

Hebrews is the book of the Falling Away

In this volume 4 of the LEARN CHRIST commentaries, you will find a great deal from the book of Hebrews. The book of Hebrews is many things. It is a book that is no doubt a revised copy of Paul's original address to the Hebrew synagogues where he attempted to tell them all that he learned about Christ and the way of salvation through Christ. Paul also wanted the people of his own nation of Israel to know that most of the children of Israel rescued from Egyptian bondage did not enter the Promised Land of Israel, nor did they enter the eternal rest of God in heaven. In short, they saw the works of God and the power and blessings of God, not only in the rescue from Egypt, but also during 40 years in the wilderness. They came short of heaven and the promised land through "unbelief". This is the First Falling Away, and God through Paul in Hebrews wants us to know the characteristics, cause, and outcome of the First Falling Way in order that He can also warn us, as the book of Hebrews often does, to stay away from the Second Falling Away, the challenge of our generation if you remember the first chapter.

Related to the Falling Away of our generation is another prominent doctrine in the book of Hebrews, that of the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. If we recognized that Jesus is on the right hand of God to ever make intercession for our sins, and we daily and for more than 40 years continued to take advantage of this benefit of the confession of sins, constantly "looking to Jesus as the

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author and finisher of ours sins," this within itself would be sufficient, no doubt, to keep us from the Falling Away of our generation. Second to this most prominent doctrine, often called and related especially in Hebrews, to the "doctrine of Christ" is the Baptist distinctive called "the priesthood of believers". I think long ago this doctrine among Southern Baptist has passed into oblivion. The words of many famous Baptists statements of faith are no longer recognized, muchless the meaning, so that when we come to the chapter on "The Priesthood of Believers", we will look at Hebrews, other Scriptures, and Baptist Statements of Faith on the subject.

I want to warn you now that the second half of this volume will be on "doctrine". Perhaps in the first half, you will hear less of the word "doctrine" and more of the "teachings" of Jesus and the Bible, although the two words are almost synonymous in meaning. The only rescue of yourself and your church, if it is already not too late, is for the sound doctrine or teachings of Jesus and the Bible. Although we will introduce that doctrine initially in the simple and straightforward teachings of the book of Hebrews, centered around it being a book about (1) the Falling Away, (2) The Priesthood of Christ, and (3) The Priesthood of Believers, we will in faithfulness to Hebrews and the rest of the Bible want to use and look at the teachings of the Bible centered around the word "doctrine". Our prime problem with "doctrine", is that we have not come to see doctrine as something we live as well as something we believe in our mind, especially is the true about the doctrine of Christ which provides salvation to us all.

2-1: The Falling Away in the book of Hebrews.

Previously we looked at the fact and characteristics of the Falling Away from Jesus in Matthew 24 and from the Apostle Paul in II Thessalonians. Also we briefly mentioned the Falling Away as the time of intolerance toward sound doctrine of II Timothy 3:3-5. This is by no means the extent of Bible teachings on the Falling Away. In this section and chapter, we will begin a more exhaustive study and explanation, hopefully in all cases based on Scripture, from the book of Hebrews. I believe we can know the truth. I believe we can know sound doctrine. I believe Jesus when He said, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine if it be of God." We can come up with many excuses as the world does about obstacles to knowing the truth, or we can count on the simple teaching of Jesus that we can know the truth. Generally, most of the excuses to shun the Bible in the name of

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the truth can not be known center around scholars and denominations who differ on interpretations. Well, there is "no private interpretation; but holy men of God spake {or wrote} as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Most scholars do not understand or properly interpret Scripture for four Biblical-reasons: (1) the natural man can not understand the things of the Spirit of God; (2) the things of the Bible are spiritually discerned, require help of the Holy Spirt, and without this assistance of the Holy Spirit, truth can not be learned and known; (3) God has chosen many simple things of the world to confuse the wise like simple words of truth and the Bible; and (4) Not many wise, noble, or scholarly are called by God. Once they claim to be a scholar as many with their Phd's do, it is tantamount to eliminating themselves among those that God has called and blessed with truth. It is from those same scholars, out of touch as much with God, Christ, and the truth of the Bible, as living in their ivory towers, that confusions about the truth of the Bible. For example, a few years ago such a group of scholars honestly collectivied in a single location from all over the globe to vote on whether Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, as if their collective scholastic votes could in any way determine the real doctrine of Christ in the Bible. Just the nerve of such scholarship, to think that in any way it would matter to God or really to most of God's people the direction in which their collective ignorance of spiritual matters went. The vote is the tool of the majority, of the world, and of the American Democratic Faith. The vote in churches is often the tool of Satan to encourage anarchy in church government as the authority of the pastor and Christ are subverted. The vote is by the many who go the way of destruction, the broad way, and the opposite of the few, who go the narrow and unpopular way that leads to life eternal. Even as Christ came to primarily preach the Gospel to the poor, so also today the recipients of the gospel are among the poor, not among the wise and scholarly and rich. Get use to it, it is Bible.

1. The Primary Falling Away Teaching Section of the book of Hebrews is found in Hebrews 3:1 through 4:11.

You know how this definition by God Himself of the First Falling Away truly gets underway in the words,

"Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, {God in His Word here, calls the First Falling Away a "rebellion", and we would expect something similar in the Falling Away of our generation.} when your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years." (Hebrews 3:7-9)

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I hope you can hear the Word of God in these words "tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years." Yes, that is God speaking. You hear and see God speaking, and you see something of the patience of God toward those often called His children. **{We will want to discuss later the meaning of children of God as used throughout the Bible, and allow Paul to throw a lot of light on the meaning from the book of Romans.}**

1. The Falling Away is a rebellion against God Himself, against the leadership of God, and a rebellion against the leadership that God has appointed over His people such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. As we will study in the Hebrew accounts and of the Old Testament history of the Falling Away in the wilderness, it was a rebellion against the leadership of God through Moses and Aaron. Just like today in churches, the people knew best in the church in the wilderness. They also, like today, thought that the majority who wanted to turn back to Egypt knew best, and that it was foolhardy to go forward into the Promised Land. Of course, it was not exactly this simple as there were other leaders among the children of Israel, leaders appointed by Moses over tens, hundreds, and thousands; and these leaders also lead the people in rebellion. We find that also today in our churches as other leaders lead the people in rebellion against the appointed of God. What I would call the very common anarchy in church government seen Convention wide in rural and urban churches, where music, youth, and education leaders lead the people in rebellion today, and in the present Falling Away, would be called Rebellion in the first Falling Away. Those churchmembers and temporal leaders in churches who label such rebellion as right because of a vote of the majority have learned little from the Bible. Those churchmembers also confuse the American Democratic Faith of the fundamentalists with the Faith and practice of the Bible. It was Christ who Ascended to the right hand of God the Father then gave gifts to men--the gifts of Prophets, Apostles, Evangelists, pastors and teachers--for the benefit of the church. For those who rebel and lead in rebellion and even participate in the rebellion, it is the same as denying the gifts that Christ has given to pastors and teachers. It is covetousness in that it is an attempt to steal those gifts for themselves. And do you think that God is going to honor any church or any majority group of the church which would covet and steal those important gifts. Even as the children of God in wilderness were after 40 years of patience on the part of God and 40 years of unbelief and rebellion on the part of the majority of the people were not allowed to receive the blessings of the land and eternal rest, even

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so--and that is what the book of Hebrews and the rest of the Bible is going to tell us--will not be allowed church blessings in their homeland, nor eternity in heaven.

Continuing with the Hebrews 3:1 through 4:11 passage:

"Therefore I was angry {yes this is God, and yes God got angry after His patience wore out in 40 years} with that generation, {There is a majority of the whole generation of the people of God with whom God was angry. It is jumping ahead but we know from the history in the Old Testamet that only a minority of children 20 years of age and younger, and Joshua, and Caleb, were allowed a future in the Promised Land and eternity.} and said, (yes, this is God talking to the Trinity again) 'They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" (Hebrews 3:10,11)

(1). This is a quote from Psalm 95:7-11 with God Himself speaking through the Prophet David.

(2). God did get mad at the majority of a whole generation except the children under 20 and the two spies, Caleb and Joshua, who gave a minority report that the Promised Land could be taken.

(3). After 40 years of providing food, water, and miracles and watching the people in the wilderness, God decided based on their behavior of 40 years and what He could see in their hearts that "they always go astray in their hearts."

(4). In fact, God decided that these same people had never known the ways of God in the first place. Later in the passage we will come to Hebrews 3:14, what I think of as the very gist of the book of Hebrews, and what is the resolution we must make later between the Security of the Believer and the Falling Away:

"For we have beomce partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end...." (Hebrews 3:14)

Notice how carefully the wording is chosen such that it does not talk about Christians. What it talks about is "partakers of Christ". These are believers that have gone all the way in the four kinds of sown seed as expressed by Christ, the only kind was the seed that brought forth much fruit. Bluntaly

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this is stated many ways in the book of Hebrews. I don't think we appreciate how blunt it can be. And what it is saying is that the real believers, the real children of God, or whatever phrase from the Bible you chose to use, are those that make it to the end and go into the promised land. It is horrible to have to say, but realistic, that most of the children of Israel in the wilderness were not true partakers, and most of the churchmembers in our churches today may not be true partakers. As we go along in Hebrews, we will find the characteristics of the partakers that make it all the way, and enumerate them; and we will find the characteristics of the participants in the Falling Away and enumerate them also.

You noticed that we started with an exegesis of 3:7, temporarily skipping the first six verses. Verse one is interesting in that it addresses the "holy brethren" and refers to them as "partakers of the heavenly calling" in spite of the fact that later in 3:14 he has to divide some of them into "partakers of Christ" and some into those who will not hold fast to the end with what they started at the beginning. Verse one always starts with asking the reader to consider Christ Jesus as the Apostle and High Priest of "our confession." I also spoke earlier of the relationship between the Falling Away and the Priesthood of Christ. In fact, we would have to say that the book of Hebrews is more on the Priesthood of Christ, secondly on the Falling Away and on the Priesthood of Believers. Verses 3:2-6 elaborate on the Priesthood of Christ: (1) a faithful priest to the God that appointed Him; in other words, Christ was obedient even unto death and never rebellious; (2) Jesus was faithful like Moses; (3) Even as the builder of the house has more honor than the house itself, so Jesus is worthy of more honor than Moses; (4) While every house is built by someone, God is the owner of all things, and God has made Christ His Son head of the house of the church.

I promised to save all the warnings against Falling Away for a later section; but as a book about the Falling Away, I want you to notice how often they are encountered in Hebrews. It would be easy to overlook in reading; and my how casually, seemingly, does Paul and the Spirit of God through Paul remind us how easy it would be to fall away. For example here in 3:6,

"whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end." (Hebrews 3:6)

Okay, what more can we do for the Hebrews 3:1 to 4:11 passage. Preliminary to a conclusion on this passage, I will for continuity sake mention the

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fact that the same chapter 3 passage that started with Jesus as the High Priest ends in 4:15-16 with facts about Jesus as the High Priest; and that there are other cautions to churchmembers about Falling Away in 4:14--"let us hold fast our confession, in 4:11--"lest anyone fall like the example of disobedience in the wilderness, and in 4:1--to fear that you might come short of the promise of eternal rest offered to today's believers. However our primary thrust in Bible study now is the Falling Away and we come to another section in the passage, Hebrews 3:16-19, where it describes exactly "who" rebelled. I will paraphrase the passage. Who was it that heard and rebelled? It was all who came out of Egypt. It was all who were led by Moses. That pretty well describes all of the so-called children of Israel except it leaves out which will be amplified later, the children under 20 years of age. And another "who" asks: with whom was God angry? These are sort of like rhetorical questions in that Paul does not wish anyone to see what truly happened to the vast majority of the Hebrews. And here we find that God was angry with them for the full 40 years. His patience was shown in that He did not make a judgment call on them as far as their eternal existence until the 40 years was up. God was angry with those who sinned, and with those whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. A third description of the "who" comes next: who did God swear that they would not enter His rest, well, you guessed it the same children who did not obey. And the giant conclusion about the who's in that why could they not enter God's rest, the answer being "because of unbelief."

I think that Jesus discouraged often attempts on the part of disciples to separate the sheep from the goats, the partakers of Christ from the non-partakers of Christ, believers from the evil hearts of unbelief in the churches, because He knew that Paul would deal so thoroughly with the subject in Hebrews and other books.

2. The Falling Away passage in Hebrews 8:7-13 wherein God makes two statements about the Falling Away: God found fault with the house of Israel, and God "disregarded" those that He took by the hand to lead out of the land of Egypt. Once again, at the beginning of Hebrews, 8:1-6, mention is made of Jesus as the High Priest, this time as the Minister of the Sanctuary and of the "true tabernacle"; and is appended in 9:11-28 with more of Jesus as the High Priest.

"Because finding fault with them, He says: 'Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel

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and with the house of Judah--not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD." (Hebrews 8:7-9)

(1). God later in the wilderness found fault with the vast majority of the house of Israel that He took by the hand to lead out of Egypt.

(2). God promised new hope in the Promised Land with a new covenant that He would make with the house of Israel.

(3). This new covenant would be different from the old covenant that God made with the forefathers when He led them out of Egypt.

(4). The vast majority of the people did not keep {"continue in"} the old covenant that God made with them. This covenant was made in the Ten Commandments, three months out of Egypt and at Sinai.

"And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you in eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, {God's demands in the covenant to obey His voice as spoken in the Ten Commandments} and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: {God's promises in the covenant} for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." (Exodus 19:3-6)

(5). God disregarded the vast majority of the people rescued from Egypt; and brother to be "disregarded" by the God of heaven, the maker of the Universe and history, the keeper of eternal rest through Christ, is the ultimate in being shuned.

2-2: Warnings to Churchmembers of Our Generation Not to Fall Away.

Warning or Cautions for other generations not to Fall Away start early and continue to the end in the book of Hebrews.

1. Warning and Caution #1 in Hebrews 2:1-4, a warning not to neglect the great salvation. It starts mildly in verse one with the caution to pay

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attention to what you have heard and are hearing, "lest we drift away." Certainly drifting away from what we have heard is the beginning of the Falling Away.

2. Warning or Caution #2 in Hebrews 3:5 where we are only the house, later to be developed in Hebrews as the true tabernacle of God and later as the assembly or church of the Firstborn, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm to the end. {Note: we might start making a chart here of the characteristics of the partakers of Christ versus those that fall away. The two characteristics of partakers here would be hold fast the confidence to the end, and rejoicing firmly in the hope to the end, and naturally of those that fall away the opposite, let go of the faith and stop rejoicing in the hope of the calling of Christ.

3. Warning or Caution #3 in Hebrews 3:8 not to "harden your hearts as in the rebellion". This states that it is possible to harden your heart, and that it is possible to rebel as the children of Israel did. The characteristic of a partaker of Christ would be keep a soft, warm heart whereas those that fall by the wayside have a hardened heart. Lest we forget these three characteristics, a table is started below.

4. Warning or Caution #4 in Hebrews 3:12, unmistakably a warning in that it starts with the words "Beware, brethren..." and continues to warn against an "evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." Notice here, it is from the living God; for many in the wilderness did, and can today, not depart from "gods" which are not really living. The characteristics of partakers would be a good heart of belief which does not depart from the living God and the fallen the opposite.

5. Warning or Caution #5 in Hebrews 3:13 that it is possible to be hardened through the "deceitfulness of sin" so that Christ believers or partakers are to "exhort one another daily" if possible.

6. Warning or Caution # 6 in Hebrews 3:14 where we are become partakers of Christ only if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence or faith to the end. The Falling Away would be to drop the confidence some where along the line.

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{NOTE: do you have any more doubts that the book of Hebrews is about the Falling Away, and do you wonder how you missed it in your original readings.}

7. Warning or Caution # 7 in Hebrews 3:15 not to harden your hearts as in the rebellion. The Fallen would be those who rebel, the partakers would be those who obey.

8. Warning or Caution #8 in Hebrews 4:1 where having also received a promise from God of rest, let us fear that we will come short of the promise of entering eternal rest.

9. Warning or Caution #9 in Hebrews 4:2 that the gospel was preached to the house of Israel as well as to us, but it did not have the internal mixture of faith and therefore did not eternally profit Israel.

Warning Number	Partakers of Christ	Participants in the Falling Away
1	hold fast faith until the end	let go of the faith once delivered unto the saints
2	rejoice to the end in the hope of Christ's calling	cease to rejoice in the eternal hope of Christ's calling
3	soft and warm heart toward God and Christ	a hardened heart toward God and Christ
4,	good heart of belief that pursue after the living God	an evil heart of unbelief that departs from the living God
5.	exhort one another daily if possible	hardened through the deceitfulness of sin
6.	beginning and ending confidence the same	drop the confidence somewhere between the beginning and the end, say like a 40 year journey or more
7.	obey	rebel
8.	receive eternal rest in heaven	come short of God's promise for eternal rest in heaven
9.	heard gospel and mixed it with internal faith	gospel heard did not have the response of internal faith
10.	hear the voice of God up to a certain day, and have a responsive heart	the hear the voice of God up to a certain day, and not have a responsive heart
11.	obedience	disobedience

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Warning Number	Partakers of Christ	Participants in the Falling Away
12	sensitive to the Words of God, the accountability to God, and the visibility of God	oblivious to the Words of God, the accountability, and the visibility to God
13.	listen and heed every Word from God	dull of hearing
14.	teachers of the Bible, living on meat more than milk	well into blessings of God and living on milk
15.	if you have tasted, you have the Security of the Believer	all that are worried, and that is encouraging, can make a decision today
16.	diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end	become sluggish
		do not immitate the faith and patience of those who inherite the promises
17.	our Hope based on God who does not lie is a sure anchor to the soul	lose hope and communicates what the truths from God
18.	draw near to God with a better hope than with the law at Mount Sinai	their hope was in the law given at Mount Sinai before Jesus
19.	salvation to the uttermost for all that come to God through the proper High Priest	no uttermost salvation without processing through the proper High Priest
20.	The Great High Priest, Jesus, and the Priesthood of Believers	no recognized proper High Priest--no Jesus--and no priesthood of believers as in the new covenant

10. Warning or Caution #10 in Hebrews 4:7 that there is a point of no return in the hearing of the voice of God and of a responsive heart. That point of no return is called "Today" and is different for each person, up to a certain extent. There seems to be a group or social aspect to it in that all in the wilderness after 40 years were rejected. The lastest word of Hebrews, so far, was that they were disregarded because they did not keep the covenant made with God at Sinai, most of which was the 10 commandments. Disregarded would be sort of like cast aside or forgotten, no longer of any value to God, and what a sad state of affairs. Often the Falling Away group before and after the decision by God is called house. The house may be a tribe, a clain, or an assembly such as a church. How sad to think that a whole church can be discarded by God as without value. And it can happen today. The message of Hebrews is that tomorrow is too late. Do you think numbers mean any thing to God when they are rebellious? He destroyed 120,000 of the Hebrew

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children in one day in the wilderness; He destroyed the whole earth of people during the Flood; He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness; and the plan on the Day of the LORD is to again destroy all of the earth and the heavens. And if you believe that God is in control with all things continuing to consist through Christ, and even though the final destruction on this earth is on automatic control, then God in the Tsunami destroyed approximately 200,000 people. Why can this not also be for wickedness since almost all on this earth are wicked and have not kept God's covenant in the 10 commandments? It is only by the grace of God that we all were not destroyed during the recent Indonesian Tsunami. It is only by the grace of God that the total destruction of the universe did not happen today, because tomorrow is too late. God would be just in doing it tomorrow in light of the wickedness, immorality, and evil hearts of unbelief. What crushes God most is the evil heart of unbelief. The consistent, always straying for His plan and will. The incessant not knowing His way.

11. Warning or Caution #11 in Hebrews 4:11 not to fall as the example of disobedience in the wilderness which prohibits a entering into the eternal rest of God. Many say to me, you are never going to retire. Well, my real retirement is my eternal rest in heaven where I cease from this earth's bootcamp, from my wanderings in the wilderness to an eternal home. In the mean time I seek to "work out my own salvation with fear and trembling." You see, God really owes us nothing for any reason except through Christ, and except as we are partakers of Christ. Why does every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God give us this example of the Falling Away? The answer is simple: it is exactly that, an example of what not to do. It for 40 years was rebellion; it was an evil heart of unbelief; it was disobedience to the leadership of God through Moses; and it was constant violation of the Ten Commandments. We are not talking about one or two times, but for 40 years; and in the next chapter we will look at "The History of the First Falling Away" from the Old Testament. Even as Pastor James in the book of James wrote that Scriptures, and the stories of the men in them like Job and Elijah, are given to us for examples, so also the massive Falling Away of the wilderness rebellion is given to us as an example of the Falling Way that must and will happen before the Second Coming. Since The collective Falling Away is inevitable, what can we do: we can individually keep from being a victim or a participant in the Falling Away. We can be like the children under 20, or like Caleb who had the "can-do" attitude that we can

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do what God commanded us; or we can be like Joshua who took the mantle of leadership from Moses and led the people into the Promised Land.

12. Warning #12 in Hebrews 4:12,13 where every word that has proceeded out of the mouth of God and through the Prophets and Apostles, alias recorded in the Bible, is dynamically alive. It cuts right into the quick of every individual to the fine point of dividing the soul and the spirit; the Bible is actually a living entity that actively discerns the thought and intents of the heart. We must give account to every action and thought based on those words, and every account and thought is daily naked before God. Nothing is hidden: all is visible to God.

{Note: Some of the warnings are more on the positive side as encouragements, and they center around what Jesus has done for us and is doing for us as High Priest so that we will come to them in another chapter on "Jesus, Our Great High Priest". Is it short of gullible to think that the very Son of God, the Christ present at Creation as the mediating Cause, the Jesus Christ who died on the cross for the sins of the world can be called by us as "Our Great High Priest". No, that is the "priesthood of believers". Lets we become far too negative and weary, Hebrews 4:14 is more on the positive side in terms of Jesus our Great High Priest.

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:14-16)

We don't have to fall or fail. Consider this preliminary look at some of the benefits of Jesus as our High Priest as a preview of things to come.

1. Our Great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, has passed from a life here on earth to heaven;

2. His passing from earth to heaven is an example of success that is encouragement for us "to hold fast our original confession;

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3. He went through on earth all the temptations that we go through--did it without sin--and can now at the right hand of God the Father both sympathize with our plight and make intercession to God the Father for our sins;

4. We are to come "boldly" to the throne of grace in prayer, and we can find in the time of need both grace and mercy.}

13. Warning #13 in Hebrews 5:11 that we like those to whom Hebrews by originally written may "become dull of hearing" so that we do not receive the "much of say" of Hebrews, or the rest of the Bible, so that we can not understand "what is hard to explain". How frustrating it must have been for Paul, having received all that information for the Ascended Christ in Arabia after his conversion, then having retreated to Tarsus for seven years where he re-read all the Old Testament, recording on manuscripts all the Old Testament quotes to include in his writing of 14 New Testament books; and to think about the unreceptive recipients dullness in hearing. I think you know about the famous II Timothy 3:3-5 passage about the Falling Away where it happens as churchmembers "will not endure sound doctrine", and out of itching ears based on what they want, they seek out teachers of itching ears to comfort their ears, teachers and preachers that will encourage them as they turn away from the truth and turn into fables. Well, here in Hebrews 5:11 is the preliminary step to itching ears. Itching ears start with dullness of hearing. Catch it right now: do not be dull of hearing on the Words of God. Listen and heed what is in the Bible, and let the Bible say what it wants to say. What is your motivation? Simple, it is the eternal rest of God! That is what is at stake, eternity!

14. Warning #14 in Hebrews 5:12 where Paul, having been in all the churches, sees in his mind's eye the churchmembers; and reminds them that by this amount of time in their Christ life {hopefully it is more like 20 years than the 40 of the Falling Away, and I do think this is more preventive in Bible instruction than corrective} they should be teachers. However, rather than being able to teach the Bible, someone must go back over with them "the first principles of the oracles of God". They still in their Christ life need more milk, like a baby, instead of meat like a mature partaker of the nature of Christ. **{In the table, we will show in a blue color the point of which we have passed from the characteristics of the Falling Away into the Preventive Measures such as to be Bible teachers.}**

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{Note: While we are at this point in Hebrews, 5:12-6:3, I would like to say a few preliminary things about "doctrine" before we come to the second half of this commentary. It will be sort of like taking the example of Paul in the Word of God "to lay again the first principles of the oracles of God." That is really what basic doctrines are, the first principles of every word that has proceeded out of the mouth of God. They are to be heard, learned, and heeded in life. Doctrine or teachings of the Bible--the two words are almost synonymous--are alive to the extent that they are like milk or meat to the spiritual body like food is to the physical body. Remember Jesus reminded us at the same time He did Satan that "man shall not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Yesterday on television I heard part of an interview with Billy Graham, quite aged and raged by Parkinsons, telling that if he had it to do over again he would study the Word more. Furthermore the passage in Hebrews 5:14 makes a close relationship between doctrine and the life style ability to discern between good and evil. Imagine that, the extent in your Christ life to which you have the ability to tell the difference of what is really good and what is really evil, is determined by the level of Bible teachings, milk or meat, that go into your spiritual body.

Another thing that I would like to point out from the 5:12-6:3 passage is that there are "elementary principles of Christ" (6:1) such as repentance from dead works, faith toward God, baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgement; and then there are the more advanced doctrines of perfection. You will find the second half of this book deals with both the (1) first principles and (2) advanced doctrines of perfection. We are very fortunate to have these lists; and as much as possible I have also tried to deal with those "first principles" in my recently distributed book, written for my kids and grandkids, **SOME SOUNDS OF A SOUND FAITH.**}

"AND THIS WE WILL DO IF GOD PERMITS". (Hebrews 6:3)

I hope you have noticed the transition here in chapter 5 and 6. We have passed from the example and characteristics of the Falling Away into the more encouraging and preventive measures to stay away from the Falling Away, starting more and more to take our minds and hearts off our own problems, focusing on Jesus our Great High Priest with recognition of the grace and mercy available, also the forgiveness of sins as One no less than our

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Great High Priest Himself is at the right hand of God daily and hourly to make intercession for our sins; and then in the word of the Bible "being careful for nothing {nothing is too small or large} but by prayer and supplication let our requests be made known to God and the peace which passeth all understanding shall keep our hearts and minds."

Hebrews 6:3 above is a positive affirmation that this is what we are going to do, God willing.

15. Warning #15 in Hebrews 6:4-8 has scared a lot of people, leading groups as large as the Methodists to believe in what they call "falling from grace". However, it is really saying the opposite: even as it is impossible for you to crucify a second time for yourself the Son of God--remember how Scripture tells us that "we are crucified with Christ"--it is impossible to first be (1) enlightened, (2) to taste the heavenly gift, (3) be a partaker of the Holy Spirit, (4) to taste the good Word of God, (5) to taste the powers of the age to come; and then to fall away. In other words, what we have been saying all along is that all the Falling Away does is to separate the real partakers of Christ from the superficial partakers of Christ.

And in Hebrews 6:7,8 the Apostle Paul with the analogy of the rain and fruitful herbs is reminding us of the parable of the seed and sower that Jesus taught. Three out of four kinds of seed spread by the Word of God, from Jesus or any preacher, do not permanently bear fruit. It takes time to tell which of the seed will be choked out by the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of sin, which seed is planted on shallow soil or rocky, and so on. But if you are worried about what the seed planted in your heart and mind has done, that is a good sign. You can turn it around at any point as long as it is still called today. Your High Priest is there and available; the meat of the word is available; the challenge of the high calling of Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith is available; and this also we will do, God willing!

16. Warning #16 in Hebrews 6:9-12 where we truly become optimistic about some churchmembers whom Paul has heard about, no doubt from Timothy, Titus, or one of the many other messengers going back to Paul. We hear of "beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you"; we hear of "things that accompany {or go with} salvation"; and we hear of "God will not forget your work and labor of love, in that you have ministered to

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the saints, and do minister". And the real preventive warning is this: that each one of you show that same diligence above, recorded of some we hear about, all the way "to the full assurance of hope until the end. Further "do not become sluggish. "Imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises". (Hebrews 6:12)

17. Preventive Warning #17 and encouragement and comfort in Hebrews 6:13-20 where we learn how impossible it is for God to lie, where we have the security of the "anchor to our soul", it is our HOPE, both secure and steadfast. Jesus has entered the Presence behind the veil of the eternal temple: Jesus is our forerunner as such of what we expectantly hope to do as our High Priest forever after the likeness of Melchizedek. **{And as your would imagine from this point on Hebrews gets into the major theme of the Great High Priest. However we will quickly continue to list the sprinklings of Warnings, which have more turned to encouragement and comfort in the book of Hebrews.}**

18. Encouragement #18 in Hebrews 7:19 where through the Priesthood of Jesus which allows our own priesthood of believers, "we draw near to God" by way of the better hope in the Priesthood of Jesus than was the hope in the law at Mount Sinai. Yes, we have a better chance than those who stood at Mount Sinai; and lest you think God is impartial, consider that during the three days in the tomb Jesus went to the intermediary state of Hades to preach the Gospel to all those same people of Old Testament times.

19. Encouragement #19 in Hebrews 7:25 where our Priest Jesus is able to "save to the uttermost"--and that is all we need, salvation to the uttermost--those who come to God through that Priest. **{Sorry I can not contain sharing now what 7:26 tells us about the characteristics of this High Priest: (1) holy, (2) harmless, (3) undefiled, (4) separate from sinners, (5) now become higher than the heavens, (6) does not need to daily offer sacrifices for His own sins and those of the people, He did it once for all on Calvary. (not for His own sins as He was without sins, but once for all for all the sins of the world) Wow, as we preachers would say at Ouachita, "that will preach". You will see this again as we have more to say in a chapter on the Priesthood of Christ.}**

20. Encouragement #20 in Hebrews 8:10-13 of the new covenant which can prevent an individual Falling Away based on both the Priesthood of

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Jesus and the Priesthood of Believers. However, I want to warn you before you read that passage below that you based on the teachings of Romans are part of the new "house of Israel". Like Paul wrote in Romans "not Israel is of the house of Israel". The new Jew, according to Romans, became both Jews and Gentiles; in fact, during the Fulness of Gentiles time which we are still in but about the see the end of it, the house of Israel is more Gentiles than Jews.

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. {now get ready for the Priesthood of Believers, what you just read was the fact of the new birth, what Jesus referred to in John 14 as God and Him coming to make residence in the individual heart} NONE OF THEM SHALL TEACH HIS NEIGHBOR, AND NONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,' FOR ALL SHALL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST OF THEM TO THE GREATEST OF THEM. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.'" (Hebrews 8:10-12)

Also recall that while most of the house of Israel in the First Century and beyond rejected Jesus as their Great High Priest, the remnant was very large and significant of people like Peter, and Paul, Matthew, and so with the Apostles, many churches in the First Century and beyond; although we still wait for something to happen in the nation of Israel as the rapidly approach end of the Fulness of Gentiles happens. Perhaps there is validity to those like B. H. Carroll who believe at the same time there comes to hopelessness of the Battle of Armagaddon as the camp of the saints retreats around Jerusalem, and before Christ intervenes to destroy the Man of Sin and his army, then 144,000 Jews will be saved in one day. Of course, it could happen in less than one day.

{We will conclude our developments of the warnings and encouragements in Hebrews here, although there are more in the second half of the book into which we have already inturded for the sake of turning despair into hope. It is true that the Falling Away of our generation is inevitable. As surely as the reality of the Second Coming is the preliminary reality of the Falling; but each individual does not have to participate. Increasing individual Christians, as I emphasize in my volume 3 commentary, "Christ for Individuals", must break from the dominant downward trend in churches and denomination, to establish a personal relationship

and priesthood of believers relationship with God through Christ, in prayer and Bible, that descends the dominant trend of the next few years.

Also you will note in the drastic change at Hebrews 6:3 of what we will do in the rest of our study of Hebrews. Increasing it becomes more about Advanced Doctrine, about the Priesthood of Christ, and about the Priesthood of Believers. Don't be mistaken this is exciting teachings about Christ and our benefits in Christ. The above will sort of be our outline of the commentary to follow, with the exception of the next chapter where we must consider from the Old Testament the history of the Falling Away, supplemented with explanations from other parts of the New Testament, in order to better understand it. A lot of words have been utilized from God in the Bible to explain what happened to a whole nation that God called out of Egypt to bless and preserve as His own, with the exception of a few, that He chose to bless and the covenant failed: words like rebellion, falling away, disregarded, disobedience; and I think we all have become curious to know the details of exactly what happened in those 40 years in the wilderness. For one thing as Pastor James says in the book of James, they are our examples to make sure in this case that we do not the same thing.}

2-3: A Summary of The Table of this Chapter.

To summarize the Table that developed in this chapter on Partakers in Christ versus Participants in the Falling Away is to also summarize the whole chapter. You may want to refer back to page 26 and 27 where the Table is shown. Remember this was the 20 warnings, later turned into encouragements, that we found in the first 8 chapters of Hebrews. {Since this is 8 out of the 13 chapters in Hebrews, you have made a good beginning on what Hebrews is all about. And temporarily in the next chapter we will go from what is quoted in Hebrews to the source itself in the Old Testament history, and we will briefly look at some of the other references in the New Testament to the Falling Away. Mainly we will take the places in the New Testament where it is quoted about the disobedience and rebellion events from the Old Testament to get how the New Testament explains those quotes.

2-3: The History in the Old Testament of the First Falling Away.

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2-4: The Falling Away and the Security of the Believer.