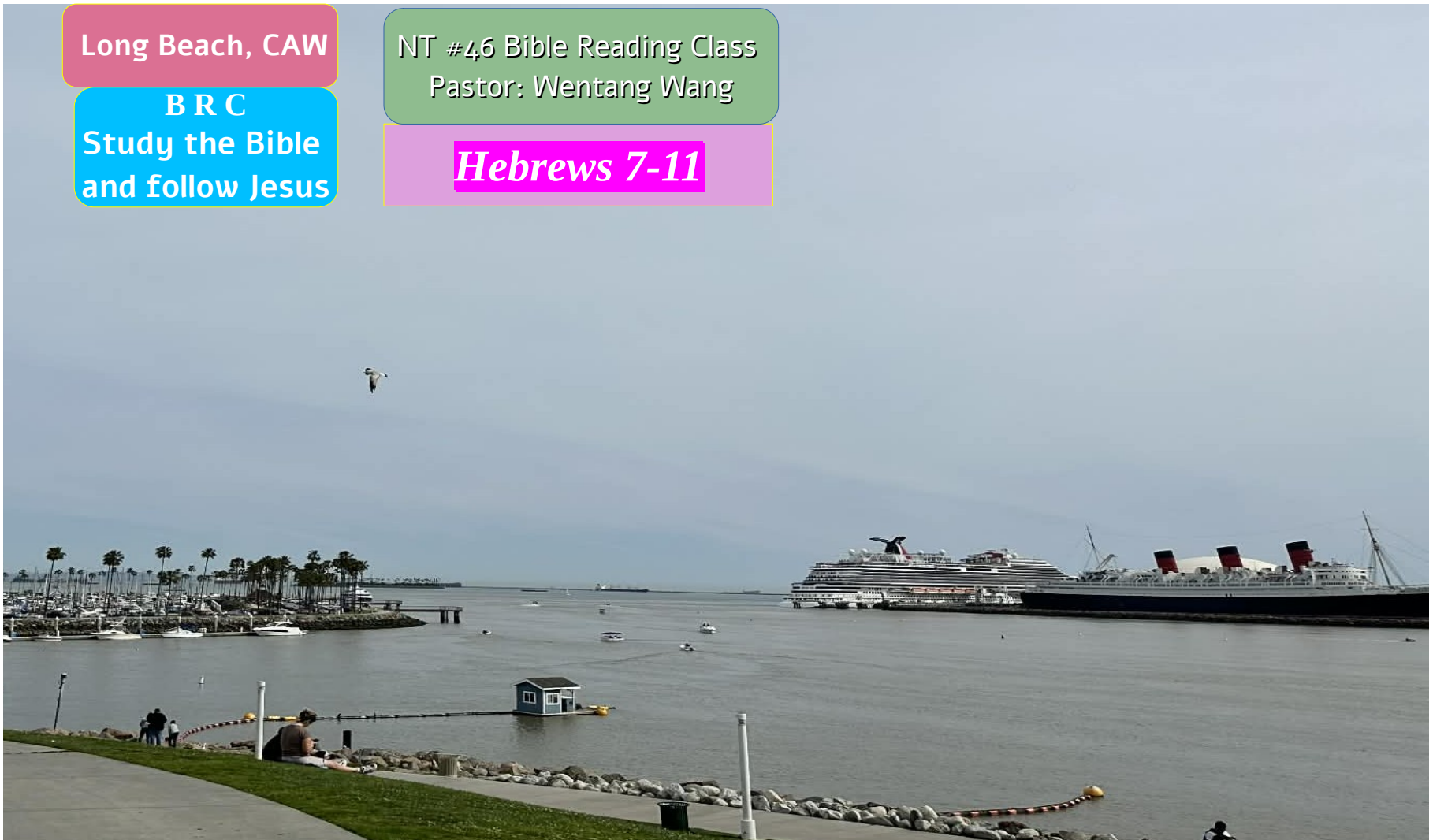


Long Beach, CAW

B R C
Study the Bible
and follow Jesus

NT #46 Bible Reading Class
Pastor: Wentang Wang

Hebrews 7-11



W.Wang

A Bible Reader's Conviction

- *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and **training in righteousness**, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NIV)*

A Blessed Journey

1. *May you study God's Word with a reverent heart and walk in His will.*
2. *May the Lord's Word flourish, and may He add to the church those who are being saved.*
3. *May the Lord bless your days of reading the Scriptures.*

Study the Bible, follow Jesus



The Guiding Principles of BRC



- Christ-Centered
- Bible-Based
- Mission-Minded

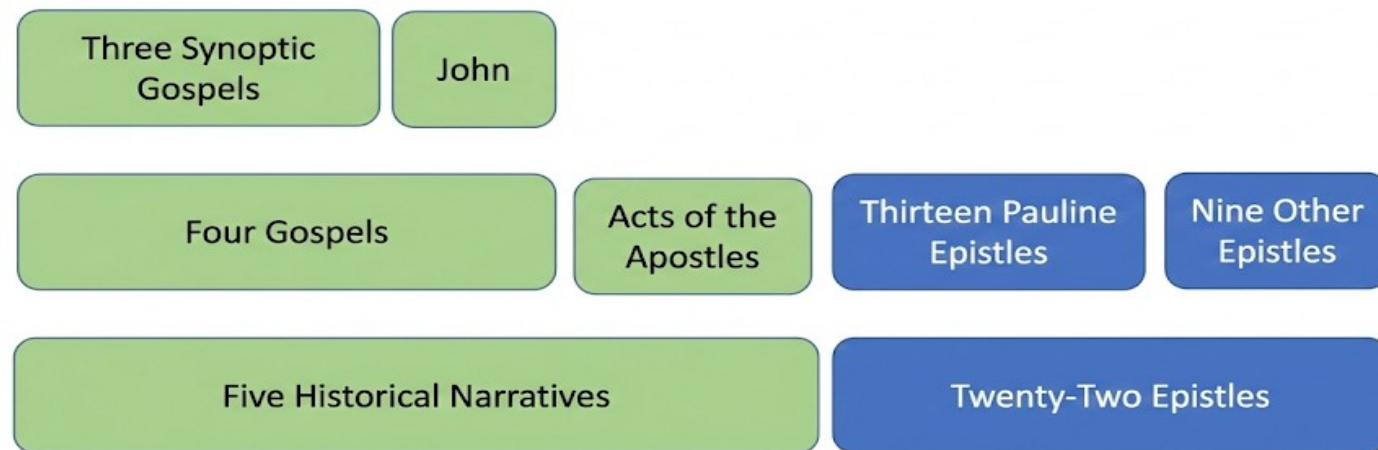
BRC: A Gentleman's Agreement



- *I'll complete weekly reading assignment*
- *I'll watch weekly teaching video in its entirety*
- *I'll complete weekly quiz (closed book)*

The Structure of the 27 Books of the New Testament

- *The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) John*
- *The Fourfold Gospel, Acts, The Thirteen Pauline Epistles, The Other Nine Epistles (General Epistles and Others)*
- *Five Books of Historical Narrative, Twenty-Two Books of Doctrinal Teaching*





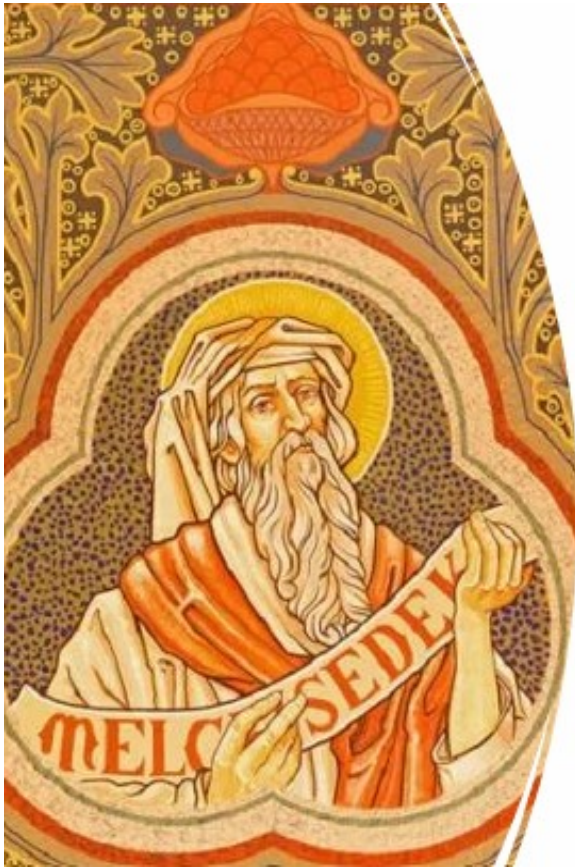
Better!

Hebrews

W.Wang

Melchizedek

• *This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.” Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever. Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! (Hebrews 7:4, NIV)*



Christ Is More Honorable Than the Earthly High Priest

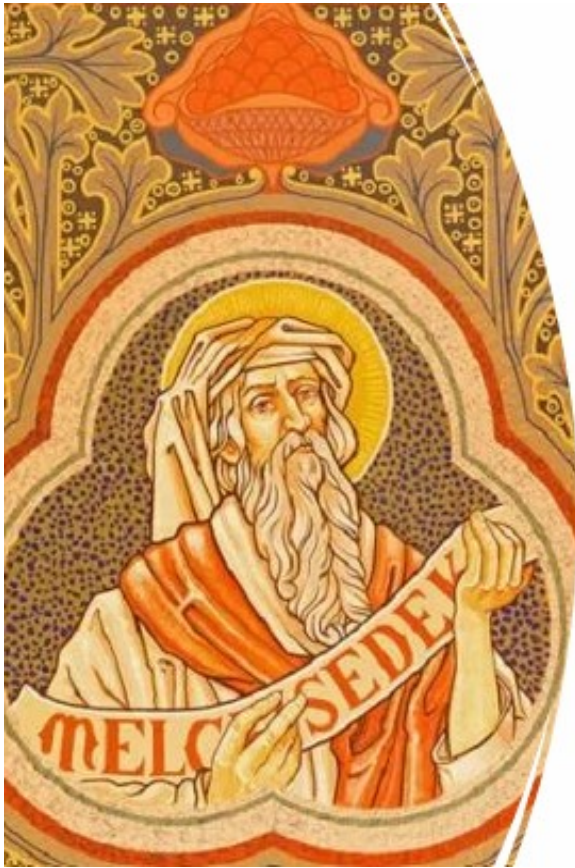
Melchizedek: A Type of the Messiah

- **What is a type?**

- A type is a person or object that expresses part of the meaning of the reality before the reality itself appears.

- The true Messiah is Jesus. His types include the Passover lamb, the bronze serpent lifted up, etc.

Melchizedek is a person who prefigures the Messiah.



Christ Is More Honorable Than the Earthly High Priest

Melchizedek: A Type of the Messiah

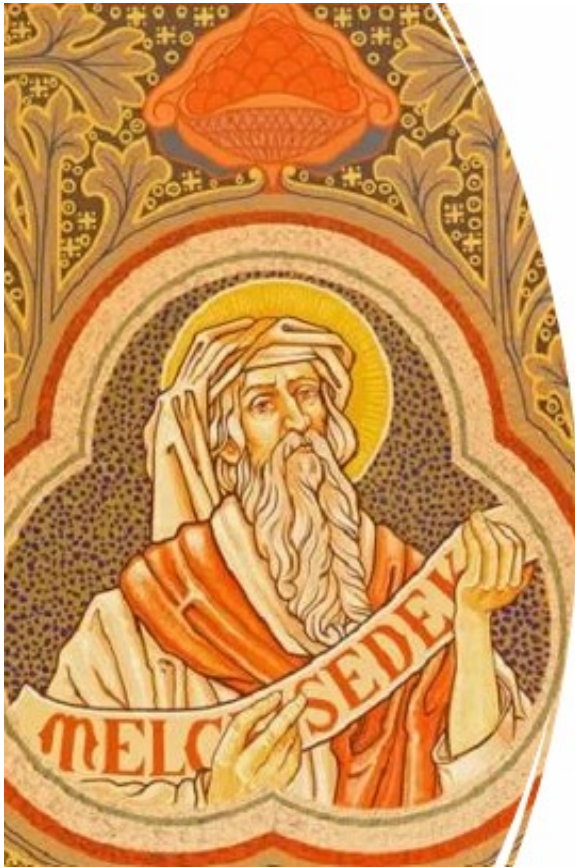
- **Functions of a type**

1. *A type helps us know God more deeply*

- A. **God who plans:** *Events do not happen by accident.*

God ordained His purpose before the ages. Types and the reality appear according to God's plan and timing.

- B. **God who has authority:** *God has the authority to accomplish His will. No power can resist Him. When the type appears, the reality will surely come. What God ordains must be fulfilled.*



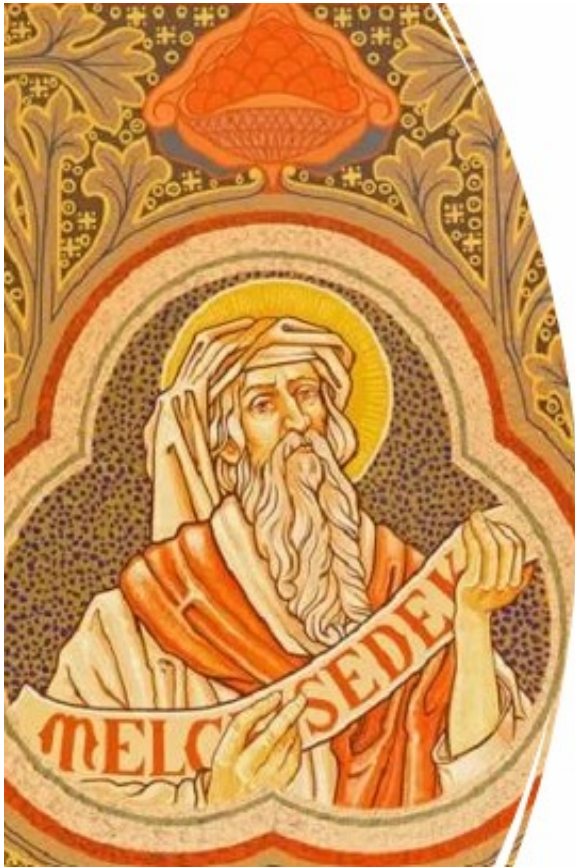
Christ Is More Honorable Than the Earthly High Priest

Melchizedek: A Type of the Messiah

- **Functions of a type**

- 2. *A type helps us understand the reality it points to*

- *Through the meaning expressed by the type, believers better understand the reality. For example, through Melchizedek (the type), we better understand what kind of High Priest Jesus Christ (the reality) is.*



Christ Is More Honorable Than the Earthly High Priest

Melchizedek: A Type of the Messiah

- **Melchizedek: Resembling the Son of God, 7:3**

1. *Typology in his position :*

- A. Title: *Priest of God Most High*
- B. Tenure: *Priest forever*

2. *Typology in his names :*

- A. King of Righteousness — the Messiah is “the righteous Branch of David” (Jer. 23:5; 33:15)
- B. King of Peace — the Messiah is “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6)

3. *Typology in his life :*

- A. *Without beginning*
- B. *Without end*

In the Order of Melchizedek

• If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also. He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. (Hebrews 7:11–14, NIV)

In the Likeness of Melchizedek

• *And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. For it is declared: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God. (Hebrews 7:15–19, NIV)*

Christ Is More Honorable Than the Earthly High Priest In The Order of Melchizedek

- **Two orders of priesthood, 7:11**

1. ***The order of Aaron***

- A. *Lesser than Abraham*

- B. *Established by a regulation of the flesh; temporary priesthood*

- C. *Not established by God's oath*

Christ Is More Honorable Than the Earthly High Priest In The Order of Melchizedek

- **Two orders of priesthood, 7:11**

- 2. *The order of Melchizedek*

- A. *Greater than Abraham*

- 1) *Received tithes from Abraham — the one who receives the tithe is greater than the one who gives it (7:4)*

- 2) *Blessed Abraham — the greater blesses the lesser (7:7)*

- B. *Established by the power of an indestructible life; eternal priesthood*

- C. *Established by God's oath*

The Guarantee of a Better Covenant

• *Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant. Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. (Hebrews 7:22–25, NIV)*

Such a High Priest, Meeting Our Needs

• *Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever. (Hebrews 7:26–28, NIV)*

Christ Is More Honorable Than the Earthly High Priest

The Priesthood of Jesus

1. A priest forever in the order of Melchizedek

- *His position is far greater than Abraham*
- *He is priest forever, with no interruption by death (7:23–24)*

2. The mediator of a better covenant

- *The better covenant refers to the New Covenant (8:6–13)*
- *Mediator: the guarantor between the two parties of a covenant (guarantee).*

Christ Is More Honorable Than the Earthly High Priest

The Priesthood of Jesus

3. He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him

- Because He always lives to intercede for them (7:25)*
- Because He offered Himself once for all, accomplishing salvation forever (7:27)*

Jesus Is Better!

- But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as **superior** to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is **superior** to the old one, since the new covenant is established on **better** promises. (Hebrews 8:6, NIV)

- The identity and work of the eternal High Priest:
 - After explaining the **identity** of Jesus as High Priest, Hebrews then explains the **work** of Jesus as High Priest:
 1. Mediator of a better covenant
 2. Serving in a better sanctuary
 3. Offering a better sacrifice



A Better Covenant

- **Mediator of a better covenant: Jesus Christ (8:6)**
- The better covenant: *refers to the New Covenant, the covenant of grace through Jesus*
- Mediator: *Jesus, as the eternal High Priest, becomes the mediator of the New Covenant, making the New Covenant an eternal covenant, valid forever.*



The New Covenant

- *“This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. **I will be their God, and they will be my people.** No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear. (Hebrews 8:10–13, NIV)*

A Better Covenant

- **The Old Covenant and the New Covenant**

- **Old Covenant**: *The Sinai covenant, based on obeying God's law and the sacrificial system. Its purpose was to set Israel apart as God's people. This covenant was abolished because it had a flaw— Israel did not remain faithful (8:7, 9).*

- **New Covenant**: *The covenant of grace through Jesus. Not based on human works but on God's grace. Anyone who believes in Jesus is justified freely, their life transformed, God becomes their God forever, and they become His people forever (8:10–12).*



A Better Covenant

- **Content of the better covenant: the New Covenant (8:10–13)**

- ***Purpose:** To make people God's people*

- ***Method:***

1. ***Changed life:** God's law written on hearts; everyone knows God.*
2. ***Eternal forgiveness:** God forgives their wickedness and remembers their sins no more.*



A Better Sanctuary

- **The shortcomings of the first sanctuary:**

1. *It could not bring people into God's presence (the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed), 9:8*
2. *Its rituals had only temporary effect (could not make the worshiper perfect), 9:9–10*
3. *It was only a **figure**, a copy of the true sanctuary, 9:9*



A Better Sanctuary

- The better sanctuary

1. A greater and more perfect tabernacle

- But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. (Hebrews 9:11, NIV)

2. The heavenly sanctuary

- For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. (Hebrews 9:24, NIV)



A Better Sanctuary

➤ *Jesus Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary, became the eternal High Priest, offered a better sacrifice, and solved the problem of human sin forever.*



A Better Sacrifice

- **The effects of sacrifice:**

1. **Cleansing:** *The law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood (9:22)*
2. **Forgiveness:** *Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (9:22)*
3. **Reminder:** *The sacrifices reminded people of their sins every year (10:3)*

- **Old sacrifices:**

- *Sacrifice: the blood of animals (goats and calves, 9:12)*
- *Effect: temporary atonement (could cover sin but could not remove it, 10:4)*
- *Purpose: to serve God*



A Better Sacrifice

- **New sacrifice:**
 - *Sacrifice: the blood of Jesus (He used His own blood)*
 - *Effect: eternal redemption*
 - *He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. (9:12,)*
 - *For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. (10:14, NIV)*
 - *And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary. (10:18, NIV)*
- *Purpose: to serve God (so that we may serve the living God, 9:14)*





The Excellent Chrristian Life

Hebrews – Part Two: The Life Section

W.Wang

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31



1. The Excellent Spiritual Life

- The “Because” of the Spiritual Life

1. *Because the way to come before God has been opened:* *We can enter the Most Holy Place (come before God) by the blood of Jesus.*
 - “by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body” (Hebrews 10:19–20, NIV)
2. *Because Christ is the head of the house:* *Because we have a great priest over the house of God (10:21)*
3. *Because we have been cleansed:* *Because our hearts have been sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience (10:22)*



THEREFORE

1. The Excellent Spiritual Life

- The “Therefore” of the Spiritual Life

1. Therefore, let us draw near to God: *“let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings” (10:22)*
2. Therefore, let us hold firmly to the hope in Christ: *“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.” (10:23)*



THEREFORE

1. The Excellent Spiritual Life

- The “Therefore” of the Spiritual Life

3. Therefore, let us love one another: *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” (10:24)*
4. Therefore, let us be faithful in gathering together: *“not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (10:25)*



Apostasy and Perseverance: Another Warning 10:26–39

- **Who are the apostates? (Who)**

- *They are “those who have received the knowledge of the truth” (10:26).*
- *They are the same people described in 6:4–8: long-term seekers, almost believers, nominal Christians, who **heard the gospel, seemed to believe, but never truly believed.***

- **What did they do? (What)**

- *They trampled the Son of God underfoot.*



Apostasy and Perseverance: Another Warning 10:26–39

- **What did they do? (What)**
 - *They treated the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing.*
 - *They insulted the Spirit of grace (10:29).*
- **Why must we not apostatize? (Why)**
 - *Because after apostasy, there is no sacrifice for sins left.*
 - *Because apostasy leads to terrifying judgment (“It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”)*



- **What Is Perseverance?**

- *Perseverance means **believing in the Lord to the very end**, holding firmly to the truth, remaining faithful even under severe persecution or hardship.*

- **Believers must persevere: “You need to persevere” (10:36)**

1. *Because you have already endured in the past:*

- *“Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering.” (10:32)*



2. *Because you are people of faith:*

- *“But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.” (10:39)*

3. *Therefore, do not fear:*

- *“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.” (10:35)*

4. *Therefore, you must continue:*

- *“You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.” (10:36)*

2. The Excellent Life of Faith — Hebrews 11

• **Definition of faith:** “*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*” (11:1)

- This is a “functional definition”: faith is the thing that gives substance to what we hope for (a solid foundation), and provides evidence for what we do not see (a sure proof).
- Because we have faith, we have confidence in what we hope for (such as God’s promises).
- Because we have faith, we are certain of what we do not see (such as God).



People Who Lived by Faith

- **By faith we understand**
 - *that the universe was formed at God's command.*
- **By faith they lived:**

1. Abel

- *By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain, and thus received testimony that he was righteous.*

2. Enoch

- *By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death...Before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.*



People Who Lived by Faith

3. Noah

•By faith, (When warned by God about things not yet seen, and moved with holy fear) he prepared an ark to save his family. In doing so, he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.



People Who Lived by Faith

4. Abraham — By Faith

- *By faith, when he was called, he obeyed and went out... even though he did not know where he was going (obedience)*
- *By faith he lived as a foreigner in the land of promise, dwelling in tents as in a strange land. (obedience)*
- *When tested, he offered Isaac (obedience)*

5. Sarah — By Faith

- *By faith, even though she was past the age of childbearing, she was enabled to conceive, because she considered Him who had promised to be faithful. (belief)*



People Who Lived by Faith

6. Isaac

- *By faith he blessed Jacob and Esau regarding things to come.*

7. Jacob

- *By faith, when he was dying, he blessed each of Joseph's sons and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.*

8. Joseph

- *By faith, when his end was near, he spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning his bones.*



People Who Lived by Faith

9. **Moses' parents**

- *By faith they hid him for three months, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.*

10. **Moses**

- *By faith, when he grew up, he refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.*
- *By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger.*
- *By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood.*



People Who Lived by Faith

11. The Israelites

- *By faith they passed through the Red Sea as on dry land.*
- *By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had marched around them for seven days.*

12. Rahab

- *By faith she welcomed the spies in peace and did not perish with those who were disobedient.*





Life Is a Song

Victorious Songs of Faith

1. Abraham — By Faith

- *By faith* Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and went out to the place he would later receive as an inheritance...
- 2. *By faith* he lived as a foreigner in the land of promise, dwelling in tents as in a strange land...
- 3. *By faith* even Sarah herself, though past the age of childbearing, was enabled to conceive, because she considered Him who had promised to be faithful...
- 4. *By faith* Abraham, when tested, offered Isaac...
(Hebrews 11:8–19)

Life Is a Song



Victorious Songs of Faith

• Every victory in the Christian life contains an element of faith. Every triumphant song is a song of victory through faith. A Christian's victory is not a personal victory, but a victory in the Lord. The source of victory is not me, but the Lord. Because the Lord has already overcome, I rely on Him by faith, so that His victory becomes my victory.

• Jesus said to His disciples at the Last Supper: *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33, NIV) The disciples have peace because **their peace is in the Lord**. They can take heart because **the Lord has already overcome the world**. The Lord did not ask the disciples to strive to obtain peace, nor did He ask them to strive to overcome the world, because these are things the disciples could never accomplish. Peace is in the Lord; victory is in the Lord. There is no personal achievement here—only trust in the Lord.

• Victory is the result of trusting the Lord. Faith brings me into Christ, enabling me to live out His peace and His victory in every circumstance. When the Lord calls, I follow by faith. When the Lord commands, I obey by faith. When I face difficulties, I rely on the Lord by faith. When I overcome difficulties, I give thanks by faith. Faith connects me to the Lord, enabling victory in every situation of life.

Four “Faith Actions”



• Abraham is called the father of faith. Scripture says: “Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.” (Galatians 3:7) And again: “So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.” (Romans 4:11) What faith deeds did Abraham have?

• *Hebrews 11 is the chapter of faith. It uses four “By faith” statements to describe the life of Abraham. Three refer to Abraham, one refers to Sarah— together describing the faith life of this couple.*

• These four “By faith” statements reveal **four faith actions**:

1. **Go** — Abraham obeyed and went
2. **Live** — Abraham lived in the land of promise
3. **Believe** — Sarah considered (believed) Him faithful who had promised
4. **Offer** — Abraham offered Isaac

1. Obey and Go



- “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.” (Hebrews 11:8)

- *Abraham obeyed and went. He did not go randomly—he obeyed and went. Faith always produces action—not just any action, but obedience. If you want to know whether you have faith, do not measure your spiritual knowledge—measure your faith actions.*

- Faith actions have two characteristics:

First: Faith always involves letting go. God said to Abraham: “Leave your country, your people, and your father’s household, and go to the land I will show you.” For anyone, “country, people, father’s household” are the hardest things to leave. Your country is your familiar environment, your people are those of your own kind, your father’s household is your closest family. Abraham’s obedience required **great sacrifice**.

1. Obey and Go (continued)



- Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee and called Peter and Andrew: “At once they left their nets and followed him.” (Mark 1:18) He called James and John: “They left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.” (Mark 1:20) The disciples left their nets and their father to follow Jesus.
- **Second: Faith always involves not knowing.** Abraham went out not knowing where he was going. God told him to go, but did not tell him where, nor what would happen along the way. Abraham acted without knowing—and that is faith. If everything is known and prepared before going, that is not faith.
- The disciples were the same. At first they did not know Jesus would be crucified. After the crucifixion they did not know He would rise. After the resurrection they did not know what would happen to them. We follow Jesus the same way—we do not know what will happen. But we know He is the Lord, and when the Lord calls, we follow.
- Faith actions always **involve sacrifice**, and faith actions always **involve not knowing**.





Life is a song

Life as an alien

• *By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (11:9-10)*

Happy Days in Tents



• Abraham is the father of faith. When he lived in the promised land, he lived as a foreigner, dwelling in tents. Scripture views this “tent-dwelling lifestyle” as an expression of faith (“**By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents.” Hebrews 11:9.**)

Allow me to use camping as a modern illustration:

• Our family has many wonderful “family memories” from camping. When the children were young, we often took them camping— in California, Texas, and Colorado’s Rocky Mountain National Park. One of the most unforgettable trips was in Big Sur, Northern California, where the campsite was in a grove of towering redwood trees, and just outside was the deep blue Pacific Ocean. Now that the children are grown, whenever we talk about those camping days, everyone is filled with joy.

• *Everything used for camping is temporary. A tent is a temporary dwelling—no need to be particular. The pots are old iron pots that can be bumped without worry. Cups and bowls are disposable. It is only camping, not home; the precious dishes that Mom treasures would never be brought along.*

The Tent of Faith



- *Abraham left his country, his people, and his father's household and came to the promised land. In that land God did not give him any inheritance—not even a foot of ground (Acts 7:5). The only piece of property he ever owned was a burial site he purchased from the Hittites to bury Sarah (Genesis 23:1–20).*
- *God had promised Abraham that He would give this land to him and to his descendants (Acts 7:5; Genesis 12:7; 17:8). Abraham never received this land during his lifetime, yet he did not mind. He lived his whole life dwelling in tents. He emphasized that he was a foreigner and a sojourner (Genesis 23:4), living in this world with the mindset of a guest.*
- **Faith gives us the right perspective on this life:** *we are like travelers living in tents. Everything in this life is temporary— we bring nothing into the world and take nothing out; if we have food and clothing, we should be content (1 Timothy 6:7–8). People of the world fight for fame and gain, cling tightly, and cannot let go. But we are not like that. Like camping, we live in this world with joyful hearts, seeking only to be used by God and to leave behind beautiful memories. We do not mind living in tents, because our true home is in heaven.*

The City With Foundations



- *To gain the right perspective, we must first have the right comparison. Only when two things are placed side by side can we see which is greater. Only when family and career are compared can we see which is more important. Abraham viewed life through the “contrast of faith”: he lived in tents on earth because he saw his true homeland—a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10).*
- *Faith enables us to see our heavenly home. Compared to our heavenly home, the houses we live in on earth—and even our physical bodies—are merely tents (2 Corinthians 5:1). Abraham saw that the heavenly city has foundations, unlike earthly tents which have none. Therefore he longed for and waited for that city (Hebrews 11:10, 16). Scripture says that for people with such faith, “God is not ashamed to be called their God.” (Hebrews 11:16)*

What Is Unseen Is Eternal

- *With the right perspective, we can enjoy life more deeply and leave behind beautiful memories. When you know that the good things are at home, you will not cling to the disposable cups and plates at the campsite. With a joyful heart, enjoy the “campground” of life— spending time with family, admiring the blue sky, the ocean, and the trees, constantly giving thanks and praise to the Creator of heaven and earth.*
- *We live by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Even when we face suffering, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For we know that our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. Faith enables us to see “what is unseen,” so we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:16–18).*

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Life is a song

God brings me laughter

• *And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. (Hebrews 11:11-12)*

The Process of Believing



- *Believing is a process. The first time we hear God's promise, we may think, "How is this possible?" Yet something wonderful happens—faith gradually replaces doubt. Step by step, our hearts move from questioning to full conviction.*
- *Why is this so? Because God gives His promises out of His unlimited power, while we try to understand His promises out of our human limitations. In the process of believing, faith enables us to see God's power, giving us a new understanding, so that we become fully convinced of His promises.*
- *The father of faith, Abraham, went through the same process. When God first told him that Sarah would bear a son, Abraham fell facedown and laughed, saying in his heart: "Will a man a hundred years old have a child? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" (Genesis 17:17) Abraham's reaction was normal; his understanding was normal. God did not rebuke him, nor count him unrighteous because of it. Instead, God counted him righteous because of his final belief.*

The Process of Believing



- Regarding this matter, Romans says: “Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead— since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why ‘it was credited to him as righteousness.’” (Romans 4:19–22)
- **God sees Abraham’s final belief, not his initial unbelief. Believing is a process. God looks at the final product, not the initial reaction.**
- Sarah was the same. She did not believe God’s promise at first. When God said, “Your wife Sarah will have a son,” Sarah heard it at the tent door and laughed to herself: “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?” The Lord said, “Why did Sarah laugh?” Sarah was afraid and denied it: “I did not laugh.” But He said, “Yes, you did laugh.” (Genesis 18:10–15)

God Considers the Outcome



- *God is gracious. If faith were an essay, God does not look at how you begin—only how you end. If faith were a journey, God does not judge whether you took a wrong step at first—only whether you reached the destination. Sarah began in unbelief but later believed. God remembered her belief, not her unbelief, and fulfilled His promise in her: “By faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered Him faithful who had promised. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants...”*
- *Scripture teaches us to look at the outcome: “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.” (Hebrews 13:7) Do not focus on Peter denying the Lord three times—look at his ending. Do not focus on Paul persecuting the church—look at his ending. Do not focus on Abraham and Sarah laughing—look at their ending.*
- *Understanding God’s graciousness makes us gracious as well. Faith is a process. We should not rush to criticize Sarah when she laughed, nor shame Abraham when he said, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!” (Genesis 17:18) Instead, we should encourage one another and give each other room to grow.*

God Brings Me Laughter



- God turns the bad into good, and turns failures into amazing grace. God told Abraham to name the child **Isaac**, meaning “he laughs.” Indeed, in this process Abraham laughed, and Sarah laughed—they laughed secretly, quietly, thinking God’s promise was “laughable.” Yet God did not mind. He told them to name the child “He laughs,” not to shame them, but so that they would bring **laughter** into the world.
- After Isaac was born, Sarah praised God, saying: “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.” (Genesis 21:6) The initial secret laughter became grateful laughter, and those who heard it laughed with her. Isaac became a living testimony. Wherever the child went, people would ask:

God Brings Me Laughter

- “Sarah, this child is adorable—what is his name?”
- “He laughs.”
- “He laughs? But he’s not laughing!”
- “No, no—I mean his name is ‘He laughs.’”
- “How interesting! Why did you name him that?”
- “I didn’t name him—God did. Here’s what happened...”
- And so the story of “Isaac” spread everywhere, and all who heard it laughed with joy. In that laughter, the name of God was glorified.





Life is a song

Welcome them from a distance

• *All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13-16)*

See Them from a Distance



- Some people say: “Only when you see heaven can you live well on earth; only when you see eternal life can you live well in this present life.” What does this mean?
- *This statement explains the power of “hope” . Compared to those without hope, people with hope can live their days far better. Those without hope see no way out— they become impatient, make mistakes easily, and fall into discouragement. Those with hope have inner stability and optimism; even when facing difficulties, they can handle them calmly and therefore live their present days better.*
- Some unbelievers mock Christians: “You Christians talk about heaven and eternal life all day long—you don’t even care about real life!” In reality, Christians often live better than others in practical life. Christian family life, work performance, and happiness levels are generally higher than those of non-believers, because their hearts are filled with hope.

See Them from a Distance



- *Hope is an expression of faith. Take Abraham as an example. God promised him: “The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you.” (Genesis 17:8) Although Abraham never received that land in his lifetime, Scripture says: “All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.”*
- *Abraham’s faith enabled him to “see them from a distance and welcome them.” Seeing from a distance means looking through time with the eyes of faith and seeing the day when the promise will be fulfilled. Welcoming them means living today with joy as if the promise has already come true.*

The Eternal Hope



- All of this has to do with perspective. Faith gives people insight—the ability to **see things in perspective**—seeing not only this life but also eternity. People of faith believe that God’s promises will surely be fulfilled—not according to my timing, but according to God’s timing. Life is short; God’s promises do not need to be fulfilled within my lifetime. But in God’s time, I will surely receive what He promised. Therefore, here and now, in this present moment, I can already welcome the promise with joy as though it has already been fulfilled in me.
- Paul said: “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.” (1 Corinthians 15:19) Paul said this because some claimed to believe in Christ but had no hope of eternal life. Paul called them “the most pitiful of all people.” Dear brothers and sisters, since we believe in the Lord, we must have the hope of eternal life. Do not believe halfway and end up more pitiful than others.

The Eternal Hope



• *Faith can be exercised. We should practice “seeing from a distance and welcoming with joy”—seeing our heavenly home by faith and living a life that is “on earth as in heaven”:*

- 1. God’s promises will surely be fulfilled; by faith I will live today as if the promise has already come true.*
- 2. God has prepared a city for me (Hebrews 11:16). He is my strength and my refuge; I will dwell securely in Him even now.*
- 3. One day I will return to my heavenly home and dwell with God forever.*



Life is a song

Offering up and Receiving back

- *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, **offered up** Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, “In Isaac your descendants shall be called.” He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also **received him back** as a type. (Hebrews 11:17-19)*

By Faith We Offer and Receive



• *People of faith will surely offer, and they will surely receive. In the process of offering and receiving, God adds His blessing. Abraham offered Isaac by faith, and God added blessing to his offering and gave Isaac back to him. (God stopped Abraham in time and said: “I will surely bless you... and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.” Genesis 22:17–18)*

• *Sometimes I wonder: What are my happiest memories from all these years as a Christian? For some reason, what always comes to mind is the scene of brothers and sisters moving tables and arranging chairs in an old classroom. The scene is simple, yet it reveals something important: serving together with brothers and sisters, waiting for the meeting to begin—those were my happiest moments. Although potlucks and outings are joyful, their joy does not last. My most enduring joyful memories are always related to serving together and offering together.*

By Faith We Offer and Receive



• Both “ offering ” and “ receiving back ” are joyful experiences. Receiving back brings not only joy but also gratitude. When we receive back, we are often surprised, because when we offered, we were not expecting anything in return. When God repays in a way that is far beyond what we offered, the gratitude in our hearts is indescribable.

The Isaac-Level Offering



- If offerings could be ranked, “Abraham offering Isaac” would surely be the highest level—far above the clouds! Such an offering feels unreachable to us, even confusing: A father offering his son as a sacrifice—is this kind of “faith” something we should imitate? To answer this, we must examine Scripture carefully.
- According to Hebrews 11:17–19, Abraham’s offering of Isaac involved three steps:
 - God gave the promise: God promised Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation, and said, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.”
 - The promise seemed about to fail: God asked Abraham to offer Isaac. If Isaac died, the promise would fail.
 - God has a way to fulfill His promise: Abraham believed God’s promise would not fail. Therefore he reasoned that “God could even raise the dead.”

The Isaac-Level Offering



- Abraham's faith was this: He believed God's promise; he obeyed even when the promise seemed about to fail; he believed God always has a way to fulfill His promise. Abraham is the father of faith—his faith is our example.
- But this was not only about faith—it also involved deep emotion. Abraham loved Isaac dearly—“your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac.” (Genesis 22:2) Even though Abraham believed God could raise Isaac from the dead and that he would receive his son back, the act of offering Isaac was undoubtedly the most difficult act in human history—the most severe test of faith. Abraham passed this test. He is the only person in history who ever had to face such a test.
- Although we will never face such an extreme test, the principle of “**offering our best**” becomes our standard. What is your “Isaac”? If God asked you to offer it, would you?

God's Generous Blessing

- The story of Abraham offering Isaac ends in the most perfect way: God stopped Abraham in time and provided a ram to take Isaac's place. The ram died; the boy lived. Abraham named that place Jehovah-Jireh: "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."
- Many years later, on a hill called Golgotha, God provided another Lamb for the world. God's Son bore the sins of humanity and was killed on the cross. The act Abraham did not complete, God completed in His own Son. Three days later, God's Son Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Abraham's belief that God could raise the dead was fulfilled in Jesus.
- Because Abraham offered, God promised him, "All nations on earth will be blessed through your offspring." This promise was fully fulfilled in Jesus (the descendant of Abraham, Matthew 1:1). From Abraham to Jesus, we see that offering and receiving form a cycle of faith—and God places His generous blessing within this cycle.



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