



CWR/PTM

CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

LEVITICUS & HEBREWS

Week 4

Bad News Religion

“The spiritually lethal virus of legalism that attacks God’s grace can be found in any belief system or structure that promises God’s blessings in return for human efforts and performance. *Bad News Religion* is based on the conviction that if we do more and try harder we will be able to manipulate and obligate God into accepting our good deeds as at least partial payment for our salvation. The hypothesis of *Bad News Religion* is that our performance of religious duties and obedience to religious laws gains us a higher standing with God than we would have otherwise enjoyed.”

“The Genius of Christianity is not its unique doctrines nor its unequalled ceremonies, but the deity of Jesus. Because of Jesus, humans are saved from the religiosity of believing that they must save themselves by producing good deeds.”

Bad News Religion
Greg Albrecht
World Publishing, 2004

Leaving Elementary School Behind

DAY 22

Hebrews 5:11–6:20

Can you imagine what it would be like to go from high school back to elementary school?

1. How does the author characterize his readers? (a) infantile, (b) slow learners, (c) young and inexperienced, (d) stunted or immature, (e) incapable as teachers or parents, (f) gullible, (g) long-time converts.
2. *Milk* and *solid food* (5:12) are metaphors for what spiritual realities?
3. What are the six *elementary truths* (5:12) of Christianity (6:1-2)? Which of these basic truths seems obscure to you?
4. Who are those “once enlightened” (6:4-5)? (a) professing Christians, (b) knowledgeable Christians, (c) charismatic Christians, (d) carnal Christians, (e) born-again Christians, (f) ancient Israelites who failed to enter the Promised Land.
5. What is “impossible” for them? (a) to lose their salvation, (b) to be restored once they reject the light, (c) to repent once they harden their hearts, (d) all things are possible for God.
6. Why an oath—isn’t God’s word good enough (6:13-20; see 7:20-22, 28)?

1. Compared to the original readers of Hebrews, how’s your spiritual nutrition program? What food for life do you snack on most days?
2. What’s your spiritual condition like? What warning or comfort do you take to heart from this passage?

*Hebrews 6:4-8 warns sluggish believers to avoid what happened to their forefathers (chs. 3–4). The ancient Israelites did not enter the Promised Land because of their persistent **unbelief** and failure to persevere (6:11-12; 10:26-31). The reward promised to those who **persevere** with faith as Abraham did, is firm and secure. That **hope** is anchored on two unchangeable things—God’s **promise to Abraham** and his **oath** binding himself to that promise. The unchanging purpose of that promise had to do with the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ (6:13-20).*

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

What Kind of Priest Is This?

Hebrews 7:1-28

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever felt like you needed someone to talk to God on your behalf—to intercede for you, because you felt unworthy to speak to Him directly?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How was Jesus like Melchizedek (7:1-17)? (a) one pre-figured the other, (b) both lived during Abraham's day, (c) no beginning or end of life for either, (d) neither descended from the tribe of Levi, (e) both had an eternal priesthood, (f) both owned lots of land.

2. How was Melchizedek greater than Abraham and Levi (7:1-10)?

3. Answer the question of verse 11, "Why was there still need for another priest"—one who had been anticipated by the Psalmist (see Ps 110)?

4. How does Jesus compare to priests under the old covenant (7:23-28)? (a) other priests died; (b) Jesus offers better hope and benefits; (c) other priests had to make sacrifices for their own sins; (d) other priests made daily offerings, but Jesus' sacrifice was once for all; (e) they were weak, but Jesus the Son was perfect; (f) Levitical priesthood was inherited from Aaron, but the source of Jesus' priesthood was eternal.

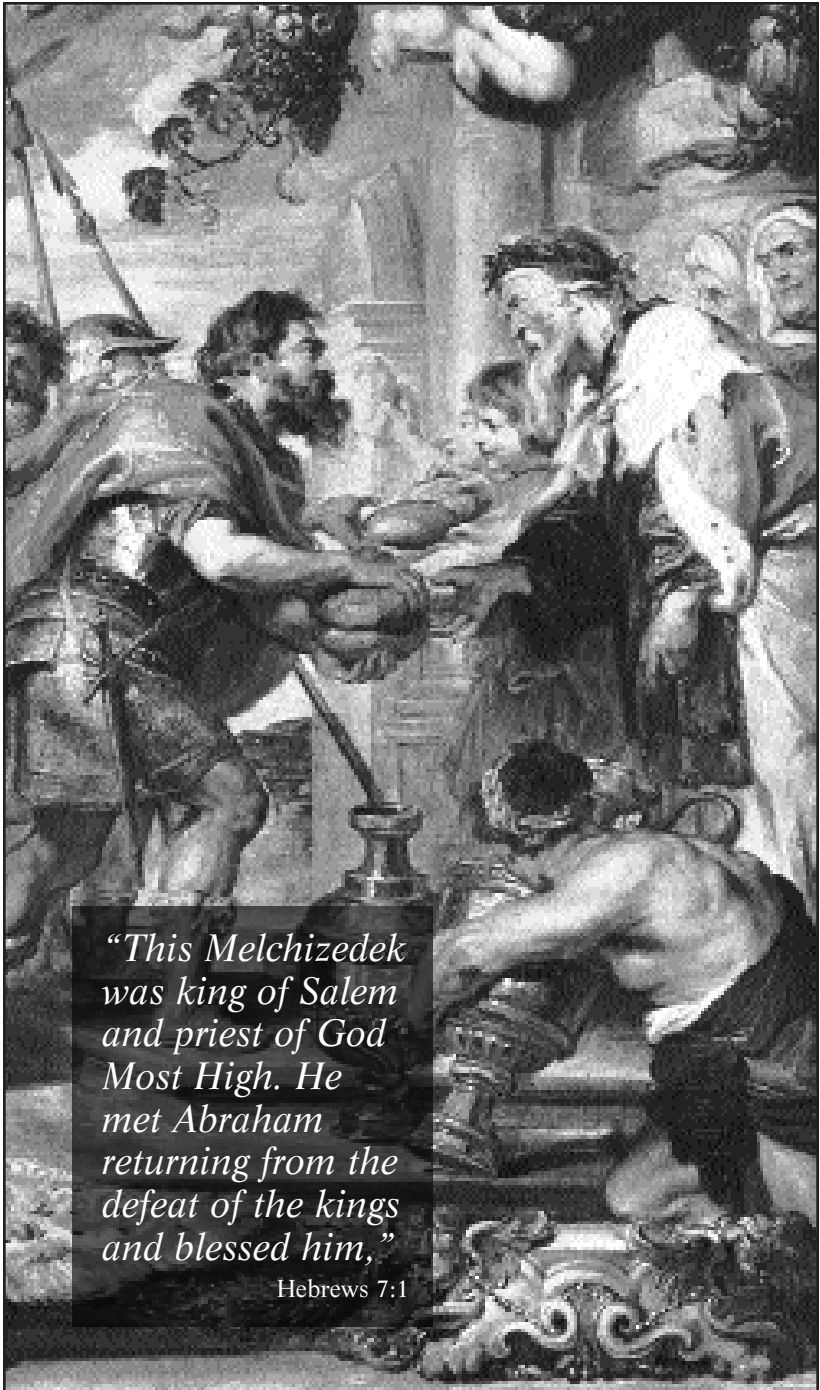
LIVING
out the Word

1. Who would you rather have as your priest and why? (a) Moses, (b) Aaron, (c) Melchizedek, (d) Abraham.

2. Consider this: Christ offers us an infinitely better hope than that available through the old covenant and Levitical priesthood. Because he lives his life within us, we don't have to experience empty ritualism and meaningless legalism.

WINDOW
on the Word

Without father... or end of life (7:3). This is an inference from the Genesis account of Melchizedek (Ge 14:18-20), which does not mention his parentage, children or death. The author of Hebrews uses Melchizedek as a prototype or prefigure of Christ, whose existence and priesthood is eternal.



*“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,”*

Hebrews 7:1

The Meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek by Peter Paul Rubens, National Gallery, Washington

Original Better Than the Copy

Hebrews 8:1–9:12

OPENING
up to the Word

Do you own any figurines, paintings or jewelry which depict angels? How do you think those images compare to the reality in heaven?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Find all the comparisons you can in 8:1–9:12. Which spiritual realities are *true*, *superior* and the *new order*? Which ones are the *copy*, a *shadow*, *old* or a mere *pattern*?

2. The argument for a better covenant in Christ stems from Jeremiah 31:31-34. What was wrong or “obsolete and aging” with the first covenant (8:7-13)?

3. What are the “better promises” or superior benefits associated with Jesus’ covenant, God’s laws, God’s people and the forgiveness of sin (8:6, 10-12)?

4. What aspects of God and his plan of redemption are illustrated by the sacred items and tabernacle furnishings (9:1-5)? By the extent and frequency of the priests’ offerings (9:6-10)?

5. Why weren’t all the gifts and sacrifices able to clear the consciences of the people? What does it take to clear the conscience?

LIVING
out the Word

1. To clear your conscience, in what or in whom are you trusting?

2. Which religious practices did you once trust in, but have discarded in favor of the better promises and blood of the new covenant?

3. Do you have a place in your house used exclusively for prayer and study? Is there a part of your house where spiritual activities are *never* done? Is part of your heart, life or mind off limits to Christ?

WINDOW
on the Word

For details about the earthly **sanctuary** (9:1-5), see Exodus 25–26 and related notes. At the time of the writing of Hebrews, the Temple was still standing, but it would be destroyed by Roman legions in A.D. 70. Within the greater and more perfect Tabernacle (9:11) is the heavenly sanctuary of God’s presence (9:24).

A Comparison of the Covenants

Old Covenant

Hebrews 9:1-10

A good, but temporary covenant, made obsolete with the coming of Christ.

Hebrews 8:13

From God, through Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Galatians 4:24-25

Brought death.

Impossible to fulfill perfectly because of sin.

Romans 8:3

Blood of Animals

Annual atonement required for sins.

Hebrews 9:7-8; 10:1-4

Access to God restricted.

Hebrews 9:7-8

Could not cleanse the conscience.

Hebrews 9:9

New Covenant

Hebrews 9:11-28

A better covenant brought by Christ.

Hebrews 7:22; 8:6-7

From God, through Jesus, from the heavenly Jerusalem.

Galatians 4:26-27

Hebrews 12:22-24

Brings life.

Perfectly fulfilled by Christ.

Hebrews 7:26-28

Blood of Christ

Christ atoned for sins once and for all.

Hebrews 9:12; 10:10, 14, 18

Access to God open to all.

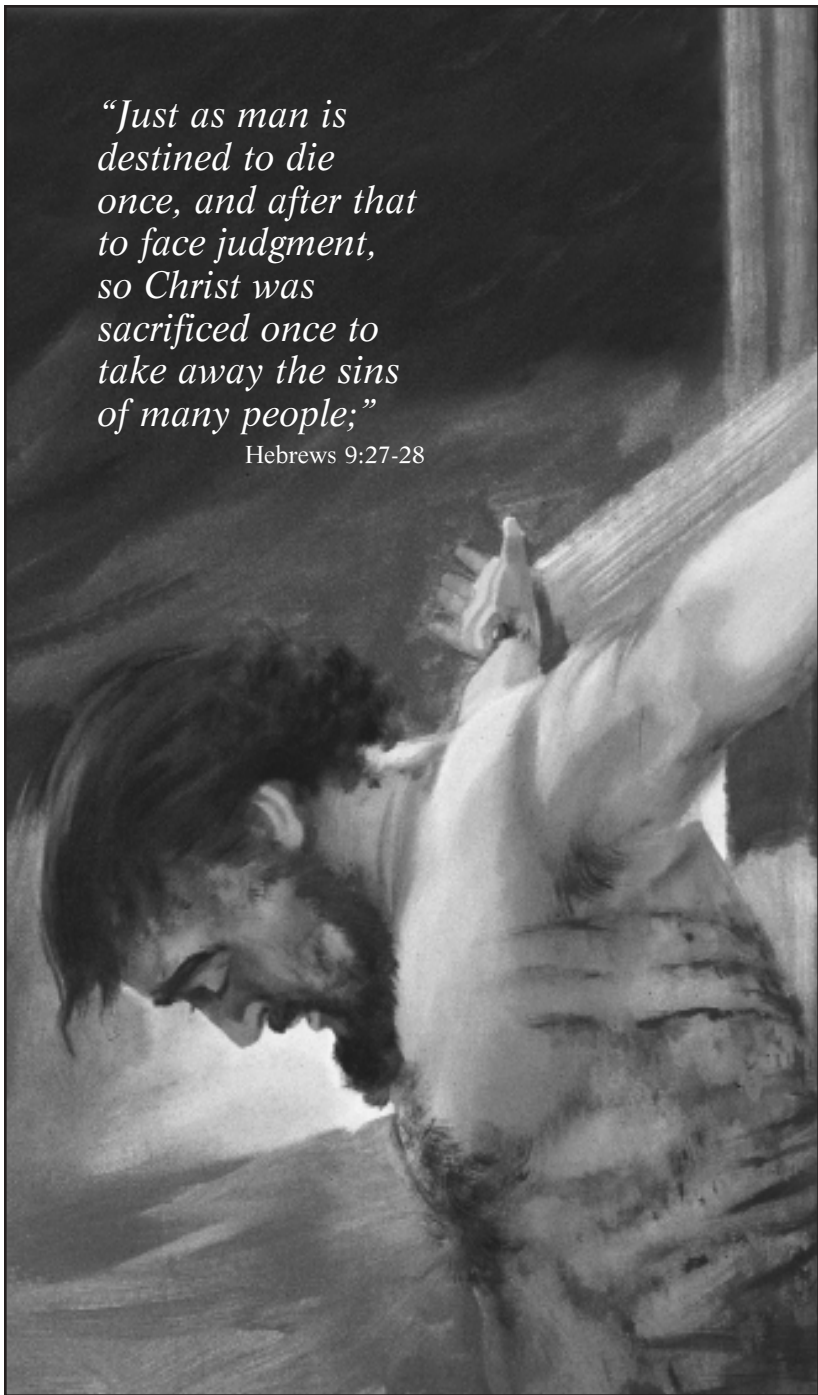
Hebrews 9:14-15; 10:19-20

Complete forgiveness.

Hebrews 10:17-22

*“Just as man is
destined to die
once, and after that
to face judgment,
so Christ was
sacrificed once to
take away the sins
of many people;”*

Hebrews 9:27-28



Artwork by Ken Tunell

Blood Relations

DAY 25

Hebrews 9:13–10:18

Does the sight of blood make you uncomfortable, squeamish or even ill?

1. Find all the references to blood. In each case, whose is it? (a) animals, (b) martyrs, (c) Jesus. Why was the “blood of the covenant” necessary, even under the old covenant?
2. Why was the blood of Jesus so important? (a) cleanses us from and breaks the power of sin, (b) puts into effect God’s new covenant, (c) pays the price for sin, (d) makes other sacrifices unnecessary, (e) frees us to serve him, (f) shows God’s unconditional love. How does it do these things?
3. How was Christ’s death like a ransom price (9:15)? Who were the hostages? Hostage to what?
4. How is Christ’s death like a *will* (9:16-18)? Who benefits from the will? What’s the inheritance?
5. Why did Christ have to die? Wasn’t his moral example and ethical teaching enough?
6. How did Christ’s death correspond to the human sequence of death and judgment (9:27-28)? In what sense is our salvation yet to come?
7. How was Christ’s death like, and unlike, the animal sacrifices of the OT?
8. How was Christ like, and unlike, the Levitical priests as one who offers sacrifices (10:1-18; see Lev 1–7)?

1. Have you accepted your inheritance from Christ? What’s keeping you, or are you just waiting (9:28)?
2. How does Jesus’ atonement change your attitude toward past sins? Toward people who have wronged you? Toward people you have wronged?

*A copy or **shadow** was not effective in and of itself to accomplish God’s redemptive work, but it prefigured or pointed to the good things to come (9:23; 10:1; also 8:5), made possible by the once-for-all (9:12, 26, 28; 10:10) sacrifice of Christ.*

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

Hang in There!

Hebrews 10:19-39

OPENING
up to the Word

When a job gets tough, do you press on or do you quit? Have you ever thought about quitting, yet ultimately finished strong, by God's grace?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What is the "Therefore" there for (10:19)? What legal case or theological argument was the author building (8:1-10:19)?
2. In the five-fold resolution that follows (10:22-25), what good works are urged upon the reader?
3. What additional reasons did the author offer for us to keep on keeping on?
4. In this call to "hang in there" for Christ, *how* does one do it? (a) our own diligent effort, (b) fear of Judgment Day, (c) regular church attendance, (d) 30 minutes daily Bible study, (e) maintaining a clean conscience, (f) grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone.
5. Who is the warning of 10:26-31 intended for? With what effect?
6. Who is the encouragement of 10:32-39 intended for? With what effect?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Of the five encouragements in 10:22-25, which ones characterize you? To which might you give further consideration?
2. In 10:25, is attendance at a brick-and-mortar church the only way to meet with other believers?
3. Think about the past week. Were you tempted to shrink back instead of confidently living by faith alone, grace alone, Christ alone?
4. Do you fear what man can do, or do you fear "falling into the hands of the living God" (10:31; see 13:6)? Why do you need to fear at all?

WINDOW
on the Word

The OT background for this principle is found in several places, for example, the willful blasphemer and the intentional Sabbath-breaker were both stoned to death (Lev 24:10-16; Nu 15:30-36). The defiant rebels in Numbers 14 are the classic example, as they condemned themselves to die in the desert and missed the Promised Land. See also Hebrews 6:4-12 and related notes, where the same spiritual condition is discussed.

The Hall of Faith

DAY 27

Hebrews 11:1-40

Do you have a human hero of the faith? Why that particular person?

1. Just what is faith, as illustrated in this chapter? (a) courage in the face of crisis, (b) believing something you can't see or hear, (c) obeying only what is seen and heard, (d) assuming something is true when scientific evidence says "no," (e) a leap of logic, (f) emotionalism or enthusiasm, (g) trusting that God exists and rewards seekers, (h) an obedient act of the heart and will, (i) any informed consent, (j) claiming God's promises as universally true.
2. What examples of the above definitions do you see in Abel? In Enoch? In Noah? In Abraham? In Moses?
3. How can one act out of control, in doubt or deceit, in fear or anger—as did Noah (Ge 9:21-22), Abraham (Ge 12:11-13) and Moses (Ex 2:11-15) on notable occasions—and still be included in the "Hall of Faith" listing?
4. How could Moses have acted "for the sake of Christ" (11:26), when he was born more than a millennium before Christ?
5. Which stories come to mind when you read the heroes of faith named or alluded to in 11:32-38?
6. Did those in 11:35-37 have less faith or more? What is that "something better" that God planned for all the people of faith (11:16, 40)?

1. Which definitions of faith in question #1 come closest to your experience?
2. What models of faith listed here bring to mind other models of faith in your own life? Know anyone like Noah or Abraham?
3. Which of these examples of faith would you like to be similar to your own legacy?

Use a study Bible, such as the NIV Study Bible, with cross-references to trace these Bible characters and their stories.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

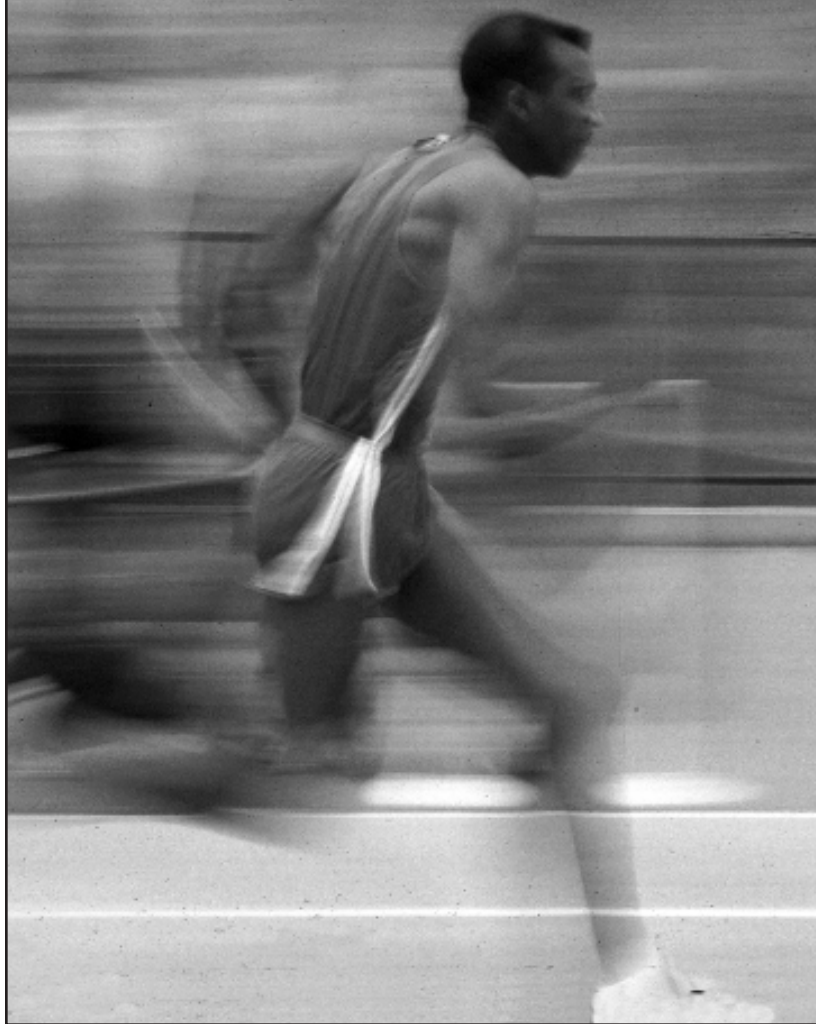
out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

*“Let us run with
perseverance the
race marked out
for us.”*

Hebrews 12:1



Fitness Training

DAY 28

Hebrews 12:1-29

Are you in training or getting ready for some physical or mental test?

1. What is the disciplined Christian life like (12:1-13)? Are we supposed to enjoy life or endure it?
2. How can you be a winner in your Christian race (12:1-3)? (a) allow Jesus to deal with your sin—it slows you down; (b) never quit; (c) remember the “witnesses” who cheer you on; (d) pace yourself for a marathon, not a sprint; (e) think of Jesus already at the finish line—and also running with us.
3. Where does the Lord’s discipline apply (12:14-17)? (a) interpersonal relationships, (b) practical holiness, (c) inner attitudes, (d) sex life, (e) godliness, (f) repentance.
4. Why would anyone want to return to Mount Sinai (12:18-21) once they had been to Mount Zion (12:22-24)?

1. Are you ready to run the race set before you? Or has something dulled your vision of Christ?
2. What parts of God’s training program (12:4-13) have you experienced?
3. What Esau-like experiences might cause a “bitter root” to grow up in your Christian life?
4. Is there an area of your life where the Lord is currently disciplining you?

Witnesses (12:1) are the heroes of the faith highlighted in chapter 11, who gather as fans in an amphitheater. The doom, gloom and pyrotechnics of **Mount Sinai** (12:18-21), where Israel experienced severe penalties for disobedience, is contrasted against the joy of **Mount Zion** (12:22-24). This is not the literal city of Jerusalem, but a metaphor for all the blessings of the new covenant. Counted among the blessed are those believers who share the privileged position of **firstborn** (12:23). The Hebrew Christians, afflicted by persecution, were in danger of doing just as Esau did—selling out—and returning to the old covenant of Mount Sinai, where dire consequences awaited them. Having a greater revelation means a greater responsibility to worship God acceptably and avoids a greater danger from God Almighty—a **consuming fire** (12:29; see 10:31).

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

Faith in a Changeless Christ

Hebrews 13:1-25

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

Are you more of an entertainer, doer, thinker, pray-er or greeter?

1. We are to “entertain,” “honor,” “do good,” “consider,” “pray for” and “greet” one another, as unto the Lord. Any special instructions for doing these things to strangers? Prisoners? Marriage partners? Financial partners? Fellow believers?
2. What is significant about Jesus remaining “the same” (13:8-14)? Who was changing? Under what influences?
3. What is meant by “strange teachings,” “ceremonial foods” and the “camp”?
4. What new metaphorical sacrifices are suggested here (13:15-16)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. In which of the areas named in question #1 are you allowing God to make progress in you? Which need more attention?
2. Why should we obey and pray for leaders (13:17-19)? Today, do we have the freedom to choose our Christian leaders or teachers? Name one aspect in which you will imitate, submit to or pray for the faith of leaders.
3. How has this letter to the Hebrews equipped you for doing God’s will?
4. If you could make one request—to be equipped for God’s service in some way—what would it be?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Some—such as Abraham (Ge 19), Gideon (Jdg 6) and Manoah (Jdg 13) have entertained **angels** (God’s messengers) without knowing it. Christ and his angels can be seen in the faces of strangers and prisoners (see Mt 25:31-46). The “strange teachings,” “ceremonial foods” and “those who minister at the tabernacle” may refer to **Judaizers**—legalists who sought to wreck the faith of Christians by getting them to return to the old covenant of law, rituals and sacrifices—all of which Jesus had made obsolete by his death outside the city gate. To stand with Jesus outside the camp meant leaving the religion of Judaism and embracing Christ in his disgrace and sufferings.*

*“Marriage
should be
honored by all,
and the
marriage bed
kept pure....”*

Hebrews 13:4

