

References for *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*

SEPTEMBER 2-8

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | HEBREWS 7-8

"A Priest Forever in the Manner of Melchizedek"

(Hebrews 7:1, 2) For this Mel-chiz'e-dek, king of Sa'lem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name is translated "King of Righteousness," and then also king of Sa'lem, that is, "King of Peace."

it-2 366

Melchizedek

King of ancient Salem and "priest of the Most High God," Jehovah. (Ge 14:18, 22) He is the first priest mentioned in the Scriptures; he occupied that position sometime prior to 1933 B.C.E. Being the king of Salem, which means "Peace," Melchizedek is identified by the apostle Paul as "King of Peace" and, on the basis of his name, as "King of Righteousness." (Heb 7:1, 2) Ancient Salem is understood to have been the nucleus of the later city of Jerusalem, and its name was incorporated in that of Jerusalem, which is sometimes referred to as "Salem."—Ps 76:2.

After Abram (Abraham) defeated Chedorlao-mer and his confederate kings, the patriarch came to the Low Plain of Shaveh or "the king's Low Plain." There Melchizedek "brought out bread and wine" and blessed Abraham, saying: "Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, Producer of heaven and earth; and blessed be the Most High God, who has delivered your oppressors into your hand!" At that Abraham gave the king-priest "a tenth of everything," that is, of "the chief spoils" he had acquired in his successful warfare against the allied kings.—Ge 14:17-20; Heb 7:4.

(Hebrews 7:3) In being fatherless, motherless, without genealogy, having neither a beginning of days nor an end of life, but being made like the Son of God, he remains a priest for all time.

it-2 367 ¶4

Melchizedek

How was it true that Melchizedek had 'neither beginning of days nor end of life'?

Paul isolated an outstanding fact respecting Melchizedek, in saying of him: "In being fatherless, motherless, without genealogy, having neither a beginning of days nor an end of life, but having been made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually." (Heb 7:3) Like other humans, Melchizedek was born and he died. However, the names of his father and mother are not furnished, his ancestry and posterity are not disclosed, and the Scriptures contain no information about the beginning of his days or the end of his life. Thus, Melchizedek could fittingly foreshadow Jesus Christ, who has an unending priesthood. As Melchizedek had no recorded predecessor or successor in his priesthood, so too Christ was preceded by no high priest similar to himself, and the Bible shows that none will ever succeed him. Furthermore, although Jesus was born in the tribe of Judah and in the kingly line of David, his fleshly ancestry had no bearing on his priesthood, nor was it by virtue of human ancestry that the offices of both priest and king were combined in him. These things were as a result of Jehovah's own oath to him.

(Hebrews 7:17) For it is said in witness of him: "You are a priest forever in the manner of Mel-chiz'e-dek."

it-2 366

Melchizedek

Christ's Priesthood Typified. In a notable Messianic prophecy the sworn oath of Jehovah to

David's "Lord" is: "You are a priest to time indefinite according to the manner of Melchizedek!" (Ps 110:1, 4) This inspired psalm gave the Hebrews reason to regard the promised Messiah as the one in whom the office of priest and king would be combined. The apostle Paul, in the letter to the Hebrews, removed any doubt about the identity of the one foretold, speaking of "Jesus, who has become a high priest according to the manner of Melchizedek forever." —Heb 6:20; 5:10; see COVENANT.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Hebrews 8:3) For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer.

w00 8/15 14 ¶11

Sacrifices That Pleased God

¹¹ "Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices," says the apostle Paul. (Hebrews 8:3) Note that Paul divides the offerings made by the high priest of ancient Israel into two categories, namely, "gifts" and "sacrifices," or "sacrifices for sins." (Hebrews 5:1) People generally give gifts to express affection and appreciation, as well as to cultivate friendship, favor, or acceptance. (Genesis 32:20; Proverbs 18:16) Similarly, many of the offerings prescribed by the Law can be viewed as "gifts" to God to seek his acceptance and favor. Transgressions of the Law required restitution, and to make amends, "sacrifices for sins" were offered. The Pentateuch, especially the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, provides a broad array of material regarding different kinds of sacrifices and offerings. While it can be a real challenge for us to absorb and remember all the details, some key points regarding the various types of sacrifices merit our attention.

(Hebrews 8:13) In his saying "a new covenant," he has made the former one obsolete.

Now what is obsolete and growing old is near to vanishing away.

it-1 523 ¶5

Covenant

How did the Law covenant become "obsolete"?

However, the Law covenant became in a sense "obsolete" when God announced by means of the prophet Jeremiah that there would be a new covenant. (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:13) In 33 C.E. the Law covenant was canceled on the basis of Christ's death on the torture stake (Col 2:14), the new covenant replacing it.—Heb 7:12; 9:15; Ac 2:1-4.

Bible Reading

(Hebrews 7:1-17) For this Melchiz'e-dek, king of Sa'lem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name is translated "King of Righteousness," and then also king of Sa'lem, that is, "King of Peace." ³ In being fatherless, motherless, without genealogy, having neither a beginning of days nor an end of life, but being made like the Son of God, he remains a priest for all time. ⁴ See how great this man was to whom Abraham, the family head, gave a tenth out of the best spoils. ⁵ True, according to the Law, those of the sons of Le'vi who receive their priestly office have a commandment to collect tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, even though these are descendants of Abraham. ⁶ But this man who did not trace his genealogy from them took tithes from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. ⁷ Now it is undeniable that the lesser one is blessed by the greater. ⁸ And in the one case, it is men who are dying who receive tithes, but in the other case, it is someone of whom witness

is given that he lives. ⁹ And it could be said that even Le'vi, who receives tithes, has paid tithes through Abraham, ¹⁰ for he was still a future descendant of his forefather when Mel-chiz'e-dek met him. ¹¹ If, then, perfection was attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for it was a feature of the Law that was given to the people), what further need would there be for another priest to arise who is said to be in the manner of Mel-chiz'e-dek and not in the manner of Aaron? ¹² For since the priesthood is being changed, it becomes necessary to change the Law as well. ¹³ For the man about whom these things are said came from another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. ¹⁴ For it is clear that our Lord has descended from Judah, yet Moses said nothing about priests coming from that tribe. ¹⁵ And this becomes even clearer when another priest arises who is like Mel-chiz'e-dek, ¹⁶ who has become such, not by the legal requirement that depends on fleshly descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷ For it is said in witness of him: "You are a priest forever in the manner of Mel-chiz'e-dek."

SEPTEMBER 9-15

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | HEBREWS 9-10

"A Shadow of the Good Things to Come"

(Hebrews 9:12-14) He entered into the holy place, not with the blood of goats and of young bulls, but with his own blood, once for all time, and obtained an everlasting deliverance for us. ¹³ For if the blood of goats and of bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who have been defiled sanctifies for the cleansing of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of the Christ, who through an everlasting spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead

works so that we may render sacred service to the living God?

it-1 862 ¶1

Forgiveness

According to God's law given to the nation of Israel, in order for a person who had sinned against God or against his fellowman to have his sins forgiven, he first had to rectify the wrong as the Law prescribed and then, in most cases, present a blood offering to Jehovah. (Le 5:5-6:7) Hence, the principle stated by Paul: "Yes, nearly all things are cleansed with blood according to the Law, and unless blood is poured out no forgiveness takes place." (Heb 9:22) Actually, though, the blood of animal sacrifices could not take away sins and give the individual a perfectly clean conscience. (Heb 10:1-4; 9:9, 13, 14) By contrast, the foretold new covenant made possible true forgiveness, based on Jesus Christ's ransom sacrifice. (Jer 31:33, 34; Mt 26:28; 1Co 11:25; Eph 1:7) Even while on earth, Jesus, by healing a paralytic, demonstrated that he had authority to forgive sins. —Mt 9:2-7.

(Hebrews 9:24-26) For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with hands, which is a copy of the reality, but into heaven itself, so that he now appears before God on our behalf. ²⁵ This was not done to offer himself often, as when the high priest enters into the holy place from year to year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶ Otherwise, he would have to suffer often from the founding of the world. But now he has manifested himself once for all time at the conclusion of the systems of things to do away with sin through the sacrifice of himself.

cf 183 ¶4

"Continue Following Me"

⁴ Regarding Jesus' arrival in heaven, his welcome, and his joyous reunion with his Father, the Scriptures are silent. However, the Bible

did reveal in advance what would happen in heaven soon after Jesus' return there. You see, for over 15 centuries, the Jewish people had regularly witnessed a holy ceremony. One day each year, the high priest entered the Most Holy of the temple to sprinkle the blood of the Atonement Day sacrifices before the ark of the covenant. On that day, the high priest pictured the Messiah. Jesus fulfilled the prophetic meaning of that ceremony once for all time after he returned to heaven. He came into Jehovah's majestic presence in heaven—the holiest place in the universe—and presented to his Father the value of his ransom sacrifice. (Hebrews 9:11, 12, 24) Did Jehovah accept it?

(Hebrews 10:1-4) For since the Law has a shadow of the good things to come, but not the very substance of the things, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, make those who approach perfect. ² Otherwise, would not the sacrifices have stopped being offered, because those rendering sacred service once cleansed would have no consciousness of sins anymore? ³ On the contrary, these sacrifices are a reminder of sins year after year, ⁴ for it is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take sins away.

it-2 602-603 **Perfection**

Perfection of the Mosaic Law. The Law given to Israel through Moses included among its provisions the establishment of a priesthood and the offering of various animal sacrifices. Though from God, and hence perfect, neither the Law, its priesthood, nor the sacrifices brought perfection to those under the Law, as the inspired apostle shows. (Heb 7:11, 19; 10:1) Rather than bring freedom from sin and death, it actually made sin more evident. (Ro 3:20; 7:7-13) All these divine provisions, nevertheless, served the purpose assigned them by God; the Law

acted as a “tutor” to lead men to Christ, forming a perfect “shadow of the good things to come.” (Ga 3:19-25; Heb 10:1) Hence, when Paul speaks of “an incapability on the part of the Law, while it was weak through the flesh” (Ro 8:3), he is evidently referring to the inability of the fleshly Jewish high priest (who was appointed by the Law to be in charge of the sacrificial arrangements and who entered the Most Holy on Atonement Day with sacrificial blood) to “save completely” those whom he served, as Hebrews 7:11, 18-28 explains. Although the offering of sacrifices through the Aaronic priesthood maintained a right standing for the people before God, it did not completely or perfectly relieve them of consciousness of sin. The apostle refers to this in saying that the atonement sacrifices could not “make those who approach perfect,” that is, as regards their conscience. (Heb 10:1-4; compare Heb 9:9.) The high priest was unable to provide the ransom price needed for a true redemption from sin. Only Christ's enduring priestly service and effective sacrifice do accomplish this.—Heb 9:14; 10:12-22.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Hebrews 9:16, 17) For where there is a covenant, the death of the human covenanter needs to be established, ¹⁷ because a covenant is valid at death, since it is not in force as long as the human covenanter is living.

w92 3/1 31 ¶4-6

Questions From Readers

Paul mentioned that a death was needed to validate covenants between God and humans. The Law covenant is an example. Moses was its mediator, the one to bring about this agreement between God and fleshly Israel. Moses thus played a crucial role and was the human who dealt with the Israelites when they were coming into the covenant. Moses could thus be viewed as the human covenanter of the Law

covenant that originated with Jehovah. But did Moses have to shed his lifeblood for the Law covenant to come into force? No. Instead animals were offered, their blood substituting for Moses' blood.—Hebrews 9:18-22.

What about the new covenant between Jehovah and the nation of spiritual Israel? Jesus Christ had the glorious role of go-between, the Mediator between Jehovah and spiritual Israel. Though Jehovah originated this covenant, it rested on Jesus Christ. Besides being its Mediator, Jesus had direct dealings in the flesh with those who would first be taken into this covenant. (Luke 22:20, 28, 29) Moreover, he was qualified to provide the sacrifice needed to validate the covenant. This sacrifice was not of mere animals but of a perfect human life. So Paul could refer to Christ as the human covenantor of the new covenant. After "Christ entered . . . into heaven itself, now to appear before the person of God for us," the new covenant became valid.—Hebrews 9:12-14, 24.

In speaking of Moses and Jesus as human covenanters, Paul was not suggesting that either of them had originated the respective covenants, which were actually made by God. Rather, those two humans were intimately involved as mediators in bringing about the respective covenants. And in each case, a death was needed—animals substituting for Moses, and Jesus offering his own lifeblood for those in the new covenant.

(Hebrews 10:5-7) So when he comes into the world, he says: "'Sacrifice and offering you did not want, but you prepared a body for me. ⁶ You did not approve of whole burnt offerings and sin offerings.' ⁷ Then I said: 'Look! I have come (in the scroll it is written about me) to do your will, O God.'"

it-1 249-250

Baptism

Luke states that Jesus was praying at the time of his baptism. (Lu 3:21) Further, the writer of

the letter to the Hebrews says that when Jesus Christ came "into the world" (that is, not when he was born and could not read and say these words, but when he presented himself for baptism and began his ministry) he was saying, in accord with Psalm 40:6-8 (LXX): "Sacrifice and offering you did not want, but you prepared a body for me. . . . Look! I am come (in the roll of the book it is written about me) to do your will, O God." (Heb 10:5-9) Jesus was by birth a member of the Jewish nation, which nation was in a national covenant with God, namely, the Law covenant. (Ex 19:5-8; Ga 4:4) Jesus, by reason of this fact, was therefore already in a covenant relationship with Jehovah God when he thus presented himself to John for baptism. Jesus was there doing something more than what was required of him under the Law. He was presenting himself to his Father Jehovah to do his Father's "will" with reference to the offering of his own "prepared" body and with regard to doing away with animal sacrifices that were offered according to the Law. The apostle Paul comments: "By the said 'will' we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time." (Heb 10:10) The Father's will for Jesus also involved activity in connection with the Kingdom, and for this service too Jesus presented himself. (Lu 4:43; 17:20, 21) Jehovah accepted and acknowledged this presentation of his Son, anointing him with holy spirit and saying: "You are my Son, the beloved; I have approved you."—Mr 1:9-11; Lu 3:21-23; Mt 3:13-17.

Bible Reading

(Hebrews 9:1-14) For its part, the former covenant used to have legal requirements for sacred service and its holy place on earth. ² For a first tent compartment was constructed, in which were the lampstand and the table and the display of the loaves of presentation; and it is called the Holy Place. ³ But behind the second curtain was the tent compartment

called the Most Holy. ⁴ This had a golden censer and the ark of the covenant completely overlaid with gold, in which were the golden jar containing the manna and Aaron's rod that budded and the tablets of the covenant; ⁵ and above it were the glorious cherubs overshadowing the propitiatory cover. But now is not the time to speak of these things in detail. ⁶ After these things were constructed this way, the priests enter the first tent compartment regularly to perform the sacred services; ⁷ but the high priest enters alone into the second compartment once a year, not without blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins that the people committed in ignorance. ⁸ Thus the holy spirit makes it clear that the way into the holy place had not yet been revealed while the first tent was standing. ⁹ This tent is an illustration for the present time, and according to this arrangement, both gifts and sacrifices are offered. However, these are not able to make the conscience of the man doing sacred service perfect. ¹⁰ They have to do only with foods and drinks and various ceremonial washings. They were legal requirements concerning the body and were imposed until the appointed time to set things straight. ¹¹ However, when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have already taken place, he passed through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² He entered into the holy place, not with the blood of goats and of young bulls, but with his own blood, once for all time, and obtained an everlasting deliverance for us. ¹³ For if the blood of goats and of bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who have been defiled sanctifies for the cleansing of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of the Christ, who through an everlasting spirit offered himself without blemish

to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works so that we may render sacred service to the living God?

SEPTEMBER 16-22

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | HEBREWS 11

"The Importance of Faith"

(Hebrews 11:1) Faith is the assured expectation of what is hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities that are not seen.

w16.10 27 ¶6

Exercise Your Faith in Jehovah's Promises

⁶ The Bible's description of faith is found at **Hebrews 11:1. (Read.)** Faith focuses on two kinds of things that are not visible to us: (1) "What is hoped for"—this may include future events that have been promised to happen but that have not yet occurred, such as the end of all wickedness and the coming new world. (2) "Realities that are not seen." In this context, the Greek word translated "evident demonstration" refers to "convincing evidence" of an invisible reality, such as the existence of Jehovah God, Jesus Christ, the angels, and the activities of the heavenly Kingdom. (Heb. 11:3) How do we prove that our hope is alive and that we believe in the unseen things spoken of in God's Word? By our words and deeds—without which our faith would be incomplete.

(Hebrews 11:6) Moreover, without faith it is impossible to please God well, for whoever approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him.

w13 11/1 11 ¶2-5

"The Rewarder of Those Earnestly Seeking Him"

What does it take to please Jehovah? "Without faith it is impossible to please [God] well,"

writes Paul. Notice that Paul does not say that it is *difficult* to please God without faith. Rather, the apostle says that it is *impossible* to do so. In other words, faith is an essential ingredient for pleasing God.

What kind of faith pleases Jehovah? Our faith in God must involve two aspects. First, we “must believe that he is.” Other translations say “believe that he is real” and “believe that he exists.” How could we possibly please God if we doubted his existence? Still, genuine faith involves more, for even the demons believe that Jehovah exists. (James 2:19) Our faith that God is real should move us to action, that is, to prove our faith by living in a way that is pleasing to him. —James 2:20, 26.

Second, we “must believe that” God is “the rewarder.” A person with true faith is fully convinced that his efforts to live in a way that pleases God will not be in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58) How could we please Jehovah if we doubted his ability or desire to reward us? (James 1:17; 1 Peter 5:7) A person who concludes that God must be uncaring, unappreciative, and ungenerous does not know the God of the Bible.

Whom does Jehovah reward? “Those earnestly seeking him,” says Paul. A reference work for Bible translators notes that the Greek word rendered “earnestly seeking” does not mean “going out to find” but, rather, implies coming to God “in worship.” Another reference work explains that this Greek verb is in a form that suggests intensity and concentrated effort. Yes, Jehovah rewards those whose faith moves them to worship him with wholehearted love and zeal. —Matthew 22:37.

(Hebrews 11:33-38) Through faith they defeated kingdoms, brought about righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the force of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from a weak

state were made powerful, became mighty in war, routed invading armies. ³⁵ Women received their dead by resurrection, but other men were tortured because they would not accept release by some ransom, in order that they might attain a better resurrection. ³⁶ Yes, others received their trial by mockings and scourgings, indeed, more than that, by chains and prisons. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were tried, they were sawn in two, they were slaughtered by the sword, they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, while they were in need, in tribulation, mistreated; ³⁸ and the world was not worthy of them. They wandered about in deserts and mountains and caves and dens of the earth.

w16.10 23 ¶10-11

Strengthen Your Faith in What You Hope For

¹⁰ In Hebrews chapter 11, the apostle Paul describes the trials that many unnamed servants of God endured. For example, the apostle mentions women of faith who lost their sons in death but later received them back by resurrection. Then he mentions others who “would not accept release by some ransom, in order that they might attain a better resurrection.” (Heb. 11:35) Though we cannot be sure whom Paul had in mind, some, like Naboth and Zechariah, were stoned to death for obeying God and doing his will. (1 Ki. 21:3, 15; 2 Chron. 24:20, 21) Daniel and his companions clearly had the opportunity to “accept release” by compromising their integrity. Instead, their faith in God’s power enabled them, so to speak, to ‘stop the mouths of lions’ and ‘quench the force of fire.’ —Heb. 11:33, 34; Dan. 3:16-18, 20, 28; 6:13, 16, 21-23.

¹¹ Because of their faith, such prophets as Micahiah and Jeremiah “received their trial by mockings . . . and prisons.” Others, like Elijah, “wandered about in deserts and mountains and caves and dens of the earth.” All of them

endured because they had an “assured expectation of what is hoped for.”—Heb. 11:1, 36-38; 1 Ki. 18:13; 22:24-27; Jer. 20:1, 2; 28:10, 11; 32:2.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Hebrews 11:4) By faith Abel offered God a sacrifice of greater worth than that of Cain, and through that faith he received the witness that he was righteous, for God approved his gifts, and although he died, he still speaks through his faith.

it-1 804 ¶5

Faith

Ancient Examples of Faith. Each one of the “so great a cloud of witnesses” mentioned by Paul (Heb 12:1) had a valid basis for faith. For example, Abel certainly knew about God’s promise concerning a “seed” that would bruise “the serpent” in the head. And he saw tangible evidences of the fulfillment of the sentence Jehovah pronounced upon his parents in Eden. Outside Eden, Adam and his family ate bread in the sweat of their face because the ground was cursed and, therefore, produced thorns and thistles. Likely Abel observed that Eve’s craving was for her husband and that Adam dominated his wife. Undoubtedly his mother commented about the pain attending her pregnancy. Then, too, the entrance to the garden of Eden was being guarded by cherubs and the flaming blade of a sword. (Ge 3:14-19, 24) All of this constituted an “evident demonstration,” giving Abel the assurance that deliverance would come through the ‘seed of promise.’ Therefore, prompted by faith, he “offered God a sacrifice,” one that proved to be of greater worth than that of Cain. —Heb 11:1, 4.

(Hebrews 11:5) By faith E’noch was transferred so as not to see death, and he was nowhere to be found because God had transferred him; for before he was transferred he

received the witness that he had pleased God well.

wp17.1 12-13

“He Had Pleased God Well”

In what sense, then, was Enoch “transferred” so that he did not “see death”? Jehovah likely transferred Enoch gently from life to death, sparing him any pangs of death. But first, Enoch received “the witness that he had pleased God well.” How? Just before his death, Enoch may have received a vision from God, perhaps one showing him the earth as a paradise. With that vivid sign of Jehovah’s approval, Enoch fell asleep in death. Writing about Enoch and other faithful men and women, the apostle Paul stated: “In faith all of these died.” (Hebrews 11:13) Thereafter, his enemies may have searched for the body, but it was “nowhere to be found,” perhaps because Jehovah disposed of it, preventing them from desecrating it or using it to promote false religion.

Bible Reading

(Hebrews 11:1-16) Faith is the assured expectation of what is hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities that are not seen. ² For by means of it, the men of ancient times had witness borne to them. ³ By faith we perceive that the systems of things were put in order by God’s word, so that what is seen has come into existence from things that are not visible. ⁴ By faith Abel offered God a sacrifice of greater worth than that of Cain, and through that faith he received the witness that he was righteous, for God approved his gifts, and although he died, he still speaks through his faith. ⁵ By faith E’noch was transferred so as not to see death, and he was nowhere to be found because God had transferred him; for before he was transferred he received the witness that he had pleased God well. ⁶ Moreover, without faith

it is impossible to please God well, for whoever approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him. ⁷ By faith Noah, after receiving divine warning of things not yet seen, showed godly fear and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; and through this faith he condemned the world, and he became an heir of the righteousness that results from faith. ⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, although not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he lived as a foreigner in the land of the promise as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the very same promise. ¹⁰ For he was awaiting the city having real foundations, whose designer and builder is God. ¹¹ By faith also Sarah received power to conceive offspring, even when she was past the age, since she considered Him faithful who made the promise. ¹² For this reason, from one man who was as good as dead, there were born children, as many as the stars of heaven in number and as innumerable as the sands by the seaside. ¹³ In faith all of these died, although they did not receive the fulfillment of the promises; but they saw them from a distance and welcomed them and publicly declared that they were strangers and temporary residents in the land. ¹⁴ For those who speak in such a way make it evident that they are earnestly seeking a place of their own. ¹⁵ And yet, if they had kept remembering the place from which they had departed, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But now they are reaching out for a better place, that is, one belonging to heaven. Therefore, God is not ashamed of them, to be called on as their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

SEPTEMBER 23-29

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | HEBREWS 12-13

“Discipline—Evidence of Jehovah’s Love”

(Hebrews 12:5) And you have entirely forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not belittle the discipline from Jehovah, nor give up when you are corrected by him;

w12 3/15 29 ¶18

Do Not Look at “the Things Behind”

18 Painful counsel. What if we are tempted to look back resentfully at some counsel that we received? This can be not only painful but also debilitating—causing us to “give out.” (Heb. 12:5) Whether we “belittle” the counsel because we reject it or we “give out” because we accept it and then give up, the result is the same—we do not truly allow the counsel to benefit and refine us. How much better to heed Solomon’s words: “Take hold on discipline; do not let go. Safeguard it, for it itself is your life.” (Prov. 4:13) Like a driver who obeys road signs, let us accept the counsel, apply it, and move forward.—Prov. 4:26, 27; **read Hebrews 12:12, 13.**

(Hebrews 12:6, 7) for those whom Jehovah loves he disciplines, in fact, he scourges everyone whom he receives as a son.” ⁷ You need to endure as part of your discipline. God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?

w12 7/1 21 ¶3

“Whenever You Pray, Say, ‘Father’”

A loving father disciplines his children, for he cares about the kind of people they will become. (Ephesians 6:4) Such a father may be firm, but he is never harsh in correcting his children. Similarly, our heavenly Father may at times find it necessary to discipline us. But God’s discipline is always given in love and is never abusive.

Like his Father, Jesus was never harsh, not even when his disciples were slow to respond to needed correction.—Matthew 20:20-28; Luke 22:24-30.

(Hebrews 12:11) True, no discipline seems for the present to be joyous, but it is painful; yet afterward, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

w18.03 32 ¶18

“Listen to Discipline and Become Wise”

¹⁸ While discipline may be painful, there is something that is even more painful—the harm that may result from rejecting discipline. (Heb. 12:11) Consider two examples—Cain and King Zedekiah. When Cain developed a murderous hatred toward Abel, God admonished Cain: “Why are you so angry and dejected? If you turn to doing good, will you not be restored to favor? But if you do not turn to doing good, sin is crouching at the door, and its craving is to dominate you; but will you get the mastery over it?” (Gen. 4:6, 7) Cain did not listen. Then sin overwhelmed him. What needless pain and suffering Cain brought on himself! (Gen. 4:11, 12) The pain of Jehovah’s reprimand would have been mild by comparison.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Hebrews 12:1) So, then, because we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also throw off every weight and the sin that easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

w11 9/15 17-18 ¶11

Run the Race With Endurance

¹¹ The ‘great cloud of witnesses’ were no mere spectators or bystanders, as it were, who were there only to watch the race or to see their favorite athlete or team win. Rather, they were participants, like runners in a race. And they had successfully run the race and finished it.

Though now deceased, they could be thought of as seasoned runners who could encourage newer runners in the race. Imagine how a contestant would feel if he knew that surrounding, or watching, him were some of the most accomplished runners. Would he not be moved to do his best or even to outdo himself? Those witnesses of old could testify that such a figurative race, no matter how strenuous, can be won. Thus, by keeping closely in mind the example of the “cloud of witnesses,” the first-century Hebrew Christians could draw courage and ‘run the race with endurance’—as can we today.

(Hebrews 13:9) Do not be led astray by various and strange teachings, for it is better for the heart to be strengthened by undeserved kindness than by foods, which do not benefit those occupied with them.

w89 12/15 22 ¶10

Offer Sacrifices That Please Jehovah

¹⁰ The Hebrews therefore needed to avoid being “carried away with various and strange teachings” of Judaizers. (Galatians 5:1-6) Not by such teachings but ‘by God’s undeserved kindness can the heart be given firmness’ so as to remain steadfast in the truth. Some apparently argued about foods and sacrifices, for Paul said that the heart was not made firm “by eatables, by which those who occupy themselves with them have not been benefited.” Spiritual benefits result from godly devotion and appreciation for the ransom, not from undue concern about eating certain foods and observing particular days. (Romans 14:5-9) Moreover, Christ’s sacrifice made Levitical sacrifices ineffective.—Hebrews 9:9-14; 10:5-10.

Bible Reading

(Hebrews 12:1-17) So, then, because we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also throw off every weight and the sin that easily entangles us,

and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² as we look intently at the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus. For the joy that was set before him he endured a torture stake, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Indeed, consider closely the one who has endured such hostile speech from sinners against their own interests, so that you may not get tired and give up. ⁴ In your struggle against that sin, you have never yet resisted to the point of having your blood shed. ⁵ And you have entirely forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not belittle the discipline from Jehovah, nor give up when you are corrected by him; ⁶ for those whom Jehovah loves he disciplines, in fact, he scourges everyone whom he receives as a son.” ⁷ You need to endure as part of your discipline. God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? ⁸ But if you have not all shared in receiving this discipline, you are really illegitimate children, and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, our human fathers used to discipline us, and we gave them respect. Should we not more readily submit ourselves to the Father of our spiritual life and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time according to what seemed good to them, but he does so for our benefit so that we may partake of his holiness. ¹¹ True, no discipline seems for the present to be joyous, but it is painful; yet afterward, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. ¹² Therefore, strengthen the hands that hang down and the feeble knees, ¹³ and keep making straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but, rather, may be healed. ¹⁴ Pursue peace with all people and the sanctification without which no man will see the Lord. ¹⁵ Carefully watch

that no one fails to obtain the undeserved kindness of God, so that no poisonous root springs up to cause trouble and many are defiled by it; ¹⁶ and watch that among you there is no one who is sexually immoral nor anyone who does not appreciate sacred things, like E’sau, who gave up his rights as firstborn in exchange for one meal. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for although he earnestly tried to bring about a change of mind with tears, it was to no avail.

SEPTEMBER 30–OCTOBER 6

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD | JAMES 1-2

“The Way to Sin and Death”

(James 1:14) But each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire.

g17.4 14 Temptation

You are tempted when you are attracted to something—especially something wrong. To illustrate, while shopping you see a desirable item. The thought flashes into your mind that you could easily steal the item and not get caught. However, your conscience says no! So you dismiss the thought and move on. At that point, the temptation is over, and you are the victor.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

Being tempted does not make you a bad person. The Bible acknowledges that we all experience temptation. (1 Corinthians 10:13) What really matters is how we act when tempted. Some dwell on the improper desire and sooner or later give in to it. Others promptly dismiss it as wrong.

“Each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire.”—James 1:14.

(James 1:15) Then the desire, when it has become fertile, gives birth to sin; in turn sin, when it has been carried out, brings forth death.

g17.4 14

Temptation

The Bible reveals the steps that lead to wrongdoing. James 1:15 says: “The [improper] desire, when it has become fertile [literally, “has conceived,” footnote], gives birth to sin.” Put simply, when we dwell on a wrong desire, we reach a point where our acting on it becomes as inevitable as a pregnant woman’s giving birth. Yet, we can avoid being slaves to improper desires. We can gain the mastery over them.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(James 1:17) Every good gift and every perfect present is from above, coming down from the Father of the celestial lights, who does not vary or change like the shifting shadows.

it-2 253-254

Light

Jehovah is “the Father of the celestial lights.” (Jas 1:17) Not only is he the “Giver of the sun for light by day, the statutes of the moon and the stars for light by night” (Jer 31:35) but he is also the Source of all spiritual enlightenment. (2Co 4:6) His law, judicial decisions, and word are a light to those allowing themselves to be guided by them. (Ps 43:3; 119:105; Pr 6:23; Isa 51:4) The psalmist declared: “By light from you we can see light.” (Ps 36:9; compare Ps 27:1; 43:3.) Just as the light of the sun continues to get brighter from dawn until “the day is firmly established,” so the path of the righteous ones, illuminated by godly wisdom, gets lighter and lighter. (Pr 4:18) To follow the course that Jehovah outlines is to walk in his light. (Isa 2:3-5) On the other hand, when a person looks at things in an impure way or with evil design, he

is in great spiritual darkness. As Jesus put it: “If your eye is wicked, your whole body will be dark. If in reality the light that is in you is darkness, how great that darkness is!”—Mt 6:23; compare De 15:9; 28:54-57; Pr 28:22; 2Pe 2:14.

(James 2:8) If, now, you carry out the royal law according to the scripture, “You must love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing quite well.

it-2 222 ¶4

Law

“Kingly Law.” The “kingly law” rightly has the prominence and importance among other laws governing human relationships that a king would have among men. (Jas 2:8) The tenor of the Law covenant was love; and “you must love your neighbor as yourself” (the kingly law) was the second of the commandments on which all the Law and the Prophets hung. (Mt 22:37-40) Christians, though not under the Law covenant, are subject to the law of the King Jehovah and his Son, the King Jesus Christ, in connection with the new covenant.

Bible Reading

(James 2:10-26) For if anyone obeys all the Law but makes a false step in one point, he has become an offender against all of it. ¹¹ For the one who said, “You must not commit adultery,” also said, “You must not murder.” If, now, you do not commit adultery but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of law. ¹² Keep on speaking and behaving in such a way as those do who are going to be judged by the law of a free people. ¹³ For the one who does not practice mercy will have his judgment without mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. ¹⁴ Of what benefit is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but he does not have works? That faith cannot save him, can it? ¹⁵ If any brothers or sisters are lacking cloth-

ing and enough food for the day, ¹⁶ yet one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but you do not give them what they need for their body, of what benefit is it? ¹⁷ So, too, faith by itself, without works, is dead. ¹⁸ Nevertheless, someone will say: “You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God, do you? You are doing quite well. And yet the demons believe and shudder. ²⁰ But do you care to know, O empty man, that faith without works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father declared righteous by works after he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that his faith was active along with his works and his faith was perfected by his works, ²³ and the scripture was fulfilled that says: “Abraham put faith in Jehovah, and it was counted to him as righteousness,” and he came to be called Jehovah’s friend. ²⁴ You see that a man is to be declared righteous by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵ In the same manner, was not Rahab the prostitute also declared righteous by works after she received the messengers hospitably and sent them out by another way? ²⁶ Indeed, just as the body without spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.