10:39**, “we are not of those who draw back to perdition”. This is also the framework for the entire discussion about saving faith in **Hebrews 11**.
  - c. I could give even more examples from **Hebrews** that show the author is using the LXX and assumes those he is writing to are doing the same. Not for today, though!

- c. **Questions:** Why was this letter written? What is the main, driving purpose of the letter?
- i. The overall structure of the letter (greatly simplified) is as follows:
    1. Jesus Christ is introduced as the Son of God (**Hebrews 1**)
    2. Jesus Christ is the ultimate faithful, merciful High Priest, who offered the one perfect sacrifice for sins, his own blood, once for all time. This fulfilled what was foreshadowed in detail in the tabernacle/temple sacrifice arrangement (**Hebrews 2-10:21**)
    3. *Therefore...* (the things that the one writing the letter calls the Christians to do) (**Hebrews 10:22 to the end**)
      - a. So if you want to understand the author's purpose of the letter, it is seen *primarily* in the last 3+ chapters, where he makes his applications based on the foundation laid in the previous 10 chapters.
  - ii. Several Bible commentators have suggested that the book of **Hebrews** was written to Jewish Christians who were struggling with the temptation to return to their Jewish roots and practices. For example, from the introduction to Hebrews in the Orthodox Study Bible (OSB):
    1. "Hebrews seems to be written to Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, perhaps in Palestine, *who were being drawn back to Judaism*. Indeed, some had returned to their roots, *partly because of a low view of Jesus*. Hence, the subthemes: the superiority of Christ and His sacrifice over Judaism, and encouragement to continue in the Christian faith." (OSB, page 1652)
    2. However, I really don't see anything in the instructions at the end of Hebrews (following the "therefore" in **Hebrews 12:1**) that addresses any such temptations.
      - a. As I see it, Hebrews is not like Paul's letters to the **Galatians**, or even to the **Colossians** or **Ephesians**, where the problem with returning to the Law of Moses is addressed.
  - iii. The overarching challenge of **Hebrews** is to be *faithful to the end*, to not draw back: to persevere in the faith. The specifics that are addressed in the letter include:

1. Beware getting into willful, deliberate sin.
2. Don't stop assembling with the other Christians.
3. "Lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us, and run with perseverance the race set before us."  
(**Hebrews 12:1**)
4. Endure hostility from sinners (persecution).
5. Endure the painful chastening that the Lord may bring into our lives, which is intended to refine and perfect us.
6. Live holy lives.
7. Don't give in to bitterness. Strive to remain at peace with others.
8. Don't be like Esau, a fornicator or profane; a godless man living for short-term gratification of the flesh. (**Hebrews 12:16-17**)
9. Entertain strangers.
10. Honor marriage; live in sexual purity; avoid fornication
11. Be content with what you have.
12. Be willing to bear reproach for the sake of Christ.
13. Give thanks to God with our lips.
14. Do good and share with those in need.
15. Be in submission to those in the church who are leading them.

iv. **Question:** Does this sound like this letter is addressed to Jews who are *tempted with going back to the Law of Moses* and circumcision?

1. **Answer:** No! It seems to me that nothing in the specific direction given at the end of the letter points to that conclusion.
  - a. The items addressed in the specific instructions are the same things we Gentile Christians struggle with, today. Therefore, this letter is of great practical use for us.

d. **Hebrews** may be the most important book of the New *Testament* for those who are already Christians, who already understand the gospel message.

- i. It explains *what it will take for us to make it to the end*.
- ii. The focus is on *persevering in the faith*, in the face of various temptations.
  - 1. Temptations of the flesh (sexual sins, greed, selfishness, not willing to share with others).
  - 2. Temptations to get lazy and worldly.
  - 3. Temptations to become bitter toward others.
  - 4. Lack of gratitude toward God.
- iii. This book not only tells us what to do (and not do), but also provides wonderful reasons and examples to hold on to when we are tempted.
- iv. So, let us not be put off by the many Old Testament references, including to the temple sacrificial system and to Melchizedek (who is discussed over three chapters). We can learn so much of practical value if we understand this letter!

## II. Jesus, The Son of God (Hebrews 1)

- a. **Hebrews 1** begins by establishing Jesus as the Son of God.
  - i. This is perhaps the best place to start with those who doubt that Jesus can be the Son of God, because they claim (as the Muslims do) that “God cannot have a Son.” It is also a great place to start with those who doubt the divinity of Christ, such those who have been influenced by Jehovah’s Witnesses.
  - ii. This chapter features two great prophecies about Jesus being the Son of God. Both of those prophecies were written 1,000 years before the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.
  - iii. Therefore, neither the apostles nor the early Christians ‘invent’ the idea that Jesus was the Son of God. It was established centuries before, in the Jewish Scriptures, that the Christ would be called God’s Son.
- b. Read **Hebrews 1:1-6**.
  - i. In **Hebrews 1:5** it quotes from **Psalm 2:7**, “*You are my Son, today I have begotten you.*”
  - ii. In **Hebrews 1:6** it points to the fact that He is worshiped by angels, in fulfillment of another prophecy (see **Deuteronomy 32:43** in the LXX; also **Psalm 97:7**, which is designated **Psalm 96:7** in the LXX).



1. From **Revelation 22:8-9**, we know that we are only to worship God.
  2. Therefore, since the angels are worshiping Jesus, the Son of God, *he must be divine*.
- iii. In **Hebrews 1:5** it also quotes from **2 Samuel 7:14** (designated **2 Kingdoms 7:14** in the LXX; see also **1 Chronicles 17:13**), regarding being the promised descendant of David, who would sit on the eternal throne, being called *God's Son*.
1. Read **2 Samuel 7:1-17**.
    - a. Consider the “house” reference. This will become important in **Hebrews 3**.
    - b. David had built a fine house for himself, and now wanted to build a “house” (the temple) for God. This would be a permanent structure, replacing the tent (tabernacle) that the ark of the covenant had resided in up to that time.
      - i. The Lord intervened with that plan of David. He told Nathan the prophet to tell David that *someone else* (not David) would build His house.
        1. The one to build it would be one of David's offspring, one who would come from his body.
        2. After David dies, this one would be “raised up”.
        3. He would build the house for God, a house that would last forever.
        4. God would be his Father, and He would be God's Son.
        5. He would reign forever, over the eternal kingdom.
      - ii. This could not have applied to Solomon, although superficially some might think it did. Solomon was the son of David, and he did build the temple. However, if we consider the details of the prophecy carefully, there are four reasons why it could not have referred to Solomon

(adapted from Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, book 4, chapter 13; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 7, p. 113):

1. Solomon was raised to the throne *while David was still alive*, rather than after David died (see **1 Kings 1**, **designated 3 Kingdoms 1** in the LXX).
  2. The house built by Solomon did not last forever. It was destroyed by the Babylonians. (**2 Kings 25**, **2 Chronicles 36**, **Ezra 1**)
  3. Solomon's kingdom did not last forever. He only reigned 40 years (**1 Kings 11:42-43**, **designated 3 Kingdoms 11:38-43** in the LXX). Even the line of kings of Judah descended from him did not last forever.
  4. Solomon was never called "*the Son of God*". He was known only as the *son of David*!
- iii. In **Luke 1:30-35**, this prophecy is alluded to in the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary.
- iv. In **Acts 2:29-30** Peter alludes to this prophecy.
1. The point he makes is that Jesus, the promised king over the eternal kingdom, and the seed of David, had just been "raised up" in fulfillment of that prophecy.
- c. The divinity of the Son of God.
- i. Read **Hebrews 1:8-2:9**.
  - ii. The phrase, "Your throne, O God" is referring to the Son of God (**Hebrews 1:8**, quoting **Psalms 45:6-7**, which in the LXX is designated **Psalms 44:7-8**).
  - iii. He was made a little lower than the angels (**Psalms 8**).
    1. Points both to his divinity (initially being *above* the angels, worshiped by them) and humanity (being *made lower* than the angels).
  - iv. He is sitting at the right hand of God.

1. Read **Psalm 110:1-4** (designated **Psalm 109:1-4** in the LXX).
2. This is a very important passage, quoted several places in the New Testament.
  - a. Jesus Himself quotes it in **Matthew 22:41-43**, making the point that this prophecy refers to the Christ.
  - b. There are two who are referred to as 'Lord' in this interesting prophecy.
  - c. David refers to the second 'Lord' referred to in this prophecy as his Lord. This one is to sit at the right hand of God.
  - d. This one, David's Lord, the Christ, will be "a priest *in the order of Melchizedek*".
  - e. All His enemies will be put under His feet.
- d. Jesus was made lower, became a man, in order to be a priest on our behalf (offering up sacrifices to God for fellow men).

### III. The Faithful High Priest over the Faithful 'House' (Hebrews 2:1-3:6)

- a. Read **Hebrews 2:5-9**.
  - i. Jesus was made "a little lower than the angels".
  - ii. Although He was divine (worshiped by angels, **Hebrews 1:6**), he was made "a little lower than the angels". In other words, he was made human.
- b. Read **Hebrews 2:10-18**.
  - i. Jesus took on human nature; and was perfected (made complete) through suffering.
  - ii. He took on flesh and blood, shared in our nature so that through His death He could defeat Satan and release us from our fear of death.
  - iii. He had to become human, just like us, in order to be a priest on our behalf. He is the merciful and "*faithful High Priest*", who can
    1. relate to our struggles,
    2. help us when we are tempted, and
    3. make atonement for sins on our behalf, as a priest (as one of us).

c. Read **Hebrews 3:1-6**.

- i. This passage expands on the “faithful High Priest” idea, and ties it to a prophecy in **1 Samuel 2** that will be the foundational concept for most of what follows in this letter.
- ii. In this passage are seven “houses”. The term “house” appears seven times.
  - 1. In English, like Greek, the word “house” is very versatile, with its meaning depending on context. A few examples of the variety of meanings this word can have, in English, include:
    - a. “Specialty of the *house*”
    - b. “On the *house*”
    - c. “I was outside working on re-siding my *house*” (= the physical building in which I normally reside)
    - d. “The *house* of God” (= the temple)
    - e. “The *house* of Jacob” (= his family, or his descendants)
- iii. Recall that in the **2 Samuel 7** prophecy, which we read earlier, David wanted to build a “house” for God (= the temple). The Lord responded that David would not build that house, but instead one of David’s seed, one from his body, would be the one to “build the house”.
  - 1. **Question:** What type of “house” was the Lord referring to in this prophecy? Was the one to come from David going to build a physical structure (a building), or was this referring to a “house” in a different sense?
- iv. In **Hebrews 3** it says that Moses was (merely) a *servant in* God’s house.
- v. In **Hebrews 3** it also says that Jesus is greater than Moses. He is the *Son over* God’s house, the *builder of* that house, and the *faithful priest over* the faithful house of God.
- d. Scriptures from the Old Testament that the writer of **Hebrews 3** assumes his readers are aware of include:
  - i. **Numbers 12:1-8**, where it says that Moses was a faithful *servant* (in the LXX Greek: θεράπων, therapon) in God’s house. The unusual Greek word for “servant” here is the same word used in **Hebrews 3:5**.

1. “And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a *servant*... (**Hebrews 3:5**, NKJV)
  2. Note that **Hebrews 3:5** is the only place in the New Testament where this Greek word appears.
  3. This is *not* the same well-known Greek word for servant that is commonly used throughout the New Testament (δοῦλος, *doulos*).
- ii. **2 Samuel 7:12-16**, where it speaks of the great ruler to come, who will descend from David. He will be the *builder* of the house.
1. “*He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.*” (**2 Samuel 7:13**, NKJV)
- iii. **1 Samuel 2:22-35**, where the Lord says He will raise up a faithful priest. This prophecy is given during the days of Eli the priest, whose sons are corrupt. The Lord says that the priesthood will be taken away from Eli’s house, and then introduces an interesting prophecy.
1. The Lord will “raise up” a “faithful priest” from another line; the Lord says He will build this priest a “faithful house”.
    - a. The word for “raise up” in the LXX is: ἀνίστημι, *anistemi*.
    - b. This word has multiple meanings (literal and figurative). It is the same Greek word used for “resurrection” (raised up from the dead) in the gospels.
    - c. It seems to me that this is one more prophecy about the resurrection.
  2. In this passage is a reference to the *Christ* (see LXX Greek of **1 Samuel 2:35**), the Anointed One.
    - a. “He” (referring to the house, or to the priest) who will “walk before my Christ / Anointed One.
    - b. Possible alternate translation of this verse in view of the parallel construction of **1 Samuel 2:30**: “... *it* (referring to the house) will walk before my Christ forever”.
  3. It seems to me that in **Hebrews 3** this prophecy is directly alluded to (consider the references to “faithful priest”, over the “faithful house”, etc.).

4. This prophecy also may be alluded to by Peter in his speech at Solomon's Portico, in **Acts 3**.
  - a. "Yes, and all the prophets, *from Samuel* and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days." (**Acts 3:24**, NKJV)
  - b. Consider that the entire life of the prophet Samuel, from conception and birth through death, occurs within the span of **1 Samuel 1-25**.
  - c. **Questions:** Could Peter be thinking of this prophecy from **1 Samuel 2** about a faithful priest? Or can you think of any prophecies (other than this one) about the Christ that were given during the time of Samuel?
5. I once heard someone claim that the prophecy of **1 Samuel 2** regarding the faithful priest that God would "raise up" applied to *Samuel*. However, this *could not* have applied to Samuel, for similar reasons that the **2 Samuel 7** prophecy could not have applied to Solomon.
  - a. Samuel did not remain a priest forever, and his descendants were not faithful to the Lord for even one generation. Consider what is says in **1 Samuel 8:1-5**.
6. The most compelling reason to believe that the **1 Samuel 2** prophecy pertains to Jesus is based on what the Bible says in **Hebrews 2:17-3:6** regarding Jesus being the "faithful priest over the faithful house". However, several early Christian writers also make the same point (that the **1 Samuel 2** prophecy applies to Jesus) when they discuss the prophecies related to Christ being the promised *priest* who would come, who would have an eternal priesthood. References to this include:
  - a. Cyprian, in *Treatises of Cyprian*, treatise 12, book 1, chapter 17; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 5. p. 512
  - b. Hippolytus, in *Fragments from Commentary on Daniel*, chapter 2, section 14; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 5, p.180
  - c. *Divine Institutes*, book 4, chapter 14; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 7, p. 113
  - d. Eusebius, in *Proof of the Gospel*, book 4, chapter 16 (this work is not in the ANF series, but is accessible online)

#### IV. Wilderness Journey Foreshadowed Our Spiritual Journey (Hebrews 3:7-4:13)

- a. This section is a short break in the narrative discussing the theme of Christ as the faithful High Priest. The writer will return to that theme in **Hebrews 4:14** and following.
- b. The Jews wandering in the Wilderness, that was concluded under Joshua, foreshadows our own spiritual journey (**Hebrews 3:7-4:13**).
  - i. Similar points regarding the Exodus journey foreshadowing our own Christian spiritual journey are found in **1 Corinthians 9:24-10:13** and **Jude v. 5**.
- c. The points being made here by the **Hebrews** writer, regarding the Exodus journey, include:
  - i. We also are in a time of testing.
  - ii. We are looking forward to entering God's rest, a final rest that Joshua (the first 'Jesus') could not provide.
    1. Note that in Greek (here in **Hebrews 4:8** as well as in the Old Testament LXX) the word 'Joshua' is the exact same word in Greek as 'Jesus' in the Greek New Testament (= Ἰησοῦς, Iesous).
    2. Compare **Hebrews 4:8** (referring to the Old Testament 'Jesus', a/k/a 'Joshua') versus **Hebrews 4:14** (referring to 'Jesus, the Son of God') in an interlinear Greek Bible, to see this for yourself.
    3. Observe that the journey through the desert to the Promised Land begun by Moses was ultimately *completed by 'Jesus'*.
  - iii. *Only if we remain faithful to the end* will we receive what we are looking forward to.
    1. The Israelites could not "enter God's rest", as it says in **Psalms 95:7-11**, because of their hard hearts and disobedience, straying from God. God was angry with them because of their disobedience.
- d. In view of all this, the Hebrews writer admonishes the Christians to:
  - i. Exhort one another daily, so that we do not become hardened by sin. (**Hebrews 3:12-13**)
  - ii. Strive to enter the promised rest we are looking forward to. (**Hebrews 4:11**)

**V. The High Priest in the Order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 4:14-7:28)**

- a. The discussion now returns to the theme of Jesus as the High Priest, which was introduced in **Hebrews 2:17-3:6**.
- b. Read **Hebrews 4:14-5:6**.
  - i. The High Priest to come, who would sit on the throne, would be “in the order of Melchizedek”.
  - ii. The story of Melchizedek transpires within just two verses of **Genesis**. However, this is discussed through *three chapters* of the New Testament (in **Hebrews** chapters **5, 6** and **7**).
    - a. Read **Genesis 14:18-20**.
    - b. **Question:** Why does Melchizedek get *so much attention* in the book of **Hebrews**, in view of the fact that he appears to be a very minor character in the **Genesis** account?
      - i. **Answer:** Because of the prophecy in **Psalms 110:1-4** (designated **Psalms 109:1-4** in the LXX). There it says that the Lord of David, who will sit on the throne, will be “a priest forever in *the order of Melchizedek*”.
    - c. **Hebrews** makes the point that Jesus is that priest, the one prophesied in **1 Samuel 2** and **Psalms 110**. He is a priest from a new line (not the line of Levi, from which Aaron and the other priests were descended). Jesus was a priest *in the order of Melchizedek*.
      - i. Melchizedek was of a greater priesthood than was Aaron, since Melchizedek was priest to Abraham, from which Levi and Aaron were descended (see **Hebrews 7:4-10**)
      - ii. The priesthood of Jesus was similar to that of Melchizedek in several ways, as explained in **Hebrews 7**. Other parallels between Jesus and Melchizedek include:
        1. Neither became priest on the basis of genealogy nor descent. They became priest by the power of their lives.



2. Both were referred to as “king of peace” and “king of righteousness”.
3. Both offered the bread and wine (consider **Genesis 14:18**).

## VI. The Service of Our High Priest Foreshadowed by the Tabernacle Service (Hebrews 8-10:22)

- a. In **Hebrews 8-10** it explains how the tabernacle (and temple) established under the first covenant, and the service of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, all foreshadowed what Jesus did on the cross.
- b. As the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place with the blood of sacrificed animals once each year for sins, Jesus has entered heaven itself once for all time, with His own blood. (**Hebrews 9:6-10:18**)
- c. Through the body and blood of Jesus, the way has been opened up for us into the presence of God. (**Hebrews 10:19-22**)

## VII. Will We Be the Faithful House? (Hebrews 10:23-13:35)

- a. **The Challenge to Us:** We must be *the “faithful house”*!
  - i. “...but Christ as a Son over His own house, *whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.*” (**Hebrews 3:6**, NKJV)
  - ii. We are the faithful house under one condition.
    1. “For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end...” (**Hebrews 3:14**, NKJV)
    2. We are that faithful house... *IF* we hold fast, firm to the end.
      - a. This is one of many passages in **Hebrews** that demolishes the Calvinist false doctrine of *unconditional eternal security* (popularly referred to as, ‘once saved, always saved’).
    3. **Question:** What does it mean to be ‘faithful’?
      - a. **Answer:** Consider how the term ‘faithful’ or ‘being faithful’ is understood in the context of a marriage. It means to remain loyal; not to share intimate affection with another. It means remaining faithful to the promises made in one’s marriage covenant, “until death do you part”.

- b. To remain faithful to God, similarly, means to remain loyal to Him and to keep our side of the covenant relationship commitment, to the very end of our lives.
- b. This call for us to remain faithful to the end is repeated at the end of **Hebrews 10**:
  - i. “Therefore, do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ‘For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.’ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” (**Hebrews 10:35–39**, NKJV)
  - 1. In this passage the writer of **Hebrews** is quoting from **Habakkuk 2:3-4**, where it says, “the righteous shall live by faith”.
    - a. The point that the **Hebrews** writer is making is that we must “live by faith”. This is calling us to not just believe for a moment, but to continue to live a life of faith. Faithfulness is a way of life that must continue to the very end.
    - b. We must not be among those who “shrink back” in our way of life, if “the One who is coming” (Jesus) should appear to tarry and be delayed.
      - i. This reference to the statement, “If anyone draws back my soul has no pleasure in him” is a reference to a statement found in the LXX text of **Habakkuk 2:3-4** (but not in the Masoretic Text).
  - ii. This statement at the end of **Hebrews 10** is the introduction to the **Hebrews 11**, often referred to as “the hall of heroes of faith”, describing tremendous examples of faith from the Old Testament.
- c. In **Hebrews 11**, “saving faith” is defined by providing many examples.
  - i. Many today, especially those from evangelical Protestant circles, incorrectly define “saving faith” as simply *believing in* Jesus.
    - 1. Some even have claimed that faith is effective for salvation *even if a person just has ‘sincere belief’ for an instant*, without any *obedience* to Jesus .

2. Some further claim that simple belief is effective for salvation even if the person who believed later abandons the faith.
- ii. However, in the many examples of saving faith provided in **Hebrews 11**, we can discern several important aspects of saving faith. *Saving faith*, to be effective, must encompass:
  1. Believing something you cannot see. (**Hebrews 11:1-3**)
    - a. We believe that God created the universe from nothing. (**Hebrews 11:3**)
    - b. Abraham believed that God could raise his son Isaac from the dead. (**Hebrews 11:18-19**)
    - c. Likewise, we believe in the resurrection of Jesus, the coming return of Jesus, and the resurrection of all the dead on the Last Day (none of which can we yet see).
  2. Obeying the commands of God. (**Hebrews 11:7, 11:8-10, 11:17-18 and 11:30**)
    - a. “*By faith* Noah... prepared an ark”. (**Hebrews 11:7**)
    - b. “*By faith* the walls of Jericho fell down” (**Hebrews 11:30**) after the people marched around them for seven days, as described in **Joshua 6**.
      - i. Notice that it says the walls fell “*by faith*” (not by works).
      - ii. **Question:** Do you think the walls would still have fallen *if the people disobeyed* Joshua and refused to march around the walls of Jericho?
    - c. True saving faith is more than just belief. It must be accompanied by a response of *obedient action*.
    - d. Obedience is the ‘acid test’ of whether we have true saving faith.
  3. Persevering to the end. (**Hebrews 11:24-27, 11:35-38 and 12:1-4**)
    - a. It says that Moses, “*endured* as seeing Him who is invisible.” (**Hebrews 11:27, NKJV**)
    - b. **Deeper Question:** So, how does a person see someone *who is invisible*?

- i. This statement/challenge sounds like a *koan* from an Eastern religion!
  - ii. (Definition of '*koan*' from Miriam-Webster Dictionary = a paradox to be meditated upon that is used to train Zen Buddhist monks to abandon ultimate dependence on reason and to force them into gaining sudden intuitive enlightenment.)
  - iii. I remind my friends that the Christian faith is from Asia, therefore an Eastern religion. It has deep mysteries, and things difficult to comprehend, such as this statement about Moses!
- d. Consider all the 'take-aways' and the 'therefore' statements throughout **Hebrews 10-13**.
  - i. Concluding exhortations and admonitions include:
    - 1. Don't give up meeting together. Stir each other up to love and good works. (**Hebrews 10:24-25**)
    - 2. Do not willfully keep on sinning (**Hebrews 10:26-31**)
    - 3. See to it that no one is godless, like Esau, living for the flesh or a fornicator. (**Hebrews 12:16**)
      - a. Don't just live for pleasure.
      - b. Follow the example of Moses, who forsook the passing pleasures of sin, because he was looking forward to something much greater.
    - 4. Pursue peace and holiness. (**Hebrews 12:14**)
    - 5. Love one another. Be hospitable to strangers. (**Hebrews 13:1-3**)
    - 6. Honor marriage and avoid fornication. (**Hebrews 13:4**)
    - 7. Be content. Don't covet what others have, (**Hebrews 13:5**)
    - 8. Do good and share with others. (**Hebrews 13:16**)
    - 9. Be submissive to those who rule over us in the church (**Hebrews 13:7, 13:17**)
  - ii. Motivations for us to live by faith and persevere to the end include:

1. Remember the earlier days of faith, and the sacrifices gladly made then. (**Hebrews 10:32-36**)
  2. We have the example of Jesus, the *faithful High Priest, who suffered* on our behalf. He was perfected through suffering. (**Hebrews 12:2-3, 13:12-14**)
  3. We have the example of all the great heroes of faith who went before us: the great cloud of witnesses. (**Hebrews 12:1**)
  4. As any loving father disciplines his children, we will be put through painful trials by God (**Hebrews 12:5**, quoting from **Proverbs 3:11-12**). We should not be surprised nor discouraged when this happens!
  5. Jesus is coming! He is referred to as, “the One who is coming” (**Hebrews 10:37**, quoting from **Habakkuk 2:3-4**). If it seems like He is taking long, He is NOT tarrying.
    - a. We need to persevere and live by faith, awaiting His sure return, and being prepared at all times.
  6. Fear God; and fear the consequences of sin. Our God is a consuming fire. (**Hebrews 12:28-29**)
- iii. As Jesus was foreshadowed by the *High Priest* of the tabernacle service, we are foreshadowed by the *priests*. We were foreshadowed by the prophecy that spoke of a future “faithful house” of priests. (**1 Samuel 2:35**)
1. Read **Hebrews 13:10** and **13:15-16**.
    - a. The sacrifices we must make as priests of the faithful house include:
      - i. Offering the sacrifice of praise to God and thanksgiving.
      - ii. Doing good and sharing with others.
      - iii. God is pleased with these sacrifices!
  - iv. **Closing Challenge from Hebrews:** Jesus is the faithful High Priest over His house. Are *you* living as a faithful member of His house, a faithful priest of God?