

HEBREWS

BACKGROUND

HEBREWS

- **Audience:** 1st century Christians who were in danger of giving up
- **Date:** 64-70 AD
- **Purpose:** To encourage them to endure by looking to Christ.
 - Endure like Abraham 6:15
 - Endure like Moses 11:27
 - Endure like Jesus 12:2-3
- **Author:** unknown. Most likely not an Apostle (Hebrews 2:3b)
 - **Barnabas:** Tertullian (155-220 AD)
 - **Silas:** Similarities between Hebrews & 1 Peter (he was a co-author 1 Pt 5:12)
 - **Apollos:** 'eloquent man' from Alexandria who was 'well versed in scriptures' as described in Acts 18:24 (Martin Luther was reasonably sure it was Apollos)
 - **Priscilla:** explain why the church was somewhat slow in accepting it as Scripture

Persecution had grown stronger: physically assaulted, their homes had been plundered; some had been thrown into prison, others had been ridiculed in public because of their faith in Jesus (10:32–34)

Some have seen the events of 10:32-34 as a ref to the Neronian persecution of AD 64. The author gives the impression that sacrifices were still occurring when he wrote this letter (e.g., 8:13; 10:1–3); if sacrifices had already ceased, the author's argument would have had to be cast in a different form.

Heb 2:3b "This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him."

13:24 "Those from Italy send you their greetings."

HEBREWS OUT LOUD

- The sermon to the Hebrews was probably designed to be spoken aloud:
- 2:5 '...about which we are speaking...'
- 3:15 'As has just been said...'
- 5:11 'We have much more to say...'
- 6:9 'Even though we speak like this...'
- 8:1 'Now the main point of what we are saying is this...'
- 9:5 '...we cannot discuss these things in detail now.'
- 11:32 '...what more shall I say?'

<http://www.esvmedia.org/speeches/ferguson.hebrews.mp3>

At the ESV site you can listen to a recitation of the entire book. The speaker is Ryan Ferguson, who I believe is reciting the book from memory rather than reading from a script.

THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

TWO MAIN THEMES:
REVELATION
REDEMPTION

THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

REVELATION & REDEMPTION

- **Revelation:** The Word of God dominates the opening (1-6) and closing (11-13) chapters.
 - Decisive
 - Supreme
 - Compassionate
 - Powerful

THE DECISIVE REVELATION

THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

- The diversified message of the OT (1:1) is now decisive in Christ (1:2-3a).
- It deserves our "most careful attention" in order to avoid drifting (2:1-4).
- The faithful heroes of the OT reach perfection only when combined with the new (11:40).
- Don't be 'carried away' by strange teachings of 'ceremonial foods' that contain no benefit now that the new altar has come (13:9-10).

THE SUPREME REVELATION

THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

- The Revelation from the Son is above:
 - Angels 1:3-2:18
 - Moses 3:1-6
 - Joshua 4:1-10
- We have a greater voice from a greater mountain (12:18-24):
 - not fearful fleeing but joyful assembly
 - not unbearable commands but unimaginable grace

A COMPASSIONATE REVELATION

THE MESSAGE OF REVELATION

- The message is a compassionate appeal (3:7-8, 12-13), but with sober warnings of the dangers of:
 - unbelief (3:12,19)
 - disobedience (3:18, 4:2, 6, 11)
 - laziness (5:11-14, 6:12).
- It is the loving 'word of encouragement' from a father to his children (12:5), but still with the warning to not refuse the message of grace because it is ultimately from heaven (12:25).

A POWERFUL REVELATION

THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

- The message is not just persuasive but powerful (4:12).
- It condemns us and convicts us until we acknowledge the seriousness of our sin (4:13) and the immensity of his grace (4:16).
- It is the message of the a 'kingdom that cannot be shaken' (12:28).

THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

REVELATION & **REDEMPTION**

- **Redemption:** The Work of Christ is given priority in the central section of the letter (7-10)
 - Christ & Melchizedek
 - Christ/Melchizedek Priesthood vs. The Levitical Priesthood
 - Humanity of Jesus

HUMANITY OF JESUS

THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

- We are 'of the same family' as Jesus and He is not 'ashamed' to admit it (2:11-12)
- Jesus shared in our humanity—our flesh and blood (2:14)
- He was 'fully human in every way' in order to be a 'merciful and faithful high priest' (2:17)
- He was tempted in every way so He can help those that are tempted (2:18, 4:15)
- Jesus faced life's hazardous experiences and often suffered, but through it all he 'learned obedience' (2:10; 5:8).
- He prayed 'with loud cries and tears', deeply aware of the cost of that sacrifice which was to be offered (5:7; 9:14).
- He was arrested, mocked, humiliated and 'endured the cross, scorning its shame' (12:2) because he knew it to be the will of God for him and the only way He could 'take away sins' and make us holy (10:10, 11, 14).

APOSTASY

THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

- **Hebrews 6:4-12**
 - Challenges evangelical belief of “once saved always saved”
 - “fall away” here vs. apostles (Mt 26:31-35)
 - “keep on crucifying” & “keep on putting him to open shame”
 - 1st Century Context
- **Hebrews 10:26-35**
 - v. 26 deliberate...v. 29 trampled...insulted
- **Hebrews 12:16-17**
 - Sin like a contagious disease
 - Unpardonable because he is insincere
 - Physical appetites meant more than spiritual privileges

Deut 29:18-

1st Century context of “falling away” back into Judaism involving adopting the viewpoint that Jesus was a blasphemer, not Messiah. Worthy of execution of the worst possible kind. The form of apostasy here envisioned is on par with ‘blasphemy against the Holy Spirit’ (Mt 12:24)

Many character studies in the NT—people who say Lord, Lord—but then turn against Jesus: Judas, Demas, Simon Magus.

2 Corinthians 13:5 “examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.”

DELIBERATE: choice of continuing in a life of habitual sin

TRAMPLED: sustained rejection and violent antagonism. Mt 5:13 salt that's lost its saltiness...good for nothing but trampled underfoot

INSULTED: deepest kind of insult—outrage:

Self-condemned: denying the only way of forgiveness, make pardon impossible

Esau is a powerful picture of Heb 6 & 10

WARNINGS

- Neglect – Heb 2:1-4
- Unbelief – Heb 3:17-19
- Disobedience – Heb 4:11-13
- Immaturity – Heb 5:11-6:12
- Rejection – Heb 10:19-31
- Refusal – Heb 12:25-29

PERSEVERANCE

- Unbelief, disobedience, drifting, or quitting all are not acceptable.
- Jesus knows what it's like – he was made like his brothers. (Heb 2:17-18)
- Grace, mercy, atonement is available! (Heb 2:17-18)
- Sabbath-rest is not for now.... It's for later. Keep going! (Heb 4)
- You ought to be teachers by now (Heb 5:12)
- Let us go on to maturity (Heb 6:1)
- Don't become lazy, taking in the blessings but producing thorns and thistles (Heb 6:7-12)
- Hold unswervingly to the hope (Heb 10:23)
- Spur one another on (Heb 10:24-25)
- Persevere (Heb 10:26)
- Strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees (Heb 12:12)
- Make Every effort, see to it.... (Heb 12)

RUN WITH PERSEVERANCE

HEBREWS 12

- "cloud of witnesses"
- "throw off everything that hinders"
- "and the sin that so easily entangles"
- "run with perseverance"
- "fixing eyes on Jesus...Pioneer & Perfecter"
 - "joy set before him he endured"
 - "so that you will not grow weary and lose heart"
- "you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood"
- "have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement"
- "do not make light...do not lose heart"
- "God is treating you as his children"
- "harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained"
- "strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees"
- "so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed"

surrounded by former contestants who are witnesses to us of the faithfulness of God: men and women that testify that faith is worth it. They have finished, now its our turn. They can inspire, but cannot strengthen.

discouragement and despair

lame—not disabled...healed. Quitting has a ripple effect, but so does repentance. See others not quitting, but perseverance inspires the lame to choose healing rather than being disabled.

LISTEN TO JESUS

HEBREWS 1:1-2:4

- **Why?**

- God's Voice (1:1-2)
- God's Son (1:2)
- God's Heir (1:2)
- God's Creative Agent (1:2)
- God's Radiance & Representation (1:3)
- God's Universal Sustainer (1:3)
- God's Sacrifice (1:3)
- God's Superior Servant (1:5-14)
 - Name (1:4); Dignity (1:5-6); Nature (1:7); Role (1:8); Example (1:9); Work (1:10-12); Achievement (1:13a); Destiny (1:13b)

Who are you listening to?

Dignity: first born son vs servant

LISTEN TO JESUS CONTINUED

HEBREWS 1:1-2:4

- **THEREFORE: Don't Drift**

"...pay the most careful attention...to what we have heard..." (2:1)

vs.

"...ignore..." (2:3)

- Announced by the Lord
- Confirmed by the Apostles
- Testified to by God

Therefore-Favourite word of the writer of hebrews

"Are you steering or drifting? (borden of yale)

FOLLOW THE LEADER

HEBREWS 2:5-3:1

- 2:5 "...the world to come..."
 - New World Order (not the conspiracy version but reality)
 - v. 8 "at present we do not see everything..."
 - "It is not, therefore, something reserved entirely for the future, even though it has a future dimension of rich and exciting significance. In Christ we have already entered God's stupendous future." -Raymond Brown
- 2:10 Jesus is the "...pioneer of their salvation..."
 - archēgos: Head of a clan, a hero, a found of a school of thought, or *the originator of a particular course of action*

Who are we following?

Example: David—how to respond to situation...what to do? what's the best response? how to navigate the complexity of the many choices we are faced with day after day...

Follow our Leader—much more than just a leader—PIONEER

fulfilling God's original intent for mankind—we can only be what we were created to be if we follow Jesus

FOLLOW THE LEADER

HEBREWS 2:5-3:1

- High View of Mankind (2:6-9) Echoes of Genesis 1:26; Psalm 8
 - v. 6 mindful
 - v. 7 crowned with glory & honour
 - v. 8 everything under their feet
- 2:9 "Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them (mankind). But we do see Jesus (pioneer humanity)...crowned with glory and honour"
 - v. 9-10 Suffered death...taste death for everyone
 - v. 11 Same family...not ashamed to call us brothers
 - v. 14 Shared flesh and blood...our humanity
 - v. 14-15 breaks the power of death...free us from slavery to fear of death
 - v. 17 Fully human in every way (merciful & faithful)
 - v. 18 Suffered when tempted to help those who are tempted

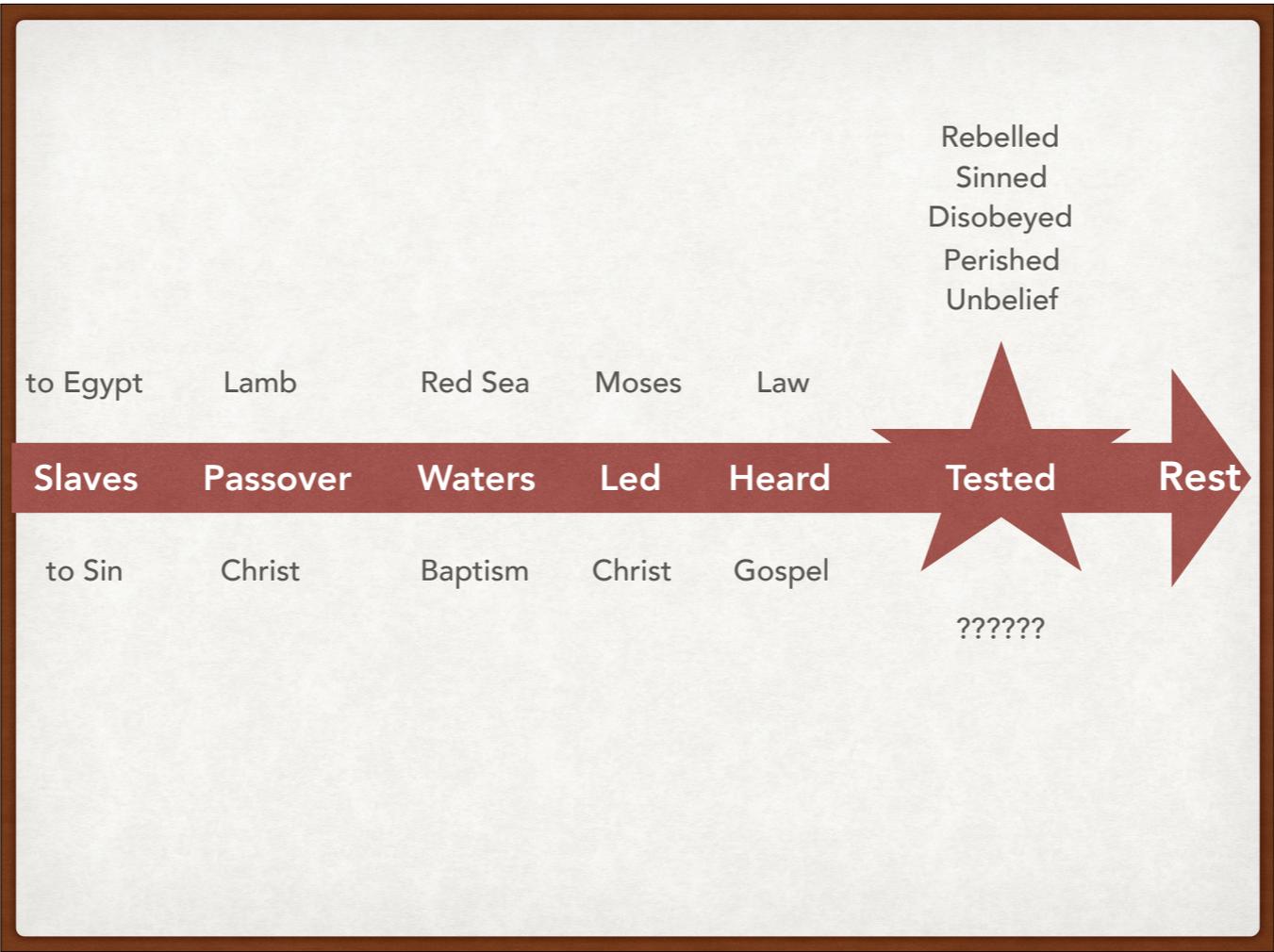
v. 10 "made perfect through what he suffered"

Leon Morris: a perfection of testedness. There is one perfection of the bud another of the flower.

ENDURING THE WILDERNESS

HEBREWS 3:1-4:2

| Moses | Christ |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 3:2-6 | |
| faithful | faithful |
| part of the house | builder of the house |
| faithful servant | faithful Son |
| witness to what would be spoken | the voice that has spoken |



PSALM 95

HEBREWS 3:1-4:2

- Regularly used each sabbath day in the 1st century
- Unites the major themes of 'Worship' (1-7) & 'Loyalty' (7-11)
 - Stubborn or hardened at:
 - Meribah: strife/quarrel: Numbers 20:1-13
 - Massah: test/complain: Exodus 17:1-7
 - tested & tried v. 9
 - hearts went astray v. 10
 - have not known God's ways v. 10

ENTER THE REST

HEBREWS 3:1-4:2

- 3:6 "...hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory."
- 3:8, 15 "...do not harden your hearts..."
- 3:12 "...see to it that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away..."
- 3:13 "...encourage one another daily..."
- 3:14 "...hold our original conviction firmly to the very end..."
- 4:1 "...be careful that none be found to have fallen short..."
- 4:2 "...the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed."

HEBREWS 4

“MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ENTER THAT REST”

- Background Texts
 - **Genesis 2:2-3:** God’s Rest
 - **Numbers 14:** Israelites failure to enter (faithless)
 - Faithful did enter: Joshua & Caleb
 - **Psalm 95:** Written by David, long after Joshua (Heb 4:8)

Key Terms

Rest (11:16; 12:22; 12:28; 13:14; 2:5)

Today (urgency)

Community (faithless or the faithful)

Word

JESUS THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST

HEBREWS 4:14-5:10

Why Jesus is great (4:14-16)

What a priest does (5:1-6)

How Jesus serves/served (5:7-10)

WHY HE IS GREAT

JESUS THE HIGH PRIEST

4:14-16

ascended into heaven

hold firmly to the faith

able to empathise with our
weakness

approach God's throne with
confidence

faced every temptation—without sin: meaning He experienced the FULL weight of temptation, and was victorious

OT provided little to no direct access to God

In Christ—Through Christ we can approach & receive mercy/find grace: not getting what we deserved...easier in some sense to accept

WHAT A PRIEST DOES

JESUS THE HIGH PRIEST

- 5:1-6
- Selected from among the people
- Represent the people in matters related to God
- Offer gifts and sacrifices
- Able to deal gently, because he is subject to weakness
- God appointed not self-appointed

HOW HE SERVED/SERVES

JESUS THE HIGH PRIEST

- **Offered:** prayers & petitions with fervent cries & tears
- **Heard:** reverent submission
- **Learned:** obedience from suffering
- **Became:** source of salvation
- **Designated:** high priest in the order of Melchizedek

SLUGGARD OR SEEKER

5:11 "WE HAVE MUCH TO SAY ABOUT THIS, BUT IT IS HARD TO MAKE IT CLEAR TO YOU BECAUSE YOU NO LONGER TRY TO UNDERSTAND."

- "no longer try to understand" literally: 'lazy as to one's ears': Slothful/Sluggard
- Proverbs 6:6, 6:9, 10:26, 13:4, 15:19, 19:24, 20:4, 21:25, 22:13, 24:30
 - 4 Cartoons of Lazy People 26:13, 26:14, 26:15, 26:16
 - Fear filled Excuses
 - Movement without Moving
 - Failing to Finish
 - Unbelievably Blind
- Hebrews 6:12 "We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised."
 - Imitate: 1 Cor 4:16, 1 Thess 1:6, 1 Thess 2:14, 2 Thess 3:9, Heb 13:7, 3 John 11

Learning through imitation requires greater motivation, focus and effort from the learner. It shifts the responsibility off of the instructor and onto the student.

LEECHER OR TEACHER

5:11 " BY THIS TIME YOU OUGHT TO BE TEACHERS, YOU NEED SOMEONE TO TEACH YOU THE ELEMENTARY TRUTHS OF GOD'S WORD ALL OVER AGAIN."

- Our focus is not inward. We live in the midst of a threatening environment, but we are more like a lighthouse than a bomb shelter.
- "As we read the rest of the New Testament, we see God's people working together in obedience to Jesus's command. They reached out to the people around them, calling them to obediently follow Jesus. The disciples went about making disciples, teaching them to obey everything that Jesus had commanded and baptising them. Some of them even moved to different areas or traveled around so that they could tell more people. They took Jesus's words seriously—and literally." -Francis Chan, Multiply

It refers to the act of giving yet providing nothing of substance in return, as it is named after the parasitic organism a leech.

Leecher is someone who has downloaded a file but is not sharing it...

APPRECIATING OR APPLYING

5:14 "SOLID FOOD IS FOR THE MATURE, WHO BY CONSTANT USE HAVE TRAINED THEMSELVES TO DISTINGUISH GOOD FROM EVIL."

- v. 13 "not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness."
- v. 14 "constant use...trained...to distinguish good from evil."

HEBREWS 6:4-12

FALLING AWAY

CONTEXT IS KEY

HEBREWS 6:4-12

- **Book of Hebrews:** A call for the saved people to persevere
 - Warnings already given:
 - Drifting Away (Heb 2:1)
 - Turning Away (Heb 3:12)
 - Falling Away (Heb 6:6)
 - **Warnings to come:**
 - "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God." (10:26-27)
 - "See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done."(12:15-17)

WHO?

HEBREWS 6:4-12

- “who have been enlightened”
- “who have tasted the heavenly gift”
- “who have shared in the Holy Spirit”
- “who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age”

-**Enlightened:** like the disciples on the road to emmaus—Luke 24:45 “he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures”

-**Tasted:** “32 Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

34 “Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”

35 Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” John 6:32-35

-**Shared:** there can be no doubt now. sharing in the life of the spirit. They had been born again.

-**Experienced:** the word of God bringing faith and transformation into their life

WHAT?

HEBREWS 6:4-12

- **"fall away"**
 - here in Hebrews (Heb 6:6) vs. apostles (Mt 26:31-35)
- **"crucifying the Son of God all over again"**
 - keep on crucifying
- **"subjecting him to public disgrace"**
 - keep on putting him to open shame

different greek words: Gospels-fall away-better translated stumble

1st Century context of "falling away" back into Judaism involving adopting the viewpoint that Jesus was a blasphemer, not Messiah.

Worthy of execution of the worst possible kind. The form of apostasy here envisioned is on par with 'blasphemy against the Holy Spirit' (Mt 12:24)

"men who left the christian church and went back to the synagogue became companions of persons who thought they did God service in cursing the name of Jesus." -Bruce,

Not simply wandering, drifting, or turning back into the world. Active opposition to Christ. Public disowning of Him



PARABLE OF THE CROP



“rain often falling”

“cultivated”

identical care—two different results

which will you be?

BETTER THINGS

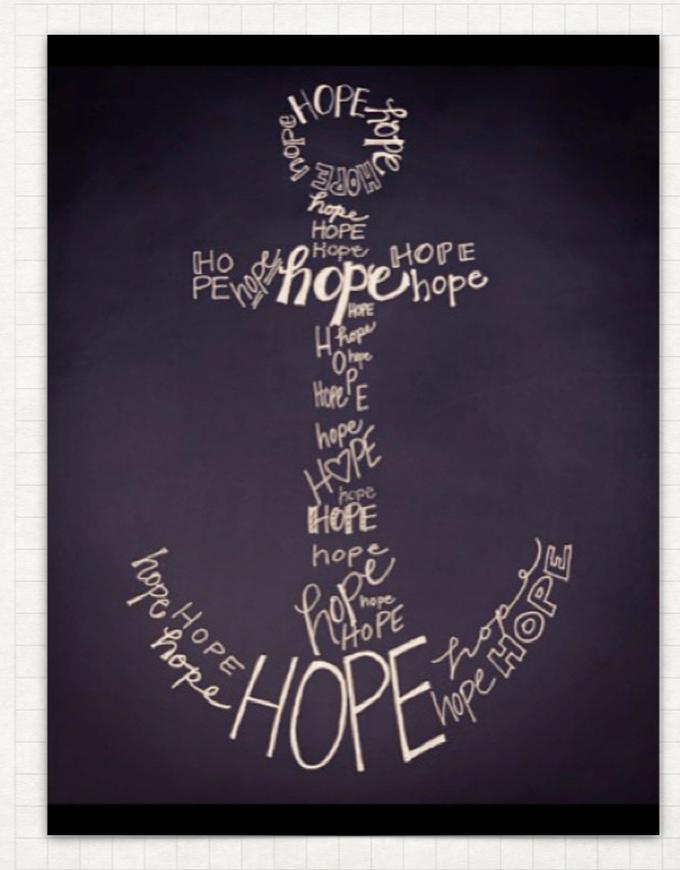
HEBREWS 6:4-12

- God is not unjust
- God will not forget your work & love helping His people
- We need diligence not laziness
- Imitate the good examples

BETTER TERMS

- “My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.” James 5:19-20
- “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.” Galatians 6:1

HEBREWS 6:9-20



the antidote to spiritual apathy and apostasy is the renewal of hope.

Hope is the motivation for faithfulness and love.

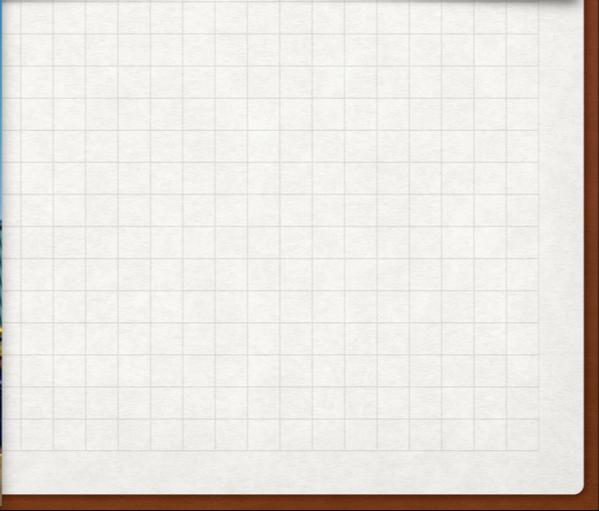
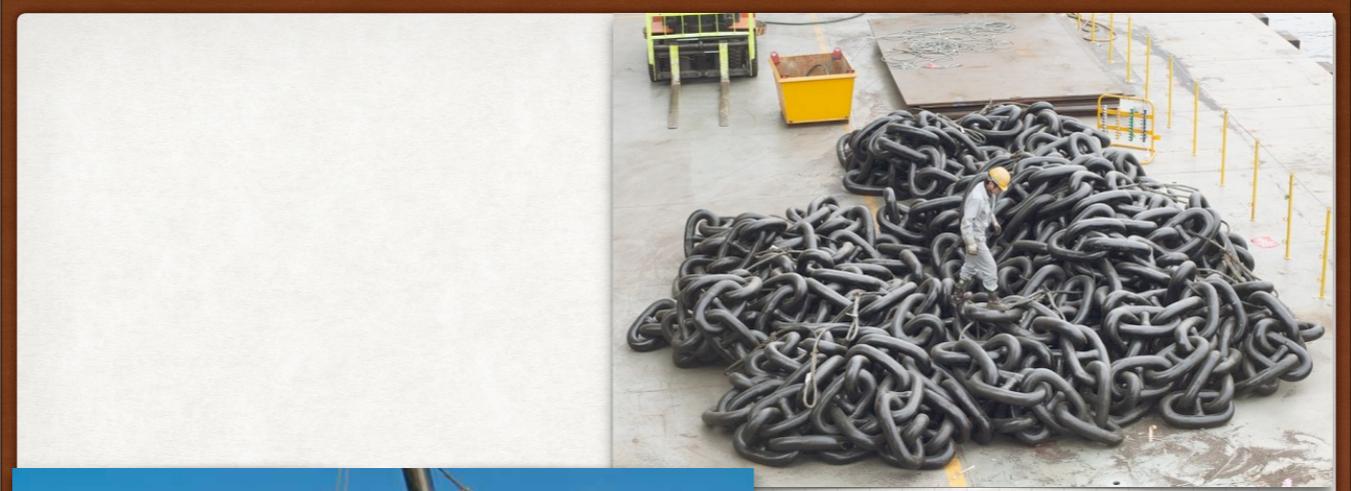
The basis for our hope is the promise of God, confirmed with an oath. Since the saving promises of God have already been fulfilled for us in the death and heavenly exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ, this gives us every encouragement to believe that those who trust in Jesus will share with him in the promised eternal inheritance.

'AND LET OUR SEALS
BE EITHER A DOVE OR
A FISH ... OR A SHIP'S
ANCHOR.'

-CLEMENT OF
ALEXANDRIA



Christian Roman epitaph of Atimetus from the catacombs of St. Sebastian on the Via Appia, Rome. Inscription flanked by Christian symbols, an anchor and a fish.



HOPE AS AN ANCHOR BECAUSE...

- **God's Word is Reliable**
 - Two Unchangeable things (v. 17)
 - Promise confirmed with an oath (v. 17-18) (Gen 22:16)
- **God's Nature is Holy**
 - It is impossible for God to lie (v. 18)
 - Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2
- **God's Son is There**
 - Our forerunner (v. 20)
 - Preparing our way to glory (2:10)
 - Opened the way through his own sacrificial death (10:20)

forerunner. This term (prodromos) was used in Greek literature to describe the function of a small party of soldiers sent fully to explore the way ahead prior to the advance of an army. Christ is our prodromos.

, there is no room for anxiety regarding his future purposes or doubt concerning his former promises.

HEBREWS 7

GENESIS 14:17-20

&

PSALM 110:4

CHRIST & MELCHIZEDEK



Meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek – by Dieric Bouts the Elder, 1464–67

Melchizedek who offers bread and wine to the victor (the only detail which our author does not mention, despite its potential typological value)

8:1-2 “Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 and who serves in the sanctuary...”

The author genuinely desires to magnify Christ and do it in such a way as to help his contemporaries to understand the superiority of Christ’s priesthood when set alongside the Levitical priesthood

Luther calls Psalm 110 “the truly supreme chief Psalm of our dear Lord Jesus Christ.”

David hears a word from God to his “lord” (verse 1). But since he was Israel’s king, who could be his superior? Jesus says the verse refers to him (Mark 12:35–37). But this powerful king is also a sympathetic priest (verse 4; cf. Genesis 14:18–20; Hebrews 6:19–7:28) who represents the people to God. So Jesus is both human and divine, both a lion and a lamb (Revelation 5:5–6).

the fulfilment of a line of truth reaching back through David to Abraham. Jesus is indeed the true Melchizedek of whom Abram met the prototype, David was the foreshadowing and of whom Zechariah spoke.

CHRIST & MELCHIZEDEK

THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

- **Status (7:1): Priest:** only in Hebrews is Christ precisely referenced as a priest. Though Paul & John make mention of His intercession (Rom. 8:34; 1 Jn. 2:1–2)
- **Authority (7:1): King:** As king he is just, and as priest he justifies
- **Name (7:2):** He is *righteousness* and *peace*, and so is Christ. Relevant & appropriate for peace with God is based upon the righteousness of God .
- **Uniqueness (7:3):** In Genesis there is no background on Mel's genealogy or what happens after the encounter with Abram. So in a sense Mel is timeless (in the silences as well as in the statements, Melchizedek is a fitting type of Christ) .
- **Superiority (7:4-10):** Abraham (and indirectly Levi) offered tithes to and received a blessing from the priest-king (lesser blessed by the greater). Even greater though is the reality of becoming a priest not through ancestry but 'on the basis of an indestructible life' (7:16).

The author of Hebrews does not, as in some typology, use Melchizedek to illustrate the virtues of Christ, but moves his thought in the opposite direction. It is not Jesus who resembles Melchizedek, but Melchizedek who resembles Jesus.

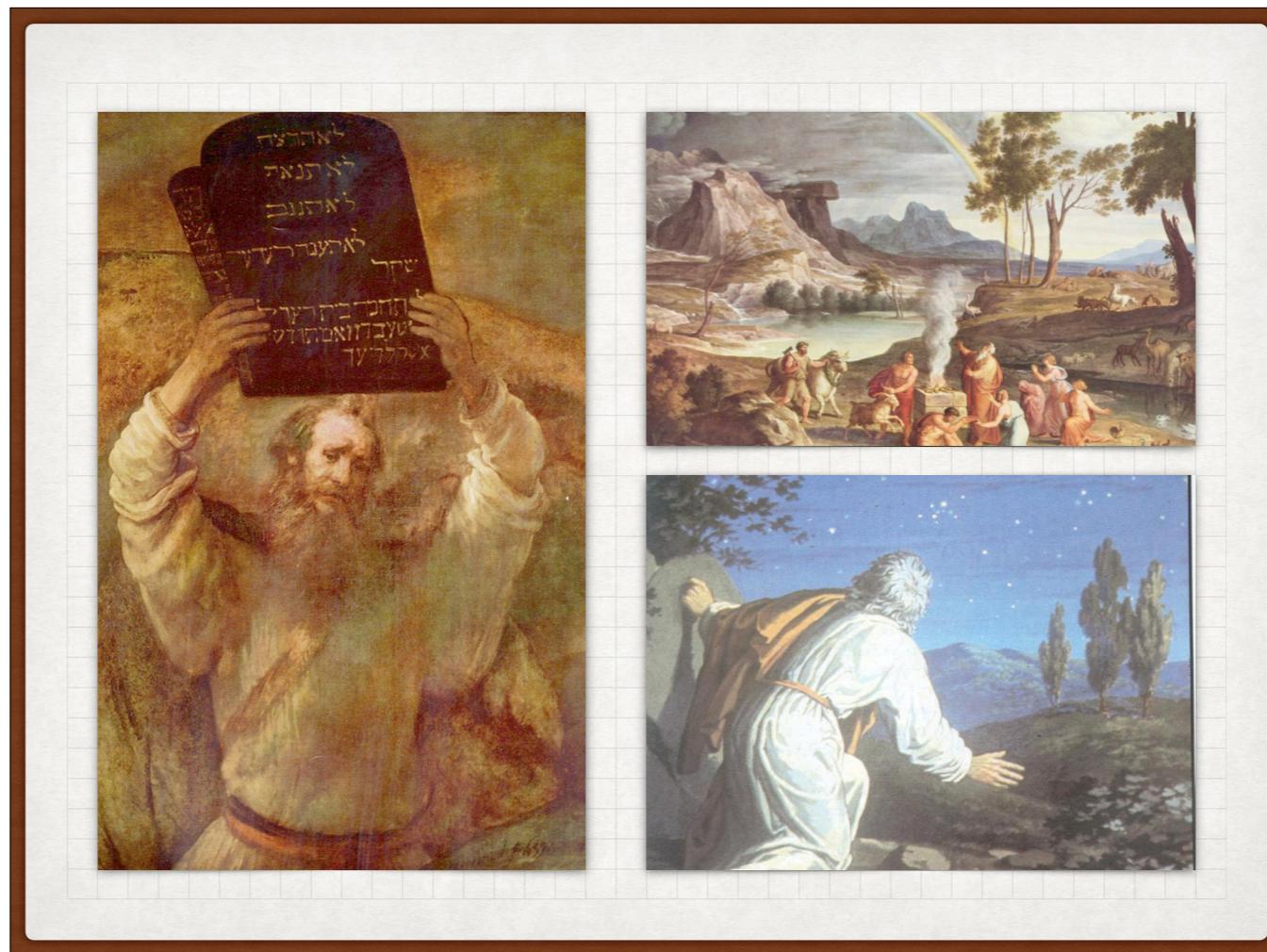
| Levitical Priesthood | Order of Melchizedek/Christ |
|--|--|
| selected on the basis of ancestry (7:16) | selected on the basis of the power of an indestructible life (7:16) |
| temporary because of death (7:23) | lives forever/has a permanent priesthood (7:24) |
| subject to weakness and sinful (5:2-3) | holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners (7:26) |
| offered the blood of goats and bulls (9:13) | offered Himself (7:27) |
| could effect only a partial cleansing, nothing more than 'outwardly clean' (9:9, 13) | purifies man's conscience (9:14, 10:22) & able to save completely (7:25) |
| reminder of sin (10:3) | removal of sin (9:26, 10:11-12) |
| daily repetition (10:11) | once for all (7:27, 10:12) |

A
SUPERIOR
COVENANT

HEBREWS 8

COVENANT

- Arrangement between two parties involving mutual obligations
 - Human Covenants:
 - **David & Jonathan:** 1 Sam 18:13
 - **Elders & David:** 2 Sam 5:3
 - **Israel & Nations:** 1 Kings 5:12
 - **Marriage:** Mal 2:14
 - **Job & his Eyes:** Job 31:1
 - Covenant is thus an interpersonal framework of trust, responsibilities, and benefits, with broad application to almost every human relationship from personal friendship to international trade agreements.
 - In Scripture covenant is also the most comprehensive concept covering an individual's relationship to God.



NOAH

The covenant with Noah affords some perspective for understanding the “covenant God.” Although human beings may deserve destruction because of their wickedness, God withholds that destruction. The covenant of Noah did not establish an intimate relationship between God and each living being; nevertheless, it left open the possibility of a more intimate covenant. Human beings, in spite of their evil, are allowed for a time to live in God’s world; during those years they may seek a deeper relationship with that world’s Creator.

ABRAHAM

The first explicit reference to God’s covenant with Abraham is in Genesis 15. When the Lord called the 75-year-old Abram (as he was first called) to leave his home city of Haran and set out on a journey, a relationship already existed between God and Abram. In that relationship, which enabled God to command Abram’s obedience, God made certain promises to him: “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing” (Gn 12:2).

The covenant is more fully expressed in Genesis 17, which probably records a renewal of God’s covenant with Abram. The initiative once again lay with God (Gn 17:1). God addressed the 99-year-old Abram in words that made clear that the covenant was not a relationship between equal partners. God was the Almighty; Abram was a human being to whom an extraordinary privilege had been granted.

Yet the details of the covenant in Genesis 17 show that both partners assumed responsibilities. God committed himself voluntarily to Abram and his descendants, in turn requiring certain commitments from Abram. The blessing Abram would receive as a covenant partner became clear from the new name God gave him. “No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations” (Gn 17:5). God would give to Abraham, through his descendants, the land of Canaan as an everlasting gift and would be the personal God of Abraham and his family in perpetuity (Gn 17:7, 8).

God’s giving required a response of obedience from Abraham: “Walk before me, and be blameless” (Gn 17:1). Those simple words indicate the essence of covenant relationship: to relate to God is to live in his presence; since God is holy, one who “walks before him” is expected to live a life of integrity and blamelessness.

The covenant also had a more formal aspect. Abraham and the male members of his household were to undergo the rite of circumcision as a symbol of covenant commitment. Abraham was an old man when he was circumcised (Gn 17:24), though male children born into the covenant family were to be circumcised when they were eight days old (Gn 17:12).

MOSAIC

The basic account of the Sinai covenant is contained in Exodus 19 and 20. The initiative came from God, who gave instructions through Moses to prepare for the covenant; God spoke the words that contained the covenant offer. There was no doubt that the God of Israel was the senior partner in the relationship made formal at Sinai. The God who had revealed himself through his acts in the exodus then revealed himself in words. Those two aspects—the God who acts and speaks—are central to OT theology. And although the covenant contained law, it was preceded by the exodus, an act of divine grace.

OLD VS. NEW

Hebrews 8:6 Better Promises

Hebrews 8:8-9 Better Power

Hebrews 8:10 Better Contact

Hebrews 8:11 Better Access

Hebrews 8:12 Better Cleansing

Promise: Land vs Heaven

Power: Outward restrictions vs Inward Holy Spirit

Contact: Inscribed on Stone vs. Written on Hearts

Access: Via a Priest then to God vs. Dwells in our hearts by His Spirit

Cleansing: Outward Washing vs. Cleansed Conscience by blood of Jesus

HEBREWS 12:4-17

DISCIPLINED OR DEFILED?

DISCIPLINED TRAINING; TEACHING

- 12:4 None of us have "arrived"
- 12:5-9 A loving word of encouragement (father to a son)
 - do not make light: arrogance: ignore
 - do not lose heart: insecurity: spiral
- 12:10 The aim is Holiness: "without Holiness no one will see the Lord" v. 15
- 12:11 No Pain No Gain
- 12:12-14 Repentance
 - Strengthen: feeble arms & weak knees: discouragement & despair
 - Think: level paths to inspire others (Prov 4:26)
 - Make Every Effort

challenging idea that they haven't **arrived**...joyfully accepted confiscation of property, imprisoned, suffered with those in prison for the Faith.

DEFILED

ESAU GENESIS 27

- sexually immoral or unholy (ESV)
- sold his birthright for a single meal
 - Physical appetites had meant more to him than spiritual advantages
 - Chose short term pleasure rather than long term privilege
- He could not undo what he had done, though he sought it with tears



Matthias Stom, Esau [right] selling his birthright to Jacob or The Lentil Stew, 17th century

HEBREWS 12:4-17

MOUNT SINAI
OR
MOUNT ZION?

WHICH MOUNTAIN ARE YOU ON?



SINAI?

ZION?



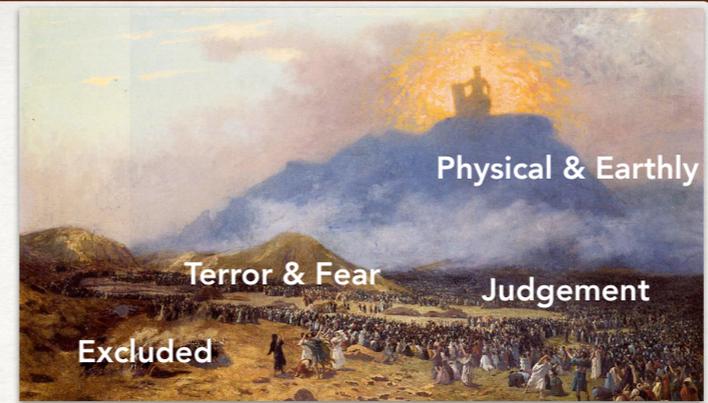
Jean-Léon Gérôme (Jean Leon Gerome) (1824-1904)

Moses on Mount Sinai

Oil on canvas, 1895-1900

SINAI

12:18-21



- v. 18 fire, darkness, gloom, and storm
- v. 19 trumpet blast, begged to not hear
- v. 20 couldn't bear what was commanded
- v. 20 swift judgement and death
- v. 21 trembling fear



Joyful celebration
included in the assembly

Spiritual & Heavenly
Grace & Forgiveness

ZION

12:22-24

- v. 22 thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly
- v. 23 the church of the firstborn: names written in heaven
- v. 23 God: the Judge of all
- v. 23 the spirits of the righteous made perfect
- v. 24 Jesus: the Mediator of a New Covenant
- v. 24 Jesus: the sprinkled blood that speaks of Grace & Forgiveness

Here is a vision of the ultimate, completed company of the people of God, assembled around Christ in the heavenly places. We may now enjoy membership of that church by faith. If our names are written on the roll of the heavenly city, we will one day enjoy the full rights of citizenship.

The term emphasizes our rights of inheritance as God's children. Natural families have only one firstborn. But in God's family, all the people of Christ are the 'firstborn' children of God, through their union with Him who is The Firstborn par excellence; their birthright is not to be bartered away, as was Esau's."

So the question is, "Where are you living?" Are you living on Mount Sinai, trying to earn acceptance with a holy God by keeping His law? If so, you should be in terror, because it is impossible to meet the demands of His holiness. If you have trusted Christ, you are living on Mount Zion.

DOES YOUR LIFE REFLECT YOUR REALITY?

12:25-29

- **Obedient** (12:25):
 - "Just as worship begins in holy expectancy, it ends in holy obedience. If worship does not propel us into greater obedience, it has not been worship. To stand before the Holy One of eternity is to change." -Michael Card, Sacred Sorrow
- **Confident** (12:26-28a)
 - "Most of our emotional problems are symptoms of one deep-rooted spiritual problem: lack of trust in the sovereign God. It's our lack of trust in Him that results in high levels of past-tense guilt, present-tense stress, and future-tense anxiety. And if we allow it to, that three-headed monster will deplete every ounce of holy confidence we possess until we lose our sense of destiny. Many of us find our confidence in the things we can control, but it's a false sense of confidence. Holy confidence isn't circumstantial. It's providential. Too often we allow our circumstances to get between God and us. Holy confidence puts God between us and our circumstances." -Mark Batterson, Soulprint
- **Reverent** (12:28b-29)
 - "our God is a consuming fire"

HEBREWS 13

Questions

Study it:

1. [13:1-3] What does "brotherly love" mean? Why is this the over-arching theme of this chapter? Who were imprisoned? Why was it important to visit? How would such a visit jeopardize their own safety?
2. [13:4-6] How is the attitude to marriage and wealth the same during the Greco-Roman times and today? Why do you think there is this consistency?
3. [13:7-9] In what sense was the congregation to "consider the outcome" of the former leaders way of life? What does it mean to "imitate their faith?" Why does the preacher now make the statement concerning the timelessness of Jesus?
4. [13:10-16] Who is the preacher referring to when he says, "we have an altar?" What is the meaning of "altar?" What is the meaning of "camp" and "gate?" Describe in your own words the main point the preacher is making in these verses. How do some commentators understand the phrase "outside the camp" as it relates to the OT?
5. [13:17] Describe the attitude and the reasons for the attitude members of the congregation should have towards their leaders? Under these stipulations how would one express their disagreement with the decision of an elder?
6. [13:18-19] Why was it important to pray for the pastor? What was the responsibility of the pastor?
7. [13:20-21] Identify all aspects in which Jesus Christ is mentioned in this prayer. Who is to receive glory?
8. [13:22-23] How does the preacher describe his letter to the congregation?

Live it:

1. How do you understand "brotherly" love within our church home? How has this love been made evident or real to you? How have you expressed it yourself? Given the safety of modern hotels and restaurants, how should hospitality to strangers be practiced by Christians today?
2. Do you find it difficult to be "content" in the position that God has placed you? How do you understand being content? How is the truth that God will never leave or forsake you encouraging to you? Practically, what does that phrase mean to you?
3. Have you ever experienced the "reproach of Christ"? Describe what happened. Were you tempted to avoid being reproached or did you, like Moses, "consider the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt"?
4. The theme that Christians are pilgrims who have no "lasting city" here on earth but are progressing towards the "heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12:22) "the city that is to come" is emphasized throughout the sermon. Is this how you feel as well about the community that you live in?
5. How does the preacher describe "praise" and what importance does he give to it? In your prayer life, how much time do you spend on praise and thanksgiving?