

HEBREWS

Alan Scholes wrote, *"I had often heard my religious friends say, 'Jesus died for our sins' or 'Jesus died to save the world.'...it was inconceivable to me that anything done by one man nearly 2,000 years ago could have a direct effect on how we live in the 20th century. I certainly couldn't see how Jesus' death, no matter how noble or unselfish, could make up for all the evil in the world."*

Skeptics gag at the notion of God becoming man -- as Jesus did -- so that we might live with God. Often they cite the hypocritical, even destructive conduct of some who call themselves Christians.

Seattle attorney Skip Li says, *"If you must judge (Jesus) by others, judge Him,"* as Umberto Eco said, *"by the conduct of saints, not fools."*

... saints like Mother Teresa

... like William Wilberforce whose life was rewarded when slavery was abolished in the British Colonies

... like the Clapham sect, Wilberforce's friends, who helped abolish child labor, reform prisons and build hospitals for the poor

... like those who founded Harvard, Yale, Princeton and others because they believed that knowing God should involve scholarship

... like Cassie Bernall, the valiant Columbine H.S. student who took a fatal bullet because she openly admitted her faith in God.

Said Seattle attorney Skip Li, *"To judge Christ by the conduct of fools is like saying you don't like Mozart because the kid next door practicing his sonatas makes mistakes all the time. Better to judge Mozart by listening to Vladimir Horowitz."*

THE BIBLE ON FAST FORWARD

The Bible is divided into the Old (OT) and New (NT) Testaments, spanning 1,600 years of writing time. Forty or so authors, inspired by God, wrote it, using three languages.

In Genesis the Bible's first 11 chapters deal with all mankind. In chapter 12 God appoints a man named

Abram, living in what's now Iraq, to become father of the Jews, God's special people, Israel.

From Genesis 12 through all 39 books of the OT, on through the first four NT books (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), Jewish people are the Bible's key cast of characters.

In THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, the fifth book of the NT, a major shift occurs after God's only Son, Jesus Christ, returns to heaven. Christ's mentees spread the news that He was indeed the Jews' long-awaited Messiah. Then God chooses Paul to take His message of forgiveness to the *non*-Jewish world.

In his 13 NT "letters" Paul says God equally loves all of us -- Jew/Gentile, male/female, rich/poor, and He sent His Son Jesus to earth to die to buy our ticket into God's forever family called "the Church," or "the body of Christ." Paul's *not* referring to any one church but to *all* who come to Jesus in repentance and faith, accepting His free gift of forgiveness, opting to live for Him. The "Church" will be here until Jesus returns at the "Rapture" to take with Him all, living and dead, who've come to Him in faith.

Next is the 7-year "Tribulation" when, says the OT prophet Daniel, God will resume dealing with the nation Israel instead of with "the Church." At the end of these seven epic years, during which Antichrist is outed, comes Armageddon, the war-to-end-all-wars. Christ returns to earth, wins that war, sits on the throne in The new Jerusalem, ruling His earthly kingdom for 1,000 years. Following this "Millennium" is His *eternal* kingdom.

David Letterman asked Larry King, "If you could interview any person from history, who'd it be?" King replied, "Jesus Christ. ... my first question would be 'Were you really born of a virgin?' The answer would define history." If God had *not* become man, died and resurrected, there's *nothing* to live for. Death's a dead end, with no hope of eternal life. Either Christ is "the *Hope* or the *Hoax* of humanity."

**"HE BREWS" IS NOT THE JEOPARDY ANSWER FOR
"WHO IS ADOLPH COORS?"**

In making *Big Business*, the film's producer arranged to shoot at a house slated for demolition. Laurel and Hardy totaled it. Later the homeowner arrived. Woops, they should've been *next door*! The director

had *faith* in his decision, but his faith wasn't truth-based.

Hebrews' key verse is the first verse of chapter 11: "*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*" The late Ray Stedman wrote, "Faith is not a matter of being sure of all the factual, logical, footnoted, photographed, notarized evidence our senses can confirm. It's being certain of what we do *not* see."

Jews began to revolt against Rome in A.D. 66. Four years later Titus' Roman army, 30,000 strong, arrived in Jerusalem to face 24,000 Jewish soldiers. Five months later the Italians razed the walls, torched the Temple and leveled the city. Moving south, the Romans killed a million Jews, taking 95,000 captive. In AD 326 Jerusalem's integrity was restored under Constantine, the Rome's first Christian emperor. In A.D. 637 it fell to Mohammedans and until 1917, except for 100 years during the Crusades, remained Muslim.

As the only NT book whose authorship remains a mystery, Hebrews was written about 66 A.D. to Jews who'd turned from

Judaism to Christ. But their faith in Christ was teetering in the face of fierce persecution. And they mourned that by accepting Christ, they had given up their Jewishness. Hebrews pleads with them to not slip back into Judaism's legalistic thickets.

The author produces big-name witnesses to prove that Christ is greater than anyone the Jewish Christians had considered more important than Jesus -- including Moses, angels, prophets et al.

Chapters 1 and 2 refer to Christ as our great High Priest -- fully God, fully man. Because He lived as a man, He understands our weaknesses and temptations. He lived here without sin, becoming the perfect Sacrifice who gave His life so that you and I wouldn't have to spend eternity in a place the Bible calls hell.

Let's read chapters 1 and 2.

"1 Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors

through the prophets.² And now in these final days, He has spoken to us through His Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son He created the universe.³ The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and He sustains everything by the mighty power of His command. When He had cleansed us from our sins, He sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.⁴ This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave Him is greater than their names.

"⁵ For God never said to any angel what He said to Jesus, 'You are My Son. Today I have become your Father.' God also said, 'I will be His Father, and He will be My Son.'⁶ And when He brought His supreme Son into the world, God said, 'Let all of God's angels worship Him.'⁷ Regarding the angels, He says, 'He sends His angels like the winds, His servants like flames of fire.'⁸ But to the Son He says, 'Your throne,

O God, endures forever and ever. You rule with a scepter of justice. ⁹ You love justice and hate evil. Therefore, O God, your God has anointed you, pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else.'

"¹⁰ He also says to the Son, 'In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundation of the earth and made the heavens with Your hands. ¹¹ They will perish, but You remain forever. They will wear out like old clothing. ¹² You will fold them up like a cloak and discard them like old clothing. But You are always the same; You will live forever.'

"¹³ And God never said to any of the angels, 'Sit in the place of honor at My right hand until I humble Your enemies, making them a footstool under Your feet. ¹⁴ Therefore, angels are only servants—spirits sent to care for people who will inherit salvation.

*"² So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it. ² For the message God delivered through angels has always stood firm, and every violation of the law and every act of disobedience was punished. ³ So **what makes us think we can escape if we ignore this great salvation that was first announced by the Lord Jesus Himself and then delivered to us by those who heard Him***

speak? ⁴ And God confirmed the message by giving signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit whenever He chose.

⁵ And furthermore, it is not angels who will control the future world we are talking about. ⁶ For in one place the Scriptures say, 'What are mere mortals that you should think about them, or a Son of Man that you should care for Him?' ⁷ Yet for a little while You made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. ⁸ You gave them authority over all things.'

"When it says 'all things,' it means nothing is left out. But we have not yet seen all things put under their authority. ⁹ What we do see is Jesus, who for a little while was given a position "a little lower than the angels because He suffered death for us, He is now "crowned with glory and honor." Yes, by God's grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone. ¹⁰ God, for whom and through whom everything was made, chose to bring many children into glory. And it was only right that He should make Jesus, through His suffering, a perfect Leader, fit to bring them into their salvation.

¹¹ So now Jesus and the ones He makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them His brothers and sisters. ¹² For He said to God, "I

will proclaim Your name to My brothers and sisters. I will praise You among Your assembled people.”¹³ He also said, “I will put My trust in Him,” that is, “I and the children God has given Me.”

“¹⁴ Because God’s children are human beings, made of flesh and blood, the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could He die, and only by dying could He break the power of the devil who had the power of death. ¹⁵ Only in this way could He set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.

“¹⁶ We know the Son did not come to help angels; He came to help the descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷ So, it was necessary for Him to be made in every respect like us, His brothers and sisters, so He could be our merciful, faithful High Priest before God. Then He could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people’s sins. ¹⁸ Since He’s gone through suffering and testing, He’s able to help us when we’re tested.”

Chapter 4 describes the dynamic power of the Bible, God’s love letter to man -- the divine X-ray that searches the hidden places of our hearts and lives, unveiling our real motives, measuring them by the straightedge of God’s Truth. We see Christ’s role as

our great High Priest. What does that mean? In *What The Bible Is All About* Henrietta Mears writes:

"We are taught very plainly in the Word that...no sinner can approach God. ... In the OT a representative, the High Priest whom God appointed, could come into God's presence only once a year after sacrifice for the people's sins had been made. He had to offer the blood of calves and goats not only for the sins of the people but for his own sins, for he too was a sinner. He then would go into the Holy Place, then on beyond the veil into the Most Holy Place where the Ark of the Covenant rested. Here was the mercy seat, and here God met man through the mediator, the High Priest.

"How can we approach God today? Christ has made that possible. *He's our High Priest, our representative before the Father. He entered the heavenly sanctuary, God's presence, bearing the blood of His own sacrifice to cleanse us from our sins and give to us eternal salvation. His blood had to be shed for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. But **Christ gave Himself to God for our sins as one sacrifice for all time, and then sat down in the place of highest honor at God's right hand. 'It is finished,' He said on the cross. All His work of redemption had been completed; hence we see Him***

sitting. Our High Priest is at the right hand of the Father at this minute, making intercession for you and for me. He has gone to appear now before God as our Friend. This is why **we can boldly enter God's presence through the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way.**"

Let's read ch. 9.

"**1**The first promise had rules for the priests' service. It also had a holy place on earth. **2**A tent was set up. The first part of this tent was called the holy place. The lamp stand, the table, and the bread of the presence were in this part of the tent. **3**Behind the second curtain was the part of the tent called the most holy place. **4**It contained the gold incense burner and the ark of the Lord's promise. The ark was completely covered with gold. In the ark were the gold jar filled with manna, Aaron's staff that had blossomed, and the tablets on which the promise was written. **5**Above the ark were the angels of glory [with their wings] overshadowing the throne of mercy.

6That's how these two parts of the tent were set up. The priests always went into the first part of the tent to perform their duties. **7**But only the chief priest went into the second part of the tent. Once a year he entered and

brought blood that he offered for himself and for the things that the people did wrong unintentionally. **8**The Holy Spirit used this to show that the way into the most holy place was not open while the tent was still in use. **9**The first part of the tent is an example for the present time. The gifts and sacrifices that were brought there could not give the worshiper a clear conscience. **10**These gifts and sacrifices were meant to be food, drink, and items used in various purification ceremonies. These ceremonies were required for the body until God would establish a new way of doing things.

11But Christ came as a chief priest of the good things that are now here. Christ went through a better, more perfect tent that was not made by human hands and that is not part of this created world. **12**He used His own blood, not the blood of goats and bulls, for the sacrifice. He went into the most holy place and offered this sacrifice once and for all to free us forever. **13**The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of cows sprinkled on unclean people made their bodies holy and clean. **14**The blood of Christ, who had no defect, does even more. Through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself to God and cleansed our consciences from the useless things we had done. Now we can serve the living God.

*"**15**Because Christ offered himself to God, he is able to bring a new promise from God. Through His death He paid the price to set people free from the sins they committed under the first promise. He did this so that **those who are called can be guaranteed an inheritance that will last forever.** **16**In order for a will to take effect, it must be shown that the one who made it has died. **17**A will is used only after a person is dead because it goes into effect only when a person dies. **18**That's why even the first promise was made with blood. **19**As Moses' Teachings tell us, Moses told all the people every commandment. Then he took the blood of calves and goats together with some water, red yarn, and hyssop and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. **20**He said, "Here is the blood that seals the promise God has made to you." **21**In the same way, Moses sprinkled blood on the tent and on everything used in worship. **22**As Moses' Teachings tell us, blood was used to cleanse almost everything, because **if no blood is shed, no sins can be forgiven.***

*"**23**The copies of the things in heaven had to be cleansed by these sacrifices. But the heavenly things themselves had to be cleansed by better sacrifices. **24**Christ didn't go into a holy place made by human hands. He didn't go into a model of the real thing. Instead, He went into heaven to appear in God's presence on our*

behalf. **25**Every year the chief priest went into the holy place to make a sacrifice with blood that isn't his own. However, Christ didn't go into heaven to sacrifice himself again and again. **26**Otherwise, he would have had to suffer many times since the world was created. But now, at the end of the ages, he has appeared once to remove sin by his sacrifice. **27**People die once, and after that they are judged. **28**Likewise, **Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of humanity,** and after that He will appear a second time. This time He will not deal with sin, but He will save those who eagerly wait for Him."

In Chs. 10-13 the author explains how we're to live while having faith in Christ. The secret is seeing Christ as our Source and Reason for living. Faith isn't brain surgery; it's simply trusting God, believing what He says in the Bible, then acting on it. God, through our faith, gives us right standing before Him -- and power for living. '

Especially since Woodstock, it's been cool to doubt the existence of God -- except when we as a nation "need" Him after a high school massacre. God wants us to trust Him *all* the time. FAITH, someone said, is an acronym for **F**orsaking **A**ll, **I** **T**ake **H**im.

In Ch. 10 we see that OT sacrifices were “reminders of sin,” but Christ’s sacrifice “removes our sin,” “once for all time,” forever settling the sin question!

Let’s read ch. 10.

*“**1**Moses' teachings with their yearly cycle of sacrifices are only a shadow of the good things in the future. They aren't an exact likeness of those things. They can never make those who worship perfect. **2**If these sacrifices could have made the worshipers perfect, the sacrifices would have stopped long ago. Those who worship would have been cleansed once and for all. Their consciences would have been free from sin. **3**Instead, this yearly cycle of sacrifices reminded people of their sins. **4**(The blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins.)*

*“**5**For this reason, when Christ came into the world, He said, " 'You did not want sacrifices and offerings, but you prepared a body for Me. **6**You did not approve of burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin.' **7**Then I said, 'I have come! (It is written about Me in the scroll of the book.) I have come to do what You want, my God.'*

*“**8**In this passage Christ first said, "You did not want sacrifices, offerings, burnt offerings, and sacrifices for sin. You did not approve of them." (These are sacrifices that*

Moses' teachings require people to offer.) **9** Christ says, "I have come to do what You want." He did away with sacrifices to establish the obedience that God wants. **10**We have been set apart as holy because Jesus Christ did what God wanted Him to do by sacrificing His body once and for all.

11Every day each priest performed his religious duty. He offered the same type of sacrifice again and again. Yet, these sacrifices could never take away sins. **12**However, this chief priest made one sacrifice for sins, and this sacrifice lasts forever. Then he received the highest position in heaven. **13**Since that time, he has been waiting for his enemies to be made his footstool. **14**With one sacrifice he accomplished the work of setting them apart for God forever. **15**The Holy Spirit tells us the same thing:

16"This is the promise that I will make to them after those days, says the Lord: 'I will put my teachings in their hearts and write them in their minds.' "

17Then he adds, "I will no longer hold their sins and their disobedience against them."

18 **When sins are forgiven, there is no longer any need to sacrifice for sins.**

*"**19**Brothers and sisters, because of the blood of Jesus we can now confidently go into the holy place. **20**Jesus has opened a new and living way for us to go through the curtain. (The curtain is His own body.) **21**We have a superior Priest in charge of God's house. **22**We have been sprinkled [with His blood] to free us from a guilty conscience, and our bodies have been washed with clean water. So we must continue to come [to Him] with a sincere heart and strong faith. **23**We must continue to hold firmly to our declaration of faith. The One who made the promise is faithful. **24**We must also consider how to encourage each other to show love and to do good things. **25**We should not stop gathering together with other believers, as some of you are doing. Instead, we must continue to encourage each other even more as we see the day of the Lord coming.*

*"**26**If we go on sinning after we have learned the truth, no sacrifice can take away our sins. **27**All that is left is a terrifying wait for judgment and a raging fire that will consume God's enemies. **28**If two or three witnesses accused someone of rejecting Moses' Teachings, that person was shown no mercy as he was executed. **29**What do you think a person who shows no respect for the Son of God deserves? That person looks at the blood of the promise (the blood that made Him holy) as no different from other people's blood, and he*

*insults the Spirit that God gave us out of His kindness. He deserves a much worse punishment. **30**We know the God who said, "I alone have the right to take revenge. I will pay back." God also said, "The Lord will judge His people." **31**Falling into the hands of the living God is a terrifying thing.*

***32**Remember the past when you first learned the truth. You endured a lot of hardship and pain. **33**At times you were publicly insulted and mistreated. At times you associated with people who were treated this way. **34**You suffered with prisoners. You were cheerful even though your possessions were stolen, since you know that you have a better and more permanent possession. **35**So don't lose your confidence. It will bring you a great reward. **36**You need endurance so that after you have done what God wants you to do, you can receive what He has promised.*

*"**37**"Yet, the One who is coming will come soon. He will not delay. **38**The person who has God's approval will live by faith. But if he turns back, I will not be pleased with him."**39**We don't belong with those who turn back and are destroyed. Instead, we belong with those who have faith and are saved."*

Next is the Bible's Cooperstown, a group of greats who simply took God at His word. **Let's read the iconic Hebrews 11.**

“**1**Faith assures us of things we expect and convinces us of the existence of things we cannot see. **2****God accepted our ancestors because of their faith.**

“**3**Faith convinces us that God created the world through His word. This means what can be seen was made by something that could not be seen.

“**4**Faith led Abel to offer God a better sacrifice than Cain's sacrifice. Through his faith Abel received God's approval, since God accepted his sacrifices. Through his faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead. **5**Faith enabled Enoch to be taken instead of dying. No one could find him because God had taken him. Scripture states that before Enoch was taken, God was pleased with Him. **6****No one can please God without faith.**

Whoever goes to God must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who seek Him. **7**Faith led Noah to listen when God warned him about the things in the future that he could not see. He obeyed God and built a ship to save his family. Through faith Noah condemned the world and received God's approval that comes through faith.

“**8**Faith led Abraham to obey when God called him to go to a place that he would receive as an inheritance. Abraham left his own country without knowing where he was going. **9**Faith led Abraham to live as a foreigner in the country that God had promised him. He lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob who received the same promise from God. **10**Abraham was waiting for the city that God had designed and built, the city with permanent foundations. **11**Faith enabled Abraham to become a father, even though he was old, and Sarah had never been able to have children. Abraham trusted that God would keep His promise. **12**Abraham was as good as dead. Yet, from this man came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the grains of sand on the seashore.

“**13**All these people died having faith. They didn't receive the things that God had promised them, but they saw these things coming in the distant future and rejoiced. They acknowledged that they were living as strangers with no permanent home on earth. **14**Those who say such things make it clear that they are looking for their own country. **15**If they had been thinking about the country that they had left, they could have found a way to go back. **16**Instead, these men were longing for a better country—a heavenly country. That is why God is

not ashamed to be called their God. He has prepared a city for them.

“[17](#)When God tested Abraham, faith led him to offer his son Isaac. Abraham, the one who received the promises from God, was willing to offer his only son as a sacrifice. [18](#)God had said to him, "Through Isaac your descendants will carry on your name." [19](#)Abraham believed that God could bring Isaac back from the dead. Abraham did receive Isaac back from the dead in a figurative sense.

“[20](#)Faith led Isaac to bless Jacob and Esau. [21](#)While Jacob was dying, faith led him to bless each of Joseph's sons. He leaned on the top of his staff and worshiped God. [22](#)While Joseph was dying, faith led him to speak about the Israelites leaving Egypt and give them instructions about burying his bones.

“[23](#)Faith led Moses' parents to hide him for three months after he was born. They did this because they saw that Moses was a beautiful baby, and they were not afraid to disobey the king's order. [24](#)When Moses grew up, faith led him to refuse to be known as a son of Pharaoh's daughter. [25](#)He chose to suffer with God's people rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a little while. [26](#)He thought that being insulted for Christ would be better than having the treasures of Egypt. He was looking

ahead to his reward. **27**Faith led Moses to leave Egypt without being afraid of the king's anger. Moses didn't give up but continued as if he could actually see the invisible God. **28**Faith led Moses to establish the Passover and spread the blood [on the doorposts] so that the destroying angel would not kill the firstborn sons. **29**Faith caused the people to go through the Red Sea as if it were dry land. The Egyptians also tried this, but they drowned.

“**30**Faith caused the walls of Jericho to fall after the Israelites marched around them for seven days.

“**31**Faith led the prostitute Rahab to welcome the spies as friends. She was not killed with those who refused to obey God.

“**32**What more should I say? I don't have enough time to tell you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. **33**Through faith they conquered kingdoms, did what God approved, and received what God had promised. They shut the mouths of lions, **34**put out raging fires and escaped death. They found strength when they were weak. They were powerful in battle and defeated other armies. **35**Women received their loved ones back from the dead. Other believers were brutally tortured but refused to be released so that they might gain eternal life. **36**Some

*were made fun of and whipped, and some were chained and put in prison. **37**Some were stoned to death, sawed in half, and killed with swords. Some wore the skins of sheep and goats. Some were poor, abused, and mistreated. **38**The world didn't deserve these good people. Some wandered around in deserts and mountains and lived in caves and holes in the ground.*

*“**39**All these people were known for their faith, but none of them received what God had promised. **40****God planned to give us something very special so that we would gain eternal life with them.**”*

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NOW THAT I'M ON JESUS' TEAM, WHAT DO I DO?

Have you decided to accept God's free gift of forgiveness for your sins? Each of us who chooses to put Christ in the driver's seat of our lives needs to learn more about Him. Here are a few ways to do that:

- Many great Bible teachers have recorded their messages. While driving I've listened to countless hours of Chuck Swindoll, Ray Stedman, Larry Wright, Tom Shrader, Robert Morris, Jack Graham, Graham Cooke, Bill Johnson and many more.

- You can read the Bible by yourself; then, if you like, you and I can get together to talk about what you've read.
- If you don't already, you could begin attending a Christ-centered church where the Bible is faithfully taught.
WARNING: there are as many churches that *don't* do that as churches that *do*. If you'll trust me, I'll try to come up with a list of good ones near you.
- There are some really good, small Bible study groups around town with whom you can meet weekly, monthly, etc.

If this makes sense to you, if you have questions, or you just need some help you to push off from the dock, let's talk.
And

If you *haven't* gotten enough info to help you make your decision about Jesus, I'm here to help you get it....whenever you're ready. But remember, life is *not* the NBA, so you probably won't get a 2-minute warning.

His Deal

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