

Title: *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews*

ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

TEACHERS EDITION

(Final Publication Copy)

In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews

by: Félix H. Cortez

January, February, March

2022

Contents

| | |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |
| 4 | |
| 5 | 1 The Letter to the Hebrews and Us—December 25-31.....13 |
| 6 | |
| 7 | 2 The Message of Hebrews—January 1-7.....23 |
| 8 | |
| 9 | 3 Jesus, the Promised Son—January 8-14.....34 |
| 10 | |
| 11 | 4 Jesus, Our Faithful Brother—January 15-21.....44 |
| 12 | |
| 13 | 5 Jesus, the Giver of Rest—January 22-28.....54 |
| 14 | |
| 15 | 6 Jesus, the Faithful Priest—January 29-February 4.....63 |
| 16 | |
| 17 | 7 Jesus, the Anchor of the Soul—February 5-11.....73 |
| 18 | |
| 19 | 8 Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant—February 12-18.....83 |
| 20 | |
| 21 | 9 Jesus, the Perfect Sacrifice—February 19-25.....93 |
| 22 | |
| 23 | 10 Jesus Opens the Way Through the Veil—February 26-March 4.....102 |
| 24 | |
| 25 | 11 Jesus, Author and Perfecter of Our Faith—March 5-11.....112 |
| 26 | |
| 27 | 12 Receiving an Unshakable Kingdom—March 12-18.....122 |
| 28 | |
| 29 | 13 Let Brotherly Love Continue—March 19-25.....131 |
| 30 | |

| | |
|----|--|
| 31 | |
| 32 | |
| 33 | |
| 34 | |
| 35 | |

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23

Editorial Office:

12501 Old Columbia Pike

Silver Spring, MD 20904

Come visit us at our website:

<http://www.absg.adventist.org>

Principal Contributor:

Félix H. Cortez

Editor:

Clifford R. Goldstein

Associate Editor:

Soraya Homayouni

Publication Manager:

Contents: *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews*

1 Lea Alexander Greve

2

3

4 **Editorial Assistant:**

5 Sharon Thomas-Crews

6

7

8 **Pacific Press® Coordinator:**

9 Tricia Wegh

10

11

12 **Art and Design:**

13 Lars Justinen

14

15

16

17 **The Overview, Commentary, and Life Applications for Lessons**

18 **1-13:** *Erhard Gallos, professor of Religion, Andrews University,*

19 *Department of Religion and Biblical Languages, Berrien Springs,*

20 *Mich., U.S.A.*

21

22

1

2 © 2022 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®. All
3 rights reserved. No part of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study*
4 *Guide* (Teachers Edition) may be edited, altered, modified,
5 adapted, translated, reproduced, or published by any person or
6 entity without prior written authorization from the General
7 Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®. The division offices of
8 the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists® are
9 authorized to arrange for translation of the *Adult Sabbath*
10 *School Bible Study Guide*, under specific guidelines. Copyright
11 of such translations and their publication shall remain with
12 the General Conference. "Seventh-day Adventist," "Adventist,"
13 and the flame logo are registered trademarks of the General
14 Conference of Seventh-day Adventists® and may not be used
15 without prior authorization from the General Conference.

16

17 The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is prepared by the
18 Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference
19 of Seventh-day Adventists®. The preparation of the guides is
20 under the general direction of the Sabbath School Publications
21 Board, a subcommittee of the General Conference Administrative
22 Committee (ADCOM), publisher of the Bible study guides. The
23 published guide reflects the input of a worldwide evaluation
24 committee and the approval of the Sabbath School Publications

Contents: *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews*

1 Board and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the
2 intent of the author(s).
3

Bible Versions Table

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21

Scripture references other than from the King James Version quoted by permission in this Bible study guide, for Teachers Edition First Quarter 2022, are as follows:

ESV. Bible texts marked ESV are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

NASB. Bible texts marked NASB are from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.

NIV. Bible texts marked NIV are from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.®. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

NKJV. Bible texts marked NKJV are from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

NRSV. Bible texts marked NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Copyright © 1989 by the Division

Versions: *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews*

1 of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches
2 of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
3
4

1

2

In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews

3

4 It was at church when he first saw her. He was running an
5 errand, absorbed in his thoughts, when the sight hit him. The
6 painting was a little less than two meters high and three meters
7 wide, but the girl portrayed in it exerted a strange captivating
8 force over the young man. Why could he not take his eyes off
9 of her? What was it? After some reflection, he realized that
10 it was her eyes. The painting portrayed only her face, and she
11 was intently looking at something. But what, and why was she
12 so absorbed in it? For a long time afterward, he couldn't get
13 the painting out of his head.

14 Several years later, the painter, Arnold Jiménez, revealed
15 some of its secrets to him. The painting was made to attract
16 viewers to her eyes, but the real secret was in her pupils. If
17 you looked closely, you would find out that they reflected what
18 she was looking at. Her eyes were fixed on Jesus on the cross.

19 The portrait of Jesus in the Letter to the Hebrews can exert
20 a similar captivating force upon us. Jesus is described, first
21 of all, as the ruler of the universe enthroned at God's right
22 hand. Innumerable angels celebrate Him, worship Him, and serve

Introduction: *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews*

1 Him (*Heb. 1:5-14, Heb. 12:22-24*). He has won the right to rule
2 because through His own death He has ensured the destruction
3 of the devil (*Heb. 2:14-16*). Jesus is also the exalted High
4 Priest. Sinless, and perfectly holy, He lives forever to
5 minister in our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary (*Heb.*
6 *7:26-8:5*). He has won the right to do so because He offered
7 Himself as a perfect, once-for-all sacrifice, effective for
8 everyone and forever (*Heb. 10:1-14*). Jesus has also mediated
9 a new covenant between God and His people that will stand forever
10 (*Heb. 8:6-13*).

11 What captivates readers about the portrait of Jesus,
12 however, is not simply what Jesus has done, but who He is. He
13 was born from a woman, as we were, and He has been tempted and
14 ridiculed, as we have been. Yet, still, He sits at the center
15 of power in the universe. When we gaze at the heavenly scene,
16 with its diverse and fantastic celestial beings, our eyes are
17 attracted to the One in the center of it all, who, amazingly
18 enough, looks like us because He had become one of us. Jesus,
19 our Brother, is there, in heaven, representing us, despite the
20 shame of our sin and fallenness.

21 In the person of Jesus, three dimensions of the story of
22 redemption intersect. The first is the local, personal

Introduction: *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews*

1 dimension. For readers tired of the reproaches and hardships
2 of Christian life, Jesus is the author and perfecter of faith.
3 They need to look to Him, who also suffered at the hands of
4 sinners (*Heb. 10:32-34, Heb. 12:1-4*). The second is the
5 corporate, national dimension. For the people of God, who are
6 traveling toward God's promised land, Jesus is the new Joshua.
7 They need to follow His lead (*Hebrews 3, 4, 11, 12*). The third
8 is the universal dimension. Jesus is the new Adam, the Son of
9 man, in whom God's purposes for humanity are fulfilled (*Heb.*
10 *2:5-10, Heb. 12:22-28*).

11 The portrait of Jesus, who captures the breadth and length
12 and height and depth of God's love for us, is our subject this
13 quarter. And just as the image of Jesus in the eyes of the
14 painting captured the young man's gaze, may the image of Jesus
15 as portrayed in Hebrews capture not just our gaze, but our love
16 and admiration for, yes, Jesus, our Brother in heaven.

17
18 *Félix H. Cortez is associate professor of New Testament*
19 *literature at Andrews University. He is married to Alma Gloria*
20 *Alvarez and has two children, Hadid, a pastor in New Jersey,*
21 *and Alma, an archaeology major at Andrews University.*

22

1 **TE-1Q-2022-01**

2

3 **Key Texts:** *Heb. 2:3, 4; 1 Pet. 4:14, 16; Heb. 13:1-9, 13; 1*

4 *Kings 19:1-18; Heb. 3:12-14; Numbers 13.*

5

6 **Part I: Overview**

7

8 **Introduction:** The book of Hebrews was initially read and
9 received by the early Christian church as a letter from the
10 apostle Paul. Paul's authorship of Hebrews is indicated by the
11 inclusion of Hebrews among the Pauline epistles in the Greek
12 manuscripts. In the earliest extant manuscripts, dating around
13 A.D. 200, Hebrews is placed right after the epistle of Paul to
14 the Romans. Today, we find Hebrews right before the general
15 epistles of the New Testament: James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and
16 3 John; and Jude.

17 Hebrews does not begin in the usual letter-writing manner
18 with the standard protocol (*see Heb. 1:1-3*). Indeed, the book
19 lacks the name of Paul, the specific addressees, the greetings,
20 as well as the thanksgiving (*compare with Phil. 1:1-11*). Hebrews
21 ends, however, in a letter-writing mode. Here, the author, whom
22 Ellen G. White attests is Paul, gives pertinent instructions
TE-1Q-2022, *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews* by Félix Cortez

1 to his audience: "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, bear
2 with my word of exhortation" (*Heb. 13:22, NRSV*). He also greets
3 the church, as well as its leaders: "Greet all your leaders and
4 all the saints" (*Heb. 13:24, NRSV*). In conclusion, he adds final
5 farewell wishes: "Grace be with all of you" (*Heb. 13:25, NRSV*).
6 Thus, in light of the deviations we have noted, we can say that
7 Hebrews is somewhat of an unusual epistle.

8
9 **Lesson Themes:** This week's lesson emphasizes three things: the
10 "genre" of the epistle, its audience, and the "last days" in
11 which the readers are living.

12

13 **Part II Commentary**

14

15 ***The Genre of Hebrews***

16 The style of Hebrews has been identified as a Christian homily
17 or sermon. What are the textual reasons for considering Hebrews
18 as a sermon?

19 First, Paul characterizes his work as a "word of
20 exhortation" (*Heb. 13:22*), which is best understood as an oral
21 discourse. Similarly, during their first missionary journey,
22 Paul and Barnabas on Sabbath attend the synagogue in Antioch

1 in Pisidia. The synagogue leaders ask Paul and Barnabas if they
2 have “any word of exhortation for the people” (*Acts 13:15*,
3 *NRSV*). Paul stands up and delivers the evangelistic-synagogue
4 sermon, recorded in Acts 13:16-41.

5 Second, the book of Hebrews uses the first-person plural
6 pronoun (we/us/our) in a distinctive manner. This use enables
7 the speaker to identify with his audience while also asserting
8 his authority.

9 Third, there are several references to speaking and
10 hearing rather than to writing and reading, which elsewhere
11 characterize Paul’s composition. Consider the following
12 examples: “. . . about which we are **speaking**” (*Heb. 2:5, NRSV*);
13 “About this we have much to **say**, and it is hard to explain, since
14 you have become dull of **hearing**” (*Heb. 5:11, ESV*); “Even though
15 we **speak** in this way” (*Heb. 6:9, NRSV*); “Now the main point in
16 what we are **saying** is this” (*Heb. 8:1, NRSV*); “And what more
17 should I **say**?” (*Heb. 11:32, NRSV*) (*emphases supplied*).

18 Fourth, a skillful alternation between exposition and
19 exhortation runs throughout Hebrews. An orator of the
20 Greco-Roman period would use this pattern in order to drive home
21 his points without losing the listener’s attention. This
22 oratorical device helps us to identify readily the patterns of

1 alternation in the book of Hebrews. Thus, we observe that the
2 exposition of Hebrews 1 leads directly into the exhortation of
3 Hebrews 2:1-4. The argument of Hebrews 2:5-18 turns immediately
4 into an application in Hebrews 3:1. The discussion of Hebrews
5 3:2-6 is driven home by the word "therefore," which, in turn,
6 funnels into the exhortation of Hebrews 3:7-13. Then the
7 exposition of Hebrews 3:14-19 is applied in Hebrews 4:1, while
8 the exposition of Hebrews 4:2-10 discharges into the exposition
9 of Hebrews 4:11-16, etc. (For more on the alternation between
10 exposition and exhortation in Hebrews, see Donald A. Hagner,
11 *Encountering the Book of Hebrews: An Exposition*, Encountering
12 Biblical Studies [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002], p. 28).

13 Fifth, the manner in which Paul introduces themes speaks
14 in favor of an oral form of discourse by which he creates a
15 cumulative effect. These themes are fully developed later on.
16 For example, the fellowship Jesus has with humans, spoken of
17 in Hebrews 2:14-18, is made thematic in Hebrews 5:1-10. His
18 faith, portrayed in Hebrews 3:1-6, is made explicit in Hebrews
19 12:1-3. His role as High Priest (*Heb. 4:14, Heb. 5:1-10*) is
20 developed more fully in Hebrews 7:1-9:28.

21 In summary, if one looks at Hebrews as a "word of
22 exhortation," then the conclusion seems inescapable: Hebrews

1 was designed, at least originally, as a sermon. Other elements
2 within the letter that give weight to this conclusion are: (1)
3 the distinctive use of the first-person plural pronoun, (2) the
4 references to hearing and speaking, (3) the alternation between
5 exposition and exhortation, as well as (4) the manner in which
6 Paul introduces themes subtly and later on develops them.

7

8 **Thought Question:** Where else in the Bible, or in the New
9 Testament, do we have sermons recorded, and how do they compare
10 to Hebrews? What elements do these sermons have in common with
11 Hebrews, and what elements are different?

12

13 ***The Audience of Hebrews***

14 The precise identity of the audience of Hebrews is not clearly
15 revealed because the book lacks the standard letter-writing
16 introduction wherein the audience would have been named. What
17 we can say with certainty from the biblical text is that the
18 addressees are Christians. This conclusion seems to be clear
19 from Paul's appeal to them to hold on to their confession:
20 "Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through
21 the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our
22 confession" (*Heb. 4:14, NRSV; see also Heb. 10:23, NRSV*).

1 Whether the addressees were Jewish Christians, Gentile
2 Christians, or a mixed audience is strongly debated. The epistle
3 never mentions Jews or Christians. Neither does it mention
4 circumcision or the temple (not to be confused with either the
5 "holy," translated as sanctuary, or the "tent," translated as
6 tabernacle). Furthermore, the epistle refrains from divisive
7 references to Jews or Gentiles. These facts speak in favor of
8 a mixed audience. Thus, the title "to the Hebrews" is an ancient
9 conjecture about the addressees. Regardless of who they may be,
10 the important group for them to belong to is the "people of God"
11 (*Heb. 4:9*).

12 The epistle has been addressed to a community of Christians
13 who obviously underwent at least a three-phase experience.

14 The first phase was characterized by evangelism, carried
15 out by the eyewitnesses and earwitnesses of Christ (*Heb. 2:3*).
16 This phase was accompanied by God-given signs, miracles, and
17 the distribution of the Holy Spirit (*Heb. 2:4*). Those
18 individuals who became Christians during this phase were
19 "enlightened," "tasted the heavenly gift," "shared in the Holy
20 Spirit," and "tasted the goodness of the word of God and the
21 powers of the age to come" (*Heb. 6:4, 5, NRSV*). Through such

1 experiences, the community developed its group identity and
2 distinguished itself from the outside world.

3 The second phase was characterized by persecution from
4 outside the community, while those persons inside the community
5 showed solidarity among themselves (*Heb. 10:32, 33*). The
6 persecution became terribly ferocious; yet, Paul remembers that
7 the audience “cheerfully accepted the plundering of” their
8 “possessions” (*Heb. 10:34, NRSV*). Such vicious persecution over
9 an extended period of time can lead to fatigue, doubt, and
10 malaise.

11 This condition seems to be the problem in the third phase.
12 That is why Paul delivers such a passionate sermon. He wishes
13 to encourage, exhort, and warn his audience. He warns them in
14 order that they might “not drift away” (*Heb. 2:1, NRSV*), for
15 he desires that no one “turns away from the living God” (*Heb.*
16 *3:12, NRSV*) and “that no one may fall through such
17 disobedience,” as did the Exodus generation (*Heb. 4:11, NRSV*).
18 Paul encourages his audience to progress rather than regress.
19 Yet, he realizes that the members of his audience “need milk,
20 not solid food” (*Heb. 5:12, NRSV*). Furthermore, his addressees
21 are “neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some” (*Heb.*
22 *10:25, NRSV*). Paul exhorts his audience not to abandon their

1 confidence because "it brings a great reward" (*Heb. 10:35,*
2 *NRSV*).

3 In summary, one can conclude that the audience of Hebrews
4 consisted of Christians who went through the phases of
5 enthusiastic evangelism, then fierce persecution, and,
6 finally, were so fatigued and discouraged that Paul feared for
7 their eternal salvation. That experience of spiritual
8 exhaustion and discouragement is Paul's purpose for delivering
9 his energetic sermon.

10

11 **Thought Questions:** Think back over your church's life cycle.
12 Analyze where you are in your journey with God compared to the
13 audience of Hebrews. Would you be willing to suffer to the extent
14 that you joyfully would accept the plundering of your
15 possessions? Christ observed that the church in Ephesus had lost
16 their first love (*Rev. 2:4*). A similar observation might be made
17 of the audience of Hebrews, whose spiritual ardor waned as their
18 suffering intensified and grew. What are the consequences of
19 such a loss?

20

21 **"These Last days"**

1 The final and decisive address of God to humanity comes through
2 Jesus, the Son, "in these last days" (*Heb. 1:1, 2, NRSV*). These
3 "last days" begin with Christ's incarnation and will end with
4 His second coming when His enemies will be made a "footstool"
5 for His feet (*Heb. 1:13, NRSV*). God not only spoke through Jesus'
6 words "in these last days" but also through His actions,
7 especially His death, resurrection, and exaltation. That is why
8 both the audience of Hebrews and we "must pay greater attention
9 to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it"
10 (*Heb. 2:1, NRSV*).

11

12 **Thought Question:** What does the nautical metaphor in Hebrews
13 2:1 of "drifting away" convey?

14

15 **Part III: Life Application**

16

17 When Beethoven was 5 years old, he played the violin under the
18 tutelage of his father. By the time he was 13 years old, he was
19 a concert organist. In his 20s, he studied under renowned
20 musicians, such as Haydn and Mozart. As Beethoven developed his
21 skills, he became a prolific composer. His enthusiasm for music
22 brought to fruition several majestic symphonies, a handful of

1 concertos for piano, and numerous pieces of chamber music. His
2 love for music propelled him further and further into his
3 musical achievements. However, Beethoven was no stranger to
4 difficulties. While still in his 20s, he began losing his
5 hearing. When he reached his 50s, Beethoven was completely deaf.
6 Just imagine what that meant for him as a musician!

7 Put yourself in the place of the audience of Hebrews. At
8 the height of your Christian enthusiasm, unexpected disaster
9 strikes. How would you, then, respond to the sermon in Hebrews?

1 **TE-1Q-2022-02**

2

3 **Key Texts:** *Heb. 1:5-14, Luke 1:30-33, Ps. 132:1-5, Heb.*

4 *2:14-16, Heb. 5:1-4, 1 Pet. 2:9, Heb. 8:8-12.*

5

6 **Part I: Overview**

7

8 **Introduction:** As we noted last week, the early New Testament
9 Christians read Hebrews as a letter from the apostle Paul.

10 Strictly speaking, however, the writer of the book of Hebrews
11 appears to be anonymous. Speculation has given rise to at least
12 13 possible authorial candidates, such as Luke, Barnabas, Jude,
13 Stephen, Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos, or even Mary, the mother
14 of Jesus. What we safely can infer about authorship from the
15 epistle itself are four facts:

16 First, the author must have been well educated. Hebrews
17 has, by far, the best Greek of the New Testament.

18 Second, the author was acquainted with Jewish methods of
19 interpreting Scripture, such as *gezerah shavah* (argument by
20 analogy), and other such techniques.

21 Third, the author is steeped in the Jewish Scriptures.
22 Hebrews has the most extensive use of Old Testament quotes.

1 Fourth, the author knew Timothy (*Heb. 13:23*). All of these
2 facts speak in favor of, rather than against, Pauline
3 authorship. Certainly, the author chose to remain anonymous for
4 undisclosed reasons. His anonymity may even suggest that his
5 message is more important than his identity. At the same time,
6 we would be remiss if we failed to acknowledge that Ellen G.
7 White attests to Pauline authorship of the book of Hebrews.
8 Moving forward in faith in that divine disclosure, we shall
9 refer throughout the lessons with confidence to the author as
10 Paul.

11

12 **Lesson Themes:** The week's lesson emphasizes two themes. The
13 first one is Christ our King, and the second is Christ our
14 Mediator.

15

16 **Part II: Commentary**

17

18 ***Christ Our King***

19 The first chapter of Hebrews can be summarized in a short
20 scriptural statement: Christ is "superior to angels" (see *Heb.*
21 *1:4, NRSV*). The second chapter of Hebrews can be summarized in
22 this scriptural statement: Christ has become "lower than the

1 angels" for a little while (see *Heb. 2:9*). The question we want
2 to pursue in our study is: What makes Jesus superior to the
3 angels and elevates Him to a kingly position?

4 "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets
5 in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken
6 to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through
7 whom also He made the world" (*Heb. 1:1, 2, NASB*). Paul wants
8 to tell his audience, and us, that God spoke and still speaks.
9 God spoke in different time periods "long ago," and He speaks
10 "in these last days." He speaks to different recipients: the
11 "fathers" and "us." He speaks through different agents: the
12 "prophets" and the "Son." God speaks "in many ways."

13 What are some of His avenues of communication? God speaks
14 face-to-face with Adam and Eve (*Genesis 3*). God speaks to Moses
15 from a burning bush, something we call a theophany, a revelation
16 of God (*Exod. 3:2-6*); to Balaam through a donkey (*Num. 22:28*);
17 to the boy Samuel, calling him by name (*1 Sam. 3:10*); to Elijah
18 in a still small voice (*1 King 19:12*); through a vision to Isaiah
19 in the temple (*Isa. 6:1-9*); and to Hosea through his family
20 circumstances (*Hos. 1:2*). All these modes of communication have
21 one thing in common: they are incomplete.

1 The ultimate and climactic utterance of God is "in these
2 last days," when He speaks through his "Son." Not only does God
3 speak through the words of Jesus; God speaks also through Jesus'
4 actions and character. God's revelation is progressive. But the
5 progression is not from true to truer, from mature to more
6 mature. Rather, it is a forward and onward movement in His
7 revelation of Himself to humanity. When speaking through the
8 words and actions of Jesus, God Himself is the speaker.

9 Immediately following the mention of the Son, Paul makes
10 seven affirmations about the Son (*Heb. 1:2-4*) that elevate Him
11 far above any angel. First, Christ is "appointed heir of all
12 things" (*Heb. 1:2*). If He is the prime heir, His followers shall
13 be co-heirs with Him and are "those who are to inherit salvation"
14 (*Heb. 1:14, NRSV*). Drawing on the theme of inheritance, the
15 early Christians affirmed that Christ, through His resurrection
16 and exaltation, was given a heavenly inheritance that His
17 followers share. "Those who conquer will inherit these things"
18 (*Rev. 21:7, NRSV*). By the same token, the Bible affirms that
19 "wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God" (*1 Cor. 6:9,*
20 *10, NRSV*).

21 Second, Christ was the Father's Creation Agent "through
22 whom he also created the worlds" (*Heb. 1:2, NRSV*). Christ, as

1 Heir, is not only the end-time (eschatological) agent (through
2 whom God speaks in these last days) but also the Creation
3 (protological) agent. The protological function of the Son
4 points to His eschatological victory. John implicitly
5 corroborates this by saying that "all things were made through
6 him, and without him was not any thing made that was made" (*John*
7 *1:3, ESV*).

8 Third, Christ "is the reflection of God's glory" (*Heb. 1:3,*
9 *NRSV*). Some Bible versions prefer the translation "the radiance
10 of God's glory" (*NIV; see also ESV*). Furthermore, Christ is "the
11 exact imprint of God's very being" (*Heb. 1:3, NRSV*). The Greek
12 term "exact imprint [charactēr]" implies a mark impressed on an
13 object, especially on coins. Both descriptions of Jesus as God's
14 "reflection" and as the "exact imprint" make the same point that
15 Jesus is the full and adequate representation of the divine.
16 The two of them share the same "imprint of being." What Paul
17 conveys here is synonymous with what Jesus testifies: "Whoever
18 has seen me has seen the Father" (*John 14:9, NRSV*). There is no
19 better discloser of God than Jesus Christ. If we want to know
20 who God is, we should get acquainted with Jesus.

1 Fourth, Christ "sustains all things by his powerful word"
2 (*Heb. 1:3, NRSV*). Christ not only spoke things into existence,
3 but He sustains things in existence by His powerful word.

4 Fifth, Christ "had made purification for sins" (*Heb. 1:3,*
5 *NRSV*). He who was the instrument of God's creative activity is
6 also the instrument of His saving activity by cleansing the
7 repentant from their sins. Christ's self-sacrifice purifies
8 "our conscience from dead works to worship the living God" (*Heb.*
9 *9:14, NRSV*).

10 Sixth, Christ, after accomplishing His atoning work, "sat
11 down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (*Heb. 1:3, NRSV*).
12 This seated position is a direct allusion to Psalm 110:1, quoted
13 at the end of the first chapter: "Sit at my right hand until
14 I make your enemies a footstool for your feet" (*Heb. 1:13, NRSV*).
15 Jesus told the Sanhedrin in His trial these very words: "You
16 will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power" (*Matt.*
17 *26:64, NRSV*).

18 Seventh, Christ has "become as much superior to angels as
19 the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs" (*Heb.*
20 *1:4, NRSV*). How superior is Christ to the angels? This question
21 is answered in the chain of quotations that follow (see *Heb.*
22 *1:5-14*). Christ deserves worship (*Heb.*

1 1:6), something the holy angels do not accept (*Rev. 19:10; Rev.*
2 *22:8, 9*). Christ has a throne and a scepter (*Heb. 1:8*). He has
3 been anointed as King (*Heb. 1:9*). He created the heavens and
4 the earth (*Heb. 1:10*), and He sits at the right hand of God (*Heb.*
5 *1:13*). "Christ became superior to the angels," in this context,
6 points to His enthronement ceremony, as pointed out by the
7 lesson in Sunday's study.

8 In summary, what makes Christ superior to angels? God spoke
9 in many and various ways to the fathers in the past; but in these
10 last days, He speaks through the Son, who became Heir of all
11 things, is the Creator of all things, is the reflection and
12 imprint of God's very being, sustains all things, made
13 purification for sins, and sat down at the right hand of God.
14 Thus, Christ is exalted above, and superior to, the angels, who
15 are ministering spirits in service to those who inherit
16 salvation (*Heb. 1:14*). Moreover, Christ accepts worship on His
17 throne at the right hand of God. Christ is our KING.

18

19 ***Christ Our Mediator***

20 A mediator is a person who stands between two parties to bring
21 a settlement or to establish a relationship. In Judaism, Moses
22 is the primary mediator of the Sinai covenant (*Gal. 3:19, 20*).

1 In the pastoral epistles, Paul tells us that “there is also one
2 mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus” (*1 Tim. 2:5,*
3 *NRSV*). Hebrews contributes to this topic by saying, Jesus “is
4 the mediator of a better covenant” (*Heb. 8:6, NRSV*), or the
5 “mediator of a new covenant” (*Heb. 9:15, Heb. 12:24, NRSV*). Two
6 questions beg answers: (1) What is this covenant in Hebrews?
7 (2) Why is the new covenant better?

8 To the first question: the covenant in Hebrews refers to
9 a binding agreement, a deal between its parties. Paul talks
10 about the first and obsolete covenant (*Heb. 8:13*) and the second
11 or the better covenant (*Heb. 7:22, Heb. 8:6*). With the first
12 covenant, God established a system of sacrifices, Levitical
13 priests, and ceremonies (*Heb. 5:1-4*). However, moral perfection
14 could not be attained through this Levitical priesthood,
15 because it was weak and ineffectual (*Heb. 7:11, 18*). Why could
16 moral perfection not be attained? Because the blood of bulls
17 and goats could not take away human sins (*Heb. 10:4*). Why was
18 the first covenant weak and ineffective? Because the priests
19 were mortal and thus finite and would die (*Heb. 7:23*).
20 Furthermore, the priests needed to sacrifice first for their
21 own sins before they could sacrifice for the sins of the people
22 whom they represented (*Heb. 5:3*). Thus, the first covenant was

1 faulty and became obsolete with the arrival of Christ's superior
2 sacrifice and better priesthood.

3 To the second question: with the second covenant, God chose
4 no mere mortal priest but One who lives forever (*Heb. 7:24*).
5 There were no more bulls and goats offered that never could take
6 away the sins of the people anyway. But Christ offered Himself
7 once for all (*Heb. 7:27, Heb. 9:14, Heb. 10:12*). Thus, He came
8 to remove sin through His own sacrifice (*Heb. 9:26*) and to
9 cleanse the conscience from dead works (*Heb. 9:14*). That is the
10 reason that the second covenant is qualitatively superior and
11 that Christ is the Mediator of this superior, new, and better
12 covenant. Christ is our MEDIATOR.

13

14 **Part III: Life Application**

15

16 **Thought Questions:**

- 17 1. If God spoke in the past but also speaks today, how does
18 He speak to you? How do you discern His voice from other
19 "voices" vying for your attention?
- 20 2. If we are co-heirs with Christ of the kingdom of God, how
21 should we evaluate the transitory things of this world?

1 3. If Christ sustains all things with His powerful word, how
2 has He sustained you through difficult circumstances?

3 4. Listen to the hymn "Jesus Paid It All" (Hymn #184, *The*
4 *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*). Pay attention especially
5 to the refrain while thinking about what having Christ as
6 our Mediator really means.

7

8

9

1 **TE-1Q-2022-03**

2

3 **Key Texts:** *Isa. 2:2, 3; Heb. 4:1-4; Exod. 24:16, 17; Isa.*

4 *44:24; Heb. 1:10; Luke 1:31; Heb. 1:5.*

5

6 **Part I: Overview**

7

8 **Lesson Themes:** Throughout human history, people have looked
9 forward to the coming Redeemer. After the Fall, our first
10 parents, Adam and Eve, thought that Cain, their firstborn son,
11 would be the promised Deliverer. Abraham was given the promise
12 that, through his son Isaac, all the nations on earth should
13 be blessed. David was promised a son who, if faithful to God,
14 would be established forever. However, none of these people
15 thought that God Himself would be the promised Redeemer.

16 Prophets in the Old Testament sometimes made cryptic
17 Messianic predictions by using the phrase "in the latter days"
18 (*see Num. 24:14-17*), which is different from other Old Testament
19 prophecies that use a phrase like "time of the end" (*see Dan.*
20 *8:17, 19*). With the coming of Christ, the "last days" arrived.
21 After a long period of time, which is sometimes called the
22 intertestamental period, God spoke once again. This time,
TE-1Q-2022, *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews* by Félix Cortez

1 however, He spoke most clearly, and qualitatively, in the most
2 superior manner through Jesus Christ. Christ is equal to God
3 because He is “the exact imprint of God’s very being” (*Heb. 1:3,*
4 *NRSV*), and being divine, He is also the Creator, as well as the
5 Sustainer of the universe.

6 Someone might ask, if Christ is equal to God, how can Paul,
7 speaking in behalf of the Father, write of Jesus, “You are my
8 Son; today I have begotten you” (*Heb. 1:5, NRSV*)? Does that imply
9 that Jesus was somehow begotten and not eternal? Explain.

10

11 **Part II: Commentary**

12

13 ***The Nature of Christ***

14 The question posed at the end of the Introduction has sparked
15 a history of various interpretations. The previous passage
16 (*Heb. 1:1-3*) was concerned with proving Christ’s superiority
17 over the prophets. In the following passage (*Heb. 1:4-14*), Paul
18 is concerned with proving Christ’s superiority over the angels.
19 The reason for emphasizing Christ’s superiority could be a keen
20 interest on the part of the audience in angels or even in angel
21 veneration, similar to what we see in the church in Colossae
22 (*Col. 2:18*).

1 In service to his argument that Christ is superior to the
2 angels, Paul, in Hebrews 1:5, quotes two verses from the Old
3 Testament. Psalm 2:7 is the first. In its original context,
4 Psalm 2 talks about kings and rulers of this earth who conspire
5 against God. However, God laughs and terrifies them.
6 Ultimately, God will enthrone His divine King on Mount Zion (*Ps.*
7 *2:6*) by saying: "You are my son; today I have begotten you" (*Ps.*
8 *2:7, NRSV*). In his sermon in Antioch in Pisidia, Paul applies
9 this text to the resurrection of Christ (*Acts 13:33*). Throughout
10 Christianity, this psalm has been interpreted as
11 Christological. Does this interpretation mean that God fathered
12 Jesus at His resurrection, a question we posed at the end of
13 our introduction?

14 Not at all. God is simply calling forth His Son from the
15 grave when He works through Gabriel, "the mightiest of the
16 Lord's host," the one "who fills the position from which Satan
17 fell," to remove the stone from the tomb of Christ as if it were
18 a pebble. The soldiers guarding the tomb "hear him cry, Son of
19 God, come forth; Thy Father calls Thee."—Ellen G. White, *The*
20 *Desire of Ages*, p. 780. Thus, God the Father calls forth His
21 Son. Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 4:15, Paul tells the
22 Corinthians, "in Christ Jesus I fathered you through the gospel"

1 (author's translation). Does this act mean that Paul fathered
2 the church? Of course not. Paul brought them to spiritual life;
3 he fathered them in a spiritual sense (the same term is used
4 for Onesimus [Philemon 10] and for Christians in 1 John 2:29,
5 1 John 3:9, etc.).

6 The second quote that Paul uses to show Christ's
7 superiority over the angels is from 2 Samuel 7:14. The original
8 context speaks about David's plans to build the temple; but
9 Nathan informs the king that his son Solomon will construct
10 God's house. The Lord also promises, "I will be a father to him,
11 and he shall be a son to me" (2 Sam. 7:14, NRSV). This quote
12 in its original context cannot refer to Christ because of what
13 follows in this verse: "When he commits iniquity, I will punish
14 him with a rod such as mortals use" (2 Sam. 7:14, NRSV). For
15 obvious reasons, this verse must refer to a sinful Solomon
16 rather than the sinless Christ.

17 Both Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14 have one thing in common,
18 however. They both stress the fact that the king of Israel and
19 Solomon are sons of God: "You are my son; today I have begotten
20 you," and "he shall be a son to me." The emphasis is not on the
21 fathering, but on the adoption of the Davidic king and on his
22 son's kingship, which is transferred, much later in Hebrews,

1 to Christ. The introductory phrase in Hebrews 1:5 asks: "For
2 to which of the angels did God ever say: 'You are my Son' today
3 I have begotten you"? " (*Heb. 1:5, NRSV*). The obvious answer
4 is to none of the angels. Only Christ has "become as much superior
5 to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than
6 theirs" (*Heb. 1:4, NRSV*). That name is "my Son," a title never
7 ascribed to any angels. To none of them did God ever say, " 'Sit
8 at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your
9 feet' " (*Heb. 1:13, NRSV*).

10 Someone, however, might object to the notion of fathering
11 as adoption in this context, countering with Hebrews 1:6: "When
12 he brings the firstborn into the world" (*Heb. 1:6, NRSV*). Does
13 not this verse, the objector might argue, talk about Christ as
14 being the firstborn? Good question. The term "firstborn" does
15 have the meaning of primogeniture in such texts as Genesis
16 25:13, Genesis 27:19, and Genesis 35:23. But in the Old
17 Testament, the "firstborn" is also Israel (*Exod. 4:22, 23*),
18 contrasted with the firstborn of Egypt. In Psalm 89:27, David
19 is called God's "firstborn" although he was the youngest of
20 eight brothers, not the firstborn at all. In the New Testament,
21 Jesus is the "firstborn" of Mary (*Luke 2:7*), the "firstborn"
22 among many brothers (*Rom. 8:29*), the "firstborn" of all creation

1 (Col. 1:15), and the "firstborn" from the dead (Col. 1:18, Rev.
2 1:5). These texts show that the title "firstborn" refers to
3 Christ's preeminence in the church, over the Creation, the
4 cosmos, and the resurrected. Linking Hebrews 1:5 with verse 6
5 indicates that the Christ is this royal Davidic king whom God
6 introduced into the world with the appeal, "Let all God's angels
7 worship him" (Heb. 1:6, NRSV). The rest of chapter 1, however,
8 takes up these proofs from Scripture and makes four assertions:
9 (1) only one Person is called "Son" by God (Heb. 1:5), and that
10 is Christ. (2) Angels worship this Son (Heb. 1:6). (3) The Son
11 is the unchanging, just, and anointed Monarch, who created the
12 heavens and the earth (Heb. 1:8-10). (4) The Son reigns at God's
13 right hand, while angels, by contrast, are ministering spirits
14 in behalf of those who will be saved (Heb. 1:11-14).

15 In summary, we can say that Christ was not fathered by
16 God but, through His incarnation as the Son of God, the human
17 race has been "adopted" and "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph.
18 1:6). Thus, Christ is given the title of "firstborn." As such,
19 His status is far above the angels and deserves even their
20 worship. Ellen G. White, in advising the church on how best to
21 reach out to other Christians, states the following about
22 Christ's pre-existing nature: "Do not make prominent those

1 features of the message which are a condemnation of the customs
2 and practices of the people, until they have an opportunity to
3 know that we are believers in Christ, that we believe in His
4 divinity and in His pre-existence."—*Testimonies for the Church*,
5 vol. 6, p. 58. Ellen G. White helped the young Seventh-day
6 Adventist Church to find biblical balance concerning the
7 pre-existent nature of Christ. In the context of Lazarus'
8 resurrection, she wrote of Christ's nature: "In Christ is life,
9 original, unborrowed, underived."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 530.

10

11 ***These Last Days and the End of Time***

12 The early Christian writers believed that the last days had
13 arrived, and they would culminate in the Second Coming. That
14 is why Paul could say, "But in these last days [contrasted with
15 the days of the prophets] he has spoken to us by a Son" (*Heb.*
16 *1:2, NRSV*). Similarly, when Peter and the other disciples are
17 accused of being drunk at Pentecost, Peter claims that the
18 miracle of speaking in tongues is a fulfillment of prophecy:
19 " ' "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour
20 out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters
21 shall prophesy" ' " (*Acts 2:17, NRSV*). The Joel 2 prophecy came
22 to pass at the beginning of the last days. Also, when talking

1 about Christ's incarnation, Peter wrote: "But [Christ] was
2 revealed at the end of the ages for your sake" (*1 Pet. 1:20*,
3 *NRSV*). These last days are characterized by scoffers, who
4 question the second coming of Christ (*2 Pet. 3:3, 4*) and exploit
5 the poor for the sake of enriching themselves (*James 5:3*). The
6 last days also are characterized by the appearance of
7 antichrists (*1 John 2:18*).

8 While acknowledging the fact that the last days arrive with
9 Christ's incarnation, is there a difference between these "last
10 days" and the "end of time," as described by Daniel and
11 Revelation? Consider the time prophecy of the 2,300 evenings
12 and mornings in Daniel 8:14. This time prophecy stretches far
13 beyond the days of Christ. And other prophecies still have
14 several events outstanding, from our vantage point in time, such
15 as the "seven last plagues" (*Rev. 15:1, Rev. 21:9*). Ultimately,
16 the "last enemy" (*1 Cor. 15:26*) is not yet conquered, nor have
17 we heard the "last trumpet" (*1 Cor. 15:52, NRSV*). In summary,
18 we can say that the last days arrived with Christ, but the last
19 great event in the time of the end is still outstanding. In
20 between these two comings, unfulfilled prophetic events must
21 still transpire.

22

1 **Part III: Application**

2

3 By looking at Hebrews 1, we realize that Paul packed a lot of
4 theology into it. Warmhearted, devotional,
5 application-oriented Christianity is necessary. However, our
6 orthopraxy (practice) stems from our orthodoxy (beliefs). A
7 solid theology will lay the foundation for a good Christian
8 lifestyle.

9

10 **Thought Questions:**

11 1. Do you think that, today, we have to balance our theology
12 with our Christian praxis? If so, how?

13 2. How can we discern, even today, between our religious and
14 cultural "baggage" and the biblical truth?

15 3. In a time in which authority both in culture and in the
16 church is in crisis, how does Hebrews 1 give us guidance?

17

1 **TE-1Q-2022-04**

2

3 **Key Texts:** *Lev. 25:25-27; Heb. 2:14-16; Heb. 11:24-26;*

4 *1 Cor. 15:50; Heb. 5:8, 9; Heb. 12:1-4.*

5

6 **Part I: Overview**

7

8 **Lesson Themes:** Comparing Hebrews 1 with Hebrews 2 paints a
9 picture of contrasts. In Hebrews 1, Christ is superior to the
10 angels (*Heb. 1:6*), whereas in Hebrews 2, He is inferior to the
11 angels, at least, for a certain time (*Heb. 2:9*). In Hebrews 1,
12 Christ is close to God, at His right side (*Heb. 1:13*); in Hebrews
13 2, Christ is close to and not ashamed of us, His brethren (*Heb.*
14 *2:11*). Contrasting the pre-incarnate Christ to human nature,
15 Hebrews tells us that Christ adopted flesh and blood in order
16 to be like us (*Heb. 2:14*). Christ also died as we humans do (*Heb.*
17 *2:14*). But the big difference between our death and His is that
18 His death accomplished what our death never could. His death
19 freed us who all our "lives were held in slavery by the fear
20 of death" (*Heb. 2:15, NRSV*). Christ is like us, yet different
21 from us. He was truly human, yet without sin (*Heb. 4:15*). Like
22 Moses who chose shame over fame (*Heb. 11:25*), Christ despised
TE-1Q-2022, *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews* by Félix Cortez

1 the shame of becoming human and dying on a cross but accepted
2 it anyway. He became like us so that we might become like Him.
3 In our becoming like Him, He need not ever be ashamed of us (*Heb.*
4 *2:11*), even when we might “put Him to open shame” (*Heb. 6:6*,
5 *NASB*). Humans go through trials and testing, which produce
6 endurance and, finally, maturity of character. Paul describes
7 Jesus in a similar manner. He “learned obedience through what
8 he suffered” and was “made perfect” (*Heb. 5:8, 9, NRSV*). How
9 did Jesus learn obedience? At some point in time, was He
10 disobedient? That notion would contradict Hebrews 4:15, which
11 says that Jesus was tested in everything as we are, yet He
12 remained without sin.

13

14 **Part II: Commentary**

15

16 ***“Having Been Made Perfect”***

17 Hebrews 5:7-9 poses several challenges. The text says: “In the
18 days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications,
19 with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him
20 from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.
21 Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he

1 suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source
2 of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (*Heb. 5: 7-9, NRSV*).

3 There are at least three questions raised by this passage
4 that deserve answers. First, Paul tells us that Christ offered
5 prayers to God who was able to save Him from death, and He was
6 heard. What does it mean that Jesus was heard and saved from
7 death? Second, Jesus learned obedience. How did He learn
8 obedience? Was it because, at some point, He was a disobedient
9 Son? Third, Jesus was made perfect. Was He not all along perfect,
10 without sin? We will tackle each one of these questions in order.

11 Was Jesus heard and saved from death? The sentence in verse
12 7 begins with the phrase "in the days of his flesh" (*Heb. 5:7*),
13 which is a clear reference to Christ's human existence. As He
14 went through the pre-Gethsemane and Gethsemane experience, the
15 Gospels tell us only that Jesus was in distress. In Matthew
16 26:38, Jesus says, " 'I am deeply grieved' " (*NRSV*). In Mark
17 14:33, 34 (*NRSV*) and John 12:27 (*NRSV*), Jesus utters, "Now is
18 my soul troubled." But none of these accounts records that He
19 prayed with "loud cries and tears" (*Heb. 5:7, NRSV*). This detail
20 is something Hebrews contributes to the Gethsemane narrative.
21 Jesus' prayers and supplications were offered "to the one who
22 was able to save him from death" (*Heb. 5:7*). But they were not

1 offered in order that He might be saved from death at all costs.
2 How, then, did God hear Jesus? Jesus did not pray for deliverance
3 from death but that God's will might be done (*Matt. 26:39*). The
4 Father did not deliver Jesus from crucifixion, but, through His
5 resurrection, delivered Him from the power of death, inflicted
6 by crucifixion. Thus, Jesus was heard, because God's will was
7 done, and Jesus was brought back to life. Paul even tells us
8 why Christ's prayer was heard. It was "because of his reverent
9 submission" (*Heb. 5:7, NRSV*). Because of Christ's reverent awe
10 for and obedience to God's will, His prayer was heard, and He
11 was resurrected.

12 How did Jesus learn obedience? This question implies that
13 Christ might have been disobedient. That possibility, however,
14 is clearly refuted by Hebrews 4:15, which claims that Jesus was
15 obedient throughout His life. Christ learned obedience through
16 submission (*Heb. 5:7*) and through suffering (*Heb. 5:8*). The
17 Greek text employs a word play, *emathen/epathen*
18 (learned/suffered), in verse 8, similar to the American English
19 proverb: "no pain, no gain." Jesus learned obedience, in part,
20 by fully conforming to God's will in Gethsemane. However,
21 because Christ was not only God, but also human, He had to learn
22 obedience in His vocational role as Savior. As God, He was holy

1 and could not have been tempted by evil (*James 1:13*). But as
2 a human, He needed to learn obedience and submission to God's
3 will, just as we human beings must learn it. As God, Jesus never
4 needed to learn submission. However, in His human experience,
5 when called to die, Jesus had to overcome His most basic human
6 instinct of self-preservation ("if it is possible, let this cup
7 pass from me" [*Matt. 26:39, NRSV*]) and submit to the will of
8 God. Thus, Jesus learned submissive obedience. Paul states in
9 *Philippians*, "he became obedient to the point of death—even
10 death on a cross" (*Phil. 2:8, NRSV*).

11 By comparison, we read that the Exodus generation was
12 characterized by rebelling against, and testing, God (*Heb.*
13 *3:8*); hardened hearts (*Heb. 3:8*); and a lack of understanding
14 about God's ways (*Heb. 3:10*). *Hebrews* summarizes these
15 characteristics as unbelief and sin (*Heb. 3:12, 13, 17, 19*),
16 as well as disobedience (*Heb. 3:18*). Rebellion, disobedience,
17 sin, and faithlessness all go together. In contrast, *Hebrews*
18 applies a different set of terms to Christ. He was "without sin"
19 (*Heb. 4:15, NRSV*) and faithful (*Heb. 2:17; Heb. 3:2, 6*), despite
20 being tempted as we are, which enables Him to help us when we
21 are tempted (*Heb. 2:18*). We must understand the obedience of
22 Christ in *Hebrews 5:8* in light of these sets of opposing

1 characteristics, as evinced by the Exodus generation, in
2 Hebrews 3:8-11, 15-19. Then we will identify readily Christ's
3 obedience as an education that is integral to our own faith and
4 trust in God (*compare Rom. 1:5, Rom. 16:26*). Just as Christ
5 learned obedience as a human by submitting to, and trusting in,
6 God's will over His own, so should we (*Rev. 14:12*).

7 Now to our final question: Why does Hebrews 5:9 state that
8 Christ was "made perfect"? After all, wasn't He perfect already?
9 In what way, then, was He made perfect? The previous verse
10 furnishes us with context in answer to our inquiry: "Although
11 he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered"
12 (*Heb. 5:8, NRSV*). Therefore, Paul concludes, "And having been
13 made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all
14 who obey him" (*Heb. 5:9, NRSV*). Thus, Jesus' perfection resulted
15 from the obedience He learned through suffering and equipped
16 Him to be our heavenly High Priest.

17 In summary, we can say that Christ's prayer to the One who
18 was able to save Him from death was heard because He prayed for
19 God's will to be done. As a result, He was ultimately brought
20 back to life. He learned obedience by submitting to, and
21 trusting in, God's will. Finally, Christ was made our perfect
22 High Priest through obedience to God, so that He could become

1 "the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him," meaning
2 us (*Heb. 5:9, NRSV*).

3

4 **Thought Questions:**

- 5 1. If Christ was subject to obedience and learned it in His
6 human experience, how important is obedience for us?
- 7 2. How can I walk in the Garden of Eden in the new earth if
8 I never experience the Garden of Gethsemane (that is,
9 God's will being done here and now)? Why do these two
10 experiences come as a package?
- 11 3. Why do you think we human beings have a "semi-allergic
12 reaction" to obeying almost any authority? How do you
13 think we could "cure" a similar negative reaction to
14 submission to divine authority?
- 15 4. Why might there be a tension within the human heart between
16 loving God and obeying Him? How could John 14:15 help us
17 resolve this problem?

18

19 ***Christ Like Us, Yet Different From Us***

20 As we have seen, Christ is portrayed as far superior to the
21 angels. In fact, He is portrayed as the exact imprint of God's
22 very being (*Heb. 1:3*). Thus, He is worthy of worship (*Heb. 1:6*),

1 according to the first chapter of Hebrews. Subsequently, He is
2 portrayed, in the second chapter, as being made lower than the
3 angels for a while. Jesus is not just a trifle inferior to the
4 angels. Rather, in adopting "flesh and blood" and the suffering
5 which this experience entails, He fully shared the fate of His
6 human brethren (*Heb. 2:14*). The manner in which Jesus was "made
7 lower than the angels" is not simply by His incarnation but by
8 His suffering in death (*Heb. 2:9*). The Son entered the human
9 sphere so much so that He embraced mortality in contrast to the
10 angels, who do not face death.

11 What Christ accomplished enabled Him to become "a merciful
12 and faithful High Priest in the service of . . . atonement for
13 the sins of the people" (*Heb. 2:17, NRSV*).

14

15 **Thought Question:** At the very moment that this commentary is
16 being penned, people the world over are fearful of becoming
17 infected with, and dying from, the coronavirus. How do the acts
18 of Christ in adopting our flesh and blood and sharing our fate
19 help us when we face such ominous threats and terminal diseases?

20

21 **Part III: Application**

22

1 Consider this statement from Ellen G. White on the human
2 nature of Christ: "Many claim that it was impossible for Christ
3 to be overcome by temptation. Then He could not have been placed
4 in Adam's position; He could not have gained the victory that
5 Adam failed to gain. If we have in any sense a more trying
6 conflict than had Christ, then He would not be able to succor
7 us. But our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities.
8 He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to
9 temptation. We have nothing to bear which He has not
10 endured."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 117.

11

12 **Thought Question:** What comfort and hope does it give you to know
13 that Jesus has endured all that we are called to endure?

14

15

16

1 **TE-1Q-2022-05**

2

3 **Key Texts:** *Gen. 15:13-21; Heb. 3:12-19; Heb. 4:6-11; Heb. 4:1,*
4 *3, 5, 10; Deut. 5:1-3; Heb. 4:8-11.*

5

6 **Part I: Overview**

7

8 **Lesson Themes:** The Davidic covenant promised rest to the
9 enthroned king and his people. The logical progression of
10 Hebrews concurs with this notion. In Hebrews 1 and 2, we see
11 the preeminence of Christ as divine Ruler and Deliverer of His
12 people. Hebrews 3 and 4 show Jesus' superiority to Moses and
13 Joshua as the divine Leader who provides rest. Sabbath rest in
14 the Old Testament is portrayed in two versions of the Ten
15 Commandments (*Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5*). The former text
16 stresses Creation, the latter Redemption. In Hebrews 3 and 4,
17 Paul uses the Exodus generation (not their young children) as
18 an example of unbelief and disobedience (*Heb. 3:19*) to show the
19 detrimental consequence of being unable to enter into the land
20 of rest in Canaan. Turning to his audience, Paul exhorts them
21 with a quote from Psalm 95: "Today, if you hear his voice, do
22 not harden your hearts" (*Heb. 4:7, NRSV*), but rather, enter into
TE-1Q-2022, *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews* by Félix Cortez

1 His rest (*Heb. 4:9*). What is this rest (in Greek, *sabbatismos*)
 2 that Paul speaks of? Why is Paul encouraging his audience to
 3 enter into it? These are the questions we shall address now.

4

5 **Part II: Commentary**

6

7 ***A Sabbath Observance Remains***

8 Let us begin first by defining the “rest” of Hebrews 4:9.

9 According to The *SDA Bible Commentary*, the word rendered as
 10 “rest” in Hebrews 4:9 comes from the Greek *sabbatismos*, meaning
 11 “ ‘a resting [from previous activity],’ ” which in later use
 12 comes to mean “a Sabbathkeeping,” from the verb *sabbatizō*, “to
 13 rest,” “to cease,” “to keep the Sabbath.”

14 “*Sabbatizō* is used seven times in the LXX [the Septuagint,
 15 the Jews’ Greek translation of the Old Testament], once of the
 16 literal seventh-day Sabbath (Ex. 16:30), once of other sabbaths
 17 (Lev. 23:32), and five times of the land’s resting in the
 18 sabbatical year (Lev. 26:34, 35; 2 Chron. 36:21). . . .

19 Accordingly, the fundamental idea expressed by *sabbatizō* in the
 20 LXX is that of resting or ceasing from labor or other activity.
 21 Hence usage of the related Greek and Hebrew words implies that
 22 the noun *sabbatismos* may denote either the literal Sabbath

1 'rest' or simply 'rest' or 'cessation' in a more general sense.
 2 Thus, a linguistic study of the word *sabbatismos* in Heb. 4:9
 3 leaves it uncertain whether the weekly Sabbath 'rest' is here
 4 referred to, or simply 'rest' or 'cessation' in a general sense.
 5 Context alone can decide the matter.

6 "The writer of Hebrews appears to use *katapausis* ["ceasing
 7 from labor"; see on Hebrews 3:11] and *sabbatismos* more or less
 8 synonymously:

9 "1. Because Joshua could not lead Israel into spiritual
 10 'rest' (*katapausis*, v. 8), a *sabbatismos* (v. 9) remains for
 11 Christians. Consistency seems to require that what remains be
 12 the same as what was there to begin with. . . .

13 "2. From vs. 1, 6 it is clear that what remains for the
 14 people of God in NT times is a *katapausis*; in v. 9 it is said
 15 that a *sabbatismos* remains. To declare that what remains for
 16 'the people of God' is the weekly Sabbath, is to declare that
 17 what Joshua failed to lead Israel into was the weekly Sabbath.

18 "3. The fact that in the LXX, the Bible of the NT church,
 19 *katapauō* (Gen. 2:2, 3; Ex. 20:11) and *sabbatizō* (Ex. 16:30; Lev.
 20 23:32) are used interchangeably to denote the seventh-day
 21 Sabbath, would tend to preclude the suggestion that the writer

1 of Hebrews intended to make a distinction between the noun forms
2 of these words in Heb. 3; 4.

3 "It may be noted, further, that the Jews of Paul's time,
4 whether Christian or non-Christian, were punctilious in their
5 observance of the fourth commandment. Certainly, in writing to
6 Jews, the author of Hebrews would not consider it necessary to
7 prove to *them* that Sabbathkeeping 'remaineth.' If the
8 conclusion of the extended argument beginning with ch. 3:7 is
9 that Sabbathkeeping remains for the people of God, it would seem
10 that the writer of Hebrews is guilty of a *non sequitur*, for the
11 conclusion does not follow logically from the argument. There
12 would have been no point in so labored an effort to persuade
13 the Jews to do what they were already doing—observing the
14 seventh-day Sabbath. Furthermore, in apostolic times the
15 seventh-day Sabbath was observed by all Christians, Jew and
16 Gentile alike, and any argument to prove the validity of the
17 Sabbath in those early Christian times would have been
18 pointless. Furthermore, it may be observed that the section of
19 the book of Hebrews consisting of chs. 3 and 4 opens with an
20 invitation to 'consider the Apostle and High Priest of our
21 profession, Christ Jesus' (ch. 3:1), and closes with an earnest
22 plea to 'come boldly' before Him in order to 'obtain mercy, and

1 find grace to help in time of need' (ch. 4:16). What relationship
2 a protracted argument designed to prove that Sabbath observance
3 remains as an obligation to the Christian church might have to
4 the declared theme of chs. 3 and 4—the ministry of Christ as
5 our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary—is obscure
6 indeed.

7 " 'The rest here spoken of is the rest of grace' " (EGW
8 Supplementary Material on Heb. 4:9; cf. GC 253). It is 'the true
9 rest of faith' (MB 1).

10 "We enter into God's 'rest' when we 'consider' Jesus (ch.
11 3:1) and listen to His voice (chs. 3:7, 15; 4:7), when we
12 exercise faith in Him (ch. 4:2, 3), when we cease from our own
13 efforts to earn salvation (v. 10), when we 'hold fast our
14 profession' (v. 14), and when we draw near to the throne of grace
15 (v. 16). Those who would enter into this experience must beware
16 of 'an evil heart of unbelief' (ch. 3:12), of hardening their
17 hearts (chs. 3:8, 15; 4:7). They must strive to enter into God's
18 'rest' (ch. 4:11).

19 "Those who enter into God's 'rest' will 'hold fast' their
20 'profession' (v. 14). They will 'come boldly unto the throne
21 of grace' to 'obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of

1 need' (v. 16)."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 422, 423,
2 comment on "Rest" in Hebrews 4:9.

3 On the rest spoken of in Hebrews 4:9, Ellen G. White frames
4 the discussion in a sketch of the life of the great English
5 reformer, John Wesley: "In a day of great spiritual darkness,
6 Whitefield and the Wesleys appeared as light bearers for God.
7 Under the rule of the established church the people of England
8 had lapsed into a state of religious declension hardly to be
9 distinguished from heathenism. Natural religion was the
10 favorite study of the clergy, and included most of their
11 theology. The higher classes sneered at piety, and prided
12 themselves on being above what they called its fanaticism. The
13 lower classes were grossly ignorant and abandoned to vice, while
14 the church had no courage or faith any longer to support the
15 downfallen cause of truth.

16 "The great doctrine of justification by faith, so clearly
17 taught by Luther, had been almost wholly lost sight of; and the
18 Romish principle of trusting to good works for salvation, had
19 taken its place. Whitefield and the Wesleys, who were members
20 of the established church, were sincere seekers for the favor
21 of God, and this they had been taught was to be secured by a

1 virtuous life and an observance of the ordinances of religion.

2 . . .

3 "Wesley and his associates were led to see that true
4 religion is seated in the heart, and that God's law extends to
5 the thoughts as well as to the words and actions. Convinced of
6 the necessity of holiness of heart, as well as correctness of
7 outward deportment, they set out in earnest upon a new life.
8 By the most diligent and prayerful efforts they endeavored to
9 subdue the evils of the natural heart. They lived a life of
10 self-denial, charity, and humiliation, observing with great
11 rigor and exactness every measure which they thought could be
12 helpful to them in obtaining what they most desired—that
13 holiness which could secure the favor of God. But they did not
14 obtain the object which they sought. In vain were their
15 endeavors to free themselves from the condemnation of sin or
16 to break its power. It was the same struggle which Luther had
17 experienced in his cell at Erfurt. It was the same question which
18 had tortured his soul—'How should man be just before God?' Job.
19 9:2. . . .

20 "Wesley, under the instruction of a Moravian preacher,
21 arrived at a clearer understanding of Bible faith. He was
22 convinced that he must renounce all dependence upon his own

1 works for salvation and must trust wholly to 'the Lamb of God,
2 which taketh away the sin of the world.' At a meeting of the
3 Moravian society in London a statement was read from Luther,
4 describing the change which the Spirit of God works in the heart
5 of the believer. As Wesley listened, faith was kindled in his
6 soul. . . . 'I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for
7 salvation: and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away
8 my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.'
9 . . .

10 "Through long years of wearisome and comfortless
11 striving—years of rigorous self-denial, of reproach and
12 humiliation—Wesley had steadfastly adhered to his one purpose
13 of seeking God. Now he had found Him; and he found that the grace
14 which he had toiled to win by prayers and fasts, by almsdeeds
15 and self-abnegation, was a gift, 'without money and without
16 price.' "—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 253-256.

17

18 **Part III: Application**

19

20 **Thought Questions:**

1 1. How does the story of John Wesley illustrate the
2 difference between resting solely in Christ's merits and the
3 futility of trusting in our own works, to save us?

4 2. What is the rest in Hebrews 4:9 that remains for
5 Christians?

6 3. Ellen G. White avers that the rest that Paul speaks of
7 in Hebrews 4:9 is the rest of grace. How do we enter into this
8 rest of grace?

9

10

11

1 **TE-1Q-2022-06**

2

3 **Key Texts:** *Heb. 5:1-10; Gen. 14:18-20; 1 Pet. 2:9; Heb. 7:1-3;*

4 *Heb. 7:11-16, 22, 26.*

5

6 **Part I: Overview**

7

8 **Lesson Themes:** Sin separated us from God. Christ, however, came
9 to bridge that gulf. In order to do that, He became our High
10 Priest. His role has similarities to human priests, but also
11 differences. He is called a priest "according to the order of
12 Melchizedek" (*Heb. 5:6, NRSV*). What that actually means is that
13 Christ is "resembling Melchizedek" (*Heb. 7:15, NRSV*). This king
14 and priest Melchizedek was a contemporary of Abram. When a
15 coalition of kings attacked Sodom and Gomorrah, they not only
16 conquered it, but took Lot, the nephew of Abram, captive. In
17 response, Abram launched a counterattack and rescued Lot and
18 the other captured citizens of those cities, together with the
19 plundered goods. After they returned from battle, Melchizedek,
20 king and priest of Salem, blessed Abram, and in return Abram
21 gave Melchizedek one tenth of all the battle spoil (*Genesis 14*).
22 This Melchizedek was not Christ incarnate, nor a heavenly being.

1 He was just a human king and priest, a useful paradigm for Paul
2 to use. Melchizedek, as a type of Christ, fits into Paul's
3 argument. Although not belonging to the tribe of Levi—the
4 priestly tribe in ancient Israel—Christ became an effective and
5 superior priest because His priesthood was according to the
6 order of Melchizedek, the king-priest of Salem. Note that
7 Melchizedek received the tithe from Abraham, which makes his
8 priesthood prior to and superior to that of that of Levi. Thus,
9 the priesthood of Melchizedek fittingly typifies Christ's royal
10 priesthood.

11

12 **Part II: Commentary**

13

14 ***High-Priestly Qualifications***

15 Hebrews 5:1-4 begins with a general catalog of high-priestly
16 qualifications. "Every high priest chosen from among mortals
17 is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf,
18 to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently
19 with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to
20 weakness; and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his
21 own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not

1 presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by
2 God, just as Aaron was" (*Heb. 5:1-4, NRSV*).

3 In all, twelve qualities of a high priest are listed in
4 Hebrews 5:1-4. First, the job description: every high priest
5 is (1) "chosen from among mortals," (2) selected "on their
6 behalf," (3) is "in charge of things pertaining to God," and
7 (4) is appointed "to offer gifts and sacrifices" (5) "for sins."
8 Next comes the personal dispositions: (6) "He is able to deal
9 gently with the ignorant and wayward" and (7) is "subject to
10 weakness." Furthermore, (8) "he must offer sacrifice for his
11 own sins," (9) "as well as for those of the people." Finally,
12 the issue of vocation: (10) "one does not presume to take this
13 honor," (11) "but takes it only when called by God," (12) "just
14 as Aaron was" called.

15 Four characteristics for the high priest stand out. These
16 are: solidarity with humans (qualities 1-3), ability to
17 moderate his emotions (quality 6), subject to weakness (quality
18 7), and, finally, the priest's calling (quality 12). We will
19 deal with each one of these four outstanding characteristics
20 before turning our attention to Christ's qualifications for
21 this job.

1 First, the high priest is chosen from among his own people.
2 He was supposed to be an Israelite (*Exod. 29:9, 44; Num. 18:1-7*)
3 from the tribe of Levi. Aaron was appointed first as high priest
4 by God Himself (*Exod. 28:1*). When certain individuals, such as
5 Korah and his company, presumed to appoint themselves or others
6 to the position of high priest, God had to destroy them (*Num.*
7 *16:15-40*). The priesthood and its prerogatives were not a
8 trifling matter, as King Uzziah experienced via a leprous
9 outbreak on his own body when he forced his way into the temple
10 to offer on the altar of incense (*2 Chron. 26:16-21*).
11 Interestingly, during the second Temple period, or
12 intertestamental period, at the end of the Hasmonean kingdom,
13 Salome Alexandra took the throne as queen (76-67 B.C.), but not
14 the priesthood. Because of her gender, she could not be high
15 priest. So, she appointed her eldest son, Hyrcanus II, to the
16 position. His younger brother Aristobolus II did not accept the
17 appointment of his brother and rivaled him for the office.

18 So, we see that the earthly high priest was always a male,
19 chosen from his own people. He also needed to show solidarity
20 with his own people. Thus, as we said, he was an Israelite, a
21 descendant of Aaron, from the tribe of Levi. His job was to
22 represent other humans before God and offer gifts and sacrifices

1 on his own behalf and on theirs. The topic of Christ's solidarity
2 with us humans surfaces in Hebrews 2:17, 18, resurfaces in
3 Hebrews 4:14-16, and will be developed further in Hebrews 5.

4 Second, the high priest, as Hebrews describes him, is a
5 person who is able to moderate, meaning restrain, his own
6 emotion with those who are ignorant and go astray. "He is able
7 to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward" (*Heb. 5:2, NRSV*).
8 The ideal high priest was a person not too harsh but also not
9 indifferent to sin. The earthly high priest shared in the
10 general responsibilities during the cultic year (*Exod.*
11 *29:38-46*); but he alone offered the sacrifices on the Day of
12 Atonement (*Lev. 16:1-25*) and carried the Urim and the Thummim
13 (*Exod. 28:30*). He needed to do all of these things with emotional
14 self-control.

15 Third, while at least sometimes the high priest must have
16 been frustrated with the sins committed by his people (just
17 think of the high priest Eli when he wrongly accused Hannah of
18 being drunk [*1 Sam. 1:13-14*]), he was himself subject to
19 weakness. Hebrews 5:2 literally says the high priest was
20 "clothed," "wore," or was "surrounded" with weakness underneath
21 his elaborate outer garb (*Exodus 28*). This distinction is
22 important, because his weakness enabled him to deal gently with

1 the wrongdoers. As a high priest, he showed solidarity with his
2 people, restrained his emotions when frustrated, and was also
3 aware that he was subject to sin. This made him an approachable
4 person.

5 Fourth, the office of the high priest was not one for which
6 a person could enlist or run. The first appointee, Aaron, was
7 chosen by God, and no one was permitted to confer this honor
8 upon himself. A person accepted it only when summoned by God.

9 In summary, a high priest showed solidarity with his
10 people, controlled his emotions, was aware of his weakness, and
11 took the office only when summoned by God.

12

13 **Thought Question:** When the church applies corrective discipline
14 to an erring person, why is it important to show solidarity,
15 have emotional self-control, and be aware of one's own weakness?

16

17 ***Christ's Qualifications***

18 With Hebrews 5:5, 6, Paul turns the discussion to Jesus. Paul
19 considers Jesus in the context of two of the qualifications of
20 high priest, delineated in the previous section, namely, His
21 divine appointment and His solidarity with humans.

1 First, Christ as High Priest did not take the honor upon
2 Himself, but rather God appointed Him to the position. How does
3 Paul make that point? By welding two psalms together. Both have
4 already been used in Hebrews, in Hebrews 1:5 and Hebrews 1:14,
5 at the beginning and end of a string of quotations in Hebrews
6 1:5-14. The first quotation is from Psalm 2:7. Psalm 2 is the
7 Messianic psalm that talks about the appointment of Christ as
8 the prophesied Son of David. The second quote comes from Psalm
9 110:4 and shows that Christ is called to be a Priest by God.
10 His priestly accomplishments were already alluded to in Hebrews
11 1:3, "When he had made purification for sins, he sat down"
12 (NRSV). Here Paul combines the Sonship motif, with the
13 high-priestly motif of Christ. Christ is the appointed Son of
14 God and the perfect High Priest for humans, "according to the
15 order of Melchizedek" (*Heb. 5:6, NRSV*), or as Hebrews 7:15
16 states, "resembling Melchizedek" (NRSV). Like Melchizedek,
17 Christ is King and Priest. Compared to human Levitical high
18 priests, Christ is better than they are in that He is able to
19 deal gently with the ignorant and wayward. Likewise, He is able
20 to "sympathize with our weaknesses" (*Heb. 4:15, NRSV*) and "to
21 help those who are being tested" (*Heb. 2:18, NRSV*). He is "able

1 to save completely" (*Heb. 7:25, NIV*), and can perfect "forever
2 those who are being made holy" (*Heb. 10:14, NIV*).

3 The second qualification of Christ, namely, showing
4 solidarity with humans, is made obvious by His suffering, His
5 learning obedience, and His becoming perfect (*Heb. 5:7-10*).

6

7 **Thought Question:** Read Hebrews 7:23-25. Why was it necessary
8 to have a better high priest than those from the tribe of Levi?

9

10 **Part III: Application**

11

12 Thus far, Paul describes Jesus as superior to the angels in His
13 capacity as the enthroned Son of God (*Hebrews 1*). Yet, for a
14 time, Jesus is made lower than the angels, as One who, through
15 His death, destroyed Satan's power of death (*Hebrews 2*). Jesus
16 is also described as the One unable to provide rest for the
17 Exodus generation because of their unbelief (*Hebrews 3*), but
18 able to offer rest for the post-Messianic people of God (*Hebrews*
19 *4*). Jesus is also a Priest who is similar, yet very different
20 from, the priests of the Levitical priesthood (*Hebrews 5*). In
21 light of this information, what is the next step to which Paul
22 wants to lead his audience?

1 Paul wants his readers to advance in their understanding
2 of Christ's High Priestly ministry by seeing His resemblance
3 as their High Priest to Melchizedek. However, there are some
4 obstacles. The obstacles include the readers' being lazy in
5 hearing the Word; needing milk as immature Christians, rather
6 than solid food; and being unskilled in the Word of
7 righteousness (*Heb. 5:11-14*). Although Paul speaks in very
8 strong terms, he balances his exhortative reproach with a
9 positive statement about their spiritual condition, by saying:
10 "Even though we speak in this way, beloved, we are confident
11 of better things in your case, things that belong to salvation"
12 (*Heb. 6:9, NRSV*).

13

14 **Application Questions:**

- 15 1. Is there ever a place in our personal spiritual journey
16 when we need to be accountable to a third party, besides
17 God, for our progress or regress? Discuss.
- 18 2. Is there a place for a spiritual authority to hold us
19 corporately accountable, just as Paul holds his audience
20 accountable? Why, or why not?
- 21 3. Is there such a thing as static Christians, or is that
22 status a contradiction in terms? Explain.

1 **TE-1Q-2022-07**

2

3 **Key Texts:** *Heb. 6:4-6, Matt. 16:24, Rom. 6:6, Heb. 10:26-29,*

4 *Heb. 6:9-13, Heb. 6:17-20.*

5

6 **Part I: Overview**

7

8 **Lesson Themes:** Hebrews 5 ends on a somewhat somber note, with
9 Paul rebuking his audience for not advancing in their spiritual
10 journey. However, Paul intends to advance in his sermon to
11 deeper theological insights in spite of an audience that was
12 “dull of hearing” (*see Heb. 5:11, NKJV*). Only if time permits
13 will he readdress basic teachings, such as “repentance from dead
14 works,” “faith toward God,” “instruction about baptisms,”
15 “laying on of hands,” “resurrection of the dead,” and “eternal
16 judgment” (*Heb. 6:1, 2, NRSV*).

17 Additionally, the audience has experienced, at some point
18 in the past, a range of divine blessings. These blessings are
19 enumerated in Hebrews 6:4, 5. The audience has been
20 “enlightened,” “tasted the heavenly gift,” “shared in the Holy
21 Spirit,” and “tasted the goodness of the word of God and the

1 powers of the age to come" (NRSV). These phrases are synonymous
2 with experiencing conversion, the grace of God, the Holy Spirit
3 through signs and wonders, the truth of the gospel, and
4 salvation.

5 Amid it all, some members of the audience seem to have
6 apostatized. Paul tells his audience, "It is impossible to
7 restore again to repentance those" (Heb. 6:4, NRSV) who have
8 apostatized. A similarly devastating judgment is uttered in
9 Hebrews 10:26-29 against those who willfully persist in sin
10 after having received the knowledge of the truth. The apostate's
11 behavior is characterized by metaphors that amount to rejecting
12 Christ, His sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit.

13

14 **Part II: Commentary**

15

16 ***The Impossibility of Repentance***

17 Does Hebrews 6:4-6, as well as Hebrews 10:26-29, talk about the
18 impossibility of repentance? Does this notion mean that if a
19 Christian apostatizes, he or she cannot be renewed to
20 repentance? Is there no way to have a second chance at
21 repentance? The idea that repentance cannot be renewed has been
22 the prevalent understanding of Hebrew 6:4-6, as held by

1 Christians throughout church history, leading some to postpone
2 their baptism all the way to their deathbed. How do such strong
3 warnings fare when one looks at the post-Gethsemane experience
4 of Peter (*Matt. 26:69-75*)? In the examination that follows, we
5 want to understand Hebrews 6:4-6 and harmonize it with the
6 experience of Peter, as well as with all of Scripture.

7 First, we want to understand what the audience of Hebrews
8 experienced. Some of them had been enlightened, had tasted the
9 heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, tasted the good Word
10 of God, and then had fallen away. The first metaphor used to
11 describe the Christian community is "enlightened," a term that
12 appears in Hebrews 10:32, where it reads: "But recall those
13 earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured
14 a hard struggle with sufferings" (*NRSV*). This metaphor seems
15 to describe the initial Christian experience the audience had.
16 By God's Spirit, the audience has transitioned from "dead works"
17 to "faith toward God" (*Heb. 6:1, NRSV*) and to the "knowledge
18 of the truth" (*Heb. 10:26, NRSV*).

19 The second metaphor, "have tasted the heavenly gift" (*Heb.*
20 *6:4, NRSV*), shows that the audience had a spiritual experience
21 in God's gracious gift of salvation. The verb "taste" appears
22 in Hebrews 2:9, where it speaks of Christ who had to "taste death

1 for everyone" (NRSV). When Christ tasted death as a human being,
2 He was experiencing something thus far unknown to Him. The
3 audience of Hebrews has tasted the heavenly gift, something
4 previously unknown to them, namely, "so great a salvation" (Heb.
5 2:3, NRSV).

6 Closely associated with the tasting of the heavenly gift
7 is the third metaphor. Christians "have shared in the Holy
8 Spirit" (Heb. 6:4, NRSV), evoking the language of
9 participation, which recalls the wording of Hebrews 3:1 and
10 Hebrews 3:14, in which the audience is described as "holy
11 brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" and "partakers of
12 Christ" (NKJV). The distribution of the Holy Spirit is something
13 this audience has experienced vividly in their early phase of
14 being evangelized (Heb. 2:4).

15 The series of metaphors continues with a repetition of
16 tasting imagery. Having tasted the "goodness of the word of God"
17 (Heb. 6:5, NRSV) refers to the hearing of the gospel, received
18 when the listeners accepted the good news of salvation (Heb.
19 2:3). Sometimes the Hebrew Bible compares the Word of God to
20 food (see Deut. 8:3). The audience is not just the recipients
21 of the goodness of the Word of God; they also experience the
22 "powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:5, NRSV), which includes

1 the "signs, wonders, and various acts of power" (*Heb. 2:4,*
2 *author's translation*).

3 After four lengthy, positive metaphors, there is a
4 dramatically abrupt change. The last metaphor conveys the
5 phenomenon of apostasy: "and then have fallen away" (*Heb. 6:6,*
6 *NRSV*). The verb "fall away," or "commit apostasy," can mean "to
7 sin," in a general sense. But because of the phrasing that
8 follows, namely, "crucifying again the Son of God" (*Heb. 6:6,*
9 *NRSV*) and putting Him to "open shame" (*Heb. 6:6, NASB*), the sin
10 needs to be understood in the more radical sense of breaking
11 away from each salvation experience described so far in verses
12 4 and 5. In simple terms, the audience has experienced
13 conversion, salvation, the Holy Spirit through signs and
14 wonders, and the goodness of the Word of God, and then
15 apostatized.

16 Now that we understand what the audience of Hebrews
17 experienced, let us now turn to examining the notion of the
18 impossibility of repentance in Hebrews 6:4-6. We need to be
19 somewhat technical in our approach. All five metaphors
20 mentioned above are verbal adjectives (participles) in Greek.
21 They are all in the past tense (aorist), a tense describing an
22 action in the past. The actions are intrinsically terminal. The

1 chain of participles describes one and the same group of people.
2 Thus, this part of the audience has gone from being
3 “enlightened” to “apostatizing,” thereby encountering the
4 whole range of religious experiences some time ago.

5 The last part of Hebrews 6:6 employs a second block of
6 participles (“again crucify” and “put Him to open shame” in
7 Hebrews 6:6, NASB). This time Paul uses the present tense
8 participles. He suddenly switches from the past (aorist) tense
9 to the present tense, which expresses action as being in
10 process. What does that denote? The present tense represents
11 action as it develops, which is happening at the time of
12 speaking. Both of these participles describe apostasy in the
13 present tense. Thus, the action is seen as a crime that prevents
14 the renewal unto repentance, because it makes the apostate an
15 enemy of Christ. He or she crucifies the Son of God again and
16 puts Him to open shame in an ongoing manner. What does that
17 suggest? To shame Christ is to reenact the crucifixion. This
18 reenactment shows the devastating and continuing impact of
19 apostasy in those who once were enlightened. They cannot be
20 restored to repentance because of the present, ongoing attitude
21 they have toward Christ. Their actions describe both the cause
22 of apostasy and the ongoing attitude of the apostate. By

1 rejecting Christ, the apostate embraces the impossibility of
2 repentance.

3 But what about someone who does not have such an attitude?
4 Does such a person have a chance? But of course! Here the example
5 of Peter is helpful. While he denied Christ three times, Peter
6 suddenly remembered what Christ foretold about him, "and he went
7 out and wept bitterly" (*Matt. 26:75, NRSV*). This sorrow is a
8 completely different attitude than that of the apostates in
9 Hebrews 6, who crucify the Son of God and openly shame Him.

10 Furthermore,

11 1 John 2:1 states: "I am writing these things to you so that
12 you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate
13 with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (*NRSV*). The
14 Advocate can be useful only if accepted, not shamed or
15 crucified.

16 In summary, Hebrews 6:4-6 makes clear that the audience
17 encountered the whole range or religious experiences from
18 conversion to apostasy. What made it impossible for some of them
19 to be renewed to repentance was their attitude of shaming Christ
20 and thus reenacting the crucifixion process. Basically, this
21 attitude amounted to declaring Christ as their enemy. However,
22 with an attitude of humble repentance, such as Peter's,

1 forgiveness is always possible. The advocate Christ Jesus is
2 willing to renew us to repentance.

3 The same is true for the passage in Hebrews 10:26-29. This
4 passage starts with the willful, high handed, intentional sin.
5 “For if we willfully persist in sin after having received the
6 knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for
7 sins” (*Heb. 10:26, NRSV*). Once again, a present, ongoing,
8 deliberate persistence in sin is described here, which deprives
9 anybody of forgiveness. Some people have “trampled underfoot
10 the Son of God, and [have] profaned the blood of the covenant
11 by which he was sanctified, and [have] outraged the Spirit of
12 grace” (*Heb. 10:29, ESV*). Their actions portray Jesus as an
13 enemy, with His blood devoid of its saving power. These
14 individuals arrogantly insult and spurn God’s offer of grace.
15 Such people do not even want to repent. They are demonstrating
16 an attitude of open defiance against Christ and His work. Thus,
17 repentance is impossible.

18

19 ***We Are Confident of Better Things in Your Case***

20 After such a stern warning, Paul of Hebrews returns to His
21 audience with a change of tone and encouraging words. “Even
22 though we speak in this way, beloved, we are confident of better

1 things in your case, things that belong to salvation" (*Heb. 6:9*,
2 *NRSV*). This audience is like the good soil mentioned in verse
3 7, which produces a fruitful crop. These people have a track
4 record of Christian service. God is just in not overlooking that
5 (*Heb. 6:10*). By addressing his audience as "beloved," Paul
6 implicitly states that he sees genuine hope for his readers.

7

8 **Part III: Application**

9

10 It is not an uncommon phenomenon in the Seventh-day Adventist
11 Church for young teenagers to get baptized. As genuine and
12 sincere as their experience with Christ may have been, when they
13 become older and attend college, their faith may fade and
14 dwindle. Some leave the church at 19, meandering through life
15 until, somewhere in their 30s, after several life crises, many
16 of them find their way back into the church. What is the best
17 way of dealing with such a former member who finds his or her
18 way back to church?

19 1. How would you respond to such a person if he or she read
20 Hebrews 6:4-6 and thought that repentance was not
21 possible?

- 1 2. What can we do individually, as well as corporately, to
- 2 prevent apostasy in our families, as well as in our church?
- 3

1 **TE-1Q-2022-08**

2

3 **Key Texts:** *Heb. 7:11-19; Heb. 8:10-12; Jer. 31:31-34; Heb.*
4 *8:1-6; Exod. 24:1-8; Ezek. 36:26, 27.*

5

6 **Part I: Overview**

7

8 **Lesson Themes:** The old covenant was given on the basis of the
9 Levitical priesthood. As part of this agreement, the Levites
10 alone acted as mediators between God and the Israelites. The
11 book of Hebrews, however, talks about how Jesus has been
12 appointed High Priest, according to the order of Melchizedek.
13 Furthermore, Paul recalls the fact that Jesus was not from the
14 tribe of Levi (*Heb. 7:14*). Rather, He was from the tribe of
15 Judah. Thus, according to the laws of the Levitical priesthood,
16 He was not eligible to serve as a priest. Yet, He was appointed
17 High Priest by God Himself: " 'You are a priest forever' " (*Heb.*
18 *7:21, NRSV*).

19 One might legitimately inquire how someone from the tribe
20 of Judah could become priest, given the Levitical restrictions.
21 Only Levites were supposed to serve at the temple. Logically,
22 a change would need to take place first. Paul makes the point
TE-1Q-2022, *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews* by Félix Cortez

1 that such a change in the priesthood would necessitate a
2 corresponding change in the laws of the priesthood (*Heb. 7:12*).
3 The change in the laws of the priesthood, in turn, would lead
4 to a change of the covenant. The first covenant was with the
5 Levites and the second with Christ. Why the complete change?
6 The lesson makes the point clear that the old covenant could
7 not cleanse the conscience from sins (*Heb. 10:4, Heb. 9:14*),
8 which cleansing is the righteousness of Christ given to us.
9 Those animal sacrifices pointed forward to Christ, the true "
10 'Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' " (*John 1:29,*
11 *NRSV*). With this new covenant also comes not just an arbiter,
12 a negotiator, or a witness, but a guarantor who assures that
13 the covenant promises will be fulfilled. Further, in this new
14 covenant, the laws will be internalized within people by God's
15 writing "them on their hearts" (*Heb. 8:10, NRSV*).

16

17 **Part II: Commentary**

18

19 ***The Superiority of Melchizedek***

20 Several times in Hebrews (*Heb. 5:6, 10; Heb. 6:20*), Christ is
21 portrayed as a priest according to the order of Melchizedek.
22 In Hebrews 7, Paul dedicates some time to this priestly

1 Melchizedek for the purpose of tracing the nature of Christ's
2 priesthood. At the same time, he establishes that Christ's
3 priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood.

4 There are only two references in the Old Testament to
5 Melchizedek: Genesis 14:18 and Psalm 110:4. Hebrews summarizes
6 the Genesis account and establishes that Melchizedek is a priest
7 (*Heb. 7:1*), that he is similar to Christ (*Heb. 7:3*), and that
8 he is superior to Abraham (*Heb. 7:4*). The Genesis narrative
9 describes the first war recorded in the Bible, showcasing
10 Abraham as he pursues the four invading kings who took his nephew
11 Lot captive. After liberating the captives, Abraham returns
12 home. On the way, Melchizedek, the king-priest of Salem
13 (Jerusalem), meets Abraham with bread and wine, a detail that
14 is missing in the account of Hebrews. The former blesses the
15 latter, and the latter returns tithes to the former (*Heb. 7:1,*
16 *2*). What then makes Melchizedek superior to the Levitical
17 priesthood? Three things, as we shall see.

18 First, Melchizedek is "without father, without mother,
19 without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of
20 life" (*Heb. 7:3, NRSV*). In the Graeco-Roman world, to be without
21 a father meant to be an illegitimate child. To be without a
22 mother meant that the child was from a woman of low social

1 status. In the Jewish world, however, to be without genealogy
2 meant that the person could not qualify for the Levitical
3 priesthood. Was Melchizedek a divine figure, as some people have
4 concluded? No; he appears suddenly on the scene, in Genesis 14,
5 and disappears just as quickly again, but without any mention
6 of his family background. Because the Genesis record does not
7 tell of his father, mother, or genealogy, Paul employs
8 Melchizedek as a perfect example for the eternal nature of
9 Christ. This is supported by the statement "having neither
10 beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of
11 God, he remains a priest forever" (*Heb. 7:3, NRSV*).

12 Furthermore, the Levites are again compared with
13 Melchizedek, in Hebrews 7:8. "In the one case" mortal Levites
14 are taking tithes from their fellow Israelites, but "in the
15 other," meaning in the case of Melchizedek, tithes are received
16 by "one of whom it is testified that he lives" (*Heb. 7:8, NRSV*).
17 Here, the mortality of the Levites is contrasted with the
18 absence of a recorded death of Melchizedek, in Genesis 14.

19 Did Melchizedek never die? No, but because his death is
20 not recorded in Scripture, Paul sees in him a perfect example
21 for Christ's eternity. Such absence was a principle used by
22 ancient writers. The silence of Scripture on a given point is

1 taken as evidence that something did not exist. Melchizedek
2 enters the narrative without ancestry and exits without an
3 account of his death, which points typologically to the One who
4 is eternal. Because Melchizedek points to eternity and the
5 Levites were finite, Melchizedek is superior to them.

6 Second, Melchizedek is superior to the Levites because he
7 blessed Abraham, the patriarch, who is described as the one who
8 received the promise (*Heb. 6:13, Heb. 7:6*). Thus, "it is beyond
9 dispute that the inferior [Abraham] is blessed by the superior
10 [Melchizedek]" (*Heb. 7:7, NRSV*). Not only is Melchizedek
11 superior to the Levites because of his continuous
12 priesthood—but He is also superior because he blessed Abraham.

13 Third, Melchizedek is superior to the Levites because
14 "even Abraham the patriarch gave him a tenth of the spoils" (*Heb.*
15 *7:4, NRSV*). The great-grandson Levi and his descendants
16 basically returned tithes through Abraham to this non-Levitical
17 priest of God, Melchizedek (*Heb. 7:9, 10*). A lack of Levitical
18 genealogy does not prevent Melchizedek from receiving tithes
19 from Abraham. In the same way, a lack of Levitical genealogy
20 cannot prevent Jesus from serving as priest. The Levites were
21 commanded by the law to receive tithes from their fellow
22 Israelites and, in turn, to return tithes from the tithes

1 received (*Num. 18:21-26*). This tradition is something Paul
2 recounts (*Heb. 7:5*). The logic of his argument is obvious.
3 Melchizedek is greater than Abraham; consequently, he must be
4 greater than Levi. By extension, the priesthood of Melchizedek
5 is greater than that of the Levitical priesthood. If that is
6 true, Christ's priesthood is superior to that of any human
7 priests in the earthly tabernacle or temple. Hence, He is called
8 a priest "forever, according to the order of Melchizedek" (*Heb.*
9 *7:17, NRSV*).

10 In summary, Melchizedek is superior to the Levites because
11 of his continuous priesthood. He blessed Abraham, the ancestor
12 of the Levites, and the Levites returned tithes to Melchizedek
13 through Abraham.

14

15 ***The Superiority of Christ's Priesthood***

16 Based on what was just said, Christ's priesthood is superior
17 to the Levitical priesthood for several reasons.

18 First, Christ became a priest by "the power of an
19 indestructible life" and by God's appointment, as witnessed to
20 by Psalm 110:4; it was not through physical descent based on
21 Aaronic legal requirements (*Heb. 7:16, 17, NSRV; see Exodus 29*).
22 Christ's priesthood is intimately connected to who He is. Yes,

1 Christ died, but He was resurrected (*Heb. 13:20*). He was
2 "exalted above the heavens" (*Heb. 7:26, NRSV*) and is now seated
3 "at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens"
4 (*Heb. 8:1, NRSV*), where He "is able for all time to save those
5 who approach God through him" (*Heb. 7:25, NRSV*).

6 Moreover, the Levitical priests were appointed on a
7 hereditary basis. None enjoyed the priesthood in perpetuity,
8 "because they were prevented by death from continuing in office"
9 (*Heb. 7:23, NRSV*). By contrast, Christ "holds his priesthood
10 permanently, because he continues forever" (*Heb. 7:24, NRSV*)
11 and "he always lives to make intercession for them" (*Heb. 7:25,*
12 *NRSV*). Christ is described by Hebrews as Someone who "continues
13 forever," "is able for all time to save," and "always lives"
14 (*Heb. 7:24, 25, NRSV*). Simply put, Christ is superior to the
15 Levitical priesthood, because He has immortality in comparison
16 to their transience.

17 Second, Christ was confirmed as a priest by God through
18 an oath: " 'The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind,
19 'You are a priest forever" ' " (*Heb. 7:21, NRSV*). Oaths are
20 solemn promises, often evoking a divine witness. Because God
21 could not swear by a greater divine power when He promised
22 Abraham descendants, "he swore by himself, saying, 'I will

1 surely bless you and multiply you' " (*Heb. 6:13, 14, NRSV*). To
2 the Exodus generation, God swore, " 'They will not enter my rest'
3 " (*Heb. 3:11, NRSV*). When God swears an oath, He will faithfully
4 execute it. That is why Jesus has "become the guarantee of a
5 better covenant" (*Heb. 7:22*). The Levites, on the other hand,
6 were inaugurated into the priesthood by divine command (*Exod.*
7 *28:1*), not by an oath. Thus, Christ is superior to them.

8 Finally, Christ is superior to the Levitical priesthood
9 because He is morally perfect. The priests of Aaron's line
10 sacrificed daily, although ultimately ineffectively (*Heb.*
11 *10:1-4*). They offered sacrifice first for their own sins before
12 they offered sacrifice for others. By contrast, Christ offered
13 Himself as a sinless sacrifice once for all (*Heb. 7:27*). Such
14 a priest is appropriate for us, for He is "holy, blameless,
15 undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the
16 heavens" (*Heb. 7:26, NRSV*). While these terms are virtually
17 synonymous, they nonetheless have slightly different nuances.
18 Christ was morally separated, innocent, and unstained by sin.
19 Such attributes make Christ superior to the Aaronic line of
20 priests (*see Acts 2:27, Heb. 4:15*).

1 In summary, Christ is better than the Levites, because He
2 is immortal, was confirmed by a divine oath, and is morally
3 perfect.

4

5 **Part III: Application**

6

7 Think of how Christ is compared to Melchizedek in Hebrews 7.
8 Melchizedek is thought of as both king of Salem and priest of
9 the Most High God (*Heb. 7:1*).

- 10 1. Why do you think Melchizedek is portrayed as having a
11 double role? Compare his duality of roles to that of
12 Christ, who is, first, a Priest according to the order of
13 Melchizedek, but second, a member of the royal tribe of
14 Judah.
- 15 2. What is the tribe of Judah primarily associated with (see
16 *Gen. 49:10*)? How does Christ fulfill both roles?
- 17 3. How would you view sin, if every time you transgressed,
18 it would cost you a lamb or a bull, depending on your social
19 status (maybe a bike or a car in today's terms)?

20

21

1 **TE-1Q-2022-09**

2

3 **Key Texts:** *Heb. 9:15, Gen. 15:6-21, Jer. 34:8-22, Eph.*

4 *3:14-19, Heb. 7:27, Heb. 10:10, Heb. 9:22-28.*

5

6 **Part I: Overview**

7

8 **Lesson Themes:** Hebrews makes clear that the substitutionary
9 death of Jesus is necessary to save us, because “without the
10 shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (*Heb. 9:22,*
11 *NRSV*). Blood stands for the life of the substitute. The demand
12 that the transgressor die was fulfilled by Jesus, who died once
13 for all as an infinite sacrifice for all humanity.

14 The Old Testament delineates more than one kind of
15 offering. Leviticus enumerates burnt offerings for atonement,
16 grain offerings in gratitude for God’s provision, fellowship
17 offerings for communal meals with family and friends, sin
18 offerings for the redemption of sin in cases of accidental sins,
19 and reparation offerings for cases of restitution (see
20 *Leviticus 1-6*). But, as Paul points out, these sacrifices,
21 including those offered on the Day of Atonement, were ultimately
22 ineffective because they could never take away sins (*Heb.*

1 10:1-4). Only the "precious blood of Christ," to which all these
2 sacrifices pointed, could do that (*Heb. 9:14, 1 Pet. 1:19*).

3

4 **Part II: Commentary**

5

6 As we saw last week, Hebrews 7 talks about Melchizedek who was
7 superior to the Aaronic line of priests. Consequently, Christ
8 is superior to the Levitical priesthood because He is a priest
9 according to the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 8 talks about
10 the superiority of the second covenant, whose efficacy is
11 further discussed in Hebrews 9:15. The first covenant,
12 established with the Levites, was defective and could not remove
13 sins (*Heb. 7:11, Heb. 9:9*).

14 In Hebrews 9, Paul also speaks of Christ's superior
15 sacrifice. Why is it superior? First, His offering is not
16 applied in the earthly sanctuary, but in the heavenly one (*Heb.*
17 *9:23, 24*). Second, the blood that He offers is not from an animal
18 but is His own blood (*Heb. 9:25, 26*). Finally, the sacrifice
19 of Christ is uniquely singular (*Heb. 9:12, 28, NRSV, "once for*
20 *all"*) and effective (*Heb. 9:14, NRSV, "purify our conscience";*
21 *Heb. 10:14, NRSV, "perfected for all time"*) in contrast to the
22 animal sacrifices (*Heb. 10:1, 4*).

1
 2 ***The Dilemma of the Altar of Incense in the Most Holy*** Hebrews
 3 9 poses what appears to be a discrepancy. In verses 3 and 4 it
 4 says: "Behind the second curtain was a tent called the Holy of
 5 Holies. In it stood the golden altar of incense and the ark of
 6 the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold" (*NRSV*). This text
 7 seems at odds with Exodus 30:6, "You shall place it [the altar
 8 of incense] in front of the curtain" (*NRSV*), which indicates
 9 that the altar of incense was not in the Most Holy apartment,
 10 but in the Holy Place, together with the lampstand and the table
 11 with the consecrated bread. At this altar of incense, Aaron was
 12 supposed to burn incense "every morning" (*Exod. 30:7, NRSV*).
 13 Similarly, other passages in the Pentateuch place the altar of
 14 incense in the Holy Place, not in the Most Holy Place (*Exod.*
 15 *40:5, 26*). So, why does Paul place the golden altar of incense
 16 in the Most Holy Place?

17 How do we account for this apparent anomaly?

18 Paul might have been thinking along these lines: "Although
 19 positioned in the main hall (i.e., the holy place), the altar
 20 of incense (compare *Exod. 30:1-10; 1 Chron. 28:18*) 'belonged
 21 to the debir' (the Most Holy Place). It appears that the ritual
 22 burning of incense performed upon this altar had a direct effect

1 on the Most Holy Place where God manifested His presence between
2 the cherubim. After all, the smoke of incense most likely
3 suffused the inner room. This may explain why Hebrews places
4 the altar of incense in the Most Holy Place (Heb. 9:4).”—*The*
5 *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary*, entry on
6 Hebrews 9:4.

7 Also it's important to note that in the Greek the author
8 of Hebrews does not actually state that the altar of incense
9 stood in the second apartment; only that the Most Holy "had"
10 the altar. The word translated "had" (NKJV) may be rendered
11 "contained," but this is not its only or necessary meaning.

12 "The connection between the altar and the most holy place
13 here indicated may be that its function was closely connected
14 with the most holy place. The incense offered daily on this altar
15 was directed to the mercy seat in the most holy. There God
16 manifested His presence between the cherubim, and as the incense
17 ascended with the prayers of the worshipers, it filled the most
18 holy place as well as the holy. The veil that separated the two
19 apartments did not extend to the ceiling but reached only part
20 way. Thus incense could be offered in the holy place—the only
21 place where ordinary priests might enter—and yet reach the

1 second apartment, the place to which it was directed.”—*The SDA*
2 *Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 449.

3 Second, the word used by Paul for the “altar”
4 (*thymiatērion*) came to be used in the Septuagint Greek
5 translation of the Old Testament to refer to the censer by itself
6 (*2 Chron. 26:19; Ezek. 8:11*). The high priest carried this
7 censer with him into the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement
8 (*Lev. 16:12*).

9 In any case, Paul’s focus does not seem to be so much on
10 the rooms and furniture, since verse 5 says: “Of these things
11 we cannot speak now in detail.” This verse implies that more
12 important than the furniture and its placement is the point that
13 Paul is making by referring to them, namely, the superiority
14 of Christ’s sacrifice.

15 “The incense, ascending with the prayers of Israel,
16 represents the merits and intercession of Christ, His perfect
17 righteousness, which through faith is imputed to His people,
18 and which can alone make the worship of sinful beings acceptable
19 to God. Before the veil of the most holy place was an altar of
20 perpetual intercession, before the holy, an altar of continual
21 atonement. By blood and by incense God was to be
22 approached—symbols pointing to the great Mediator, through whom

1 sinners may approach Jehovah, and through whom alone mercy and
2 salvation can be granted to the repentant, believing
3 soul.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 353.

4

5 ***Substitutionary Death of Christ***

6 Substitution and satisfaction are terms that have aroused a lot
7 of criticism. Why would God need some kind of substitution for
8 the penalty of humanity’s sins? What does substitution mean?
9 Substitution in this context means that someone takes the place
10 of someone else in order to bear that person’s punishment for
11 the purpose of saving him or her.

12 As to the second term, satisfaction, we must ask, What
13 needed to be satisfied? Does the Bible support the concept of
14 substitutionary death? Substitution occurs in the case of
15 Abraham. When he was on Mount Moriah to sacrifice his son Isaac,
16 “Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt
17 offering **instead** of his son” (*Gen. 22:13, NRSV, emphasis*
18 *supplied*). In the Passover narrative, life was spared by
19 substitution. But the only firstborn males spared were those
20 whose families sacrificed a lamb and put its blood on the
21 doorposts (*Exod. 12:7, 13*). *The whole sacrificial system was*
22 *based on substitution*. Because the penalty for sin is death,

1 the substitute animal was killed, thereby sparing the sinner's
2 life (*Lev. 17:11*).

3 Turning to the New Testament, we find that John the Baptist
4 identifies Jesus as "the Lamb of God who **takes away** the sin of
5 the world!" (*John 1:29, NRSV, emphasis supplied*). Paul
6 declared: "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed"
7 (*1 Cor. 5:7, ESV*). In the letter to the Ephesians, this same
8 Paul is unambiguous: "Christ loved us and **gave himself up for**
9 **us**, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (*Eph. 5:2, NRSV,*
10 *emphasis supplied*). In Romans, Paul states: "while we still were
11 sinners **Christ died for us**" (*Rom. 5:8, NRSV, emphasis supplied*).
12 The Bible is full of substitution and sin-bearing language. (*For*
13 *more examples, see Isa. 53:12, Mark 10:45, 2 Cor. 5:14, 1 Tim.*
14 *2:6, Heb. 9:28, 1 Pet. 2:24.*) Hebrews crowns this topic with
15 the indisputable, though often ignored, statement that "without
16 the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (*Heb.*
17 *9:22, NRSV*). What blood? It cannot be the blood of animals,
18 because "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to
19 take away sins" (*Heb. 10:4, NRSV*). Thus, it has to be the blood,
20 the life, of Christ.

21 Jesus bore our sins and died for us. Thus, we must not view
22 Christ as a mere third party, an individual separated from God

1 and humanity. Such a view would brutally distort the
2 understanding of atonement. Christ would be portrayed then as
3 Someone simply pacifying the Father. God, in turn, would be
4 shown as punishing the innocent Jesus, just so that we guilty
5 people could survive. The broken unity between the Father and
6 the Son comes to full view in Paul's great reconciliation
7 statement in which the Father takes action through the Son: "All
8 this [new creation in Christ] is from God, who reconciled us
9 to himself through Christ" (2 Cor. 5:18, NRSV).

10 Our Substitute was neither Christ alone, nor God alone,
11 but God in Christ, who was both God and Man. God in Christ
12 substituted Himself for us. Thus, the objections to a
13 substitutionary atonement disappear. There is nothing immoral
14 (lawbreaking) here, because the Substitute for the law breakers
15 is the Lawmaker, who only could make atonement for
16 transgression. The cross is no transactional bargain with the
17 devil. But as God, Christ reconciled us to Himself to "satisfy
18 the claims of the broken law, and thus He [Christ] bridges the
19 gulf which sin has made."—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*,
20 book one, p. 341.

21 **Part III: Application**

22

- 1 1. In the context of Christ's substitution, consider the
2 refrain of the hymn entitled "And Can It Be?" (*The SDA*
3 *Hymnal* no. 198): "Amazing love! How can it be that Thou,
4 my God, shouldst die for me?" What does this sentiment mean
5 to you personally?
6
- 7 2. Why is substitution so central to the whole plan of
8 salvation? What does it tell us about how bad sin is that
9 it took the self-sacrifice of "God in Christ" in order to
10 solve the problem and offer us the hope of eternal life?
11

1 **TE-1Q-2022-10**

2

3 **Key Texts:** *Heb. 9:24; Exod. 19:3, 4; Heb. 12:18-21; Lev. 16:1,*
4 *2; Heb. 10:19-24; Col. 3:1.*

5

6 **Part I: Overview**

7

8 **Lesson Themes:** In Hebrews, the ascension of Christ marks the
9 beginning of His rule and the beginning of His high- priestly
10 ministry in heaven. When Christ ascended into heaven, He
11 appeared in the presence of God in our behalf (*Heb. 9:24*). In
12 Old Testament times, every male was required to appear in God's
13 presence three times a year. The pilgrim festivals were
14 Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths (*Exod.*
15 *23:14-17*). Their purpose was to appear before God (*Ps. 42:2*).

16 Christ appeared in heaven in the presence of God in our
17 behalf. In accordance with the Old Testament feasts, Christ died
18 on Passover. Then after His resurrection, He ascended initially
19 to His Father at the time when the priests waved their sheaf
20 of barley (*see John 20:17; Eph. 4:8*). Christ ascended again a
21 final time after 40 days to sit at the right hand of God. As
22 the inauguration of Christ as our High Priest took place in
TE-1Q-2022, *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews* by Félix Cortez

1 heaven, the Holy Spirit was poured out during Pentecost on
2 Christ's followers on the earth.

3 When God appeared to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, they
4 were fearful of God's presence. Moses became their
5 intermediary. All through the history of Israel, priests were
6 the mediators. But even they were prohibited from going whenever
7 they wanted into the Most Holy apartment of the tabernacle. The
8 veils functioned both as boundaries and as protection for the
9 priests when ministering in the sanctuary. Hebrews invites its
10 audience, and by implication us, to approach the sanctuary
11 through the veil, that is, through the flesh of Christ (*Heb.*
12 *10:20*).

13

14 **Part II: Commentary**

15

16 ***The Spirits of the Righteous Made Perfect***

17 In Hebrews 12:22, 23, Paul addresses his audience with these
18 words: "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the
19 living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels
20 in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who
21 are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the
22 spirits of the righteous made perfect" (*NRSV*). The question that

1 we will pursue in regard to this passage is: Who are "the spirits
2 of the righteous made perfect"? That is, what kind of beings
3 are they?

4 In preparing to answer this question, let us look at the
5 context of Hebrews 12:22, 23, which is Hebrews 11. In Hebrews
6 11, Paul offers praises in honor of the heroes of faith, followed
7 by a strong exhortation at the beginning of Hebrews 12 to fix
8 our gaze upon "Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith,
9 who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the
10 cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the
11 right hand of the throne of God" (*Heb. 12:2, NRSV*). Then the
12 section that follows in Hebrews 12 deals with God's discipline
13 in the Christian life. The fact that righteous people suffer
14 is not a sign of divine displeasure but of God's parental
15 affection. That is why Paul states, "For the Lord disciplines
16 those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts"
17 (*Heb. 12:6, NRSV*).

18 Next follows a double exhortation to peace and holiness:
19 "Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no
20 one will see the Lord" (*Heb. 12:14, NRSV*). To reinforce the
21 warning, Paul brings forward the illustration of Esau,
22 described as an "immoral and godless" person—the very antithesis

1 of the example of faith in Hebrews 11—who traded off his
2 firstborn-inheritance rights for the immediate gratification
3 of a meal (*Heb. 12:16, NRSV*). Finally, Paul compares the Exodus
4 generation with his own audience. The former was confronted with
5 a theophany on Mount Sinai. Moses recalled the scene and
6 declared: “ ‘I tremble[d] with fear’ ” (*Heb. 12:21, NRSV*). In
7 contrast, the audience of Hebrews has not come to this
8 terrifying mountain but to the heavenly dwelling place of God,
9 the “heavenly Jerusalem” (*Heb. 12:22, NRSV*). They have access
10 to “God, the judge of all,” to “the assembly of the firstborn
11 who are enrolled in heaven,” and to the “spirits of the righteous
12 made perfect” (*Heb. 12:23, NRSV*).

13 Who are the “spirits of the righteous made perfect”? Most
14 scholars of the book of Hebrews employ Jewish apocalyptic
15 literature (e.g., *Jub. 23:30, 31; 1 Enoch 22:9; 1 Enoch 102:4;*
16 *1 Enoch 103:3, 4; 2 Apoc. Bar. 30:2*) to understand the phrase
17 “spirits of righteous made perfect.” On this basis, they
18 conclude that these spirits must be immaterial souls, devoid
19 of the body, who are dwelling in heaven. Such a conclusion needs
20 to be challenged by the data presented in the book of Hebrews
21 itself. To that end, we will analyze the noun “spirits,” the

1 adjective "righteous," and the adjectival verb (participle)
2 "made perfect."

3 The noun "spirits," or "spirit," has three different uses
4 in the letter to the Hebrews. First, "spirits" is used to
5 designate angels who are ministering spirits (*Heb. 1:7, 14*).
6 Second, "spirit" designates the Holy Spirit who gives gifts,
7 speaks about the new covenant, and bears witness to it (*Heb.*
8 *2:4, Heb. 3:7, Heb. 6:4, Heb. 9:8, Heb. 10:15*). Sometimes the
9 Holy Spirit seems to be described as the "Spirit of grace" (*Heb.*
10 *10:29*), or the "eternal Spirit" (*Heb. 9:14*). Third, "spirits"
11 refers to human beings who are alive and who are subject to the
12 piercing penetration of the Living Word of God (*Heb. 4:12*).
13 Similarly, when Paul talks about God's disciplining His
14 children, he says "We have had earthly fathers who disciplined
15 us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to
16 the Father of spirits and live?" (*Heb. 12:9, ESV*). Thus, we can
17 conclude that the "spirits" in the phrase "the spirits of the
18 righteous made perfect" (*Heb. 12:23, NRSV*) are not angels, nor
19 the Holy Spirit, but human beings who, by faith have approached
20 Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem
21 (*Heb. 12:22*).

1 In Hebrews, the adjective “righteous” appears only two
2 times outside of the passage under investigation. The first time
3 that it appears, it is used in the context of endurance: “My
4 righteous one will live by faith” (*Heb. 10:38, NRSV*). God has
5 no pleasure in those who shrink back in doubt or unbelief. The
6 second time, the adjective is used in the context of Abel’s
7 offering a better sacrifice than Cain offers. Because of that
8 better sacrifice, Abel receives the testimony that he is
9 “righteous” (*Heb. 11:4*). Both instances refer to persons when
10 they were alive, not dead or in a bodiless state of being. Thus,
11 these individuals are not depicted as immaterial souls. So, we
12 may conclude that the “righteous” are those people who live by
13 faith and express their faith by the sacrifices they make.

14 The term “made perfect” appears several times in Hebrews,
15 yielding three uses. First, Christ was made perfect through
16 sufferings and becomes the source of eternal salvation (*Heb.*
17 *2:10, Heb. 5:9, Heb. 7:28*). Second, the law cannot make perfect
18 the conscience of the worshiper (*Heb. 7:19, Heb. 9:9, Heb.*
19 *10:1*). Third, human beings are perfected. In Hebrews 10:14, Paul
20 states, “For by a single offering he [Christ] has perfected for
21 all time those who are sanctified” (*NRSV*), and in Hebrews 12:23
22 the “spirits of the righteous” are perfected. Thus, the objects

1 of perfection are Christ and human beings, not bodiless beings
2 in a metaphysical sphere.

3 Finally, the phrase "assembly of the firstborn" seems to
4 be part of a parallelism, synonymous with the phrase that
5 follows it: "who are enrolled in heaven" (*Heb. 12:23, NRSV*).
6 The image of righteous people being enrolled in the heavenly
7 books is common in Scripture (*Exod. 32:32, Ps. 69:28, Dan. 12:1,*
8 *Luke 10:20, Rev. 13:8, Rev. 17:8, compare Phil. 3:20*). Moses
9 contended with God either to forgive Israel's sin or blot out
10 his own name from the book of life. Consequently, the "spirits
11 of the righteous made perfect" should be interpreted as human
12 beings rather than bodiless souls of people who died.

13 In sum, the textual evidence points to the fact that the
14 noun "spirits" is used for angels, the Holy Spirit, and humans.
15 The adjective "righteous" is used for faithful people such as
16 Abel and the audience of Hebrews. The term "made perfect" is
17 used to describe Jesus being made perfect, the inability of the
18 law to make anything perfect, and humans who have been made
19 perfect by Christ's sacrifice. Thus, we can safely conclude that
20 the "spirits of the righteous made perfect" are not immaterial
21 souls, devoid of corporeal form, who are dwelling in heaven
22 after their earthly sojourn and subsequent death, and who are

1 now enjoying heavenly peace. Rather, the “spirits of the
2 righteous made perfect” are human beings whose names have been
3 registered in heaven. Through faith, the addressees of Hebrews
4 approach God, Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant, the heavenly
5 Jerusalem, the innumerable angels, and these human beings who
6 have been made perfect by faith and whose names are recorded
7 in heaven. This passage should be understood as an exhortation
8 to believers, similar to the author’s exhortation to his
9 audience when he says: “Let us therefore approach the throne
10 of grace with boldness” (*Heb. 4:16, NRSV*).

11

12 **Part III: Application**

13

14 As Seventh-day Adventists, we hold many beliefs in common with
15 other Christian denominations, such as prayer, righteousness
16 by faith, sanctification, the Godhead, tithing, etc. Besides
17 distinctive Adventist beliefs, such as those connected with the
18 sanctuary doctrine and our self-understanding as the end-time
19 remnant of Revelation, some denominations can be found within
20 Christianity that share our beliefs in the Sabbath, the Second
21 Coming, the gift of prophecy, and the state of the dead. During
22 this week’s lesson, we looked at the state of the dead through

1 the passage of Hebrews 12:22, 23. As Seventh-day Adventists,
2 we are distinguished from other Christian groups, though not
3 exclusively, in believing that the soul is not immortal. We
4 believe that God created Adam "from the dust of the ground, and
5 breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became
6 a living being" (*Gen. 2:7, NRSV*). Other translations render the
7 phrase "living being" as "living soul." With death, the living
8 being ceases to exist. Through the influence of Greek
9 philosophy, most Christians throughout history have believed
10 that humans are born immortal and that when one dies, his or
11 her spirit goes to heaven or hell to live with God or to burn
12 eternally.

13 1. What dangers arise when we superimpose our presuppositions
14 onto the biblical text instead of permitting the Bible to speak
15 for itself?

16 2. Can we indeed be completely objective and free of
17 presuppositions? Why, or why not?

18

1 **TE-1Q-2022-11**

2

3 **Key Texts:** *Heb. 10:32-39, Rom. 1:17, Hebrews 11, Gen. 22:1-14,*

4 *Josh. 2:8-11, Heb. 12:1-3.*

5

6 **Part I: Overview**

7

8 **Lesson Themes:** If one must look for a biblical definition of
9 faith, one need not look further than Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith
10 is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things
11 not seen" (*NRSV*). The whole chapter explains and exemplifies
12 what it means to hold on to God's promises, despite not having
13 visible evidence for our faith. The faith chapter is introduced
14 with a quote from Habbakuk 2:2-4. Habakkuk asks God why He does
15 not intervene in the destruction of the righteous by the wicked
16 (*Hab. 1:13, Hab. 2:1*). In response, God reminds Habakkuk that
17 there will be a lapse of time before He acts. Contrary to
18 appearances, this lapse constitutes no delay on God's part. In
19 the meantime, the prophet needs to exercise faith. Faith goes
20 hand in hand with endurance (*Heb. 10:36-38*). The heroes of
21 Hebrews 11 showed endurance and faith in the unseen. Abraham
22 believed that God could resurrect Isaac from the dead (*Heb.*
TE-1Q-2022, *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews* by Félix Cortez

1 11:19) because Abraham was as good as dead when he became the
2 father of Isaac (*Heb. 11:12*). Moses, though destined to become
3 the monarch of the greatest empire in antiquity since the Flood,
4 chose ill-treatment, abuse, and suffering with God's people
5 rather than the fleeting palace pleasures of the pharaohs. Moses
6 made this decision because he looked to the future reward
7 promised by God (*Heb. 11:25, 26*). The audience of Hebrews could
8 identify with Moses because they were going through similar
9 circumstances. They too needed to look toward the future reward.
10 The next rather remarkable example in Hebrews 11 is Rahab, a
11 Gentile prostitute. Though a Gentile, she hears about God's
12 actions, believes in Him, and acts on her belief when hiding
13 the Hebrew spies (*Josh. 2:8-11*). Similarly, the audience of
14 Hebrews does not see Jesus but is called to believe and act in
15 faith in response to God's word.

16

17 **Part II: Commentary**

18

19 ***Creatio ex Nihilo (Latin for Creation From Nothing)***

20 This phrase portrays the view that the universe was created by
21 God out of nothing. One of the classical texts to support a
22 *creatio ex nihilo* is Hebrews 11:3: "By faith we understand that

1 the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is
2 seen was made from things that are not visible" (NRSV). This
3 passage can be interpreted that way. We will, however, look at
4 an alternative understanding of this text.

5 After the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1, Paul moves
6 to the people of old who were commended for their faith (Heb.
7 11:2). The catalog of the faithful does not begin with Abel,
8 surprisingly, but with us (that is, "we," the audience) and
9 Paul, the author. "By faith we understand" (Heb. 11:3, NRSV)
10 expresses an intellectual outlook of a faith reality. We
11 understand that the universe (literally the worlds) were
12 created by God's Word. Creation can be grasped only by faith,
13 Paul asserts. Furthermore, that which is visible was not made
14 from things that are visible. In other words, the world of
15 Creation is visible but its origin is not. Its origin is
16 intellectually comprehended only by faith.

17 What is this invisible origin? Is it *ex nihilo*, "out of
18 nothing," that God created the visible worlds? The text says,
19 "What is seen was not made out of things that are visible" (Heb.
20 11:3, ESV), which means that the things that are not visible
21 are not necessarily nonexistent. For example, just because we
22 do not see the wind does not mean the wind is nonexistent. Could

1 it be that the invisible things out of which the visible worlds
 2 were made are a reference to the spoken "word of God"? If so,
 3 this is a clear allusion to the Creation account in Genesis 1,
 4 where God's Word is the source of Creation ("*And God said*" is
 5 *repeated in Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26*). In other words,
 6 the sensory world is derived from a power that remains
 7 inaccessible to our senses—God's powerful creative Word. If
 8 this is true, a better explanation of verse 3 emerges.

9 Instead of referring to *creation ex nihilo*, Paul uses a
 10 parallel structure to underscore the invisibility of God's
 11 spoken Word. Notice the three sets of corresponding,
 12 interrelated ideas in Hebrews 11:3:

13

| | | |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 14 | A "the worlds" (3a) | A' "what is seen" (3b) |
| 15 | B "were prepared" (3a) | B' "was made" (3b) |
| 16 | C "the word of God" (3a) | C' "that are not visible" (3b) |

17

18 Or to write the structure another way: [A]"By faith we
 19 understand that *the worlds* [B]*were prepared* [C]*by the word of*
 20 *God*, [A']so that *what is seen* [B']*was made* from things [C']*that*
 21 *are not visible"* (Heb. 11:3, NRSV). Thus, we see that God's
 22 invisible spoken word creates visible worlds. This

1 understanding of the verse corroborates Paul's concern that his
 2 audience orient their lives to the things not seen but, rather,
 3 hoped for. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the
 4 conviction of things not seen" (*Heb. 11:1, NRSV*). In sum, we
 5 can say that God's invisible word produces visible worlds and
 6 our universe. This does not mean that God did not, nor could
 7 not, create *ex nihilo*, but only that this text seems to be saying
 8 something else.

9
 10 **Thought Questions:** By faith we, as well as Paul and the audience
 11 of Hebrews, understand that God created the worlds through His
 12 powerful yet invisible word.

- 13 1. What do you think motivated Noah to build an ark in spite
 14 of no previous floods or even any rain?
- 15 2. What do you think motivated Abraham to set out for a country
 16 he had not previously seen or explored?
- 17 3. What do you think motivated Moses to exchange a
 18 "prestigious" life in the palace of Egypt for a "miserable"
 19 life with the Exodus generation?

20
 21 ***Esau Found No Repentance Though He Sought It With Tears*** Hebrews
 22 12:17 says of Esau: "For you know that afterward, when he wanted

1 to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place
2 for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears"
3 (NKJV). This verse, like others in Hebrews (*Heb. 6:4-6, Heb.*
4 *10:26-29*) seems to speak in favor of no possible repentance.
5 (In Lesson 7, you can find a treatment of Hebrews 6:4-6: "The
6 Impossibility of Repentance.") Did God really reject Esau?

7 Hebrews 12 talks about running the race in which Christ
8 is our Example of endurance. Endurance comes through
9 discipline, and discipline strengthens weak hands and feeble
10 knees. In addition, Paul admonishes his audience to pursue peace
11 and holiness, "without which no one will see the Lord" (*Heb.*
12 *12:14, NRSV*). Every Christian is exhorted to live in peace and
13 maintain harmony with everyone as far as it lies within his or
14 her power (*Rom. 12:18*). Not only peace but also holiness is an
15 essential attribute Christians are to pursue. What is the goal
16 of the discipline that God inflicts upon His children? He wants
17 them to share in His own holiness (*Heb. 12:10*). The absence of
18 holiness and peace equals the absence of seeing the Lord. The
19 absence of holiness is illustrated in the life of the sexually
20 immoral person (Greek: *pornos*) and the godlessness of Esau (*Heb.*
21 *12:16*). Paul comments on both Esau's despising the birthright
22 (*Gen. 25:29-34*) and losing the firstborn blessing (*Gen.*

1 27:1-40). With this context in mind, we will address the
2 question: Did Esau find no place for repentance, though he
3 sought it diligently with tears?

4 The *KJV*, *NKJV*, *ESV*, *NIV*, and *NASB* give the impression that
5 Esau found no repentance even though he sought it with tears.
6 Furthermore, these versions impress upon us the idea that Esau
7 desired repentance, but for whatever reason, God denied him this
8 chance. To solve the problem, we need to ask the following
9 question: What does the pronoun "it" refer to in the phrase "he
10 sought it with tears"? Is its antecedent "repentance," or
11 "blessing"? In Greek, the pronoun "it" is feminine. Therefore,
12 the antecedent of "it" must be a feminine noun also. In the
13 English translation, the closest noun in proximity to "it" is
14 "repentance": this proximity is the reason for the confusion.
15 In Greek, both "repentance" and "blessing" are feminine nouns.
16 However, the noun "repentance" is part of a fixed idiom and goes
17 together with "place/opportunity," which is why we translate
18 the phrase in question as an "opportunity for repentance." So,
19 if Esau did not find an "opportunity for repentance," what,
20 then, did he seek with tears? Because the noun
21 "place/opportunity" is a masculine noun, the feminine pronoun
22 "it" cannot refer to the masculine noun "place." Thus, the only

1 other option is the somewhat further placed noun "blessing."
2 Esau could not find an opportunity to repent, although he sought
3 the blessing with tears. Some translations like the *NRSV* capture
4 the Greek grammar correctly by translating the verse: "You know
5 that later, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was
6 rejected, for he found no chance to repent, even though he sought
7 the blessing with tears" (*Heb. 12:17, NRSV*).

8 Such a translation also concurs with the narrative in
9 Genesis 27:34-38. The narrative tells us that Jacob deceived
10 his father by pretending to be Esau. When Esau came to his father
11 with the savory food, Isaac was surprised because he thought
12 he had just blessed his firstborn son Esau. Once Isaac realized
13 that he had been cheated by his son Jacob, he "trembled
14 violently" (*Gen. 27:33, NRSV*). Esau, on the other hand,
15 realizing that the blessing had been given away, "cried out with
16 an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father,
17 'Bless me, me also, father!' " (*Gen. 27:34, NRSV*). After the
18 dialogue with his father, "Esau lifted up his voice and wept"
19 (*Gen. 27:38, NRSV*). In sum, we can say that Esau did not weep
20 for an opportunity to repent for all the things he did by his
21 godless lifestyle; rather, he wept for the lost blessing, which
22 his brother stole from him. That is exactly what Paul means when

1 he says: "he found no place for repentance, though he sought
2 it [the blessing] diligently with tears" (*Heb. 12:17, NKJV*).
3 God offers opportunity for repentance to everyone who wants to
4 repent (*Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:9, 10; 2 Tim. 2:25; 2 Pet. 3:9*).

5

6 **Part III: Application**

7

8 In the span of its history, our church has survived several
9 crises. During the twentieth century, we faced controversies
10 over the issues of inspiration, the role of Ellen G. White, the
11 nature of Christ, the Godhead, the remnant church, Creation
12 versus evolution, etc. The twenty-first century seems to have
13 brought these issues back and more.

- 14 1. What would be the consequences if we Seventh-day
15 Adventists gave in to the belief system of evolution or
16 theistic evolution? Discuss.
- 17 2. Does the biblical Creation account necessitate a *creation*
18 *ex nihilo*?
- 19 3. Why is it important to consult more than one translation
20 when encountering a difficult text?

21

1 **TE-1Q-2020-12**

2

3 **Key Texts:** *Heb. 12:18-29; Exod. 32:32; Dan. 7:9, 10, 13-22;*

4 *Hag. 2:6-9; Ps. 15:5; Ps. 16:8; Heb. 13:15, 16.*

5

6 **Part I: Overview**

7

8 **Lesson Themes:** This week's lesson deals primarily with Hebrews
9 12:18-29. Here, Jesus is portrayed as the Mediator of the new
10 covenant, and God is shown as the Judge of all. Hebrews 12:18-29
11 alludes to the historical context of Exodus 19, the assembling
12 of Israel at Mount Sinai for the giving of the law. This event
13 is contrasted with the experience of the audience of Hebrews,
14 who have not come to Mount Sinai, something that God's people
15 were forbidden to touch, but to Mount Zion, the city of the
16 living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Mount Zion is not a place
17 of terror but of festal gathering, for there the believers have
18 access to God. The basis for their joyful confidence is Jesus,
19 the Mediator of the new covenant. Mount Zion is also the place
20 where Jesus' dedication ceremony as king occurs (*Ps. 2:6, 7;*
21 *see Heb. 1:5*).

1 God is portrayed as the Judge of all (*Heb. 12:23*). When
2 the Lord descended on Mount Sinai, the earth shook (*Exod.*
3 *19:18*). The shaking is figurative language for God's judgment.
4 Once again, at the end of time, the earth will be shaken, and
5 not only the earth but also heaven (*Heb. 12:26*). Only the
6 unshakable things will survive, namely, the just, the
7 righteous, and those who trust in Him. As a response to such
8 a warning, the righteous will bring offerings to God. These
9 offerings consist of their praising God's name, doing good
10 deeds, and sharing what they have to benefit others (*Heb. 13:15,*
11 *16*).

12

13 **Part II: Commentary**

14

15 In lesson 10, the identity of "the spirits of the righteous made
16 perfect" (*Heb. 12:23*) has been defined.

17

18 ***Pre-Advent Judgment and Hebrews***

19 The questions we want to pursue this time are: What does the
20 book of Hebrews say about the sanctuary in heaven? What is the
21 biblical basis for the pre-Advent judgment?

1 The book of Hebrews provides some of the clearest
2 statements for the existence of a heavenly sanctuary. Paul
3 states unequivocally, "Now the main point in what we are saying
4 is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the
5 right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a
6 minister in the sanctuary and the true tent that the Lord, and
7 not any mortal, has set up" (*Heb. 8:1, 2, NRSV*). Here, Paul
8 affirms, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the main thrust of his
9 sermon: Christ is our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary,
10 not the earthly one. If Christ ministers in the heavenly
11 sanctuary, it must, therefore, exist.

12 In the following chapter, the claim of Christ's
13 high-priestly ministry in heaven is made again: "he entered once
14 for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and
15 calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal
16 redemption" (*Heb. 9:12, NRSV*). Again, the assertion is that
17 Christ ministers in a superior tabernacle than the one made by
18 human hands. In an even stronger statement, Paul maintains, "For
19 Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere
20 copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now
21 to appear in the presence of God on our behalf" (*Heb. 9:24,*
22 *NRSV*). Thus, from our reading of Hebrews alone, it seems

1 indisputable that there is a sanctuary in heaven in which Christ
2 ministers. What exactly that sanctuary looks like is not
3 precisely defined. The last verse quoted emphasizes its
4 difference from the earthly sanctuary, that the sanctuary of
5 the new covenant is in heaven itself. We should, however, be
6 careful in defining the dimensions of the heavenly sanctuary.
7 What we can say with strong conviction is that Hebrews supports
8 unequivocally the existence of a heavenly sanctuary in which
9 Christ ministers as our High Priest.

10 What disconcerts some readers is Paul's claim that "it was
11 necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified
12 with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better
13 sacrifices than these" (*Heb. 9:23, ESV*). Why would the heavenly
14 things need any purifying sacrifices? After all, heaven is clean
15 and holy, right? Several scholars have tried to solve the enigma
16 of heavenly things needing cleansing by arguing that the
17 conscience is in need of cleansing (*Heb. 9:9, 14*). Others
18 profess that the purification means the inauguration of the
19 sanctuary. Both of these suggestions seem to fall short of the
20 argument developed in Hebrews 8:1-10:18, which centers on
21 defilement, purification, and Christ's heavenly ministry.

1 As Seventh-day Adventists, we have the advantage of
2 understanding such passages in connection with Daniel 7 and 8.
3 We understand that heaven and earth are interconnected. The fact
4 that we have paid attention to the sanctuary service in the Old
5 Testament has given us an insight into how it works. Together
6 with Daniel 8:14, which reads, "And he answered him, 'For two
7 thousand three hundred evenings and mornings; then the
8 sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state' " (NRSV),
9 the meaning of the statement in Hebrews 9:23 resolves itself.
10 At the same time, we need to acknowledge that Hebrews 9:23 does
11 not talk about the timing of the heavenly purification. That
12 is something we learn from the book of Daniel. In sum, we can
13 say that the existence of the heavenly sanctuary is an
14 incontrovertible fact in the book of Hebrews. Furthermore, even
15 a cleansing of the heavenly things with better sacrifices is
16 indisputable. What the book of Hebrews does not tell us,
17 however, is when that purification happens. We should not try
18 to force the letter to say or mean more than it does.

19 Now we will turn to the question, What is the biblical basis
20 for the pre-Advent judgment? Here we need to look at the book
21 of Daniel. (For a deeper study of the pre-Advent judgment, the
22 Apocalypse of John should also be consulted.) The key passage

1 for the pre-Advent judgment is Daniel 7. This chapter displays
2 a succession of kingdoms, symbolized by a series of beasts,
3 namely, the lion, the bear, the leopard, and a terrifying,
4 dreadful, and exceedingly strong animal. A comparison of Daniel
5 2 and Daniel 7 make it apparent that these two chapters are
6 dealing with the same general subject: prophecies regarding the
7 rise and fall of four major Mediterranean world powers. These
8 world powers can be readily identified as Babylon,
9 Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome. After Daniel sees the
10 terrifying, dreadful, and exceedingly strong beast with its ten
11 horns, a "little horn" emerges from among them. Suddenly, the
12 vision shifts from the earth toward heaven, and a bright throne
13 room comes into view (*Dan. 7:9-14*). The scene unfolds in three
14 stages: (1) a court scene in which thrones were set in place
15 (*Dan. 7:9, 10*), (2) the outcome of the judgment in which the
16 beast is put to death (*Dan. 7:11, 12*), and (3) the transfer of
17 the kingdom to the Son of man (*Dan. 7:13, 14*). The chronological
18 events of the chapter display Babylon, Media-Persia (see *Dan.*
19 *8:20*), Greece, Rome, the little horn, judgment, and the
20 possession of the kingdom by the saints.

21 In the second half of Daniel 7, the prophet's curiosity
22 turns to the activity of the fourth beast, as well as the little

1 horn that "spoke arrogantly" (*Dan. 7:19, 20, NRSV*). It makes
2 war with the saints "until the Ancient of Days came and judgment
3 was passed in favor of the saints" (*Dan. 7:22, NASB*) and
4 eventually "the saints took possession of the kingdom" (*Dan.*
5 *7:22, NASB*). For the second time, the sequence after the fourth
6 beast is: little horn, judgment, and possession of the kingdom
7 by the saints. This sequence is repeated a third time in Daniel
8 7, just to make sure that we do not miss it. The little horn
9 "shall speak words against the Most High, shall wear out the
10 holy ones of the Most High, and shall attempt to change the
11 sacred seasons and the law" (*Dan. 7:25, NRSV*). This activity
12 is followed by the assurance that "the court shall sit in
13 judgment" (*Dan. 7:26, NRSV*), and finally the "kingship . . .
14 shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High"
15 (*Dan. 7:27, NRSV*).

16 In reviewing Daniel 7, the chronology is obvious. Babylon
17 is followed by Media-Persia, then by Greece, and by Rome. What
18 constitutes the content of the second half of Daniel 7 is the
19 activity of the little horn, judgment, and the receiving of the
20 kingdom, either by the Son of man or by the saints. Christ's
21 kingdom is their kingdom. This heavenly judgment includes
22 books, which obviously are opened for the purpose of presenting

1 evidence. These court books indicate that the heavenly judgment
2 is investigative before God takes action against the "little
3 horn" and for the saints (*Dan. 7:21, 22, 27*). The last three
4 events in Daniel 7 are repeated three times. This should make
5 it sufficiently clear that the judgment is sandwiched between
6 the little horn's activity and the kingdom. Thus, it is called
7 the pre-Advent judgment.

8

9 **Part III: Application**

10

11 The concept of an investigative judgment is not foreign to the
12 Bible. Before God pronounces a verdict, He investigates each
13 case. This is clearly seen in the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis
14 3. Before a curse is pronounced over the serpent and the ground,
15 God investigates Adam and Eve's condition as well as their
16 conduct.

17 In the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, God is portrayed as
18 descending to earth to investigate "whether they have done
19 altogether according to the outcry that has come to me" (*Gen.*
20 *18:21, NRSV*). Only after God investigates the situation,
21 discloses His plans to Abraham, and warns and even delivers Lot
22 and his family from Sodom does the Lord rain sulfur and fire

1 out of heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah (*Gen. 19:24*). Both the Fall
2 narrative and the Sodom-and-Gomorrah narrative set a biblical
3 precedent for an investigative assessment that precedes
4 executive judgment. The same pattern prevails in the case of
5 the investigative, or pre-Advent, judgment.

6 1. Why are so many people afraid of the investigative
7 judgment? How can we make it clear how central the gospel
8 is to the judgment?

9 2. Why is this judgment good for us? If good, why should we
10 not be concerned over it? Explain.

11

1 **TE-1Q-2022-13**

2

3 **Key Texts:** *Hebrews 13; Rom. 12:13; Eph. 5:3-5; 1 Pet. 5:1-4;*

4 *Heb. 2:9; Heb. 4:16; Gal. 2:20.*

5

6 **Part I: Overview**

7

8 **Lesson Themes:** Paul concludes his letter with several
9 admonitions for his audience to “let mutual love continue” (*Heb.*
10 *13:1, NRSV*), to “show hospitality to strangers” (*Heb. 13:2,*
11 *NRSV*), and to “remember those who are in prison . . . [and] those
12 who are being tortured” (*Heb. 13:3, NRSV*). Paul also admonishes
13 his readers to ensure that “marriage be held in honor” (*Heb.*
14 *13:4, NRSV*), to “keep your lives free from the love of money”
15 (*Heb. 13:5, NRSV*), to “obey your leaders and submit to them”
16 (*Heb. 13:17, NRSV*), and to “pray for us” (*Heb. 13:18, NRSV*).
17 Throughout the letter, Paul repeatedly calls on his audience
18 to “exhort one another every day” (*Heb. 3:13, NRSV*), “to provoke
19 one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet
20 together” (*Heb. 10:24, 25, NRSV*), as well as to see “that no
21 one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness
22 springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become
TE-1Q-2022, *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews* by Félix Cortez

1 defiled" (*Heb. 12:15, NRSV*). The letter, as a whole, is a "word
2 of exhortation" (*Heb. 13:22. NRSV*).

3 While Paul encourages his audience to practice mutual
4 love, he does not expect a certain emotional sentiment. Rather,
5 he exhorts them to specific actions, such as showing
6 hospitality, sharing with those who are imprisoned, practicing
7 faithfulness in marriage, and shunning greed. Similarly, when
8 Paul exhorts his audience to remember their leaders, he is not
9 interested in an exercise in recollection. Rather, he wishes
10 that in showing their faithfulness to God, they would obey,
11 submit to, and respect their leaders. Finally, Paul warns his
12 audience not to follow strange teachings, but to follow the
13 Master Teacher, Christ.

14

15 **Part II: Commentary**

16

17 ***Strange Teachings and Foods***

18 In Hebrews 13:9, Paul warns his audience: "Do not be led away
19 by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart
20 to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not
21 benefited those devoted to them" (*ESV*). This verse constitutes
22 one of the more difficult texts in the book of Hebrews. What

1 makes this verse difficult is the vague reference to its
2 historical background. Because we cannot pinpoint exactly the
3 precise situation to which the whole discourse was addressed,
4 we should avoid drawing conclusions that are too strong.

5 In the verse prior to the one quoted above, we are told
6 that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever"
7 (*Heb. 13:8, ESV*). In contrast to Christ's constancy stands the
8 admonition not to be carried away by all kinds of strange
9 teachings. The metaphor of "carried away" (*Heb. 13:9, NRSV*)
10 evokes images of wind and water, which carry things away. The
11 use of this figure calls to mind the nautical metaphor used by
12 Paul in Hebrews 2:1: "so that we do not drift away" (*NRSV*).
13 There, Paul was keen in warning his audience to pay attention
14 to what they heard from those who witnessed Christ. At that time,
15 the audience was in danger of drifting away from Christ. Here,
16 Paul reminds his audience of those stalwart teachers and leaders
17 and calls for the imitation of their faith (*Heb. 13:7*). While
18 leaders come and go, Christ is constant. Spiritual errors,
19 however, have not ceased. That is why the audience is in danger
20 of being carried away by the instrument of deceptive teachings.
21 Those teachings seem to be in opposition to what they've heard

1 from their teachers and leaders and are described by two
2 adjectives: "diverse and strange" (*Heb. 13:9, ESV*).

3 Paul tells his audience that the strengthening of the heart
4 happens by grace, not by food. The antithesis between food
5 (which is fleeting) and grace (which is permanent) is a
6 comparison often employed by Bible writers to show the
7 difference between this temporary existence and something much
8 better. Paul, for example, states: "For the kingdom of God is
9 not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the
10 Holy Spirit" (*Rom. 14:17, NRSV*). Likewise, Paul admonishes the
11 Christians in Corinth: " 'Food will not bring us close to God.'
12 We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we
13 do" (*1 Cor. 8:8, NRSV*). Actually, food very often brought
14 division in the early church (*Rom. 14:1-3*), as well as today.

15 What is the particular problem Paul addresses in Romans
16 14:1-3? Some scholars contend that members of the faith
17 community in the church at Rome advocated eating meat offered
18 to idols, something similar to the problem the church in Corinth
19 faced (*1 Corinthians 8 and 10*). Comparing Hebrews with 1
20 Corinthians clearly shows that Paul uses much more forceful
21 language with regard to food offered to idols (*1 Cor. 8:12*) than
22 he does in Hebrews ("it is good for the heart to be strengthened

1 by grace, not by foods" (*Heb. 13:9, ESV*). So, most likely, the
2 issue in Hebrews is not food offered to idols.

3 Another, more likely, option inspiring the warning in
4 Hebrews 13:9 would be dining on the food of temple sacrifices.
5 What speaks in favor of this idea? Let us consider three
6 scriptural possibilities. First, the immediate context seems
7 to allude to the consumption of foods connected to Jewish
8 sacrificial meals. Paul states, "We have an altar from which
9 those who officiate in the tent have no right to eat" (*Heb.*
10 *13:10, NRSV*). Here, Paul is alluding to the Old Testament
11 priests who ate from sacrificial offerings at the tabernacle.

12 Second, the very same word "food" is used in Hebrews 9:9,
13 10, in which we read: "gifts and sacrifices . . . deal only with
14 food and drink and various baptisms, regulations for the body
15 imposed until the time comes to set things right" (*NRSV*). Here,
16 Paul makes the same point that he makes again in Hebrews 13:9:
17 ceremonial sacrifices cannot perfect the conscience; rather,
18 they deal with food and drink and various ceremonial washings.
19 That is the reason the audience should not follow strange
20 teachings, because these ceremonial sacrificial meals are
21 useless even for those who practice (literally, "walk in") them.

1 Christians participate in a sacrifice far superior to any
2 sacrificial meal (*compare Heb. 13:10-12*).

3 Third, the Greek term “food” (in the Septuagint, the Greek
4 Old Testament) is used in Malachi 1:7, 12 with reference to
5 sacrificial foods on the altar. Priests offered polluted food,
6 defined as blind, sick, and lame animals, as sacrifices (*Mal.*
7 *1:7, 8*). In sum, all three reasons—the immediate context, the
8 further context, and the Old Testament context—seem to point
9 to the fact that the strange teachings about food relate to
10 Jewish sacrificial meals.

11

12 ***Obey and Submit to Your Leaders***

13 Within democratic or representative systems of governance, an
14 exhortation to obey and to submit to the leaders sounds rather
15 authoritarian. Should a claim like that be made today? If so,
16 how should we as members of a worldwide church respond to it?

17 Several New Testament books contain important instruction
18 on church leadership and so it should not be surprising that
19 the book of Hebrews does also. Church leaders are mentioned
20 three times (*Heb. 13:7, 17, 24*). In verse 7, they are referred
21 to as “those who spoke the word of God to you” (*Heb. 13:7, NRSV*).
22 These individuals most likely were the missionary evangelists

1 of Hebrews 2:3. Because of their preaching and teaching, the
2 audience is confronted with “the word of God” as “living and
3 active, sharper than any two-edged sword” (*Heb. 4:12, NRSV*).

4 Three verbs draw attention to these leaders: “remember,”
5 “consider,” and “imitate” (*Heb. 13:7, NRSV*; author’s emphasis).
6 As the letter indicates, Paul has provided his audience with
7 both negative (*Heb. 4:11*), and positive examples (*Heb. 11:4-38*)
8 for avoidance and imitation, respectively. At this juncture,
9 readers are supposed to consider the outcome of their leaders’
10 way of life. This contemplation implies that the leaders’
11 objectives have been accomplished. Thus, the audience now can
12 review the course of their leaders’ efforts and imitate their
13 faithful conduct.

14 Later in the chapter, we see reference again to leadership
15 and how church members should relate to them: “Obey your leaders
16 and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls
17 and will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with
18 sighing— for that would be harmful to you” (*Heb. 13:17, NRSV*).
19 The authority of the leaders resides in faithfully executing
20 the function of their office, “for they are keeping watch over
21 your souls” (*Heb. 13:17, NRSV*). When leaders take their
22 responsibilities seriously, they help prevent their members

1 from being carried away by all kinds of strange teachings and
2 the consumption of foods that will not benefit even those who
3 ingest them. At the same time, good leaders are aware that
4 leadership demands accountability, as illustrated by the two
5 servants in Jesus' parable (*Matt. 24:45-51*).

6 Finally, Paul urges his listeners to obey and submit to
7 their leaders so that their duty can be done with joy and not
8 with sighing. Joy recalls the attitude with which the audience
9 accepted the plundering of their possessions (*Heb. 10:34*). Such
10 joy is the very reason that Jesus endured the cross and
11 disregarded its shame (*Heb. 12:2*) and the consequence of
12 paternal discipline (*Heb. 12:11*). The work of leaders is made
13 joyful when their members submit to, and obey, them. When that
14 is not the case, their work is made arduous. According to Paul,
15 under such conditions the leaders groan, and the church reaps
16 no benefits. Thus, a successful collaboration between leaders
17 and members requires trust and benevolence.

18

19 **Part III: Application**

20

21 If church leadership has been abused in the past under certain
22 circumstances, or in parts of the world in which political

1 regimes make church governance difficult, how can we find the
2 harmony between leaders and members that Hebrews talks about?

3 1. Why is there so much aversion to authority in some
4 cultures?

5 2. Should leadership be followed only if a person agrees with
6 the leader? Discuss.

7 3. What criteria does Paul give us in Hebrews 13 for following
8 leaders?