Letters to Christians

Spring Quarter 2013

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Welcome to our study of Letters to Christians. We have just finished our study of the foundation and history of the early Church, the journeys and writings of the apostle Paul, and now we continue with the letters written by other inspired authors to the early Church. Thanks to the efforts of missionaries such as Paul and to the power of the gospel of Christ, Christianity had spread greatly.

While men such as Paul and Philip were spreading the gospel to Gentiles, others such as James and Peter, were teaching Jews about Christ and leading the Judean church. Although it was Peter who had the vision concerning the clean and unclean animals representing God's desire to allow Gentiles into the Kingdom (Acts 10), and it was Peter who preached the first sermon to the Gentiles as recorded Acts 11, and it was Peter who defended the Gentiles at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15, the apostle Peter ministered predominately to Jews, not Gentiles. If Paul was considered the apostle to the Gentiles, Peter could be considered the apostle to the Jews. Peter wrote the books of 1st and 2nd Peter.

James (the half-brother of Jesus), also played an important role in the early Church; more specifically, he apparently held a leadership role in the Church at Jerusalem. When Paul recounts his trip to Jerusalem in Galatians 1:19, he mentions seeing “James, the Lord's brother” there. In Galatians 2:12, in reference to the circumcision controversy of Acts 15, James apparently had a role in sending people from Jerusalem to Antioch to teach regarding circumcision. This James was also the most likely author of the book of James. The author of the book of Jude was probably “Judas” referenced in Mark 6:3 as one of the (half-)brothers of Jesus; this fits nicely with Jude's claim in Jude 1 that he was the brother of James.

The author of the book of Hebrews is not identified by name. For our purposes, it is probably more useful to recognize the audience rather than the author. Like most of these other “Letters to Christians” this quarter, Hebrews was written predominately to Jewish Christians or at least to those familiar with the Old Testament.

Our study of the Letters to Christians begins with James, a book packed full of practical topics such as faith and works, partiality or favoritism, poverty and wealth, the tongue, prayer, and many others. From there, we will move to the two epistles of Peter, which discuss remaining holy in an ungodly world, suffering persecutions for one's beliefs, and recognizing false teachers. Then, we will study Hebrews, a book that shows how the Old Testament pointed to the coming of Christ, stressing the superiority of Christ's law over the old law, and presenting examples of the type of faith that God wants us to have. We will conclude our study with the short book of Jude, a reminder that the faith was once for all delivered to the saints, and a warning for those who deviate from the apostles' teachings.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 1 – Intro. To James, Trials and Temptations, Listening and Doing

(James 1)

**Memorize:**

“Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

James 1:12 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define bridle -

**Questions:**

1. Was the author of the book of James one of the 12 apostles? What is said about James in the following scriptures?

Matt. 13:55 Acts 15:13-23

Gal. 2:9 Jude 1:1

1. To whom was the book of James written? What does this phrase mean?
2. In what way(s) can we count it joy when we fall into various trials? Who else counted suffering as joy? Heb. 12:2
3. How can we get wisdom? Who else in the Bible asked for wisdom and received it? 2 Chron. 1:10
4. What is an important attitude to have when praying to God?
5. In what way is the lowly brother exalted and the rich humiliated? What teaching of Jesus does this remind you of? Matt. 20:16, 23:1-12
6. Does God tempt us? Does God test us? (Heb. 11:17) What is the difference?
7. From where does every good and perfect gift originate? What is excluded by “every”?
8. What is able to save our souls?
9. Can we attend every worship service, listen intently, understand what we hear, and still be lacking in some way? How?
10. What can make our religion useless?
11. What can make our religion pure and undefiled? In the context of the surrounding verses, what does this mean in a more general sense?

**Thought Question:**

Describe something difficult you went through that made you better as a result.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 2 – Favoritism Forbidden / Faith and Deeds

(James 2)

**Memorize:**

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

James 2:26 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define partiality -

**Questions:**

1. Around the time James wrote this book, were there any poor members at the church in Jerusalem (where James most likely was)? See Rom. 15:26.
2. In order not to show partiality, how should we treat rich and poor?
3. What were some of the things the rich were doing to the poor around this time?
4. Summarize or paraphrase the main idea of verse 7.
5. Did Jesus associate with people of lowly position? Give 3 specific examples.
6. What law do we violate when we show favoritism, and what are we lacking?
7. If we do not show mercy, what kind of judgment will we receive? Compare Matt. 18:21-35.
8. Can we attend every worship service, listen intently, understand what we hear, say all the right things, and still be lacking in some way? How?
9. According to James, how is our faith made perfect or complete?
10. What 2 Old Testament examples does James use to illustrate faith working together with works?
11. Did Abraham actually offer up Isaac as a sacrifice? Why would James have chosen this example?
12. What actions accompanied Rahab's faith in God? (Joshua 2)

**Thought Question:**

Reconcile James 2:24 with Paul's statements in Romans 3:28 and Ephesians 2:8-9.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 3 – Taming the Tongue / Two Kinds of Wisdom

(James 3)

**Memorize:**

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.”

James 3:17 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define iniquity -

similitude -

**Questions:**

1. Why do you think James says that teachers will be judged more strictly (than students)?
2. Do you think his goal is to discourage us from teaching others about God? If not, what is his goal?
3. What three things does James say the tongue is like? Why are these good comparisons?
4. How can the tongue defile our whole body? See Matt. 15:17-20.
5. What positive activities can we engage in with our tongues? What does James say about that?
6. In James 3:11-12, James gives some examples to make his point. Come up with an example of your own.
7. What is one implication of the examples of the fruit trees? To clarify, if a fig tree bears olives, is it a fig tree or an olive tree? See Matt. 7:15-20.
8. In v. 13, how can we show that we have wisdom and understanding?
9. What are the two kinds of wisdom? Give examples of actions that demonstrate each type.
10. Can earthly wisdom properly be called wisdom at all? If not, what is it? See. 1 Cor. 3:19.

**Thought Question:**

Think of a time when you said something that you later regretted. What were the consequences of speaking those words? Think of some practical tips or techniques you can apply next time you are tempted to speak evil.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 4 – Submit Yourselves to God / Boasting About Tomorrow

(James 4)

**Memorize:**

“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it,* to him it is sin.”

James 4:17 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define enmity -

lament -

**Questions:**

1. What causes wars and fights between brothers?
2. Why does God answer “no” to some prayers (sometimes called “unanswered prayers”)? Have you ever prayed for anything for selfish reasons?
3. In 4:4, James calls some of his readers “adulterers and adulteresses”. What did he mean by this?
4. How many masters can we effectively serve at once? (Matt. 6:24)
5. What are we missing if we love the world or the things in the world? (1 Jn. 2:15-17)
6. Since the Law of Moses, God has demanded what priority in our lives? (Ex. 20:1-6) What rationale is given in that passage that is similar to that used by James.
7. In 4:6, what attitudes does God like and dislike?
8. How close should we get to Satan? To God?
9. What will God do if we draw near to him? While the prodigal son was returning but was still a great way off, what did his father do? (Lk. 15:11-32)
10. What two types of judgment are there? (Jn. 7:24) Which one is condemned in James 4:11 and elsewhere in the New Testament? What do you think is involved in “righteous judgment”?
11. Do you think 4:13-16 is saying it is wrong to make plans for the future? (Rom. 15:28) If not, what aspect makes it wrong in James' example?

**Thought Question:**

In the next few years, you will make many decisions that will affect your future (e.g. college, occupation, who to marry, etc.). Formulate two specific principles from this chapter that will help as you make these decisions.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 5 – Warning to Rich Oppressors / Patience in Suffering / The Prayer of Faith

(James 5)

**Memorize:**

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

James 5:16b (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define avail -

**Questions:**

* 1. What is the rich man's misery? What verse from chapter 1 does this remind you of?
  2. What does James accuse some rich people of doing?
  3. What specific death might James be referencing in v. 6? Explain your answer.
  4. The word “therefore” in v. 7 ties the topic of rich people to the topic of patience. What is the connection between these two topics? (Jas. 2:6-7)
  5. Tie the command to “establish your hearts” back to the analogy of the farmer.
  6. James refers to prophets as examples of suffering and patience. Name an Old Testament prophet and tell what he had to suffer.
  7. What was the “end intended by the Lord” in Job's case, and what is the lesson for us?
  8. Why should our “yes” or “no” be good enough, without having to swear? (Matt. 5:33-37)
  9. In v. 16, what are two things we as Christians are supposed to do to/for one another?
  10. What are we to do for one another that could result in the salvation of a soul? How are we to do this? (Gal. 6:1)
  11. What is unusual about the way this epistle ends, compared to most others?
  12. There are many similarities between James' epistle and Jesus' “Sermon on the Mount” in Matt. 5-7. For each verse from Jesus' sermon, find the similar verse from James. Feel free to list others.

Matt. 7:24,26 → Jas. 1:\_\_\_\_ Matt. 6:14-15 → Jas. 2:\_\_\_\_

Matt. 7:16 → Jas. 3:\_\_\_\_ Matt. 6:24 → Jas. 4:\_\_\_\_

Matt. 5:33-37 → Jas. 5:\_\_\_\_ Matt. \_\_\_\_\_ → Jas. \_\_\_\_\_

**Thought Question:**

Explain the perspective of James that can allow him to make the following statements:

“Count it all joy when you fall into various trials”, “Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation”, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up”, “Come now, *you* rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon *you!”, and* “Indeed we count them blessed who endure”.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 6 – Intro. To 1st & 2nd Peter / Praise to God for a Living Hope / Be Holy

(1 Peter 1)

**Memorize:**

“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever”

1 Peter 1:22,23 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define foreordained -

manifest -

**Questions:**

* + 1. In which modern-day country are the regions mentioned in the first verse of this epistle located? Where do we read about these regions elsewhere in the scriptures?
    2. What is the “Dispersion” to which Peter refers?
    3. What is the common subject that both James and Peter mention at the beginning of their epistle? Were the same people responsible for it?
    4. How exactly is gold tested by fire? How would this apply to those who read this epistle?
    5. What does Peter consider the end of our faith?
    6. What is the basic reason God makes rules for us?
    7. What does the word “holy” (Greek “hagios”) mean, and in what sense can we be considered holy?
    8. How are we to conduct ourselves during the time of our stay here? Why?
    9. Why does Peter seem to stress the concept of “incorruptible” in this chapter?
    10. What do you think Peter means in v. 23 by “lives and abides forever”?
    11. Summarize Peter's message of encouragement to these Christians as they are undergoing trials and persecutions.

**Thought Question:**

Which things do “angels desire to look into” and why?

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 7 – The Living Stone and a Chosen People / Living Godly Lives in a Pagan Society

(1 Peter 2)

**Memorize:**

“But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;”

1 Peter 2:9 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define cornerstone -

sojourners -

cloak -

**Questions:**

* + - 1. “Therefore” in v. 1 refers back to what topic in the last chapter?
      2. Peter calls them “newborn babes” and says they need the “milk of the word”. Heb. 5:13-14 says that more mature Christians should eat what instead of milk?
      3. What is Christ to those who believe? What is Christ to those who are disobedient?
      4. What is the purpose and importance of a cornerstone in a physical building? How does this apply spiritually?
      5. What group is referred to as a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people”, and what is the job of that group?
      6. Based on 2:9-10, do you think Peter's readers were Jews or Gentiles?
      7. Peter says we should submit to every ordinance of man. Is there a limit to that submission? If so, what is the limit?
      8. Is Peter condoning slavery in v. 18? If not, what is his message? Whose slaves are we to be?
      9. Is there anything inherently honorable about suffering? What is commendable before God pertaining to suffering?

**Thought Question:**

Think of 3 examples from scriptures that demonstrate exceptions to the command to submit to the ordinances of man.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 8 – Suffering for Doing Good

(1 Peter 3)

**Memorize:**

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;”

1 Peter 3:15 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define antitype -

**Questions:**

* + - * 1. What is one reason given here why it is important for wives to be submissive to their husbands?
        2. How can we convert others “without a word”?
        3. Should our outward appearance be the source of our beauty? If not, then what is “precious in the sight of God”?
        4. How are husbands told here to treat their wives? What does this mean?
        5. What 6 things does Peter command all of us to do in v. 8-9?
        6. Peter quotes from Psalm 34 in v. 10-12. Read that psalm and summarize its theme. Tie this back with the message of 1 Peter.
        7. Does the Lord hear the prayers of sinners? What qualifications are placed on those whom the Lord will hear?
        8. What is the context of the command to “always be ready to give a defense”?
        9. Think of a time when you might have been persecuted for refusing to participate in evil. Were you able to give a defense?
        10. If baptism is not the removal of the filth of the flesh, what is it? What does this verse indicate regarding the practice of infant baptism?
        11. Many people today say there is no verse in the Bible that says that baptism saves us. Are those people correct?

**Thought Question:**

Give a possible meaning of preaching “to the spirits in prison”. Compare 1 Pet. 1:11.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 9 – Living for God / Suffering for Being a Christian

(1 Peter 4)

**Memorize:**

“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins.'”

1 Peter 4:8 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define lewdness -

abominable -

dissipation -

**Questions:**

What are some of the sinful things in which these Christians participated in the past?

How does the world view refusal to participate in these sins? From your own experience, give an example of this reaction.

What does Peter say the wicked will eventually have to do regarding their sinful lifestyles?

Explain how love covers a multitude of sins.

Compare 4:8 to James 5:20. What must be included in the idea of loving our brother?

What does Peter say should be the outcome or result of the use of spiritual gifts?

What two attitudes should Christians have regarding suffering? Why is attitude so important?

Can God use evil to His glory? Explain.

According to this chapter, where does judgment begin?

What is the answer to the question posed in v. 17 & 18?

**Thought Question:**

Will the Christians who formerly participated in the lifestyles of v. 3 have to give an account to God of these acts at the judgment? Reconcile with Heb. 8:12.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 10 – To the Elders and the Flock / Final Greetings

(1 Peter 5)

**Memorize:**

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

1 Peter 5:8 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define adversary -

sober -

vigilant -

**Questions:**

What 3 characteristics does Peter say elders/shepherds should have? What 3 traits should they not have? Why are these important?

What is the reward for trustworthy shepherds?

What command is given to younger people? What are the applicable characteristics of good “sheep”?

What is the key component to submission? Does this imply inferiority? Justify your answer.

What will God do for us if we humble ourselves?

List as many similarities as you can think of between the devil and a lion.

What should be our defense against Satan? What was Jesus' defense against Satan (Matt. 4)?

In James 4:7, what are we told will happen if we successfully resist the devil?

Who evidently helped Peter write and/or deliver this letter? Where else do we read about this person? What other epistles might he have helped write and/or deliver?

Who else greeted the saints at the end of this chapter? To whom might this be referring?

In chapters 2, 3, and 5 of this book, Peter addressed five specific groups of people. What were these 5 groups, and what instructions were given to each group?

**Thought Question:**

What would result if we obeyed the command to be “submissive to one another” perfectly? What would be precluded if we followed this command?

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 11 – Confirming One's Calling and Election / Prophecy of Scripture

(2 Peter 1)

**Memorize:**

“...for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.”

2 Peter 1:21 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define diligent -

negligent -

cunningly -

**Questions:**

How has God's divine power given us all things that pertain to life and godliness? What is excluded by “all things”?

What are some of the “exceedingly great and precious promises” given to us?

What 8 traits are we to have that will make us productive and fruitful? Are these virtues something you can check off a list and forget? How could those who lack these 8 things be described?

How can we make our call and election sure?

Once we know the truth, do we need to be reminded of it? For what purpose?

To what is Peter referring as a “tent”, and why is this an appropriate term?

How was Peter ensuring they would “always have a reminder of these things”?

What event is being recounted in v. 17? Was Peter an eyewitness of this event? Matt. 17

What is the source of all prophecy?

**Thought Question:**

At what other event in Jesus' life did a voice from heaven say something similar? Compare and contrast these two events.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 12 – False Teachers and Their Destruction

(2 Peter 2)

**Memorize:**

“For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.”

2 Peter 2:20 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define heresies -

presumptuous -

carouse -

**Questions:**

Peter connects this chapter with the previous one by saying “But there were also false prophets among the people.” What is meant by “the people”, and can you think of one example of such a false prophet not mentioned elsewhere in this chapter?

What are some of the ways that following these false teachers could result in the way of truth being blasphemed?

What does Peter say motivates some of the false teachers?

Peter gives 3 historical examples of groups of people God punished for disobedience. What are the 3 groups, and what do they have in common? What is the lesson for us?

What did Balaam do wrong, and what might have been his motivation for doing so? See Num. 22.

How are these false teachers like wells without water and clouds carried by a tempest?

Is there anything liberating about the type of “liberty” promised by these false teachers? If not liberating, what is it instead?

Peter paints 2 word pictures of what it is like when a Christian returns to the pollutions of the world. What are they, and describe in your own words what they are like.

Evidently some of these false teachers were at one point true Christians, and presumably followed the truth for a period of time. Is anything good said about them in this chapter?

Would there have been anything appealing to Peter's audience about the teachings of these false teachers? If so, what? Why was it necessary to spend an entire chapter addressing this issue in detail?

**Thought Question:**

What might it mean to “speak evil of dignitaries”? Compare Jude 9.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 13 – The Day of the Lord

(2 Peter 3)

**Memorize:**

“But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

2 Peter 3:8-9 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define scoffers -

perdition -

**Questions:**

What was Peter's express purpose in writing this 2nd epistle?

Have you ever heard someone mock God by saying something like “Why hasn't Jesus returned yet?” or “Do you actually believe He's coming back”? What is God's answer to such scoffers?

The scoffers in the last days willfully forget what important fact? Paraphrase.

What is one purpose of the Lord's longsuffering and the delay of his return?

If the first destruction mentioned in v. 6 came by water, what will be used in the second destruction? Describe its intensity. In what way will it be different than the first destruction?

Will the new heavens and new earth be identical to the old heavens and old earth? After this coming destruction, will people still inhabit the old earth?

Because of the coming destruction, what manner of persons ought we to be, and what should we be diligent to be found doing? Compare Matt. 24:42-51.

In the New Testament, the word “scripture” usually refers to the Old Testament. To what does Peter refer as “scripture” here?

Is it possible to use scripture in an incorrect manner? Give an example of such a misuse. What will happen to those who are guilty of doing so?

What do you think is the main point of the book of 2 Peter?

**Thought Question:**

Explain the general concept of millennialism, and how does this chapter serve to refute that concept?

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 14 – Review

(James, 1&2 Peter)

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 15 – Intro. To Hebrews / God's Final Word: His Son / Son Superior to Angels / Jesus Fully Human

(Hebrews 1-2)

**Memorize:**

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;”

Hebrews 1:1-2 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define anointed -

**Questions:**

1. Hebrew was a language spoken by those in and around Israel. What are some other synonymous names for the Hebrew people?
2. While we don't know who wrote this book, it is pretty clear who the intended audience was. Name at least three topics in this book that would only have been meaningful to the Hebrew people.
3. What were some of the various ways God spoke to people in the past? How has he spoken to us in these last days?
4. How did Christ purge our sins, where did he go after doing that, and what is the significance of him being there in the context of Hebrews 1? Compare v. 13, Eph. 1:20, Rom. 8:34.
5. Angels played a few important roles when Jesus came into this world; list as many of those roles as you can. See Luke 1-2.
6. What was the importance of anointing, and what name for Jesus implies this concept of anointing?
7. What is being referred to as the “word spoken through angels”? See Acts 7:38,53.
8. Name 5 things the Hebrews writer lists that confirm the word of the Lord and establish our great salvation.
9. In what sense is Jesus lower than the angels? In what sense is he superior?
10. In what way is Christ our brother?
11. According to Hebrews 2, what two things did Jesus' death accomplish?
12. What does the Hebrew writer say Christ's suffering and temptation mean for us?

**Thought Question:**

Contrast Christ as God's son with angels as ministering spirits or servants. Are we sons or servants?

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 16 – Jesus Greater Than Moses / Warning Against Unbelief

(Hebrews 3)

**Memorize:**

“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

Hebrews 3:12-13 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define deceitfulness -

**Questions:**

1. We don't usually think of Jesus as being an apostle. What does “apostle” mean in this context?
2. Jesus is also referred to as the High Priest. What were some roles of the high priest under the Old Covenant, and which role do you think was most important?
3. What are some differences listed here between Jesus and Moses, and why is Jesus worthy of more glory than Moses?
4. In chapters 1 and 2, Jesus was shown to be superior to angels. In this chapter, Jesus is shown to be superior to Moses. Compare the two arguments for Jesus' superiority.
5. Recall the Old Testament story of the wilderness wanderings. Summarize the basic (repeating) pattern of that 40 year period.
6. Moses sent 12 men to spy on the land of Canaan, 10 of whom advised against entering the land. What was God's punishment for this lack of faith, and who was exempt from this punishment? See Num. 14.
7. The Hebrews writer twice quotes from Ps. 95:8. In this verse, the Hebrew word used for “rebellion” is “Meribah”. What event happened at a place called “Meribah” and what was Moses' punishment? See Num. 20.
8. In both of the above Old Testament examples, lack of faith resulted in the same punishment. What do you think the Hebrews writer is indicating by referencing this punishment?
9. The Hebrews writer uses “unbelief” synonymously with what other concept? What verse from James does this bring to mind?

**Thought Question:**

How might the story have changed if those 10 spies had the same faith as the 2? What kind of influence did the 10 have? Relate this to our memory verse.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 17 – A Sabbath-Rest for the People of God / Jesus the Great High Priest

(Hebrews 4-5)

**Memorize:**

“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.”

Hebrews 4:15 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define marrow -

vehement -

**Questions:**

1. What is the connection between the concept of “rest” and the preceding chapter?
2. Is the “rest” to which the author refers spiritual or physical? When do we enter it? See Rev. 14:13. How can we lose the hope of entering it?
3. In order for the word of the gospel to profit an individual, with what must it be mixed?
4. How should we endeavor to enter God's rest? What should be our response to the thought of not being able to enter that rest?
5. The Hebrews writer describes three pairs of things the word of God is able to divide. What are the differences between each of the items paired together?
6. What is unique about Jesus our High Priest that enables us to approach the throne of grace boldly?
7. When Jesus was on earth, based on his genealogy, was he qualified to be a priest according to Mosaic Law? Provide scripture to prove your answer.
8. Who was Melchizedek, where did he come from, and did he live before or after Moses? See Gen. 14:18-19.
9. When did Jesus offer up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears?
10. In what sense could Jesus have “learned” obedience? Does this mean he was ever disobedient? Compare Phil. 4:11
11. What specific concept is the writer referring to here as “solid food”? What do we need to do in order to be able to “digest” “solid food”?

**Thought Question:**

Other than the “Temptation of Jesus” by the Devil in the wilderness, list at least two other specific occasions when Jesus might have been tempted, and describe his response to those potential temptations.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 18 – Jesus the Great High Priest / Warning Against Falling Away /

The Certainty of God's Promise

(Hebrews 6)

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**Memorize:**

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

Hebrews 6:19-20 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define immutable -

**Questions:**

1. What does the Hebrews writer refer to as elementary principles of Christ? Do you consider this list to contain elementary principles?
2. Are these verses teaching the possibility of falling away from salvation? Justify your answer.
3. Are these verses teaching the impossibility of one being restored who has fallen away? Justify your answer.
4. What good things were mentioned here that these Hebrew Christians had done? What might this have entailed?
5. Who does the writer tell them to imitate? To whom might this specifically refer?
6. Is v. 16 giving permission for us to swear oaths? What did Jesus say regarding this topic? See Matt. 5:33-37.
7. What are the “two immutable things” referenced here and why should these things give us strong consolation?
8. What does it mean that our hope is “an anchor of the soul”?

Answer the following questions with respect to the Old Law:

1. Who was qualified to enter behind the veil? See Num. 18:1-7.
2. What was behind the veil? See Ex. 26:31-35.
3. How often and at what time(s) was it permitted to enter behind the veil? See Ex. 30:10, Lev. 16.

**Thought Question:**

Relating to the old law: At what point did Jesus enter behind the veil? What act was he accomplishing by entering behind that veil? Justify your answer with scripture.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 19 – Melchizedek the Priest / Jesus Like Melchizedek

(Hebrews 7)

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**Memorize:**

“But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

Hebrews 7:24-25 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define annulling -

surety -

tithes -

**Questions:**

1. Melchizedek is said here to be the king of a place called Salem. What might be another name for that place, and what is the meaning of Salem?
2. What did Melchizedek give Abraham?
3. What did Abraham do for Melchizedek that indicates the greatness of Melchizedek? Who does this passage indicate was greater: Abraham or Melchizedek?
4. What was the relationship between Abraham and Levi? Based on this fact combined with your answer to Question 3, who was greater: the Levitical priests or Melchizedek?
5. What does a change of the priesthood necessarily imply?
6. The writer refers to the Old Covenant as imperfect, weak, and unprofitable. Was this a problem with the law itself? If not, then what was the problem? See Rom. 7:7-25
7. The fact that Jesus was a priest provides us with surety of what?
8. In Chapters 7 and 8, the writer gives many reasons why Jesus is superior to the Levitical priests. List the reasons given in each of the following verses:

7:23-25 -

7:26-28 -

1. The Hebrews writer refers to Jesus being made priest through an oath. Where is this oath recorded, and what was the time frame of this oath in relation to the giving of the Old Law?

**Thought Question:**

Think of three specific examples of God's commands / expectations under the New Covenant being far superior from our standpoint to those under the Old Covenant.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 20 – The High Priest of a New Covenant / Worship in the Earthly Tabernacle / The Blood of Christ

(Hebrews 8-9)

**Memorize:**

“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”

Hebrews 9:27-28 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define cherubim -

manifest -

**Questions:**

1. In Chapters 7 and 8, the writer gives many reasons why Jesus is superior to the Levitical priests. List the reasons given in each of the following verses:

8:1,2 -

8:6 -

1. What was the earthly tabernacle modeled after, and who is the priest of the “true tabernacle”?
2. Where is the law of the new covenant written, and who prophesied that this new covenant would come?
3. The phrase “new covenant” implies what about the old covenant? Why might this have been hard for the Hebrew Christians to accept?
4. What was in the sanctuary of the tabernacle? What was in the “Holiest of All”? Who entered each area and how often? See also Lev. 23:27.
5. Could the sacrifices under the old law provide forgiveness of sins? What did provide forgiveness of sins?
6. What was required to enter the “Holiest of All”? What enabled Christ to enter the “Most Holy Place”?
7. The author seems to use the terms “covenant” and “testament” synonymously. When does a testament take effect?
8. According to the Hebrews writer, what purifies and provides remission? Be specific.
9. How many times did Christ need to offer his sacrifice? Why is this the case?

**Thought Question:**

Think of 3 ways that heaven might be similar to the “Most Holy Place” of the earthly tabernacle.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 21 – Christ's Sacrifice Once for All / A Call to Persevere in Faith

(Hebrews 10)

**Memorize:**

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another,* and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define exhorting -

indignation -

reproaches -

**Questions:**

1. According to the author, what was one purpose of sacrifices under the old law?
2. The writer seems to emphasize this point: Could sacrifices and the blood of bulls and goats take away sins?
3. According to this chapter, what is one thing Jesus is doing while sitting at the right hand of God?
4. Reconcile v. 14 with v. 26, 27.
5. What can we do by the blood of Jesus that only the High Priest could do under the old law? Do we need a “priest” today in order to approach God's throne?
6. What 3 things does the writer say we should do as a result of being consecrated by the blood of Jesus?
7. In what context is the command given not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together? According to this verse, what is one reason we assemble together?
8. The writer uses strong language to describe willfully sinning after receiving knowledge of the truth. To what 3 things is this sort of willful sin tantamount?
9. We can assume that many of those to whom this letter was written had been Christians for many years and suffered persecutions. We can also assume that some had allowed their faith to wane. Summarize the writer's encouragement / warning to them.

**Thought Question:**

The author emphasizes the virtue of endurance. Think of 2 parables of Jesus that emphasize this virtue, and explain how they relate to Hebrews 10.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 22 – Faith in Action

(Hebrews 11)

**Memorize:**

“But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him,* for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define esteeming -

valiant -

**Questions:**

1. We have titled this lesson “Faith in Action”. List as many action verbs as you can find in this chapter that demonstrate faith. (Should be 25+.) What does this imply about the connection between faith and action?
2. How many times is the concept of heaven / an eternal reward mentioned in this chapter? Describe the Old Testament promises of a heavenly reward.
3. To whom does “the elders” of v. 2 refer?
4. Was anyone present (other than God) when “the worlds were framed”? According to the definition given in v. 1, what does this imply about any theory of origin of the universe?
5. According to this chapter, what is required in order to please God?
6. Does faith necessitate an understanding of God's means to accomplish his promises? Who in this chapter demonstrates this?
7. Can we be forgiven for moments of unbelief and still be counted faithful? What did Sarah do when told she would bear a child in her old age? See Gen. 18. Name two other characters in this chapter who suffered lapses in their faith. Describe.
8. How did Abraham reconcile God's seed promise with God's command to sacrifice Isaac?
9. What made Rahab's works of faith so remarkable? See Joshua 2.
10. The writer lists several acts of faith that involved acts committed by others rather than acts that they themselves committed. What are these acts of endurance / perseverance?
11. After listing all these great examples of faith, the writer concludes that God has provided something even better for us. What has he provided for us, and what is the implication?

**Thought Question:**

Think of someone you know who lives like a stranger and pilgrim on the earth. Describe practical aspects of their lifestyle that demonstrate that belief.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 23 – God Disciplines His Children / The Mountain of Fear and the Mountain of Joy

(Hebrews 12)

**Memorize:**

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us,* and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”

Hebrews 12:1 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define ensnares -

scourges -

**Questions:**

1. Who is the “cloud of witnesses” and what are they motivating the Hebrew Christians to do?
2. What was the joy set before Jesus?
3. Who is our ultimate example of endurance, and what was the extent of that endurance?
4. These verses tell us that chastening and scourging is one way God shows us that he \_\_\_\_\_\_ us and is treating us like legitimate \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. What should be our response to this correction? How does chastening seem at the present, and what does it yield?
5. How is the topic of endurance / discipline related to the previous concept of running the race?
6. What types of endurance had these Christians already exhibited? See ch. 10.
7. How were these Hebrew Christians in danger of losing their birthright (salvation) like Esau? See 6:4-6, Gal. 5:4.
8. To which mountain is the writer referring in v. 18-21? Summarize the account found in Ex. 19.
9. What makes Mount Zion and the presence of God different for us? Describe how it is different.
10. What is the “kingdom that cannot be shaken” and what enables us to serve God acceptably?

**Thought Question:**

Is discipline always the same as punishment? Think of a specific earthly example that would be considered discipline, but not punishment. Think of a spiritual example.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 24 – Concluding Exhortations / Benediction and Final Greetings

(Hebrews 13)

**Memorize:**

“But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

Hebrews 13:16 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define unwittingly -

**Questions:**

* 1. Recount a story from Genesis of someone who unwittingly entertained angels.
  2. What rationale is given for why these Christians should remember the prisoners? Compare to 1 Cor. 12.
  3. What is the connection between the topics of fornication, adultery, covetousness, and contentment? What did the Ten Commandments say about these topics (Exodus 20)? What did Jesus say regarding them (Matthew 5)?
  4. Read between the lines: What is the real “secret” given here to avoiding covetousness and being content?
  5. According to the writer, what should be one factor that motivates us to faith and good conduct?
  6. How was Jesus' sacrifice similar to the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement?
  7. The author speaks of a “continuing city” that we are to seek. What two verses from Chapter 11 convey a similar idea?
  8. What three things should we offer to God today as a sacrifice rather than animals?
  9. The writer seems to be referring to elders or shepherds here as those who must give an account for our souls. What are our responsibilities as good sheep?

**Thought Question:**

Several comparisons were made in Hebrews between Jesus and various elements of the Old Covenant. List as many of these comparisons as you can from the entire New Testament. Your answers should have the form “Jesus is the <element from Old Covenant>”.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 25 – The Sin and Doom of Ungodly People / A Call to Persevere

(Jude)

**Memorize:**

“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

Jude 3 (NKJV)

**Keys to Understanding:**

Define reviling -

brute -

**Questions:**

* + 1. How does the author identify himself? What else do we know about Jude? See Matt. 13:55. Do we know who the epistle was written to, or when, or where?
    2. What does the phrase “once for all” mean? What does this imply regarding modern-day revelations and prophets?
    3. How is it possible to “turn the grace of our God into lewdness”? See Rom. 6:1.
    4. Jude cites 3 examples in v. 5-7. What similarities are there between these examples? What point is Jude trying to make by citing them?
    5. There are many similarities between Jude and 2 Pet. 2. Both books mention false teachers and their doom and cite many of the same examples. In our study of 2 Pet., we already studied Balaam's error. Summarize and compare the story of Cain and the rebellion of Korah. See Gen. 4, Num. 16.
    6. Jude makes 4 metaphors from nature to describe false teachers. List the 4 metaphors, and briefly summarize the gist of each one.
    7. What do you think is meant by “love feasts” in v. 12? Regardless of the exact meaning, what can we surmise from this verse?
    8. Were these false teachers “outsiders” or “insiders”? Which is more destructive to the church, false teachers or persecution?
    9. Describe the behavior of these false teachers in v. 16-19.
    10. Towards those who are weak or sinning, we should have one of two responses. What are the two possible responses, and how are we to determine which response is appropriate?

**Thought Question:**

Construct a table of parallel items referenced in both Jude and 2 Pet. 2.

**Letters to Christians**

Lesson 26 – Review

(Hebrews, Jude)