

October 30-November 5, 2023

# Hebrew 1–6

“JESUS CHRIST, THE AUTHOR OF ETERNAL SALVATION”

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**Summary:** *Hebrews 1. The Son is in the express image of the person of the Father—Christ is the Only Begotten Son and thus above the angels.*

*Hebrews 2. Jesus came to suffer death and save men—He came to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.*

*Hebrews 3. Christ is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession—Jesus, being the Son, is more than a servant—Now is the time and the day of our salvation.*

*Hebrews 4. The gospel was offered to ancient Israel—Saints enter into the rest of the Lord—Though tempted in all points, Jesus was without sin.*

*Hebrews 5. For a man to hold the priesthood, he must be called of God as was Aaron—Christ was a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek—Jesus Christ is the Author of eternal salvation.*

*Hebrews 6. Let us go on to perfection—The sons of perdition crucify Christ anew—God swears with an oath that the faithful will be saved.*

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## Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

### How likely would God give different laws to different children?

Sometimes people think the Old Testament was a lesser law and the New Testament is the higher law. Immediately that prompts the question, “What would cause God to give less than the full plan to His children?” So, let us begin with the premise that the gospel and eternal covenants were given to mankind from the beginning. “Commencing with Adam, who was the first man, who is spoken of in Daniel as being the “Ancient of Days,” or in other words, the first and oldest of all, the great, grand progenitor of whom it is said in another place he is Michael, because he was the first and father of all, not only by progeny, but the first to hold the spiritual blessings, to whom was made known the plan of ordinances for the salvation of his posterity unto the end, and to whom Christ was first revealed, and through whom Christ has been revealed from henceforth. Adam holds the keys of the dispensation of the fullness of times; i.e., the dispensation of all the times have been and will be revealed through him from the beginning to Christ, and from Christ to the end of the dispensations that are to be revealed.” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Four 1839-42 p.167)

### How does the Hebrew word for “commandments and blessings” apply yesterday and today?

The Hebrew word for commandments (*mitzvot*) is the same word as for blessings. It was at the time of physical deliverance out of Egypt later that the Children of Israel rejected the responsibilities (and subsequently the blessings) of the higher law, settling instead for a lesser law. At least, Moses was able to keep the lesser law as a Messianic guideline. It was created to anticipate the Savior. The lesser law was predicated on performance-related criteria rather than on intent or attitude. Simply put, do’s and don’ts became the people’s perception of the law instead of the Spirit of God dictating the law. During the entire twentieth chapter of Ezekiel, the

prophet speaks of God's sadness in giving His children less than the best. Some selected verses highlight His feelings of giving statutes (commandments) that were less than the best, resulting in judgements (rewards) that were less than the best. In fact, the lesser statutes and judgements were a pollution. Here are selected verses from (Ezekiel 20). (6): "In the day that I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands:" (8-9) "But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt." (11): "And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them." (13): "But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them . . ." (17): "Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness." (22): "Nevertheless I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth." (25-26): "Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live; And I polluted them in their own gifts . . ." Both the physical and spiritual scattering of Israel is compared to heathens who want to worship stone and wooden images. The Israelites stayed away from those images but resorted to rules of do's and don'ts instead of softening their hearts to be guided by the Holy Spirit. Yet, in the end, the children of Israel will be gathered, and their original covenants will be restored!

### **What was God's ultimate promise to the Children of Israel?**

The chapter continues, (Ezekiel 20). (32): "And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone." (34-35): "And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face." (37): "And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." (41): "I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen." (43): "And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled . . ." (47-48): ". . . Hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee . . . And all flesh shall see that I the LORD have kindled it: it shall not be quenched." The world will truly see and hear the words in the 2<sup>nd</sup> song in the hymn book of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; "The spirit of God like a fire is burning." As of now, part of the family of Israel knows that the original covenants have been restored. "The everlasting gospel made known in the last days is nothing more nor less than the ancient religion restored. It is the commencement of the "restitution of all things, spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world was." (John Taylor, *The Gospel Kingdom*, p.2-3)

### **What must be added to "keeping the law?"**

Looking at Jewish philosophy on "faith" (*Emunah*) and commandments (*mitzvot*) which implies action or "works," may be the spur of some wavering between "faith and works," "The developing rift between Christianity and Judaism and the animosity after their final split

in the second century C.E. produced many great disputations. A crucial one occurred about the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt (c. 135 C.E.) between the Christian Justin Martyr and the Jew Tryphon. While the two adversaries expressed friendship toward each other, the argument became bitter. Justin challenged the Jewish concept of being the chosen people by pointing out their low position in the world, and argued that the Jews were made to follow laws as punishment by God. Tryphon countered by charging Justin with selecting his quotes from the Bible, and - proclaiming that true salvation comes from strictly following the law, not from faith in man. He argued. "The medieval Jewish philosophers gave a great deal of thought to formulating Articles of Faith and disagreed among themselves as to how many there should be. Some even opposed any such formulation on the grounds that every *mitzvah* (deed or act) is an article of faith." "One of the first formulations was that of Hananel ben Hushi'el who was an important Babylonian scholar of the 11th century C.E. He saw, as basic to the Jewish religion, the following four principles: (1) belief in God; (2) belief in the prophets; (3) belief in the World to Come; and (4) belief in the coming of the Messiah." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) That Messiah, still unknown by a part of the House of Israel (and most of mankind), is the original author and finisher of our faith. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." (**Revelation 1:8**)

### **What must be added to faith?**

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 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; 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; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." (**Hebrews 1:1-4**) Is it conceivable that He purged our sins, yet intended for us to continue sinning as long as we just profess belief?

### **How could being "called of God" make a "mighty change" in a person?**

In Jewish understanding, the priestly lineage comes through the father, the family lineage comes through the mother. The Apostle Paul was teaching about the most important principle of the gospel, repent and be baptized for remission of sins. The priesthood line that is responsible to teach repentance and baptism is the Aaronic priesthood. "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." (**Hebrews 5:4**) A recent genetic study by Jewish scientist reveals that there is a DNA "priestly" marker that identifies those of the Aaronic father's line. Now, consider how an ancient people of a God were given covenant that they apostatized from and still maintain a genetic marker of it. "It was the patrilineal nature of Jewish priesthood that piqued the curiosity of a research team from Israel, England, Canada and the United States. Knowing that another bit of a man's identity is also passed strictly from father to son -- namely, the Y chromosome, which carries the gene for maleness -- they set out to determine whether that chromosome might carry special features that would link the priests to each other and set them apart from other men, confirming the priests' unique paternal lineage. 'I think anybody who knows the biblical story about Aaron and this tradition of the priesthood going from father to son, and is aware that the Y chromosome is inherited in the same way, would think of this question,' said Dr. Michael Hammer, a geneticist at the University of Arizona in Tucson, and an author of a report about the priests in the current issue of the journal Nature. A unique aspect of the Y chromosome that lends itself to this sort of research is that the Y does not swap stretches of

DNA with other chromosomes. Changes that occur in the Y tend to persist in a lineage over time, and, Dr. Hammer said, 'We can use that to interpret historical events.' In a study published in 1995, he and his colleagues used segments of the chromosome to suggest that all men living today can be traced back to a common ancestor 188,000 years ago. The subjects of the current study were 188 Jewish men from Israel, North America and England. The researchers did not rely on surnames to identify priests, but instead asked the men if they had been told they were priests. Sixty-eight had, and the rest identified themselves as 'Israelites,' a term used to describe laymen. (Men who said they were Levites, members of a different priesthood, were omitted from the study.) The researchers obtained Y chromosomes by extracting them from cell samples scraped from the men's mouths. They studied two sites, or markers -- known variable regions of DNA -- to find out whether the priests and Israelites differed. They did. Only 1.5 percent of the priests, as opposed to 18.4 percent of the laymen, had the first marker. The other marker, which could appear in five different forms, tended to occur most often in one version in the priests. Fifty-four percent of the priests had this version and 33 percent of the others had it.

### **How many people have this special priestly marker?**

'The simplest, most straightforward explanation is that these men have the Y chromosome of Aaron,' said Dr. Karl Skorecki, a coauthor of the report who conducts genetic research at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, in Haifa. 'The study suggests that a 3,000-year-old oral tradition was correct, or had a biological counterpart." There are at least 350,000 priests around the world today with that same chromosome, he and his colleagues estimate, about 5 percent of the Jewish male population. They are all related, Dr. Hammer said, and could be considered distant cousins on their fathers' side. 'It's a beautiful example of how father-to-son transmission of two things, one genetic and one cultural, gives you the same picture,' Dr. Hammer said. The study also supports the idea that the priesthood was established before the world Jewish population split into two major groups 1,000 years ago, as a result of migrations. The marker findings in the priests were similar in Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, indicating that the priesthood antedated the division. Asked to comment on the study, Dr. James Lupski, a medical geneticist at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, said: 'It's amazing to think how you can use these technologies to investigate history and evolution. They took a very interesting approach that will certainly be useful for studying the Y chromosome. And a report like this is going to stimulate interest, stimulate other groups around the world to confirm it in a different way.' Dr. Hammer said he did not know whether the chromosome testing used in the study would be of interest to anyone other than scientists." "Do we want a hereditary leadership pattern in the Jewish community? We haven't had that in 2,000 years." (Denise Grady, *The New York Times*, Tuesday, January 7, 1997)

### **How have I been "changed?"**

Now, combine the ability to make a genetic identification with the mighty spiritual change that Alma speaks of and wonder how mighty it is. "And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? (Alma 5:14) Does it change you completely, "whole-istically?" How exciting it would be for the same genetic study to be made on members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

Saints who have been given the priesthood. Members of the Church claim a blood descendancy from the biblical tribes of Israel and function in restored priestly temple rites. "We are the chosen people, the elect of God, those in whose veins flows believing blood. Abraham is our father. We are the children of the prophets and have been born in the house of Israel. Isaac and Jacob are our forebearers. We are the children of the covenant God made with Abraham, that Abraham's seed should have the right to the gospel and the priesthood and eternal life. There is no blessing ever offered to the ancients that is not ours to obtain. 'If God be for us who can be against us! Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?' (Romans 8:31, 33.)" (Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, p.40) The latter-day Temples hold the sacred secrets of what was, what is and what will be. Could part of the secret of the mighty change be seen in LDS genetics, in that our blood would be changed - cleansed? "Our work is to . . . to build more temples; to free ourselves from the blood and sins of this generation; to keep the commandments; to stand in holy places; to remain on the highway the Lord has cast up whereon gathered Israel may march to their Millennial Zion. Our work is to prepare a people for the Second Coming. Temples must be built in Old Jerusalem and in the New Jerusalem. And when all things are accomplished, the Great Jehovah will say the work is done. Until then we have no choice but to use our means, talents, and time in the building up of the Lord's work on earth and the establishment of Zion." (Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, p.577)

### **What will I do to keep this "mighty change?"**

"Therefore *not* leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; *not* laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." (Hebrews 6:1, JST) I will repent and keep the commandments, I will be born again, I will cleanse my spiritual garments through the blood of my Savior, I will be humble and strip myself of pride and envy, and do the works of righteousness. I will let my God prevail because He invited me to take His yoke upon me. (Matthew 11:29-30)