



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

LEVITICUS
& HEBREWS

Week 3

Planning for the Holidays

DAY 15

Leviticus 23:1–24:23

Which Christian and/or cultural holiday means the most to you and why?

1. What was the occasion or purpose for each holy day or feast identified here (23:3-44)? See accompanying chart of main Hebrew feasts and holidays.

2. What common themes tell you something of how God wanted the Israelites to worship him?

3. What equivalent or fulfillment in Christ do you see in these OT Feasts?

4. The Day of Atonement was for repentance and self-denial. Do you think this was a more of a spiritual benefit or a legalistic burden? How so?

5. Keeping the light on and setting the bread before the Lord were a “lasting ordinance” and a “lasting covenant” (24:3, 8). What benefit do you see in these two traditions? What is their Christian significance? How long were they “lasting” ordinances?

6. To blaspheme (curse or repudiate) God was a capital crime (24:10-16, 23), a charge also leveled at Jesus (Mt 26:65-66). Why was blasphemy taken so seriously in Israel?

7. How was the “life for life” principle applied here (24:17)? What was Christ’s teaching on this (see Mt 5:38-42)?

1. Can or should we attempt to draw any lessons from Israelite holy day rituals or provisions and apply them to Christian holidays? Or are they not comparable? Why or why not?

2. Do you feel that such times of the year as Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter ought to be more Christ-centered? How would you go about doing that?

OPENING
up to the Word

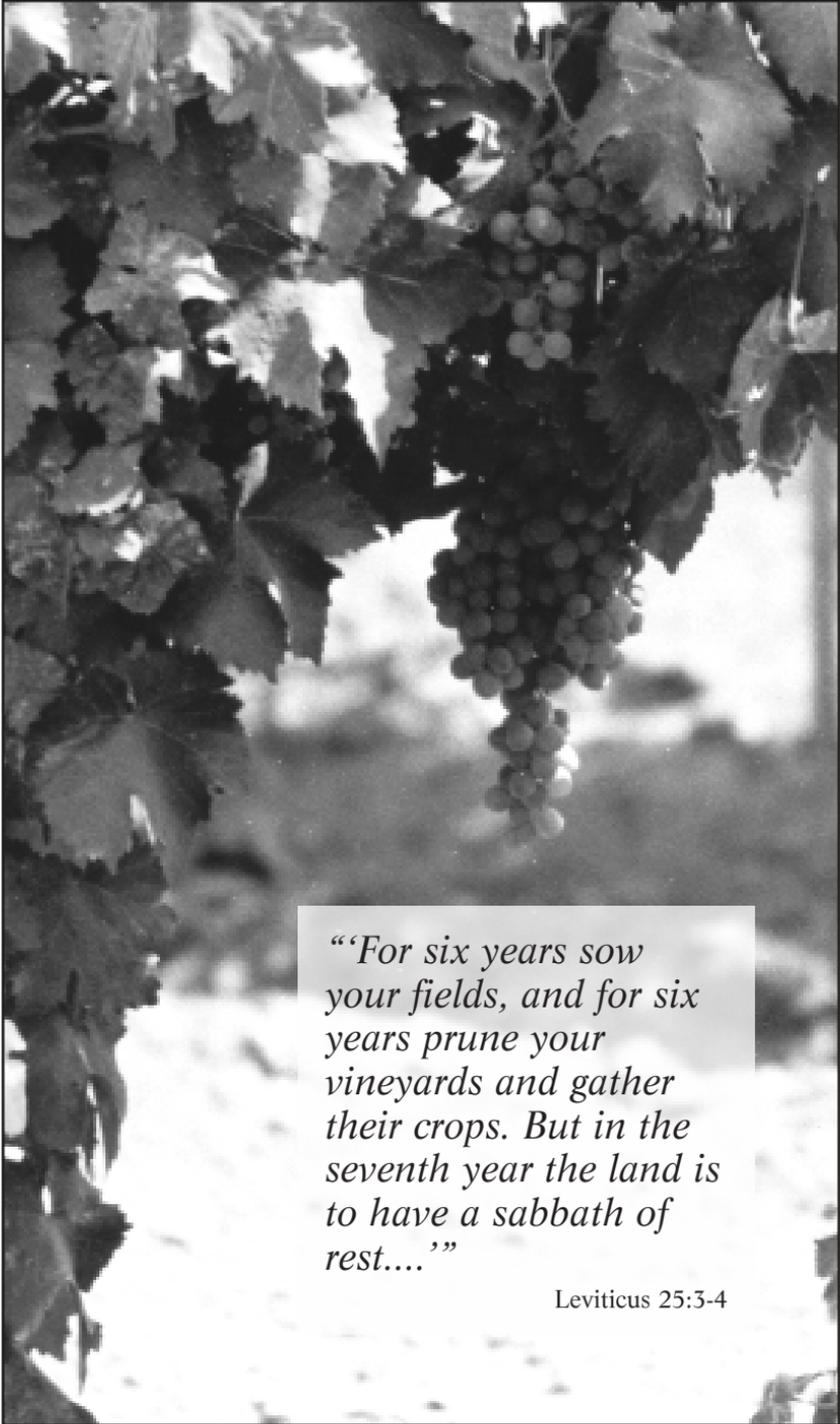
DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

Content, Purpose and Christian Significance of the Sabbaths and Festivals Named in Leviticus

Name of Holiday	Texts in Leviticus	Time of Observance	
The Sabbath	23:3	7th day	Sunset Friday to sunset Saturday
The Passover	23:5	1st month, Day 14 = <i>Abib 14</i> or <i>Nisan 14</i>	March-April
Feast of Unleavened Bread (a.k.a. <i>Pesach</i>)	23:6-8	1st month, Day 15-21 = <i>Abib 15-21</i> or <i>Nisan 15-21</i>	March-April
Offering of Firstfruits	23:9-14	1st month, Day 16 = <i>Abib 16</i> or <i>Nisan 16</i>	March-April
Feast of Weeks (a.k.a. Pentecost)	23:15-21	3rd month, Day 6 <i>Sivan 6</i>	May-June
Feast of Trumpets (a.k.a. <i>Rosh Hashbanab</i> or Jewish New Year's Day)	23:23-25	7th month Day 1 = <i>Tisbri 1</i>	Sept.- October
Day of Atonement (a.k.a. <i>Yom Kippur</i>)	23:26-32	7th month Day 10 = <i>Tisbri 10</i>	Sept.- October
Feast of Tabernacles (a.k.a. Feast of Booths, Ingathering or <i>Sukkotb</i>)	23:33-36; 23:39-43	7th month Days 15-21 = <i>Tisbri 15-21</i>	Sept.- October
Sabbath Year	25:1-7	every 7th year	same
Year of Jubilee	25:8-55	every 50th year	same

Elements Involved	Purpose	Fulfilled in Christ
Rest from work; a day for sacred assembly	To provide for rest and worship	Sabbath is fulfilled in Christ, Heb 4:1-11
Slaughtered lamb, bitter herbs, unleavened bread; observed in every household	To recall when the angel of the Lord passed over Israel; the beginning of the Exodus	The Passover Lamb foreshadowed Jesus, the Lamb of God, Mk 14:12-26
Unleavened bread; designated offerings; week-long celebration and sacred assemblies	To recall the Exodus from Egypt was done in haste	Jesus is Bread of Life, Jn 6:35; unleavened bread foreshadowed new life in Christ
Presentation of sheaf of grain as a wave offering; burnt offering of lamb	To recognize God's goodness in the land	Christ is risen; the tomb is empty, 1Co 15:20-23
Burnt, drink, grain, sin and fellowship offerings; leave gleanings of fields for the poor; hold a sacred assembly	To give thanks for a bountiful harvest	At Pentecost, God the Holy Spirit descends, NT church begins, Ac 2:1-4
A sacred assembly heralded by trumpets and burnt offerings.	To present Israel before the Lord for his favor	No direct link in scripture, but Christ will return at the last trumpet blast, Rev 11:15
Rest from all work; sacred assembly and self-denial, fasting, sacrifice and cleansing	A reminder of the need of atonement for sins	A type of the atoning work of Christ on the cross, Ro 3:24-26; Heb 9:7; 10:3,19-22; 13:11-12
Week-long celebration, with a closing assembly on the 8th day; people live in temporary dwellings and offer sacrifices	To celebrate fall harvest; to recall living in tents after Exodus	Christians are pilgrims and sojourners, Heb 11:13-16
A Sabbath rest for the land; fields lie fallow	To provide rest for the land	God's people enter his Sabbath-rest through faith in Christ, Heb 4
The poor have their debts canceled; slaves and indentured servants are freed; land reverts to original family owners	To give the poor and the land a fresh start	Christ proclaims freedom for spiritually imprisoned and oppressed, Lk 4:18-19; Heb 9:15



“For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest....”

Leviticus 25:3-4

Cry of the Land: “Gimme a Break!”

DAY 16

Leviticus 25:1-55

Are there places—family homes, parks, historic landmarks, vacation sites, favorite hangouts or whatever—that have special meaning for you? Ever go back there? If so, how have they changed?

1. Why the *Sabbath Year* and *Year of Jubilee*?
2. Why was land eventually returned to the original owners, even if that land had been sold (25:23-28)? What exceptions were made and why (25:29-31)?
3. What limits were placed on slave-holders and why (25:35-54)? Why were Israelites *not* to be sold as slaves while aliens could be—even being held as property for life (25:39-46)?

1. Imagine yourself as an Israelite farmer, grocer, hired hand or banker as the Sabbath year approaches. How would you survive? (a) on provisions you set aside; (b) if God commands it, God will provide; (c) declare bankruptcy; (d) use the sabbatical year for study; (e) welcome a second chance to make it big.

2. How would the fear of God (25:17, 43) produce more merciful social policies? What about the love of God—would that work better?

3. What social practices of ancient Israel might have merit and practicality where you live and work? Which ones would not? Which ones are inappropriate under the new covenant?

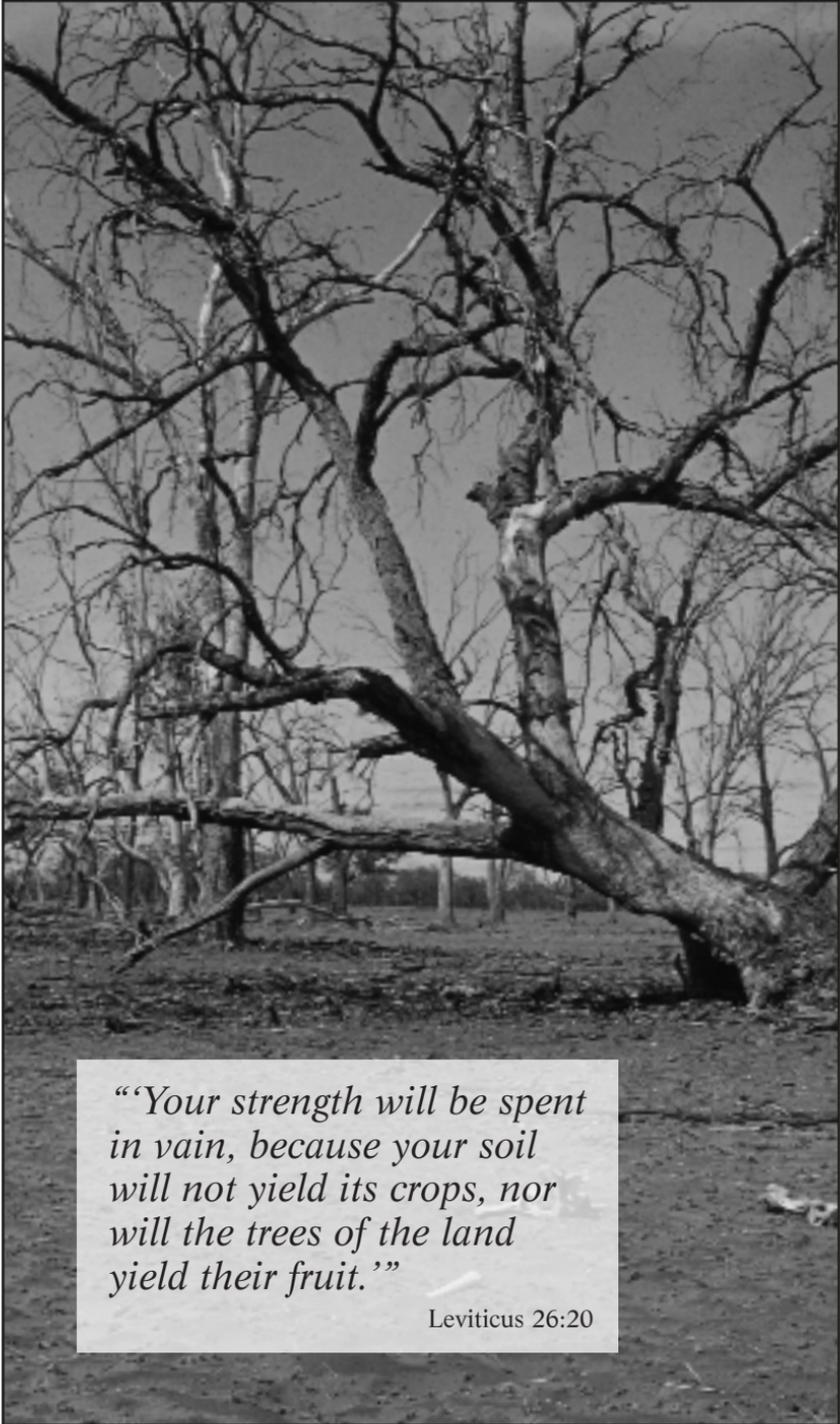
*Many reasons have been offered for giving the land a **year of rest** every seventh year (25:1-7) and a two-year rest every 50 years during the **Year of Jubilee** (25:8-55): (a) agricultural and ecological—to rotate crops, restore minerals; (b) humanitarian—to give a fresh start to the poor, slaves, indentured servants, temporary residents; (c) theological—to affirm that God is the Lord of all land and people, and that we cannot permanently own what belongs to him; (d) economic and political—to establish proportionate prices for land and slaves, to avoid capitalist accumulation of property and wealth and to preserve the original holdings of the tribes of Israel.*

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word



*“Your strength will be spent
in vain, because your soil
will not yield its crops, nor
will the trees of the land
yield their fruit.”*

Leviticus 26:20

Choose Your Consequence

DAY 17

Leviticus 26:1-46

While growing up, were you rewarded and punished in a systematic way? Or was it more haphazard and unpredictable?

1. Under God's covenant with Israel, what were the benefits of obedience (26:1-13; compare Dt 28:1-14)?
2. What were the consequences of disobedience (26:14-39; compare Dt 28:15-68)? What terms of the covenant were progressive or escalating?
3. What were the terms for restoring a repentant people and their land (26:40-45; compare Dt 29:1-28)? Even though Israel repented, would they still have to pay a penalty for their sins?
4. God promised "rain in its season" for the obedient (26:3-4) and no rain for the disobedient (26:18-20); but elsewhere rain is said to fall equally on both the just and the unjust (Mt 5:45). Explain.
5. If God always punishes those who disobey him, what does this mean? (a) this is a cause-and-effect principle, like gravity; (b) this is not always true; because sinners sometimes succeed; (c) God is arbitrary; (d) justice will always be served through Christ's atoning work on the cross—by which all people are offered forgiveness.
6. What role did *fear* play (or should it have played) in the Israelites believing and obeying God?

1. God promised "rain," "peace" and "no fear" to the obedient. Can you claim these things because of your obedience? Or are you qualified by God because of Jesus' obedience (see Col 1:12)?
2. Have you ever turned a deaf ear to God? What kind of punishment or reward might work best to improve your hearing?
3. The Israelites were commanded to fear God (25:17, 43). Should fear play a role for believers today—or has it been driven out (1Jn 4:18)?

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

Promises Made and Redeemed

Leviticus 27:1-34

OPENING
up to the Word

Do people ever doubt your word? If so, which promise would they most likely doubt? (a) "I won't tell a soul," (b) "I'll just be a minute," (c) "I'll quit that bad habit tomorrow," (d) "The check is in the mail."

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What kinds of things were usually *dedicated* or promised to God? What was given in redemption or exchange? What kinds of things were *devoted* or irrevocably given to the Lord?
2. How did priests judge the "equivalent value" of gifts-in-kind (27:2-8, 9-13, 14-15, 16-21, 22-25)? What abuses of this system might there have been?
3. A *tithe*—a tenth of the increase of crops and animals—was given to God. Why set standards for giving to God? What might be a standard today?
4. The idea of buying back (redeeming) one's possessions in the Year of Jubilee points to Christ, who paid the ultimate price, redeeming us from our sins. What other links to Christ have you seen in the book of Leviticus?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Have you ever made a special promise to God? Did you follow through on it?
2. Could you dedicate your possessions—computer, car, home, proceeds from a cottage industry or job—to be used by God? What would happen if you did? What would you pay to get those possessions back?

WINDOW
on the Word

God was already entitled to the **firstborn, firstfruits and tithe** (10%) of the family, livestock or harvest (27:26, 30; see Ex 13:1-2). But out of gratitude or devotion, people could also dedicate servants, certain animals, houses and lands as **holy to the Lord**. God allowed the giving of equivalent values instead (27:2), based on ability to pay (27:8), but usually a fifth was added in the buyback or substitution (27:13, 15, 19, 27, 31). Declaring a person or thing "holy to the Lord" (27:28, 33) was far more serious than merely dedicating something and buying it back. Whatever was devoted was irrevocably given to the Lord, with no possibility of redemption or buyback; the finality of this transaction was often signified by its total destruction.

“If a man dedicates to the Lord part of his family land, its value is to be set according to the amount of seed required for it— fifty shekels of silver to a homer of barley seed.”

Leviticus 27:16



Introduction to Hebrews

Leviticus to Hebrews—the Link to Christ: Christ's life, ministry and atoning death was foreshadowed by Leviticus. This is apparent from Jesus' own words—quoting the second greatest commandment from Leviticus (19:18; compare Mt 22:39)—and the letters of the NT that exhort Christians to holiness based on the holiness of God, just as Leviticus does (e.g., 1Pe 1:15). But the most obvious link to Christ is the letter to the Hebrews, which brings out so many ways that the priests and sacrifices in Leviticus typified the atoning work of Christ (Heb 3:1; 4:14-16; 7:1-28; 9:11-28; 10:1-18; 13:10-15). See also the charts in this volume which link Leviticus to Christ and Hebrews.

Authorship: Unknown. The book of Hebrews was commonly called *The Letter of Paul to the Hebrews* for some 1,200 years, from about A.D. 400-1600. Yet for the first three centuries of church history there was no agreement about authorship. Some suggested that Barnabas may be the author, as he was a traveling companion of Paul and a descendant of the priestly tribe of Levi. Protestant reformers showed that, due to differences in literary style, the apostle Paul was probably not the author of Hebrews, although he may have been the inspiration behind it. Another leading candidate for authoring Hebrews is Apollos—an intellectual Hebrew Christian well-versed in the Greek OT Scriptures, and a close associate of Timothy, who worked with Paul. Other suggestions include Luke, Silas, Clement of Rome and Philip.

Date: Hebrews was probably written before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, which occurred in A.D. 70. Had the book been written later, the author probably would not have referred to temple activities in the present tense and would instead have noted the end of the Jewish sacrificial system, made obsolete by Christ.

Setting and purpose: No geographical references appear in this book. The recipients of the letter knew its author (13:18-24) and Timothy. They were Jewish believers in Jesus—not recent

converts. But they were in danger of slipping back into Jewish practices, for several reasons. Perhaps a return to Jewish culture and practice would have immunized them from the severe persecution that Christians were suffering, socially and physically, from both Jews and Romans.

Distinctive features: Unlike Paul's letters, the literary style does not conform to standards of first-century correspondence. The book reads more like a highly developed sermon than a letter. Christianity is presented as far more "superior to" or "better than" (words that occur 15 times in the letter) anything the readers could have considered before Christ.

Hebrews explains how a redeemed people approach a holy God. In Leviticus, holiness may appear ritualistic and tiresome, but in Hebrews holiness is a blessed gift from God, made possible by Christ. Christ is superior to angels, Moses and the OT priesthood. As high priest and intercessor, Christ guarantees our access to God. However, trusting in Christ for grace and help in time of need are but the initial steps. Christians are to go on to maturity living holy lives, setting aside sin, enduring hardship and discipline and persevering to the end.

Outline: Each subpoint in the outline below corresponds to a day of reading.

I. SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST OVER THE OLD COVENANT, 1:1-7:28

- A. Christ Greater Than Angels, 1:1-2:18
- B. Christ Greater Than Moses, 3:1-4:13
- C. Christ Greater Than OT Priesthood, 4:14-7:28

II. SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST'S WORK AS OUR HIGH PRIEST, 8:1-10:18

- A. Christ Embodies a Better Covenant, 8:1-9:12
- B. Christ Embodies a Better Sanctuary and Sacrifice,
9:13-10:18

III. SUPERIORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, 10:19-13:25

- A. Faith Through Perseverance, 10:19-39
- B. Faith Exemplified by Past Heroes, 11:1-40
- C. Faith Results from Discipline, 12:1-29
- D. Faith Despite Circumstances, 13:1-25

Christ Is the Man!

Hebrews 1:1–2:18

OPENING
up to the Word

When your attention drifts, where does it go?
What's the best way to get you back on track?

DIGGING
into the Word

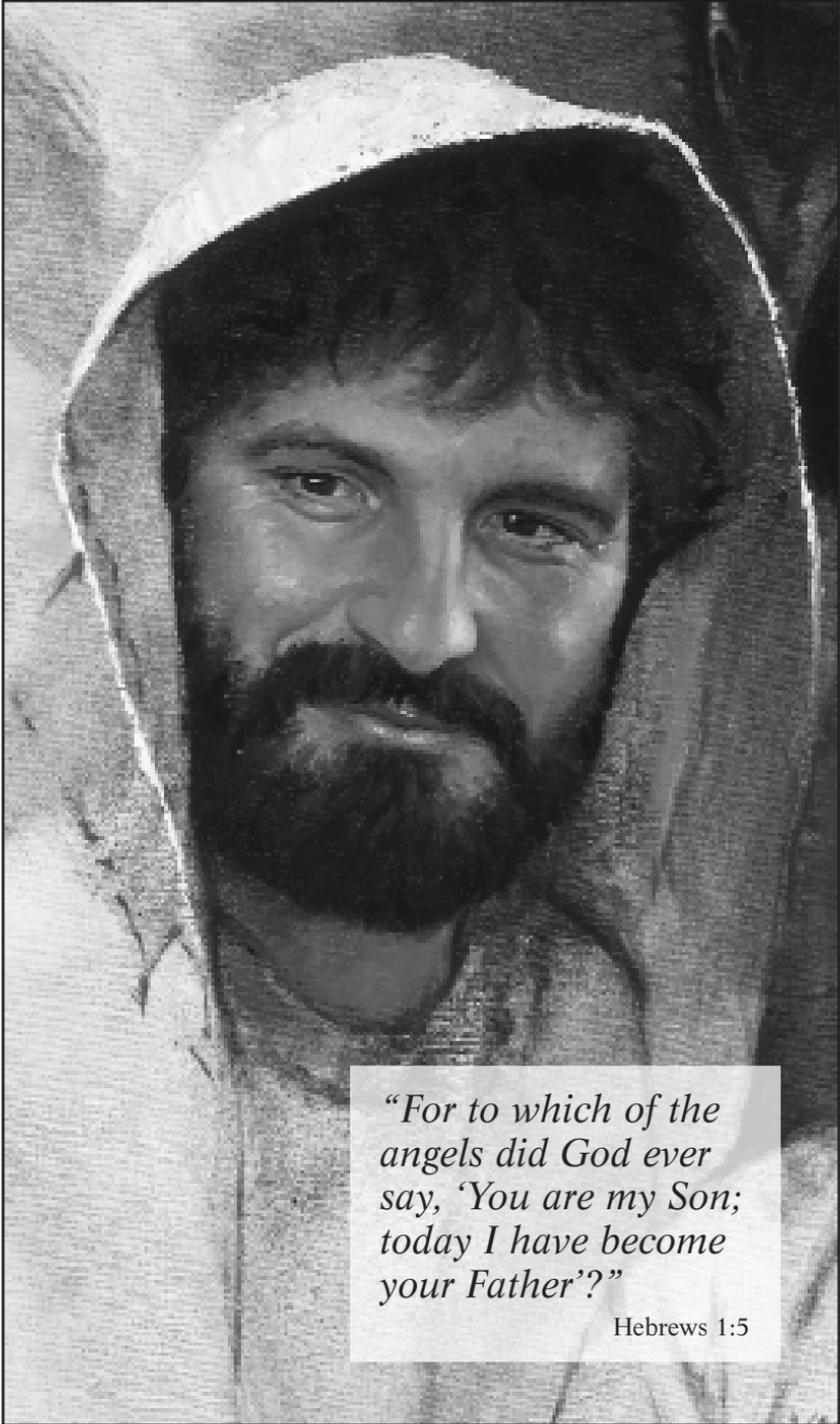
1. With whom, or to what, was Christ compared (1:1-9, 13-14; 2:7-9, 11, 14, 17)? How is Christ superior to all the other ways God has spoken to us (1:1-4)? Can you find the seven descriptive statements in the opening prologue?
2. What do the angels do (1:4-7, 13-14; 2:2; see note)?
3. Look up in their original context the seven OT quotations applied to Christ in 1:5-14.
4. What two messages are in view here (2:1-4)?
5. Suppose God had not taken on flesh-and-blood (2:14-17). What difference would that have made?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Where in this narrative do you see yourself? (a) God is speaking to you, (b) angels are protecting you, (c) Christ atones for your sin, (d) Christ faces temptation with you, (e) God crowns you with glory and honor, (f) the Holy Spirit gives you gifts, (g) you are drifting away, but drawn back.
2. God is not silent. How would you want him to speak to you this week? (a) through the Law and Prophets, (b) through an angel, (c) through a preacher, (d) by phone, (e) by texting, (f) by his Son.
3. If God's salvation message had come to you via phone, what would you have done? (a) put the call on hold, (b) accept it with joy, (c) hang up, (d) record it, (e) pass it on to others.

WINDOW
on the Word

God has spoken through OT writers and prophets, but this revelation was incomplete, temporary or transitional. Angels (1:4–2:2) were a significant point of comparison for this Jewish audience because they were the mediators of God's revelation to Moses (2:2). Some believed the archangel Michael would be the one to fully and finally inaugurate God's kingdom, but it is Jesus the Son whom the angels worship and serve (1:6, 13). The Son of God is the redemptive, eternal, unique and final revelation of God (1:1-5).



“For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father’?”

Hebrews 1:5

The Faithful Find God's Rest

Hebrews 3:1–4:13

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

Who, other than your spouse or children, considers you a faithful person?

1. How is Jesus more faithful than Moses (3:1-6)? (a) both were faithful to the One who sent them; (b) Jesus is equated with the “builder,” who is God; (c) the son outshines the servant; (d) Jesus led people out of bondage to sin, Moses merely freed people from Egypt.
2. What *day* is spoken of here (3:7, 13, 15; 4:7-8; quoting Ps 95:7-11)? (a) that of the Exodus, (b) that of the psalmist, (c) that of the author of Hebrews, (d) that of modern-day readers.
3. What's the point of the rhetorical questions regarding the Israelites' wilderness experience (3:16-19)?
4. What is the “promise of entering his rest” (4:1)? (a) God's rest on the seventh day of creation, (b) our rest one day each week, (c) the Promised Land, (d) God's eternal rest, (e) the gospel of Christ, who redeemed us from sin once and for all.
5. How does the Word of God (Christ) affect his hearers (4:11-13)? (a) cuts both ways, (b) scrutinizes actions and motivations, (c) produces greater effort.

LIVING
out the Word

1. Are you struggling to be faithful? How?
2. What causes you to take what you've heard and “combine it with faith”? (a) Christ's faithfulness, (b) Moses' service, (c) Israel's history in the wilderness, (d) God's promise of rest, (e) your faithful friends.
3. When will you enter this rest—or have you?

WINDOW
on the Word

*In this passage the Hebrews are warned about the **condition of their hearts**: hardened,... going astray,... unbelieving,... turning away,... rebelling,... disobedient. The result of this heart condition is that, just as the Israelites of old rebelled, fell short and were sentenced to wander in the wilderness, so also some “Hebrews” of today might **fall short of God's rest**.*

My Confidante and Helper

DAY 21

Hebrews 4:14–5:10

On earth, who is your confidante and helper, the one who knows most of your problems and is able to help you in your time of need?

1. Jesus is our great high priest because: (a) he's our confidante in time of need; (b) he is God and intercedes with God; (c) he sympathizes with human weakness; (d) he was the perfect, flawless sacrifice; (e) he dispenses God's grace and mercy; (f) he deals justly but mercifully with sinners.

2. How did Jesus get to be the high priest for us? (a) like Aaron, he was appointed by God; (b) like Melchizedek, he was designated a priest forever; (c) like any of us, he learned to pray in distress; (d) as God, he was always our high priest.

3. What does it mean that Jesus "has been tempted in every way, just as we are" (4:15)? (a) he *felt* lust, anger and pride, but did not *act* on those human emotions; (b) he felt our pain; (c) he was tormented by the same accuser and deceiver; (d) he had the human capability to sin, but didn't; (e) he was susceptible to physical suffering and death.

4. What difference does it make in his role as priest that Jesus was fully human and fully God?

1. Are you comfortable going to Jesus with a problem? Why or why not?

2. Take time now to bring your need for grace and mercy to the great High Priest who can empathize and intercede for you.

*Jesus **learned obedience** (5:8), not that he ever disobeyed, but that he was tempted and suffered human pain. Jesus resisted temptation and succeeded. Hence, through suffering—principally, in the wilderness with Satan, in the Garden of Gethsemane with his disciples and on the cross—Jesus, God-in-the-flesh was finally resurrected and "made perfect" (5:9, also 2:10).*

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word