

תַּנְחִיחַ לִּי מֵחֶמֶד  
The Book of

דֵּס תֵּל גִּנְזֵס פִּדְא רַחֲחֵס נִנְז

# Hebrews

מֵאֲנִי מִנְּמ דֵּא מִנְּ ת אֶקְלֵא

צִמְאֵל לֵל נִתְאַתְצֵרְח דִּרְתִּסְנ סֶק

א ח פֶּקְלֵא ת סִנְ סֶרְבֵּאֵל

רֵר תֵּא סֶד תֶּאֶקְסִנְז דִּמְמִצ

תֵּאֲתַפְלֵשׁ נ תִּרְדֵּנְהֵרְפֵר נ רֵלֵד

תֵּאֲגִשׁ רֵלֵד מִלְּלֵצ סֶס תֵּלֵשׁ



An aerial photograph of a city, likely Chicago, showing a dense urban area with a prominent river (the Chicago River) winding through it. A large stadium is visible in the lower right quadrant. The sky is overcast with grey clouds.

# Major Ideas in the Book of Hebrews

## High Level Overview

# Jesus is Better

- **The Major Idea: *Jesus is Better***
  - Jesus Is Better Than the OT Prophets (1:1-4)
  - Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
  - Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)
  - Jesus' Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)
- Notice that ***every one*** of the items in the above list where the author declares Jesus to be "better" is an item associated with the ***old covenant***:
  - The ***OT Prophets*** gave us the old covenant scriptures.
  - The ***Angels*** are said to have delivered the old covenant law to Moses. (Heb 2:2; cf. Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19)
  - ***Moses*** is the one who proclaimed the old covenant law to the Israelites.
  - The ***Levitical Priesthood*** is the old covenant priesthood.
- Which brings us to the ***second*** major idea in the book of Hebrews: The ***new*** covenant that Jesus mediates is ***better*** than the ***old*** covenant made with the nation of Israel through Moses.

# The New Covenant Is Better Than the Old

- Because Christ has come and established a ***new and eternal covenant***, the ***old covenant***, made with the nation of Israel through Moses, ***is now obsolete***:
  - *“The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You [Jesus] are a priest forever.’” This makes Jesus the guarantor of a **better covenant**. (Heb 7:21b-22)*
  - *Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as **the [new] covenant [Christ] mediates is better**, since it is enacted on better promises. For **if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second**. For he finds fault with them when he says: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when **I will establish a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, **not like the covenant that I made with their fathers** on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt”... **In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete**... (Heb 8:6-9, 13a)*
  - *Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus... by the blood of the **eternal covenant**, equip you with everything good that you may do his will... (Heb 13:20-21)*

# The New Covenant Is Better Than the Old

- Furthermore, the author takes great pains throughout the letter to demonstrate that **all** of the things **associated** with the **old covenant** –
  - Were **Given By God** (to the people of Israel) and served God's sovereign purposes within the course of redemptive history.
  - **But** at the same time, they were proclaimed by God **within the OT scriptures themselves** to be **temporary**, because those things were mere **types** that **prefigured** the **greater** spiritual realities that we now have in Christ in the **new covenant**.
- The old covenant and all those things associated with it were **never designed** to meet the ultimate spiritual needs of God's people. Only Jesus can do that!
- Consequently, throughout the letter, the author demonstrates again and again from the OT text itself, that the old covenant system and all the things that were a part of it were **inadequate** and a **mere shadow** of the coming greater realities that they were pointing to.

# The New Covenant Is Better Than the Old

- The major things associated with the old covenant that are discussed in the book of Hebrews are:
  - The Old Testament Scriptures
  - The Levitical Priesthood
  - The Law of Moses
  - The Sabbath Rest
  - The Tabernacle
  - The Animal Sacrifices
  - The Earthly City of Jerusalem
  - Mount Sinai
- In the next few slides, I would like to *remind you* of what the author has said about *each* of these old covenant ideas.

# The Old Testament Scriptures

- The author of the Book of Hebrews holds the Old Testament scriptures in **high esteem** because he recognizes that **all** scripture is the “*the Word of God*” and as such it is
  - *...living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* (Heb 4:12)
- In fact, the author builds his **entire case** throughout the course of this letter on the basis of the Old Testament text itself, giving specific Old Testament citations for **each** of his major points.

# The Old Testament Scriptures

- Nevertheless the author recognizes that the ***New Testament*** scriptures are the ***definitive and final revelation*** given ***in the Son*** and have been passed on to us ***by his apostles***:
  - *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these **last days** he has spoken to us **by his Son**, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. (Heb 1:1-2)*
  - *For since the message [given to Moses and mediated by angels] proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was **declared at first by the Lord**, and it was **attested to us by those who heard** [i.e. Jesus' apostles] (Heb 2:2-3)*



# The Old Covenant Levitical Priesthood

- The Old Covenant ***Levitical Priesthood*** prefigured Jesus' ***Melchizedekian priesthood***
  - ***We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God...***  
(Heb 4:14)
  - ***Every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.***  
(Heb 5:1)
  - ***Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said... "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."*** (Heb 5:5-6)

# The Old Covenant Levitical Priesthood

- The Old Covenant **Levitical Priesthood** prefigured Jesus' **Melchizedekian priesthood**
  - *Now if perfection had been attainable through the **Levitical** priesthood... what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of **Melchizedek**, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? (Heb 7:11-12)*
  - *And every [Levitical] priest stands daily at his service, offering **repeatedly the same sacrifices**, which can never take away sins. But when **Christ** had offered for all time **a single sacrifice** for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. (Heb 10:11-13)*

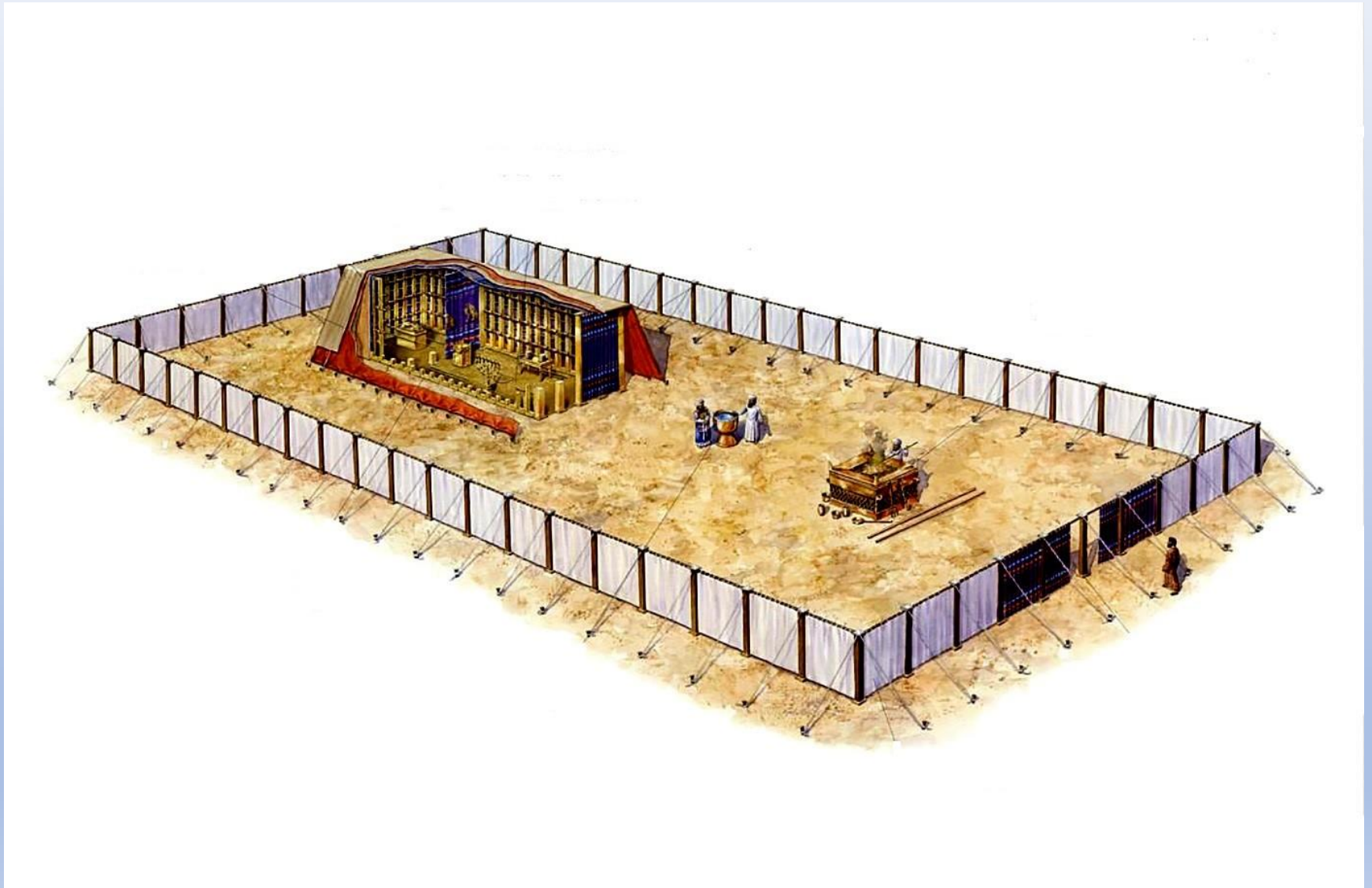
# The Law of Moses

- The **Law of Moses** was (according to the author) given **on the basis of** the Levitical Priesthood.
  - *[It was] on the basis of [the Levitical Priesthood] the [Law of Moses] was given to the people*  
(Heb 7:11 NIV)
- And therefore (according to the author) a change in **priesthood** required that there be a change in **Law**.
  - *For when there is a **change in the priesthood**, there is **necessarily a change in the law** as well.*
- This is why the Apostle Paul can say:
  - *To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (**though not being myself under the law**) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (**not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ**) that I might win those outside the law. (1 Cor 9:20-21)*

# A Sabbath Rest for the People of God

- The “*Sabbath rest*” spoken of by the author is not the observance of a special day, but the **eternal** rest of God’s people when we will experience final rest from the toils and trials of our present life.
- We are told to “*strive*” to enter that rest, by avoiding the kind of disobedience exhibited by the wilderness generation, who, as a result of their disobedience failed to enter the promised rest **they** might have received in the land of Canaan:
  - *There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.* (Heb 4:9-11)
- The various Sabbath days commanded in the OT pointed to this **ultimate** rest which is why the Apostle Paul says in Col 2:17 – *Therefore let no one pass judgment on you... with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.*

# The Old Covenant Tabernacle



# The Old Covenant Tabernacle

- The Old Covenant ***Earthly Tabernacle*** Was a Mere ***Copy*** that ***Prefigured*** the ***True Heavenly Tabernacle***:
  - *We have... a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, <sup>2</sup> a minister in the holy places, in the **true tent [=tabernacle]** that the **Lord set up, not man.** (Heb 8:1-2)*
  - *[The Levitical Priests ministered in] a **copy and shadow of the heavenly things.** For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “*See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain [Ex. 25:40].*” (Heb 8:5)*
  - *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through **the greater and more perfect tent** (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) <sup>12</sup> he entered once for all into the [heavenly] holy places... (Heb 9:11-12)*

# The Old Covenant Animal Sacrifices

- The old covenant *animal sacrifices* were **unable to take away the sins** of those who offered them, but were designed to point to **Jesus'** perfect once-for-all sacrifice which **did** secure our eternal redemption:
  - *The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship... But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.* (Heb 10:1, 3-4 NIV)
  - *[Jesus] entered once for all into the [heavenly] holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.* (Heb 9:12)

# The Old Covenant Animal Sacrifices

- The old covenant *animal sacrifices* were ***unable to take away the sins*** of those who offered them, but were designed to point to ***Jesus'*** perfect once-for-all sacrifice which ***did*** secure our eternal redemption:
  - *[Jesus said to the Father], "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." ... And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Heb 10:8-10)*



# The Earthly City of Jerusalem

- The *earthly city of Jerusalem*, capitol of the nation of Israel, *prefigured* the *new heavenly Jerusalem* where all of God's people will dwell for all eternity:
  - *For here [on earth] we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.* (Heb 13:14)
  - *[Abraham] was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.* (Heb 11:10)
  - *[In fact, all the Patriarchs] desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.* (Heb 11:16)
  - *But you have come... to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...* (Heb 12:22)

# Mount Sinai Versus Mount Zion

- In Heb 12:18-24, the author makes a **dramatic contrast** between:
  - **Mount Sinai** – and the **dreadful circumstances** that accompanied the giving of the law: *For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom... For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."*
  - **The Heavenly Mount Zion** – and the **glorious assembly** of those gathered at there: *But you have come to Mount Zion... and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant...*
- The author makes this contrast in order to demonstrate the **vast difference** between the old and new covenant.

# We Cannot Go Back

- The conclusion that the author draws from all that he has said about the old and new covenant is this:
- Since Christ has now come and fulfilled ***all*** of the things that the old covenant prefigured and anticipated, a Christian living in the new covenant age who tries to ***go back*** to doing things the way they were done in the old covenant is, in effect, ***denying Jesus*** and the work that he has done in fulfilling those things.
- The original readers of this letter were in danger of doing this very thing.
- Which brings us to the ***third*** major idea presented in the book of Hebrews: a strong warning that a ***genuine believer*** who hopes to spend eternity resting in the presence of God in the New Jerusalem ***must persevere*** in their faith.

# **Warning: A Genuine Believer Must Persevere in Their Faith**

- The Book of Hebrews contains some of the strongest warning passages in all of scripture.
- As we have shown, the author spends the majority of the letter meticulously developing a very detailed series of theological arguments designed to show that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of all that the Old Testament scriptures pointed to.
- But periodically, throughout the letter, the author punctuates and underscores his theological arguments with a series of very strong warnings.

# Four Major Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews

- Don't Drift Away (Heb 2:1-4):
  - *We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels [i.e., the old covenant] proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall **we** escape if we neglect such a **great** salvation [made available in the new covenant]? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*

# Four Major Warning Passages

- Jesus Is Better – Don't Apostatize (6:4-8)
  - *For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.*

# Four Major Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews

- No Hope of Forgiveness for Those Who Turn from Christ (10:26-31)
  - *For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. **How much worse** punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has **spurned the Son of God**, and has **profaned the blood of the covenant** by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

# Four Major Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews

- Don't Reject God's Word! (12:25-29)
  - *See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth [i.e. Moses in the old covenant], much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven [i.e., Jesus in the new covenant]. At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." ... Therefore let us be grateful for receiving **a kingdom that cannot be shaken**, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.*



# Draw Near to God

- Though, as we have seen, the author gives many strong warnings, he says a number of **encouraging** things to his readers as well.
- For example, one of the author's **favorite** words is a Greek word that is often translated as "**draw near**" in the ESV :
  - The readers were told they should "**draw near to the throne of grace**" (Heb 4:16)
  - Jesus "**is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him**" (Heb 7:25)
  - The "**sacrifices [required in the law can never] make perfect those who draw near [to God]**" (Heb 10:1), but because of **Christ's** sacrifice the author is able to encourage his readers to "**draw near [to God] with a true heart in full assurance of faith**" (Heb 10:22)
  - **For you have not come to [=draw near] what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest... But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering** (Heb 12:18,22)

# Class Discussion Time



## \*Class Discussion Time

- What is the most surprising thing you learned during the past year as we have looked at the book of Hebrews together?
- The original readers of this letter were being warned because they were in danger of reverting back to Judaism. Most modern Christians are not in danger of doing this.
- But how might **we** in our day apply the strong warnings not to put themselves under the teachings of the old covenant and ignoring the changes brought about by the new?
- What other things do you see going on in our day that are clearly addressed in the book of Hebrews?