

Biola University

Digital Commons @ Biola

Talbot Publications

The Louis T. Talbot Archive

Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews - Lesson 1

Louis T. Talbot
Biola University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.biola.edu/talbot-pub>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Talbot, Louis T., "Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews - Lesson 1" (1945). *Talbot Publications*. 114.
<https://digitalcommons.biola.edu/talbot-pub/114>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Louis T. Talbot Archive at Digital Commons @ Biola. It has been accepted for inclusion in Talbot Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Biola. For more information, please contact university.archives@biola.edu.

Studies in the
EPISTLE to the
HEBREWS



LOUIS T. TALBOT

Pastor, Church of the Open Door
President, The Bible Institute of Los Angeles
558 South Hope Street
Los Angeles, California

Studies in the
EPISTLE to the
HEBREWS



LOUIS T. TABBOT
The Holy Spirit of the Open Door
The Holy Spirit of the Open Door
The Holy Spirit of the Open Door
The Holy Spirit of the Open Door

LESSON I

GOD HATH SPOKEN!

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, bath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. . .”

With these majestic words the Epistle to the Hebrews opens. “God . . . hath . . . spoken!” “God . . . hath . . . spoken . . . by his Son;” He, who “in the beginning was the Word,” He of whom the written Word of God speaks, tells a lost and sinning world the message of salvation, the message of the eternal, living Lord. Do you want to know what God is telling you, my friend? Then listen to His beloved Son; look at His glorious Person; behold His finished work of redemption on Calvary’s Cross; consider His present ministry of intercession for His own before the throne of grace. Do this, and you will hear God’s voice as He has spoken in His Son. Do this; and you will grasp the meaning of the Epistle to the Hebrews, written many centuries ago, yet still as fresh and powerful and profound as it was when it first came from the pen of the inspired writer. Yes; “God . . . hath . . . spoken . . . in his Son!”

THE AUTHOR OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

The inspired writer, used by the Holy Spirit to record this epistle, was the Apostle Paul. Though some would deny the Pauline authorship, yet we believe that a careful study of these sacred pages proves conclusively that the Apostle to the Gentiles was used to write these words of teaching and encouragement and warning to His own people, Israel.

To be sure, all the other letters of Paul bear his name; but in writing this Epistle to the Hebrews he was divinely guided to omit the reference to the human authorship. Indeed, the very omissions of Scripture, as well as the content, prove that the Holy Spirit was the real Author of all the Word of God. For example, when Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, he began by saying,

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God. . ." (Rom. 1:1).

When he wrote to the Corinthian Christians, he said,

"Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God. . ." (I Cor. 1:1).

Likewise, all thirteen of Paul's epistles, from Romans to Philemon inclusive, bear his name in the opening words. It seems as though God prompted him to state the human authorship of all these, in order that the churches might know that these letters bore the stamp of apostolic authority. Yet, when we turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find, not only that Paul's name is missing, but also that the very first word is "God." Then why this striking variation from the general rule? Two facts explain the answer to this question:

1. *Christ is "the Apostle and High Priest of Our Confession"* (Heb. 3:1, R. V.). Man is out of sight; the human author exalts the crucified and risen Lord Jesus as in few books of the Bible. The human apostle is insignificant; the divine "Apostle," even Jesus, is preeminent! The human apostle was "one sent" by God to bear witness to our Lord's resurrection; the divine Apostle was the One sent from God to speak forth the message of grace and forgiving love to a sinning world. When the disciples asked God for guidance in selecting an apostle to take the place of Judas, they stated the qualifications of an apostle; he had to see the risen Lord Jesus. (See Acts 1:15-26.) Paul later saw the risen Lord on the road to Damascus, "as one born out of due time." (I Cor. 15:8). These apostles were "ones sent" to testify to the fact that they had seen the risen Christ; and that, therefore, the message of His salvation which they preached was authentic and authoritative and divine. That is why it was important that the Gospels and epistles should be known as the work of the inspired apostles, in order that Christians might know that they were penned by men who had the message directly from the Lord Jesus Himself.

Yet when the Holy Spirit wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, He purposely omitted all human authorship, and referred to Christ as the "Apostle"—the "One sent" down from the Father. Thus Christ was given the preeminence.

This is the only time in all the Word of God that our Lord is called by this name—"Apostle."

2. *Paul Was Repudiated by Many in Israel.* This was his only epistle to Jewish Christians; all of his other letters were written to Gentile churches or to individual men, such as Timothy, Titus and Philemon. He was very eager that the Hebrews should receive his message; and knowing that his brethren after the flesh were greatly prejudiced against him, he kept himself in the background, omitting all reference to himself. As he wrote this letter, he had in mind not only the Hebrew Christians, but also many Hebrews who were intellectually convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was Israel's Messiah, yet who had not taken Him as a Personal Savior and Lord. The latter, especially, might have been less willing to heed the message of the epistle if they had known Paul wrote it; therefore, he very wisely—because divinely guided—did not mention his name in connection with the book.

The prejudice and hatred of his own nation against him must have caused Paul much anguish of heart, and he yearned after Israel with all the fervor of brotherly love. The rulers of the nation feared Paul's attitude toward their ancient ritualism. Because Paul proclaimed Christ's message, that He had come to fulfil the Law of Moses, and to usher in the "day of grace," he was perhaps the most hated of his nation, as the summary of his sufferings at their hands indicates. (See II Cor. 11:24-27.)

Paul tried to overcome this opposition in many ways. For instance, upon the occasion of his last visit to Jerusalem, he let James persuade him to pay for the sacrificial offerings of certain Jewish brethren about to be released from the Nazarite vow. But God would not permit him to do this; for it would have been a virtual denial of the sufficiency of the one sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross. Thus it was that the Spirit of God permitted insurrection against Paul, and saved him from this apparent inconsistency. (See Acts 21:18-32.) It was not that Paul himself doubted the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice! Far from it! Yet he hoped, by this concession, to prove to his Hebrew friends that he did not despise the Law of Moses. His purpose was good; yet it seems that

God overruled, lest he appear to limit the efficacy of the one sacrifice of the Lamb of God, once for all.

Since many Israelites were bitterly prejudiced against Paul, it was the part of wisdom that his name should not be linked with the one epistle, above all other New Testament books, which proves the superiority of Christianity over Judaism—"the Jews' religion." Accordingly when the Holy Spirit led Paul to write, saying that the Lord Jesus Christ is the answer to all the Jewish sacrifices, to all the slain lambs, to all the Levitical offerings of the Old Testament, to all the ritualism of the tabernacle in the wilderness and the beautiful temple worship; when the Holy Spirit led Paul to prove that Christ is the "Great High Priest," of whom Aaron and his sons were but a type; and that the beautiful garments of Aaron, with the breastplate, the onyx stones, and the golden bells foreshadowed the glories of the Lord's Person and work—when the Holy Spirit led Paul to write these majestic truths, He led Paul also to say nothing about himself. Then Christ received all the glory; and none would cast the epistle aside merely because a despised Jewish Christian had penned its lines.

The result is that the Epistle to the Hebrews opens with the all-powerful name—"God." Just as Genesis begins with the majestic phrase, "In the beginning God . . ."; just as the Gospel according to John opens with equally significant majesty, "In the beginning was the Word . . ."; just so the Epistle to the Hebrews strikes at the very heart of the message it bears by stating, "God . . . hath . . . spoken . . . in his Son" (R. V.).

God spoke in His beloved Son, the living Word of the eternal God. And God spoke through the Holy Spirit in guiding Paul to write these sacred pages to his fellow-Hebrews. Shall we today not learn a practical lesson from Paul's humility? If we can further our testimony for Christ by eliminating ourselves, then let us do so for the glory of God and for the salvation of the lost. What this world needs is not to see you or me, but to see Jesus—crucified, risen, interceding, coming again in glory! This old world can get along without knowing what you or I have done; but souls can not be saved without accepting the finished work of

Christ on the cross. We are useful to Him only as we are His mouthpieces, His witnesses to a world that needs to know the only Savior.

EVIDENCES OF THE PAULINE AUTHORSHIP

Those who deny that God used Paul to write the Epistle to the Hebrews would thereby deny the apostolic authority of the book. But the honest seeker after the truth of the matter needs only to read the epistle itself, remembering the words of Peter concerning it, and remembering Paul's own experiences, to be convinced that it was Paul who penned these pages, by the authority of divine inspiration. Let us outline some of the overwhelming proof of the Pauline authorship:

1. There is no substantial evidence that anyone other than Paul wrote it.
2. There is no reason to suppose that Paul did not write it.
3. The doctrine of the epistle parallels that of the other epistles of Paul.
4. Some peculiarities of style are Pauline.
5. The personal allusions are Pauline. For example, the writer was a prisoner, and spoke of his "bonds":
"Ye had compassion of me in my bonds" (Heb. 10:34).
6. The writer was in Italy, and may well have been in prison at the time he penned the epistle; of course, we know that Paul was a prisoner in Rome. The author of this epistle wrote, saying,
"They of Italy salute you" (Heb. 13:24).
7. The writer was well acquainted with Timothy, as Heb. 13:23 states,
"Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you."
8. The Greek fathers of the church, without exception, ascribed the epistle to Paul.
9. The epistle bears the mark of apostolic authority.

10. II Peter 3:15 is convincing; for Peter was writing to Christian Jews of the dispersion; and no other epistle answers to his statement:

“. . . the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you.”

Now Peter was “a minister to the circumcision,” and his letters were written to the “sojourners of the dispersion” (I Peter 1:1, R.V.)—Jewish Christians scattered abroad. We have seen that all of Paul’s other epistles were written to churches composed chiefly of Gentiles, or to individual Christians. The Epistle to the Hebrews is the only one Peter could have had in mind when he wrote to his fellow-Hebrew-Christians, saying that their “beloved brother Paul” had also written them.

Having before him all this evidence of the Pauline authorship, the child of God remembers also that the Holy Spirit would not have permitted the Epistle to the Hebrews to be included in the New Testament if He Himself had not prompted the human author to write every single word. The divine inspiration of “all scripture” is beyond question; and the man of faith accepts it as such.

THE PERSON ADDRESSED

The average Christian today, ignorant of the profound teaching of this wonderful book, is likely to overlook the fact that the persons addressed in this epistle were living in the day when the Jewish temple was still standing, and when the ritualism of Judaism was being adhered to by those who rejected the Lord Jesus as their Messiah. Heb. 10:11 makes this fact clear:

“Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins . . .”

“Every priest standeth”—present, progressive tense—the writer says. In other words, the temple in Jerusalem was not destroyed until 70 A. D., by the Roman emperor, Titus;

therefore, this epistle was written before that date, and unbelieving Jews were still offering the daily sacrifice, still observing the ceremonial law of Judaism. All this was an empty mockery, because the Lamb of God had come! He had offered Himself once for all, and had fulfilled all the Old Testament shadows and types set forth in the Law of Moses. But those Jews who cast the Lord out of the world at the point of a spear continued to observe the ceremonial law, even until the temple was destroyed and the nation finally scattered throughout the world. If we bear in mind this condition of the nation as a whole, we shall better understand the message of the Epistle to the Hebrews. If not, then we shall miss the very heart of the truth it graphically presents.

Because the persons addressed were Hebrews, and because they accepted the Old Testament as the very Word of God, that same Old Testament is quoted more often in this epistle than in any other portion of the Old Testament. Indeed, we cannot comprehend the deep and beautiful doctrine it sets forth concerning the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus unless we know something of the significance of the Levitical offerings, the Jewish tabernacle, the qualifications and duties of the high priest in Israel—all that pertains to the Law of Moses. I am glad that, in our former radio Bible studies, we have devoted much time to these often-neglected portions of the Old Testament; for only in the light of some knowledge of these “shadows of good things to come” in Christ Jesus can we understand what the Holy Spirit is saying concerning our Lord in the epistle before us in this present study. And let us keep uppermost in our minds that the reason the Holy Spirit quotes so frequently from the Old Testament in the Epistle to the Hebrews is that He is proving that the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New, that Moses and the prophets pointed the fathers of the nation of Israel on to the Christ of the cross.

THE TWO-FOLD PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE

Repeated personal appeals in the epistle bear witness to the fact that the Holy Spirit had in mind a two-fold purpose in sending this message to the Hebrews:

1. To establish the Hebrew Christians in the "faith once for all delivered unto the saints."

2. To warn those who were enlightened but not regenerated of the danger of returning to Judaism.

The lot of a Hebrew Christian has always been a bitter one; and in the days of the early church it was a particularly hard one. He was persecuted by the unbelieving Jews; often his property was confiscated; his very life was in danger. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that those who were intellectually convinced that Jesus was their Messiah, yet who had not been born again by faith in His work on Calvary, were in danger of returning to Judaism. This fact accounts for the repeated warnings that occur throughout the epistle. It is as though the Holy Spirit were teaching, exhorting, warning, using every possible approach to the heart of those who read; beseeching them all to be "reconciled to God" by accepting His Son as their Messiah and Lord and great High Priest.

My Gentile friends, you and I need to remember that for some years the early church consisted only of Jewish believers. On the Day of Pentecost, when "about three thousand souls" were saved and the church had its beginning, those souls were "Jews . . . out of every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5, 41). There was not a Gentile in that number; no Gentile would have been allowed in the Jewish temple! Again, we read that, following the first persecution of the church, "about five thousand" believed in Jesus (Acts 4:4); and all of these were Jews. It was not until some seven or eight years after Pentecost that God showed Peter, by special revelation, that he should go to the house of a Gentile; and in the home of Cornelius the Holy Spirit first came upon the Gentiles. (See Acts 10:1-11:18.)

All of those first believers—Hebrews—needed to be instructed in the things of Christ. All of them revered and honored Moses and the prophets. And they would be able better to thank God for the glorious Person and the mighty work of the Lord Jesus as they were taught the typical significance of the Old Testament priesthood and ritual. In Heb. 10:1 the Holy spirit told them plainly that "the law" of

Moses was but "a shadow of good things to come" in Christ Jesus. Only as we continue our study in this epistle shall we begin to understand just how wonderful it must have seemed to those Hebrew Christians! Then only shall we realize in some measure why we were glad to discontinue a ritual that their forefathers had observed for some fifteen hundred years—all for Christ's sake!

But there were also many Hebrews living in that day who were enlightened concerning the Person and work of Christ, yet not regenerated. Such as these were sure to return to Judaism unless they trusted in Christ as a personal Saviour. The persecutions were bitter; the pressure brought to bear upon them by loved ones and national leaders was not easy to withstand. It cost something to be a Christian in those days! Caesar was throwing believers in Jesus to the lions; or forcing them to fight with gladiators. Even Gentle Christians suffered martyrdom, unspeakable torture of mind and body. But for a Jew to confess Christ meant even greater persecution. Had not Stephen been stoned to death by the very religious leaders of his nation?

That is why Paul, guided by the Spirit of God, so earnestly besought his fellow-Hebrews to confess Christ openly, not continuing in the empty ritualism of Judaism, which denied the only Saviour of sinners—Jew or Gentile. He was seeking to prove to them the sufficiency of the finished work of Christ, warning them also of the dangers of apostasy and unbelief. He was teaching them that, once a man comes to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, he is forever justified by faith, and faith alone. He was writing to show that, if they were born again, they would not go back to the high priest of Judaism with their lambs to offer upon the altar in the temple in Jerusalem. Rather, they would look to "the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." They would know Him as their Great High Priest; His one sacrifice of Himself, as the sufficient offering upon the altar which is Calvary's Cross—"once for all"! They would not return to a ritual which had fulfilled its purpose, that of typifying the one sufficient Priest and the one sufficient Sacrifice!

We talk today of persecution. Sometimes I receive letters from the radio audience telling of persecution from friends or loved ones. There are, indeed, many in the world today facing bitter persecution for Christ's sake. I am thinking of Pastor Martin Niemoeller and many others who have been languishing in dirty dungeons and horrible concentration camps of Europe, simply because they refused to deny the Lord who bought them, and took their stand against infidel governments. But surely, my friends, we in America know little about persecution for Christ's sake! Possibly some Christians in prison camps today are experiencing many of the bitter things endured by the early Jewish Christians for the Lord Jesus. I do not know. But I do know that the early Hebrew Christians did have to suffer for their faith.

That is why the weapon employed by the enemies of the cross of Christ was so subtle; it was the crafty weapon of argument. The persecutors tried to show those who were intellectually convinced that Jesus was their Messiah that they were following a false Christ. They compared the teachings of the lowly, despised Nazarene to the glories of the Old Testament. Had the Law of Moses not been given "at the hand of angels"? Had God not talked with Moses "face to face"? Why follow a poor Galilean Carpenter? Why heed the teachings of the Peasant of despised Nazareth? Then they said, "You have no priest, no altar, no sacrifices, no impressive ceremony!"

Such arguments evidently had a tremendous effect upon some. But the inspired writer, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, captured the guns of the enemy, and turned them upon the foe. By the very same argument concerning the priest and the temple and the sacrifice, he proved beyond controversy that Christ Jesus had come, not to destroy the Law of Moses, but to fulfill it!

THE THEME OF THE EPISTLE

Thus we might state the theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews by saying that Christ fulfilled the "shadows of good things to come," foretold by the law and the prophets. We might state it by saying that Christianity is better than Juda-

ism as seen in its Founder, Christ. The key words are "better than"; and throughout the epistle Paul is comparing Christ to the things of Judaism. He proves that Christ is "better than" the prophets, better than the angels, better than Moses, better than Joshua, better than Aaron—better than the very best that Judaism had to offer. Let us outline just here the many times these words "better than" occur in the epistle; then we shall study them in detail in their order:

1. The Son of God is "so much better than the angels" (1:4).
2. "Better things" than apostasy are accredited to the true believers in Jesus (6:9).
3. "The less is blessed of the better" (7:7). We shall see later in our study that here the apostle is saying that, as Melchizedek is better than Abraham, even so Christ, a Priest "after the order of Melchizedek," is "better than" the Aaronic priests, who were descendants of Abraham.
4. "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did" (7:18).
5. "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant" (7:22, R.V.).
6. "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (8:6).
7. "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect (i. e., "better") tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building. . ." (9:11).
8. ". . . the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (9:23).
9. "In heaven ye have a better and an enduring substance" (10:34).
10. ". . . now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly" (11:16).
11. ". . . a better resurrection" (11:35).
12. ". . . God having provided some better thing for us . . ." (11:40).

13. “. . . Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (12:24).

We cannot, in this introductory lesson, discuss each of these comparisons in detail; we can not even enter upon a discussion of them at all. That we hope to do as we study the epistle chapter by chapter and verse by verse. But let us take just a moment to consider the meaning of the last of these quotations; it touches the very heart of the epistle. There God says that the blood of Jesus “speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Why! In the first place, Abel, “a keeper of the sheep,” brought a little lamb, “the firstling of his flock.” Abel brought his offering “by faith” in the coming of Jesus, “the Lamb of God” who was to die for his sins. There can be no question that the blood of the Son of God was “better than” the blood of the animal sacrifice! Abel’s offering was but a type of Christ’s offering of Himself—“once for all”!

Side by side with the words “better than” we find running throughout the epistle the reassuring words, “we have.” At least seven times this expression speaks to us of our heritage in Christ:

1. “We have a great high priest . . . Jesus the Son of God” (4:14; cf. 8-1; 10:21).
2. “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are apart from sin” (4:15, R.V.). He is our sympathetic Priest!
3. “. . . which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast . . .” (6:19).
4. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near (10:19-22).
5. “We have an altar”; i.e., the cross of Jesus, where the Sacrifice was slain (13:10-13).

These are only a few of the precious possessions which are ours in Christ! And how reassuring such words were to the persecuted Hebrew Christians, to whom this epistle was addressed! Their enemies were trying to persuade them that

they had lost everything by accepting Christ, that they had no high priest, no altar, no sacrifice. How significant that Paul should tell them, with the voice of authority from God’s own Holy Spirit, that they had a better High Priest than all of Judaism ever had offered or ever could offer; that they had a better altar than that upon which the animal sacrifices were slain, even the cross of Jesus; that in Him they had the only perfect and sufficient Sacrifice, provided by God Himself, planned from all eternity! Moreover, he told these Hebrews that they could enter in the Holiest of all, even heaven itself, because the “way into the holiest” had been forever opened by the rent veil, eloquent symbol of the broken body of the Lord Jesus. By constantly referring to the Old Testament for every point he proves, the apostle gives God’s Word as the supreme authority for the “better hope” he offers by the grace of God. What a theme! And what a profound epistle! What a picture it represents of the Person and work of our Lord!

THE CHIEF POINT OF THE EPISTLE— CHRIST, OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

From our study thus far even the casual listener has found that the “chief point” of the epistle; that is, its central theme, is the High Priestly work of Christ. This fact is definitely stated in Heb. 8:1, which we quote here from the Revised Version:

“Now in the things which we are saying (or ‘to sum up what we are saying,’ margin) the chief point is this: We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.”

Before our next broadcast, I hope every listener will take time to read the entire epistle at one reading, keeping this central theme in mind. My friends, even though you may not understand it all as you read, read on to get the broad, outline view of the whole letter. There are only thirteen chapters; and although they are very deep and very profound, yet the Holy Spirit will teach you, and you will find your soul flooded with light from Him who alone can “take

the things of Christ, and show them unto you." Perhaps a simple outline of the entire epistle will help you as you read. There is only one logical way to divide the book; the Holy Spirit has done that with crystal-clear definiteness. Different readers may choose to give different phraseology to the divisions and their sub-topics: but there is only one, God-given outline; and it falls into three main parts:

I. Introduction to the "Chief Point," 1:1-4:16.

II. "The Chief Point"—"We have such a high priest" (as the one described in the opening chapters), 5:1-10:18.

III. Encouragement, Exhortation, Warning, and Conclusion, 10:19-13:25.

As we have already noted, the Holy Spirit often breaks into the main theme of the epistle to warn against apostasy, or to encourage the faltering, persecuted Christian. These warnings we shall mention a bit later in this lesson. But just here, not considering them, let us look at these three main divisions of the book in more detail, as a guide to our comprehensive reading. The four introductory chapters fall logically into two parts: (1) Christ is better than the prophets and better than the angels, chapters one and two; (2) Christ is better than Moses and Joshua, chapters three and four.

Over chapter one we might write the words, "Jesus, the Son of God"; over chapter two, "Jesus, the Son of Man." Chapter one proves His eternal deity; chapter two, His perfect humanity. And both His deity and His humanity are proved by a series of quotations from the Hebrews' own Old Testament! It is a marvelous study—this division of the book which lays the foundation for what is to follow! In order to be a perfect High Priest, our Lord had to die, to offer a sacrifice for sin. And in order to be a sinless Sacrifice, He had to be God. Now God can not die; but Jesus, the Son of God, became Man, in order to die for us. Thus the wisest of Teachers, even the Holy Spirit, in laying the foundation for the discussion of the priestly work of our Lord, proved that He was both God and Man. No mere man could have conceived such a message—or such a salvation—or such a Savior!

Chapters three and four are one long parenthesis in the main development of the theme. It seems as though, in 3:1, the Holy Spirit intended to begin the discussion of the "chief point" of the epistle; that is, the priestly work of Christ, but turned aside to instruct and warn and encourage yet more, before continuing the subject in hand. He bade his readers "consider the Apostle and High Priest . . . Christ Jesus"; then he paused to show that He is "better than" Moses and "better than" Joshua. (Note that the word "Jesus" in 4:8 should be translated "Joshua." Indeed, "Joshua" is the Hebrew word for "Jesus"; and the name means "Saviour" or "Deliverer.")

Chapters 5:1-10:18, inclusive, develop the "chief point"; and prove that Christ is a "better" High Priest than Aaron—the very best that Judaism could offer! The Person and work of our Lord are set forth in a matchless way, in this main portion of the epistle. And, again, searching are the warnings, and reassuring the encouragements that intersperse this division of the book.

The last division of the epistle, beginning with 10:19, is hortatory, comforting, searching. Doubtless we shall spend many hours studying together its pages, if the Lord tarries, and permits us to continue our lessons in this wonderful book. And as we consider it, chapter by chapter, and verse by verse, we shall see yet other outline helps which will guide us in our reading, and help us in our spiritual understanding of the message. But even this brief outline which we have set before us today suggests a mine of wealth and a paradise of glory!

Before you read the epistle, I know what many will ask concerning the repeated warnings against apostasy set forth in these pages. I have before me on my desk many questions concerning the eternal security of the believer, most of which express doubts based upon texts from the Epistle to the Hebrews. Therefore, let me say before you begin to read, that such questions and such doubts are founded upon the *supposed* possibility that a born-again child of God can "fall away" and be eternally lost. I say "supposed possibility" advisedly; for the Bible teaches no such doctrine. And the Epistle to the Hebrews is in the Bible. Moreover, it gives some of the strongest passages on the eternal security of the believer that are to be found in all the Word of God. That Word does

not contradict itself! We promise to consider all of these warnings prayerfully and carefully, as we come to them in the text; and we know that the Spirit of God will make the truth known to us. But just here, to present the key to these difficult passages, let me say that the fears of those who doubt are based upon verses which apply, not to born-again children of God, but to those who had been enlightened yet not regenerated. This rule never fails, throughout the epistle; therefore, let us note this fact as we read.

For illustration, let us look at just one verse, in 10:26,

"If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."

Here Paul was addressing those who, though convinced that Jesus was their Messiah, yet were going back to the temple to offer a little lamb. They were not born again; they preferred the recognition of the rulers of the Jews to reproach and persecution for Christ's sake. One dear child of God wrote me, saying: "Mr Talbot, that text has taken all the joy out of my life, because I know that from time to time I have sinned wilfully, and that text says there is no more offering for sin." But, my friends, God is speaking here of the sin of refusing the one sacrifice of our Lord on the cross as an atonement for the soul; he is not talking of the weakness of the flesh. He deals with that in other portions of the Bible. Indeed, there is "no more sacrifice for sins," other than the one perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus! Of Him all the Old Testament sacrifices were but shadows of types! And it was because the Holy Spirit loved Israel that He faithfully paused after each topic, after each argument, to warn against going back to Judaism. As we consider each of these warnings in the light of its context, all difficulty disappears; and reassuring conviction of the eternal security of the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ floods the soul.

My friends, we are going to have a wonderful time in this study. I believe that there is no book in the New Testament that will warm your heart and show you what a wonderful Christ we have more than does the Epistle to the Hebrews.

He is the answer to every problem. He alone can make you strong to withstand temptation. Then when you are in the office, where you hear men take the name of Jesus in vain, you will not be ashamed to give a testimony for Him. "Turn your eyes upon Jesus"—even though "the things of earth" include persecution, fierce persecution.

*"Turn your eyes upon Jesus;
Look full in His wonderful face;
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace."*

As we meditate upon the wonders of this epistle, God will fill the horizon of our vision with the glory of the Lord Jesus, with the sufficiency of His work on Calvary—the answer to all the types and shadows of all the Old Testament. With such a vision flooding our souls, we shall want to sing in the words of Charles Wesley:

*"Arise, my soul, arise!
Shake off thy guilty fears!
The bleeding Sacrifice
In my behalf appears;
Before the throne my Surety stands;
My name is written on His hands."*

*"Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary.
They pour effectual prayers;
They strongly plead for me.
'Forgive him, oh, forgive,' they cry,
'Nor let that ransomed sinner die!'"*

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...