

A decorative blue floral border with intricate scrollwork and leaf patterns surrounds the central text.

**A Layman's  
Commentary on  
Hebrews and the  
General Epistles**

**T.O.D. Johnston**

Hebrews and the General Epistles – T.O.D. Johnston - [www.biblestudylessons.pdf.info](http://www.biblestudylessons.pdf.info)

A Layman's Commentary on Hebrews and the General Epistles

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Hebrews and the General Epistles

Religious Non-fiction

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Contact the publisher:

Owen Johnston

E-Mail – [email@biblestudylessons.pdf.info](mailto:email@biblestudylessons.pdf.info)

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Table of Contents

Preface	-	6
---------	---	---

Hebrews

Lesson I	-	Chapter 1	-	7
Lesson II	-	Chapter 2	-	10
Lesson III	-	Chapter 3	-	14
Lesson IV	-	Chapter 4	-	18
Lesson V	-	Chapter 5	-	22
Lesson VI	-	Chapter 6	-	25
Lesson VII	-	Chapter 7	-	29
Lesson VIII	-	Chapters 8 and 9	-	34
Lesson IX	-	Chapter 10	-	42
Lesson X	-	Chapter 11	-	48
Lesson XI	-	Chapter 12	-	54
Lesson XII	-	Chapter 13	-	59

James

Lesson I	-	1:1-17	-	63
Lesson II	-	1:18-2:13	-	66
Lesson III	-	2:14-26	-	70
Lesson IV	-	3:1-18	-	72
Lesson V	-	4:1-17	-	75
Lesson VI	-	5:1-20	-	78

I Peter

Lesson I	-	Chapter 1	-	82
Lesson II	-	Chapter 2	-	87
Lesson III	-	Chapter 3	-	92
Lesson IV	-	Chapter 4	-	96
Lesson V	-	Chapter 5	-	99

II Peter

Lesson I	-	Chapter 1	-	102
Lesson II	-	Chapter 2	-	106
Lesson III	-	Chapter 3	-	110

Table of Contents, continued

I John

Lesson I	-	Chapter 1	-	114
Lesson II	-	Chapter 2	-	118
Lesson III	-	Chapter 3	-	122
Lesson IV	-	Chapter 4	-	125
Lesson V	-	Chapter 5	-	128

II John and III John

One Lesson	-		-	132
------------	---	--	---	-----

Jude

One Lesson	-		-	136
------------	---	--	---	-----

Bibliography	-		-	141
--------------	---	--	---	-----

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A Layman's Commentary on Hebrews and the General Epistles

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Written by T.O.D. Johnston  
Published by Owen Johnston  
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Dedicated for knowledge, understanding, and inspiration as we seek to follow Our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ.

Preface

After reading many scholarly commentaries on different books of Scripture, it became my mental habit to sift through the minute discussions of individual words and/or phrases, and the quoting of various scholars of the past of many differing opinions, and center on the most logical and inspirational truths that remained. Thus I relied on the studied scholarship of those who had learned the original languages and had read all the previous scholars that had written to get the best possible understanding of Scripture that I, as a non-scholar, could. It seemed that most church members would not attempt to read scholarly works - but would benefit from their knowledge if presented in a plain and straightforward manner, the truths they had perceived. The following commentary is my attempt to do this. May God bless my efforts to the extent that they increase the understanding and faith of the reader.

T.O.D. Johnston  
2005

Hebrews – Lesson I

The greatest, inclusive, and illustrated definition and explanation of all the doctrines of the Gospel are written in this epistle. It describes the whole plan and point of God's dispensations to and for man from the foundation for the world to the incarnation of Christ. The complete story of the Gospel, and the fulfillment of the Law: Christ is the End of the Law for righteousness to them that believe.

The letter is addressed to the Jews, assuming a familiar knowledge of the Mosaic Law, the traditions of the elders, and the Mishna (written and oral law illustrated). Let us read the Scriptures.

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, chapter 1.

God Has Spoken by His Son

1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,  
2 hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;  
3 who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;  
4 being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

The Son Superior to Angels

5 ¶ For unto which of the angels said he at any time,

Thou art my Son,  
this day have I begotten thee?  
And again,

I will be to him a Father,  
and he shall be to me a Son?

6 And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith,  
And let all the angels of God worship him.

7 And of the angels he saith,  
Who maketh his angels spirits,  
and his ministers a flame of fire.

8 But unto the Son he saith,  
Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever:  
a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity;  
therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee  
with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

10 And,  
Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth;  
and the heavens are the works of thine hands.

11 They shall perish, but thou remainest:  
and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

12 and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up,  
and they shall be changed:  
but thou art the same,

and thy years shall not fail.

13 But to which of the angels said he at any time,  
Sit on my right hand,  
until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

Verse 1.

God is mentioned at the first. In this particular context it is emphasized that God had communicated to the people and the prophets throughout history at different times and in diverse ways. He revealed His will to redeem man through the incarnation of His Son

Verse 2.

The Gospel dispensation takes place in the last days (the last time), the last dispensation or communication). The Jewish nation and its people face their coming devastation and destruction. This 'good news' was delivered by a Son, appointed heir of all things, and by whom all things were created.

Verse 3.

As the Father is the sun, source of all power, of the same essence is the Son as the outshining, the splendour of the Sun. The one is eternal with the other. Both, though distinct, are together and eternal. Christ showed forth the image of God to man in His life and ministry, His sacrificial love, grace and mercy toward humankind.

The Christ is upholding all things by the Word of His power shows; the immensity of all-pervading power of God, eternal with the Father, both before the beginning of time and after its end.

Christ alone purged mankind's sins, giving up His life. This placed Him above all the patriarchs from Abraham and Moses.

The right hand is the place of greatest importance next to the throne of God the Father. Christ, after His ascension, sits there on the right hand of the Majesty on high, in glory everlasting, in governing of all things through time and eternity.

Verse 4.

He that is greater than the angels is the One they adore – He is God. He possessed or acquired, as God, shown forth in the flesh, through His perfect obedience, His suffering and sacrificial death, the more excellent name and position than the angels.

Verse 5.

'Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee' - Psalms 2:7, which was also quoted by Paul in Acts 13:33 as referring to Christ's resurrection. Also explained in Romans 1:4. The Resurrection proved the Sonship with power. Angels were and are God's created servants. Christ's resurrection unto eternal life was fullest proof. He was innocent and righteous. He had accomplished the purpose of His sacrifice. Also innocent in His miraculous conception by a virgin. These facts refute the blasphemies of the Jews who reject Him.

Paul then refers to II Samuel 7:14 where God promised a seed to David who would sit upon his throne and it would be established forever. This emphasizes that the Old Testament recorded these promises concerning Christ, the Son of God.

Verse 6.

Again, by the resurrection, God brought the first begotten in to the world as One worthy of the worship of God's angels. This quotes Psalm 97:7.



Verse 7.

Quoting from Psalm 104:4 – this refers to angels in the divine administration as spirits and flames of fire, yet are inferior to the position of the Son. They minister or serve God in the form of wind and fire at God's bidding. This is in contrast with the eternal power of the Son.

Verse 8.

Paul quotes Psalm 45:6,7 - "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Said to Jesus Christ – naming Him as God. This Psalm speaks of the Messiah as the Son of David. Ezekiel 34:24 - "And David my servant shall be a Prince over them forever." This states the Divinity of Christ. The sceptre was a staff of various forms that were an instrument of power and authority of a monarch. The Messiah's sceptre was one of righteousness as was His Kingdom to be ruled.

Verse 9.

A just ruler loves what is right and hates injustice and evil. So is Christ the righteous. Therefore God set Him apart, consecrated by anointing 'with the oil of gladness' above all others. This is the Messiah (the anointed one). No other was prophet, Priest, and King.

Verse 10.

This is addressed to the Son as Creator, in laying the foundation of the earth, and also the infinite wisdom and beauty of the heavens.

Verses 11,12.

This 'old' creation will perish, like an 'old' garment to be folded up and changed into a new heavens and a new earth. The Lord remains the same and His life is eternal. His years shall not fail. Note: the word 'world' is a contraction of 'wear old'. This expressed the idea of the earth wearing out over time.

Verse 13.

Paul continues to cite Old Testament Scripture to prove the deity of Christ as the Lord. Here is Psalms 11:1, where the Lord is to sit on God's right hand, until his enemies are his footstool. This places Him as equal to God, far above the angels who were messengers and servants, even His servants (to mankind).

Verse 14.

Clearly stated, angels are ministering spirits to Christians. They are never seated before God. Their service will continue until the 'heirs of salvation' receive their inheritance in heaven.

Hebrews – Lesson II

Doctrine and the Greatness of Salvation.

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, chapter 2.

So Great Salvation

1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

2 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;

3 how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

The Captain of Salvation Made Perfect through Suffering

5 ¶ For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

6 But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him?

or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

8 thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.

For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

10 ¶ For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

12 saying,

I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

13 And again,

I will put my trust in him.

And again,

Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

14 ¶ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

15 and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

17 Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.

Verse 1.

Because God has spoken to us as His Son, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Trinity, of eternal things of the greatest import to man: 'Therefore' we must give the most earnest attention for our very souls. We must keep them close, continually, so no part slips away from our consciousness and memory.

Verse 2.

The Words from God as delivered by angels (see Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19) were confirmed by divine authority. This was the law which 'transgression and disobedience' had prescribed a punishment. Compared to the Gospel this was strict, the punishment inescapable and severe for any and every infraction. In this dispensation, no one could actually earn their salvation through perfect obedience.

Verse 3.

If one in the present 'neglect so great salvation' offered by Christ, first spoken to the apostles, then how can anyone escape damnation? There is no other remedy to man's sinfulness. This Gospel was continually confirmed from Pentecost onward in the power of the Holy Spirit to the conversion of the Jews first who believed, and then unto Gentiles.

Verse 4.

This was confirmed by God with 'signs and wonders', gifts of the Holy Spirit. All these were above and beyond the ability of any person, and confirmed God's presence and blessing. They were clearly wrought by God according 'to His own will.'

Verse 5.

The world to come is what Paul is talking about. It relates to the new world order where Christ reigns at God's right hand. The angels will not have authority there as they did among the nations in the Old Testament times (Daniel 10:20,21; 12:1). The future is in the hands of Christ where all creation will be subject to Him.

Verse 6.

David in Psalm 8:4-6 - 'But one' assumes that any Hebrews reading this would recognize this quote as very familiar, thus shows reverence for the author. The point: that God would condescend to deal with this sinful creature of man and show such mercy. The son of man refers to Jesus taking on human nature to provide the way of salvation for fallen humanity. This was only accomplished by His sacrifice of His life for them: love and mercy eternal and unmerited.

Verses 7,8.

Paul is applying these words, not to be speaking of Adam (from Genesis 1:26), but of Christ. He was made, for a little while, lower than the angels (Psalms 8:5 in the Septuagint). The second part: He is, as the Son of Man (see Daniel 7:13). Jesus spoke of Himself as the Son of Man, thus identifying Himself as the head of a new creation and ruler of the world to come. He is crowned 'with glory and honor', with all things under His authority, nothing that is not under His feet. As the victorious Messiah, after His resurrection, He was exalted, all power given to Him in heaven and earth. The ultimate subject is not yet seen being now the period of grace, the 'Times of the Gentiles' when the Gospel is offered to all people. When that time is finished, He will reign over all creation.

Verse 9.

To redeem man, Jesus had to become a man, lower than the angels to suffer the penalty of death, because of man's sins. To 'taste' death apparently refers to the means used to carry out the death penalty by being forced to drink a cup of poison. This was commonly used in Greece in the time of Socrates as his recorded sentence and death (recorded by Plato). In Matthew 26:39, Christ prayed: "Oh my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me?" But of this cup He did drink, by the grace of God, for every man. For this, He was crowned with the highest glory and honor.

Verse 10.

According to the magnificence of His mercy and grace toward His creation, God planned for and brought to pass our redemption. This was and is to bring 'many sons unto glory', through Christ the leader and Captain (and Prince) of their salvation. This path included extreme suffering, part of paying the price for the penalty of our sins, even death on the cruel and torturous cross. His sinless, perfect and righteous life was of such immeasurable value as to be perfect to pay for man's also immeasurable sins.

Verse 11.

He that makes holy atonement and reconciliation to God and those He redeemed are all one. Both as having the same human nature, Christ is not ashamed to call those that have accepted Him as brethren.

Verse 12.

Referring to Psalm 22:22 as Christ speaking to the Father: that He will declare God's glorious attributes to the believers in the Church. They will sing praises for God's mercy unto them. Christ states in John 1:18 that He has revealed God unto man, in praise of the Father.

Verse 13.

Here the writer refers to Psalms 18:2, the Messiah referring to trusting in God. 'I and the children' comes from Isaiah 8:18. All these introduce whole paragraphs of the cited Scriptures that all are prophecies of the Messiah fulfilled in Christ. Consider the last one: 'Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.' All point to Scriptures fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This also includes the calling of the Gentiles especially to Paul, in his entire ministry.

Verse 14.

All offspring of Adam and Eve are children of the flesh, therefore fallen, sinners in need of a Savior. He had to partake of the same flesh, the incarnation, to become a man of flesh and blood. Only in this way could His death pay for the children of God (Jews and Gentiles alike). (John 11:51,52.) He became the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (I John 2:2). This also included the provision of the power of the Holy Spirit to render useless and without effect the power of the Devil over death. Isaiah 25:8 - "He will swallow up death in victory..."

Verse 15.

This appears to be principally referring to Gentiles, having no revelation, no promise of life after death. They preferred life, even in the worst circumstances, to death. They lived in fear of death, having no hope beyond the grave. Those that acknowledge God, being wicked, are afraid of death and eternity. This pervaded the lives and thoughts of those 'in bondage'. Some would do anything in their lives to preserve their lives, so great was their fear of death.

To the Christian, death is not to be feared, but leads only to blessing and the eternal state, to be with God as His child.

Verse 16.

Christ did not take on the nature of angels, not intending to redeem angels. He did take on the nature of a man in the line of Abraham. Abraham was promised that from his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. In this Christ seized the falling humanity, preventing them from endless perdition. This was not done for the fallen angels for whom the outer darkness is prepared. Humans were endowed with the image of God uniquely.

Verse 17.

Christ had to take on all things of a man 'made like unto his brethren.' In this way to represent and suffer in his stead, to make atonement. In this way He experienced our infirmities and afflictions. He represented us before God, as our High Priest, to take our punishment in our stead for our sins. This brought 'reconciliation for the sins of the people.'

Verse 18.

As Christ suffered, He felt deep compassion for others who suffered. Because He was tempted (by satan, in fatigue, hunger, etc.). To them Christ offers strength and guidance in the Spirit, in prayer find mercy and grace, supplying what they need to endure and come through.

Hebrews – Lesson III

Jesus, the High Priest.

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, chapter 3.

Christ Superior to Moses

1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;  
2 who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.  
3 For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house.  
4 For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.  
5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;  
6 but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

A Rest for the People of God

7 ¶ Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith,  
Today if ye will hear his voice,  
8 harden not your hearts, as in the provocation,  
in the day of temptation in the wilderness:  
9 when your fathers tempted me, proved me,  
and saw my works forty years.  
10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation,  
and said, They do always err in their heart;  
and they have not known my ways.  
11 So I sware in my wrath,  
They shall not enter into my rest.  
12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.  
13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.  
14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;  
15 while it is said,  
Today if ye will hear his voice,  
harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.  
16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.  
17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?  
18 And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?  
19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Verse 1.

What has gone before leads to this consideration. First Paul addresses the readers as 'holy brethren', those consecrated to God in heart, speech, and actions. This is also the heavenly calling, from sin to salvation.

Consider our High Priest, Jesus Christ, Apostle of God. (As so thought of among the Jews – High Priest also thought of as Apostle of God.) Paul directs the Hebrews to recognize Jesus Christ in these offices. It is from this Jesus that the New Covenant comes – the priest and prophet, one to declare the will of God, the other to minister holy things to the people. Under the Old Testament, Moses was the Apostle, Aaron the High Priest. Now Jesus has declared the Father's will as Prophet. As Priest, He makes atonement for the people's sins – a Mediator between man and God.

Verse 2.

Referring to Numbers 12:7 where God testifies to Moses as being faithful to the home and family, to the whole congregation of Israel.

So also and more so was Christ for His Church. And this even unto His death, revealing the promises of God and His great mercy and grace toward all men.

Verse 3.

Jesus Christ was counted more worthy of glory than Moses, Aaron, or the angels. He that builds the house (the Church as house, family, and body) is Christ. Moses was in the house of God built by Christ and under His authority, care, and maintenance.

Verse 4.

Men build houses, plan it for a specific function. To continue the metaphor, each family has a head. God built the universe, which includes the Church of Christ. Which Christ provided the foundation for.

Verse 5.

Moses was faithful as a servant of the house. Everything under Moses was a testimony to the things which were to follow: those things regarding Jesus Christ and His Gospel. John 5:46 – Jesus spoke: "If ye had believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me."

Verse 6.

Jesus was faithful as the first-born Son, over His own house. We as Christians are His Church and family and house. We shall continue as we maintain our profession and rejoice 'of the hope, firm unto the end.' The way to God was now open, with liberty of access, by the blood of Jesus.

Verse 7.

Wherefore as the Holy Spirit says, then a quote from Psalm of David 95:7 – the exhortation is to heed the voice of the Lord today, and persevere to hold firm to His mercy.

Verse 8.

To not heed His voice brings the result of the heart becoming hardened. This happened in the 'provocation' - where the Israelites provoked God in the wilderness. They murmured against their condition – having no bread. God provided manna. They again provoked God, complaining about no water. Later in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year from the Exodus from Egypt they again provoked God by making the golden calf. Again when they were to take possession of the land of Canaan they were afraid and were destined to all die in the wilderness for not believing and obeying God.

Verse 9.

The Israelites had tempted, and proved Him in the 40 years in the wilderness. They had seen God's miracles, yet tempted God by their refusal to trust and believe God for the remainder of their lives (that same 40 years in the wilderness).

Verse 10.

God as the Father of that great, set-apart Jewish family, who He had supported and given great blessings, yet that generation grieved Him. They continually set their affections on earthly comforts and values – not on being holy, good, or upright in their hearts. In spite of the miraculous deliverance from Egypt and the provisions for them in the wilderness. They erred in their hearts, not acknowledging His blessings, His power, and His tender-hearted goodness toward them.

Verse 11.

Because of their continued lack of faith, and grumbling against God, they brought God to wrath (Deuteronomy 11:2,5). That generation was not allowed to enter into His rest in the promised land. Their carcasses would drop in the wilderness (Numbers 14:29).

Verse 12.

The lesson of the Israelites is a warning to any 'brethren'. Christians have been brought from the bondage of sin, with the promise of everlasting life. Through unbelief and disobedience, they lost their rest. An evil heart of unbelief will lead to rejection of the living God. This heart of unbelief has 5 steps: 1. Consenting to sin, 2. hardening of the heart through sin, 3. unbelief from the previous sinning (to deny the truth of the Gospel), 4. causing them to speak evil of the Gospel, 5. apostasy, a seared conscience, and a reprobate mind.

Verse 13.

To exhort one another daily supposes that they met, have had close fellowship to be able to be contacted daily. The continually present 'now' is the proper and necessary time to cleave to the living Almighty God. This will prevent the hardening and selfishness and worldliness of those Israelites. Thus is the deceitfulness of sin.

Verse 14.

To have accepted Christ by faith includes the whole Gospel, its benefits, blessings, and promised eternal 'life' (unto the end). Perseverance is called for, to 'hold steadfast'.

Verse 15.

Quoting Psalm 95:7,8 – If you hear the Lord's voice, don't neglect so great a salvation and hold fast (harden not your hearts as they did in the wilderness).

Verse 16.

The majority did provoke God, even in the hundreds of thousands. Caleb and Joshua, Moses and the priests also were led out of Egypt by Moses and did not provoke God.

Verse 17.

The 40 years God was grieved with those who fell in the wilderness, those who sinned. God at the time of this epistle's writing was now a long time provoked by the generation rejecting the Messiah. Was not the destruction of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel God's judgment against them for unbelief?



Verse 18.

The height of the sin of those that were not allowed to enter into God's rest, again is emphasized as unbelief, their greatest sin. God swore it, so serious was their stubbornness and hard-heartedness.

Verse 19.

God had provided multiple miracles, as visible proof of His care and provision for them. He strengthened and led them every step of the way out from Egypt. And yet they stubbornly would not believe, but disobeyed Him, time after time, being willfully blind, bringing upon themselves the final judgment of God, their destruction.

Finis.

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