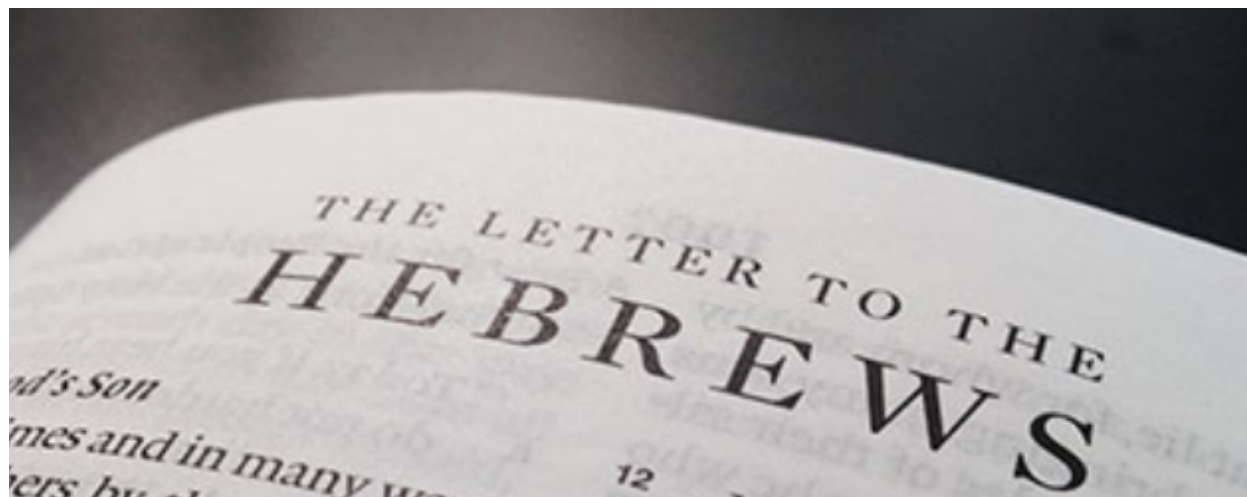


Introduction to Hebrews

Written on: October 1, 2022

Article by: Paul Birston



The Sermon on Jesus Our Merciful and Faithful High Priest with Exposition, Exhortations and Warnings

(By Geoffrey Ellis and Paul Birston)

Of the sixty-six books of the Bible, one on its own, Hebrews, is a sermon!

We acknowledge of course that many Bible books contain powerful sermons, notably Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, a formidable opening to His ministry and the New Testament, and Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost opening the door of God's kingdom to all who obey His gospel.

Lacking an identification of the intended recipient(s), thus removing it from the category of a letter, Hebrews' careful structure of announcement, instruction, and exhortation qualify it as a homily.

It is noted that the author identifies his lesson as "my word of exhortation," i.e. a sermon, "...written to you briefly" (Hebrews 13:22). (This reminds us of the invitation extended to Paul and Barnabas by synagogue officials in Antioch of Pisidia, after the reading from the Law and Prophets, "Brothers, if you have a word of *exhortation*, deliver it now" (Acts 13:15). And the author of Hebrews refers to "speaking" in his lesson, Hebrews 2:5, 5:11, 6:9, 8:1, 9:5, and 11:32.

However, given our penchant for studying the Bible in bits and pieces, e. g. by chapters and verses (the Bible was divided into chapters in 1227, and verses in 1551), we are at risk of missing the logical thrust, the interwoven majesty, and the compelling demand of its teaching, as a complete sermon.

(I [Geoff] once preached through Hebrews during quarterly visits to the Bayview congregation. It took three years!)

The majesty of Hebrews is supported by its exquisite structure. Hebrews is the longest exposition of a major theme in the New Testament illuminating Old Testament Scriptures on the High Priesthood of Jesus according to the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110).



Hebrews is the only New Testament book to refer to Jesus specifically as High Priest though His high priestly work is seen throughout the New Testament. Hebrews weaves together several cycles of exposition, exhortation and

warning, exalting Jesus through whom God made the world and upon whose sacrifice of His own blood God makes His final offer of “so great a salvation” (Hebrews 2:3) with clear warnings throughout on the consequences of refusing Him.

Hebrews illuminates 1) Jesus’ High Priesthood and His superiority to angels, 2) His High Priesthood’s superiority to the First Covenant’s sacrificial system and 3) how we must live since we have such a great High Priest. (For an expanded overview of the exquisite structure of Hebrews’ exposition, exhortations and warnings see: <https://app.box.com/s/or3xql9cq4ikg1jfy9hc2blutaatr18v>)

We would do well to settle in for a one-hour hearing of this majestic sermon, of the exalted Christ in his saving role, in Hebrews! For through this sermon God *speaks* and the hearers are constrained to listen: “...God spoke to the fathers...and has spoken to us by his Son...” God is said to speak six more times in Chapter One: “Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift from it” (Hebrews 2:1).

Our curiosity remains unrequited as to the author and the intended original recipients of Hebrews. The apostle Paul was identified as its author later in the early church through to the time of the King James Version. Yet Paul identified himself as author in each of his thirteen writings in the New Testament, while the polished style of Hebrews is not found in the writings known to be his. Some suggest Apollos or Barnabas. One who wrote in the literary caliber of the Greek of Hebrews was Luke who was intimately acquainted with Paul and his thought. Some suggest Paul may have preached the sermon in Hebrew and dictated it to Luke for translation and publication.

The final word on the authorship of Hebrews presently remains a mystery in the scholarly world that God may reveal to us when we join “the festal gathering and assembly of the Firstborn who are enrolled in heaven” in His presence (Hebrews 12:23a)

We do know where the sermon was written and where its intended audience was not. Hebrews 13:24: “They in Italy salute you.” Thus, it is believed, Hebrews was written in Italy and forwarded to an audience somewhere outside of Italy. (There are some scholars who give a reverse twist to this reading.)

When Hebrews was written intrigues us. Two dates have the greatest following: the early ‘60s and the late AD 80’s. The earlier date fits with the absence of any hint of the temple’s destruction (AD 70) in the text. The later date fits with the persecution of the church of that time, and persecution is

featured in chapters eleven and twelve of Hebrews. However, Chapter 13 again supplies a clue: “...our brother Timothy has been set at liberty, with whom, if he comes shortly, I will see you” (vs. 23). Tradition places Timothy in prison in the early 60’s.

Who is addressed by Hebrews? The title says it all. Or does it? The long-standing consensus that Hebrews was addressed to Jewish Christians is inaccurate and pejorative. The title, “Hebrews,” was not part of the writing of the sermon—it was not added until the third century. The person, priesthood, and sacrifice of Jesus come into full focus in this work, capping the teachings of the Old Testament. This is the genius of

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Hebrews. The interlocking of the past, the present, and the future is found in this one sermon of the Bible (as it is in Peter's sufferings and glories theme in 1 Peter). It was preached to Christians in its day, and is the treasure-trove for all Christians in our time. (It is remembered that Abram was promised that through his descendants, "all the families of the earth would be blessed..." (Genesis 12:3b). And the high priesthood of Melchizedek which provides the model for the high priesthood of Jesus, *predated* the Jews per se, though we note that Abaram was Semitic and known as "Abram the Hebrew" (Genesis 14:13) before he met Melchizedek. That Hebrews, the one sermon of the Bible, has as its subject the majestic Saviour and his sacrifice for the entire world, qualifies it as a premier writing of the Scriptures, to be treasured by all believers. Hebrews is addressed to all believers everywhere, in every age.

Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Saviour, is the focus of this preaching that was intended to be read to a congregation within an hour. The preacher gathered his hearers' attention with the opening words: "In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways" (Hebrews 1:1a). He then launches into his sermon which has the elevation of Jesus Christ as its theme: "...in these last days he has spoken unto us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory, and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven" (Hebrews 1:3).

The superiority of Jesus Christ is the dominant message of this sermon. As the sermon unfolds, Christ is superior to: *the angels*, chapters one and two; superior to *Moses*, chapters three and four; superior to *the priests*, chapters five through seven; whose *sacrifice* is superior, chapters eight through ten; *faithful action*, is the appropriate response, as illustrated by God's heroes of faith, followed by a call to *acceptable service*, chapter twelve; chapter thirteen follows with twelve *miscellaneous admonitions* to Christian conduct.

Chapter twelve ends the formal sermon with one of the Bible's grandest visions of God's rescue of his people, given in contrast to His earthly blessing granted on Mount Sinai: "...But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable host of angels in joyful assembly, and the church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better than that of Abel." Linked to this blessed vision is the sober warning: "See to it that you refuse not him who speaks... Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire" (12:25a, 28, 29).

This is one sermon that we as believers should hear, not once but repeatedly, with gratitude, great attention and reverence.

Grimsby and Waterloo, Ontario

The Heart-Written Covenant: Hebrews 8

Written on: October 1, 2022

Article by: Thayer Salisbury

For many readers of the Gospel Herald, the eighth chapter of Hebrews is familiar territory. Some may even be able to quote large portions of it. Most believers know that there was a prior covenant that was replaced by the new covenant through Christ. Many know that this was predicted in Jeremiah 31, and that the Hebrew writer quotes extensively from Jeremiah in our text. One might ask, “Do we need further teaching on this familiar passage?”

We do need such teaching. We need it because we need reminders (see 2 Peter 1:12-13; 3:1). We need teaching on this because there is always a new generation growing up that needs to be taught (see Psalm 78:5-8). We may also need teaching from Hebrews 8 because it is quite possible that we may have misunderstood it in some way.

Not Genesis to Malachi

We are making a terrible mistake when we assume that the “old covenant” discussed in Hebrews 8 means

everything from Genesis to Malachi. That is not the case. The Mosaic law does not equal the book we call the Old Testament. Perhaps we would be clearer if we would learn to call that part of our Bible “the Hebrew Scriptures.”

There is much in the Hebrew Scriptures that was not a part of the Mosaic law. The Apostle Paul insists that the promise given to Abraham predates Moses by 400 years. That promise to Abraham was not cancelled by Moses nor by the coming of Christ (Gal 3:17). God is still keeping the promise to Abraham.

Paul does not mention it, but the rainbow sign of Genesis 9 also predates the Mosaic covenant. The earth will never again be destroyed by water. We can count on that promise. It is not a promise that passed away with the coming of Christ.

It is not the covenant with Abraham, nor the covenant with Noah that is the “old” covenant of Jeremiah 31 or Hebrews 8. The “old” covenant of Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 8 is the one God made with the people of Israel “on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt” (Jer 31:32; Heb 8:9). The promise

But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

Hebrews 8:6

to Noah has not been replaced. Nor has the promise to Abraham, nor even the later promise to David (2 Sam 7) been replaced. It is only the law given at Sinai that is in view here in Hebrews 8.

The Mosaic covenant was for the nation of Israel. It was for the benefit of all nations, but it was never expected that all nations would obey its detailed provisions. It was for the benefit of all in that its provisions were designed to reveal the nature of God, but it was not expected that the nations would all engage in the Tabernacle or Temple worship. As the nations observed Israel obeying the Mosaic Law, they would be led to honour the wisdom of Israel's God (Dt 4:6-8).

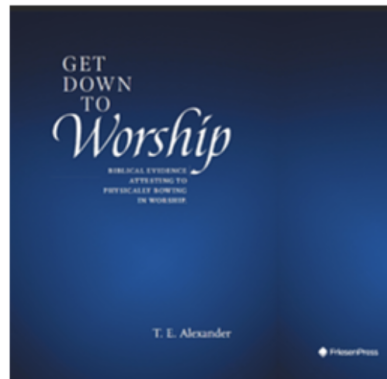
God does not change (James 1:17). Therefore, we too, like the non-Israelite nations, can learn something of the nature of God from the provisions of the Mosaic law, even though we are not under that law. Truths revealed and promises made in the portions of the Hebrew Scriptures that were not part of the Sinai covenant are still valid. God is still creator and ruler of all. It is still a descendent of Abraham that blesses all the families of the earth (Gen 12:3). It is still a descendant of David that rules God's chosen people (2 Sam 7:16; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 3:7; 5:5).

The Nature of the New

The "old" covenant referred to in Hebrews 8 is not Genesis through Malachi; nor is Matthew through Revelation what is called the "new" covenant in this passage. We must think more carefully about the nature of this new covenant.

Heart-written

The people at Pentecost were reconciled to God by means of the New Covenant through Christ (Acts 2:41). Stephen became of first of the new covenant martyrs (Acts 7). The Ethiopian was reconciled to God by means of the new covenant (Acts 8). Yet



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About the Author:

Tim Alexander is a life-long Christian with a love for languages. He reads his Bible with an eye for getting away from human-made traditions and discovering the pure will of God. He works for a non-profit Christian organization and has had the opportunity to travel and speak in churches around the world.

Tim and his wife live in Beamsville, Ontario, Canada.

not a word of Matthew through Revelation (the “Greek Scriptures”) had been written at that time. The New Covenant is not words written in a book or on a stone, the new covenant is a heart written covenant.

It had been predicted that the New Covenant would be a heart-written covenant (Jer 31:33); Jesus indicated that his kingdom would be an internal one (Lk 17:21); and that is what Hebrews 8 tells us as well. “I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Heb 8:10). The Pentecost believers were saved by a heart-written covenant. Stephen was saved by a heart written covenant. The Ethiopian was saved by a heart-written covenant. We will be saved by a heart-written covenant, or we will not be saved. Many a person has a copy of the Greek Scriptures on their shelf, or even in their hand, and yet does not have the new covenant in their heart. Such does not save.

Repentance

This New Covenant involves turning from sin. The first people to receive it, received it in their hearts when they felt the horror of their sin. They were accused of causing the death of an innocent man. Their hearts acknowledged the justice of the accusation and they said, “Brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). We cannot accept this new covenant while wilfully continuing in sin. It is good to own a copy of what is commonly called the New Testament. It is better to study it. It is good to quote it. But owning, studying, and quoting are not substitutes for repentance. Until we show by our actions that there is a new covenant in our heart, there is no new covenant in our heart. We must repent or we will perish (Luke 13:3; 1 John 3:6).

Seeking

This New Covenant involves the seeking of God. It is not a matter of dietary laws (like ‘no bacon’) but of seeking to know and to be conformed to the character of God. “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17). “They shall all know me” (11). We do not seek to have a small clerical or monastic minority who know God. Our Lord expects that all will know him experientially as well as theoretically.

Death and Resurrection

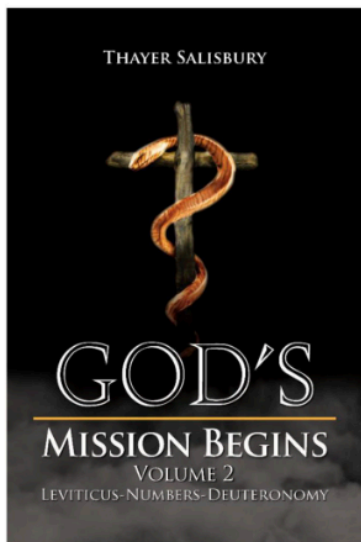
This New Covenant involves death to self and resurrection to a whole new life. Under the Old Covenant, too many still sought their own way (Jer 31:32; Heb 8:9). They kept various ceremonies, but their lives, too often, were unaffected. The New Covenant is light on ceremony. There is some ceremony, but the ceremonies are few. The ceremony that is a part of the New Covenant points to this death to the old and resurrection to the new life. The Lord’s Supper is our most repeated ceremony. It clearly points to the death and resurrection of the Lord (1 Cor 11:26), and to how that death and resurrection means that we no longer belong to ourselves (1 Cor 6:19-20). Baptism is the other main ceremony of the new covenant. It clearly points to the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord, and to our need to bury the old life and rise to a new life (Romans 6:4-6).

The Use of Scripture

Please do not misunderstand. The Bible and the scriptures we commonly call the New Testament are critically important to us. But the printed book is not the New Covenant. The printed books from Matthew to Revelation are the record of the New Covenant in the lives of the early Christians. From that record we learn how the New Covenant is to work in our hearts and lives. But the New Covenant itself is a heart-written, life changing covenant, or it is nothing at all.

Do we have the new covenant written on our hearts? Is it changing our lives? These are the critical questions.

Matsapha, Eswatini, Africa



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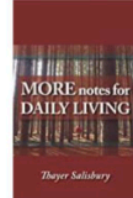
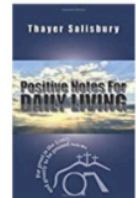
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Now Faith Is – Hebrews 11

Written on: October 1, 2022

Article by: **Dave Knutson**

Hebrews 11 is sometimes called “God’s honour roll”. It is filled with extraordinary people who lived by faith and did all manner of amazing things. This account of their lives is intended to inspire us, but might instead leave us feeling defeated and inadequate. For which one of us is like Abraham or Moses, Joshua or Jephthah?

Let me challenge our thinking about this passage on two levels. First of all, these were real people. They are not fictitious inventions of an over-active mind. They were surrounded by unbelievers and had to deal with real-life issues from day to day. And they did not start out as ‘heroes of faith’. They were just ordinary people, minding their own business and doing their best to cope with life. Their lives were a mixture of virtue and vice, doubt and faith. Yet it was faith that set them apart as they persisted in it. So, perhaps we should tone down the ‘superhero’ part and focus on just what faith can do in the lives of everyday people.

Abraham is a good case in point. Now Genesis 11:28 and Neh 9:7 tell us that Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldees. We know a good deal about Ur at the time when Abraham lived and before. Part of what we know came to light through the excavation that was done by Sir Charles Leonard Woolley in 1922 and 1934. We know, for example, that these people were pagan. They worshiped the moon goddess along with a pantheon of others. They had a man-made high place that we call a ziggurat where they practiced their religion. Thus when God called Abraham from the city of Ur, he was also calling him away from that pagan culture.

The physical infrastructure of Ur was quite advanced. We have every reason to think of Abraham as an educated man who could read and write. The city had schools



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and libraries as well as extensive royal archives. The University of Pennsylvania has a cup dating two centuries before the time of Abraham that shows the magnificent workmanship these men were capable of. This cup is so marvelously made that no one today can surpass it, and it indicates the luxury of that place. Woolley's excavation volumes covering the Royal Tombs show pictures of the same amazing work in gold and alabaster.

At the time that Abraham lived there, archaeologists estimate the population at about 25,000. The houses in Ur made of mud brick and were whitewashed to make them look attractive. Many were two story structures. The larger ones had from ten to twenty rooms with well equipped kitchens, a plumbing system and sanitation.

For that time, we would say that these people enjoyed a high standard of living. The city was prosperous and many were wealthy. From what we know about Abraham's family, it appears that they too were well off, with flocks, herds, servants and slaves.

All of which means, that when God called Abraham, this man was turning his back on a good thing. He was leaving the good life for life on the road – for life in a land that God had yet to identify. The land that God promised Abraham was at that time and by comparison, backward and primitive. Yet as faith would prove, life with God in any place is the best life possible.

What set Abraham apart was, that when God called him...he went. He obeyed God because he believed what God said and was willing to submit to the will of the Lord. By the way, that is what makes obedience, obedience. When God says – “I want you to do something’, and we do it because God said so...that's obedience. At any rate, his journey to Canaan and then within Canaan was a journey of faith. He left his home to live in tents and never again had a permanent place to call home. It was a literal journey from one place to another. But it was also a journey from initial trust to complete obedience. Abraham's

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faith was enough for him to take each successive step, and as he added knowledge to his faith, he grew to be more and more like his heavenly Father. He lived an upright moral life and earned the respect of those around him.

The trip to Canaan then was all about making Abraham *into...the 'father of those who live by faith'*. We can see that about him...looking back, but Abraham couldn't see that from his point of view, at that time.

When Abraham left Ur, he travelled to Haran and stopped, to accommodate his aging father. It was at Haran after his father's death that God said to Abraham:

“Go from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house,
To the land which I will show you;
And I will make you into a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And *you shall* be a blessing;
And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

Many years later, Abraham reminded God that His promise of a son had yet to be fulfilled (Gen 15) And the standing arrangement that he had at that time was for his servant, Eliezer of Damascus to inherit all of his possession and to become Abraham's legal descendant. Abraham was referring to a common Mesopotamian custom whereby a man who had no son, would sign a contract with one of his servants. The servant would technically become the '*son of my house*'...and unless a 'natural' heir was born to the master, that man would through adoption, inherit his master's name and household.

But that was not what God had in mind...so he replied:

“This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.” And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” Then he (Abraham) believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

So Abraham believed God. But he also knew that the clock was running. We all have that same sense that life is slipping away. And when we don't see what we think that God has promised, we start to question if it's ever going to happen. In Abraham's case, it was pretty straightforward...a son or no son.

Well, about 10 years in, Sarai came up with a solution. She said...I have this little Egyptian maid – a servant. Why don't we have a baby with her? So Sarai took Hagar and gave her to Abraham as his wife. This was another acceptable custom of that time whereby the slave of the wife could become a surrogate mother. Since she belonged to the wife anyway, the baby would also be hers.

The verse uses the word for Hagar that means wife...though she probably had a secondary status since she remained a slave. So Abraham took Hagar as a wife and they conceived a baby. But the outcome was that Hagar began to shun the authority of Sarai. She acted uppity and superior...because Sarai had no child. She could see herself becoming wife number one...when there really should never have been two in the first place. And t

So Sarah came back on Abraham and blamed him. She said..now look what you've done to me. I'm despised in the eyes of my own maid. May the Lord judge between you and me.

Abraham and his wife thought... that they were going to help God to fulfil his promise. They thought that whatever *God* was doing, it wasn't working. So they tried to fix the problem themselves.

Well, you get the picture...these were real people, immersed in the stuff of life. They had hopes and dreams, which in case we miss the point, were based on the promises of God – or at least their understanding of them. All of this created marital tension as they grew impatient with God.

But you'd never know that from Hebrews 11...because their lives were *mostly* defined by faith and not by doubt.

They never did give up on God and God didn't give up on them. All of which brings us back to us...and this chapter on faith. A chapter in which faith is the key ingredient.

So Hebrews 11:6 says: "And without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Faith is belief – but not just any kind of belief. It is belief with specific content. In order to be pleasing to God, a person must believe that God is. Or more specifically, that the God of the Bible exists. That everything said and done by God and recorded in the Bible is true.

The God of the Bible exists... and we must believe in Him. But that is not all. We must also believe in the promises that He has made but has not yet kept. We must trust Him as a person who keeps His word. And we must be willing to stake our lives on Him and hold nothing back in reserve.

Faith has content.

- The object of our faith is God...the God who speaks to us in the Bible and whose word cannot be broken. That content is made up at least in part of the conclusions that we draw from the truths that God has revealed. This is the kind of faith that a person

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must have in order to be pleasing to God.

Abraham was a theologian. He did not just do what God commanded without considering what the implications were. So when God commanded the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham leapt ahead in his thinking. God had made it clear that Isaac was the son through whom he would keep his promises to Abraham. His descendants would become a great, unnumbered nation and through him, all of the nations of the earth would be blessed. If God was going to keep his promise and at the same time require the death of Isaac, then God must intend to raise that boy from the grave. Abraham accepted that certainty – by faith, and set about to sacrifice his son. In so doing, he and Isaac became a ‘type’. A father offering his only son, with the full expectation of his resurrection. As it turned out, God’s son was also a ‘son of Abraham’ and was literally raised from the dead, to make it possible for God to ‘bless all of the nations’ under heaven. Likewise, our faith must be the kind of content arising from valid theological thinking and blessed with a measure of wisdom and insight.

Coming back for a moment to Heb 11:1 Moulton and Milligan suggest a very helpful translation. In the New American Standard Bible it reads: “Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” .

What they found was that the word, **hypostasis**, which my bible translates as *assurance*, was used in that literature to mean “that body of documents bearing upon ones ownership of property and giving evidence or proof of such”.

If you have ever purchased real estate, then you received a packet of official papers when the sale closed. Some were issued by the city, and perhaps others by the bank. Your lawyer checked them for accuracy, genuineness and the absence of encumbrances – so that you could obtain clear title to the property. But that packet of documents was indicated in the ancient world by the word *hypostasis*. So Moulton and Milligan suggest the translation: “faith is the title-deed of things hoped for”.

If this is what the Hebrew writer has in mind, then this passage takes on special



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meaning. It becomes the historic record of certain men and women who held onto their faith as the title-deed by which God gave them ownership of the things which He had promised. The emphasis is then on the value of faith. It's on the role or function that faith plays in the economy of God. And this fits the context well.

In Chapter 10:32-34, the writer reminds his audience of what they had endured:

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one

Someone had confiscated their stuff. Yet these Christians had not only endured it, they had done so joyfully. How was that possible? Could it be that perhaps not all of their possessions had been lost? It seems that their enemies had missed something. No one could take their faith from them. And they understood, that that faith gave them title to something that was safe with God.

They understood that the promises of God in the ultimate sense were not about earthly possession. So they were not attached to them. Faith allowed them to distinguish between those things that are of permanent value, and those that are not.

Faith is the thing that is of value.

- It gives us title to the promises of God, and for that reason, we must not squandered it.
- We must hold onto it as the people of old did...refusing to accept anything but the real article...the real promises of God in exchange.

Satan and the world which serves him is willing to make you an offer. What will you take in trade?

Those faithful men and women in Hebrews 11 refused to cash in early

- Enoch lived by faith and was taken up without seeing death.
- Noah prepared and ark in faith, saving his own family and condemning the world....becoming an heir of the righteousness which God bestows on the basis of faith.
- Abraham was given the land of Canaan by an oath of God. He owned it lock stock and barrel. But you know, he never built a house on it. And he never allowed himself to think of it as home.

He had a tangible piece of land and an intangible deed. His faith did not correspond to the land of Caanan...and he was not about to take it in trade. Our passage says that he lived in the land of promise *as if* he was in a foreign country.

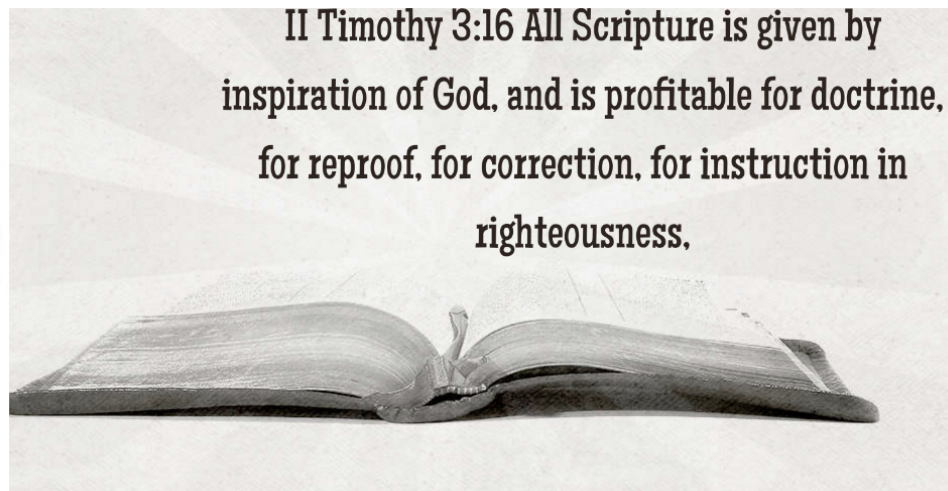
And then the writer of Hebrews tells us why. "For he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (vs.10). For that very reason, "God is not ashamed to be called their God. I like that. Because they understood that faith as a title deed anticipates a spiritual inheritance", God is not ashamed to be called their God.

It makes sense. Physical papers establish my ownership interests in a physical house. But this title deed is different. It is just as real and far more permanent. It is made of different stuff. And it corresponds to the Heavenly city...whose builder and maker is God.

Hebrews 11 is all about a host of faithful men and women whose lives speak to us across the ages.

Who: ... by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power to fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, Because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect. So – let us lay aside every encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangles us and let us run with endurance the race set before us.

God has prepared a heavenly city and faith is the deed reserving your place in it. Let us live by faith so that God will not be ashamed to be called our God.



Christ is Changeless and Eternal

Written on: October 1, 2022

Article by: Roy Davison

The statement that Christ is the same, alludes to what is said of God in Psalm 102:25–27: “Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens *are* the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You *are* the same, and Your years will have no end.”

Psalm 102 is addressed to God. The designation ‘Jehovah’ is used seven times (in verses 1, 12, 15, 16, 18, 19 and 22). God does not change, with the “Father of lights” “there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:16). “For I *am* the LORD, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6).

Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same.” Back in chapter one of Hebrews, Psalm 102 is quoted and applied to Christ (preceded by Psalm 45:6–7).

“But to the Son He says:

‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;

A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;

Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You

With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.’

And:

‘You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,

And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

They will perish, but You remain;

And they will all grow old like a garment;

Like a cloak You will fold them up,

And they will be changed.

But You are the same,

And Your years will not fail’” (Hebrews 1:8–12).

In chapter one, the immutability of Christ is contrasted with the continually changing universe that will pass away. “They will perish, but You will endure ... They will be changed. But You are the same” (Psalm 102:26–27). “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

Christ is without beginning or end.

God is self-existent, He always has existed and always shall exist. When the writer of Hebrews says: “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8), he is ascribing eternal, self-existence to Christ.

When God told Moses to rescue His people from Egypt, Moses asked: “When I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them? And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:13, 14). The one true God is self-existent. He is ‘I AM’, Infinite Being.

In Israel this became a sacred name for God. The Hebrew word, sometimes transliterated as Jehovah or Jaweh, is called the Tetragrammaton because it consists of four consonants. (The alphabet of ancient Hebrew did not have vowels.) The Tetragrammaton appears more than 6,000 times in the Old Testament.

For the Israelites, this name was so sacred that they would not even pronounce it. Thus, when the Scriptures were read aloud, the Hebrew word for ‘Lord’ was read instead.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the New Testament writers used the Greek word for ‘Lord’ to translate the Tetragrammaton when quoting Old Testament passages, except in a few instances where the Greek word for ‘God’ appears.

New Testament writers, in their quotations of Old Testament passages, apply the Holy Name, Jaweh, the Ever-Existing One, to the Son as well as to the Father.

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In Isaiah 40:3 we find a prophesy of the work of John the Baptist: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD [Jaweh]; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’” According to Mark 1:1-4, the LORD for whom John was to prepare the way, is Christ.

Isaiah 8:13-14 says that “the LORD [Jaweh] of Hosts” will be “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel.” According to Peter, this stone of stumbling is Christ (1 Peter 2:7-8).

In Psalm 102:12-27 we are told that the LORD (Jaweh) will endure forever (v. 12) even though the earth and the heavens will perish (vs. 25, 26). In Hebrews 1:10-12 this passage is quoted and applied to Christ.

Isaiah 44:6 proclaims: “Thus says the LORD [Jaweh], the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD [Jaweh] of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God.’” In Revelation 1:17 Jesus says: “I am the First and the Last.”

In Psalm 24:10 we read: “Who is this King of glory? The LORD [Jaweh] of hosts, He is the King of glory.” In 1 Corinthians 2:8 and in James 2:1 Christ is called “the Lord of glory.”

In a vision, Isaiah saw “the King, the LORD [Jaweh] of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5). Alluding to this passage, John says in John 12:41 that Isaiah saw the glory of Christ.

In Joel 2:32, after God promised to pour out His Spirit, the promise is also made “that whoever calls on the name of the LORD [Jaweh] shall be saved.” In Romans 10:8-13 this passage is quoted and applied to Christ.

Not only the Father, but also the Son, is Jaweh (the Ever-Existing One). In the light of this we understand why Jesus said to the Jews: “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58). The Jews understood what He meant as well, and tried to kill Him. Both the Father and the Son are ‘I AM’.

“Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). He is changeless and without beginning or end.

Herselt, Belgium

Jesus and the letter called Hebrews

Written on: September 30, 2022

Article by: George Mansfield

I**NTRO:** The biblical writing known as Hebrews stands alone, being different than all other Bible writings. The main message focuses on a person, not a thing or an achievement.

Aside from the above statement, the Bible writer often repeats himself over and over. This is undoubtedly for the sake of emphasis. In a nutshell, Jesus Christ is declared to be superior to all other beings of all time!

Because of the above-mentioned truth- that Jesus Christ had no equals- it stands to reason that the writer would make Jesus the theme of this book from beginning to end!

Let us notice an example of this.

A good place to introduce this truth is found in Hebrews 3:1 which reminds us, “... *therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your eyes on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.*”

Having noted the above, turn back to Hebrews 1:1-4

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in *His* Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, to the extent that He has inherited a more excellent name than they.”

May I suggest two important things:

1. Please read this from your Bible of preference (quotes here are from NASB) -gm
2. Read the letter in its entirety and treat this letter as different from any other book in the Bible!


A scholar of renown described in an elevated, incomparable way, the true nature and value of the Christian religion. He penned “For the author of this epistle, Christianity is the better and the best of all possible religions. Besides, it there is none other. Jesus Christ is in an elevated incomparable way, the true value of the Christian religion” *“Dr. Neil Lightfoot,*

This writer of this article believes that two of the most fascinating lines in all of the letter of Hebrews are found in chapter 8:6 and 10:19-25. Please read these and meditate on their meaning.

Some refer to this information as *“the better covenant.”* Please refresh your familiarity with this *“better covenant”* by reading the material above. But, there is more. In the midst of all this *“better”* material we find a more powerful phrase. Allow me to suggest that you also read Hebrews chapter 8:7-13 for a more precise eye-opening experience. This causes us to thank God for this information and our transformation!

While it may not be a new thing to you, this letter called Hebrews finds no equal in the rest of the Bible’s writings! *There are other exciting verses containing fascinating material, but no as far-reaching as are defined in one of these ways: “Strong trust” or “Confidence in someone or something.”*


This much we know: Hebrews 11:6 clearly states *“without faith it is impossible to please God!”* The Penman of this work pinpoints the obvious for the sake of the utter importance of faith in Jesus; that he was born, lived, died as our sacrifice, resides in heaven, and is making our faith valuable to us!



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It is important to insert here that *“without faith it is impossible to please God.”* Faith, by definition, is *“trusting to the point of commitment.”* We might use the word to describe the faith we have in our leaders, or could it be as simple as this????

Faith is a word we use in different ways. Here we use it to say that not all things are tangible, but that Hebrews contains some of the best of the most exciting information we have access to. If we *claim to possess faith, we are telling or showing others that we believe the Bible to be true and dependable.*

The extension of this definition, simply put, is “God the Father has provided for us a way to live on planet earth and to pass on to the heavenly realm when this life is over.

Let us retreat just a little and bear-down on a small part of a telling passage. Please read chapter 8:7-13. You will notice that the event spoken of beginning in verse nine, took place many years earlier when God *“took them (Israelites) by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.”* As we read this we become aware of God’s desires for His beloved people, and when we study and meditate upon the actual happenings, we are aware of our failures, many times over!

Still, God’s promise to them was a NEW COVENANT between them (or their offspring) and the God of heaven and earth! Psalm 105:8 reminds us that God keeps His word for as long as it takes!

Brothers and sisters, this is our God too!

V. Charles Gordon McPhee, Ontario Preacher

Written on: October 1, 2022

Article by: Geoffrey Ellis



McPhee, pictured on the front page of the Sept, 1972, *Gospel Herald*

McPhee concluded his nine years of work in Beamsville in 1945, and moved to Toronto, to serve the Bayview Ave. Church of Christ. His home address was 18 Banff Rd. He spoke often on the radio station, CKEY. He remained in that work for three years, returning to Jordan in 1948. "My three years in Toronto have not been fruitful." He had to sell his home in Beamsville to go to Toronto, leaving him short, \$2,500. (His daughter, Rosalie, age 16, spent a year at the David Lipscomb College high school during this time.)

From Toronto, C. G. preached at Jordan for a year, '48-'49, but found it necessary to conclude this work there. He returned to Meaford in 1949, where he served the second time, from June 4, 1949 until June 1, 1952.

GLCC opened in the fall of 1952, enrollment 14. By the third year, 1954, enrollment had grown to 53. However, in October, 1954, the announcement came that McPhee would leave his post as president. The Nov. issue of the *Gospel Herald* announced, C. G. McPhee "to preach full-time." No explanation was, or has been, given re this decision.

Gordon, while president of GLCC, returned to Nova Scotia, in 1953. This was the first time since leaving in 1915 that he had returned to his birth place, having been away 38 years. In Truro, he visited his brother, Henry and wife.

McPhee was preaching for the St. Catharines Raymond St. congregation in 1955 when the addition of Sunday school rooms was begun. This involved the raising of the building and placing the classrooms in the lower area.

“Sermon outline notes, using black/red typewriter ribbon, McPhee would underline points for emphasis in his notes.”

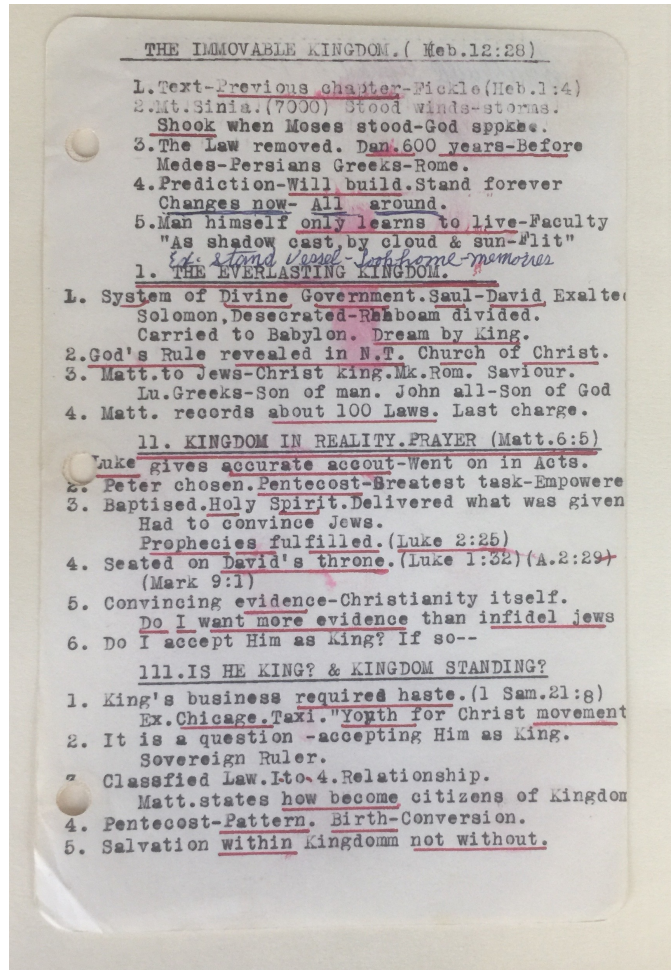
In about 1955, C. G. began preaching from small one- page, typed outlines. (No evidence has been found of his sermon notes practice, during 1920-1955, following his hand written, longhand, work book sermons, used up to 1920.) These later sermon notes were on 7 ¾" X 5" pages, punched for a small three-ringed binder. The sermon outlines are type-written, using black/red typewriter ribbons so that he could highlight or underline in red, the special emphases of the lesson. The outlines typically contain: title and Scripture text, (usually one verse), with usually three main points. On these pages, C. G. would note the time and place of their delivery. The McPhee files include 260 sermon outlines, with 453 times preached (and where) noted. While most sermons were preached only one or two times, C. G. did have his favourites: e.g.

“Rightly Dividing the Word,” eight times; “Revelation,” eleven times; “Namaan,” twelve times; “Has Christ Failed?” 16 times; and “The Great Salvation,” 29 times! The city where C. G. McPhee preached the greatest number of times was St. Catharines: Raymond and Beecher, 70 sermons; Ontario Street, 69, for a total of 139. (Strangely, no reports of lessons delivered at Niagara Street were found.)

In 1956, C. G. went to Nova Scotia, where he preached for three Sundays, beginning Sept. 16: “The church has revived at Mill Village where I did some preaching.” Also, at Nine Mile River, he went “to stir up some interest, where I preached my first sermon.” And then to Halifax, where he began Oct. 7, 1956, for a dozen lessons and radio sermons. Later in 1956, McPhee visited the Manitoulin Island, and preached at Ice Lake, Nov. 18, and Little Current, Nov. 14.

Then in 1957, he went to St. Johns, Newfoundland, July 7-21, preached 20 lessons, and every week on the radio. He also returned the next year, 1958, to St. Johns, Nfld., preaching, June 1-22.

There are a few funeral records in the files: the records do not include a complete account of the many times he was called to bring solace to family, friends, and



strangers. (In October 2, 1958, McPhee conducted the funeral service for my grandfather, William Patterson,)

1959 was a full year for Brother McPhee: delivering 187 sermons, 30 radio sermons, and a meeting in Beamsville, Oct. 18-30, including 18 lessons.

In 1960, McPhee conducted a meeting at Meaford, Oct. 3-12, preaching 12 lessons. He held meetings at Ice Lake, on the Manitoulin, Oct. 3-12, delivering 11 lessons.

In late 1960, while McPhee was conducting the meetings at Meaford, he phoned home to announce that the Raymond and Beecher and Niagara and Manning congregations would join forces. On Dec. 4, 1960, the Niagara and Manning members moved “in a body.” The merged church totaled 150 members. By April, 1961, attendance averaged 172, and they were “looking for a suitable lot” for a new church building. C. G. McPhee had now been with the Raymond and Beecher congregation since the fall of 1954.

During 1961, C. G. conducted a meeting in Ottawa, preaching 12 sermons, June 11-21. Also, he preached a meeting at Griersville, July 16-26, including 11 services, where there were 4 baptisms.



“C. G. McPhee’s wedding registers.”

Pictured are McPhee’s Registers of Marriages: the top registry includes 100 registrations—Oct. 5, 1921-Oct. 10, 1942; the bottom, 153 registrations—Oct. 24, 1942-Jan. 20, 1979; 253 weddings in total. (In addition, for whatever reason, there were weddings at which C. G. officiated that are not registered in these books (cf. mine in Dec. 1952, as an example!)

On Friday, Feb 23, 1962, “C. G. suffered a severe heart attack.” He would not preach again until May.

He recovered and preached for another 17 years.

Gordon and Grace celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary, June 16, 1962, inviting their friends to their home, afternoon and evening, at 4 Fawell Ave. in St Catharines.

During the summer, 1962, two acres were purchased on Ontario St. N, in St. Catharines, for a new church building. On October 12, the digging of the basement was begun. Members from the congregation directed the construction: Gordon

Excerpt from <https://gospelherald.org> October 2022 issue

Stewart, Loney Wallace, Jim Allcock. The building was designed for a 350 capacity; to cost \$90,000,

On May 29, 1963, the Raymond and Beecher building closed, and on June 23, the Ontario St. building was opened.

The *Gospel Herald* in 1963, reported, "St. Catharines Opens New Home; Open house held June 23, 1963." Also reported, June 2, "June Meeting, 1,000 present." That June 2-21, McPhee preached 7 radio sermons. Later that year, he returned to Nova Scotia, to Mill Village, Sept. 25- 29, delivering 6 lessons, and to Halifax, Oct. 2-6, for 6 lessons.

During 1964, McPhee held a meeting at Ice Lake, Manitoulin, May 3-16, giving ten lessons. McPhee preached regularly over the radio from the mid-1940s: St. Catharines, CKTB; Toronto, CKEY; Owen Sound, CFOS. He was the second preacher, after W. F. Cox, to preach over the radio for Churches of Christ in Ontario.

In April, 1966, the Ontario St. elders made the decision that Charles Gordon McPhee should retire from his full-time responsibilities as preacher with the Ontario Street congregation. They offered to provide him a pension of \$200 a month.

In April 16, 1967, Gordon McPhee reported, "Last day of regular work, four years, one month," i.e. with the Ontario St., St. Catharines congregation. However, he kept on preaching! His records for the rest of that year (1967) list 24 sermons preached in eleven churches! Then for the next twelve years, this record exists: an average of seven congregations a year visited, with an average of 58 sermons per year preached.



Summary of preaching for the following years, 1968-1979:

1968: 9 churches, 104 sermons 1974: 9 churches, 78 sermons
1969: 9 churches, 116 sermons 1975: 7 churches, 101 sermons
1970: 9 churches, 79 sermons 1976: 11 churches, 82 sermons
1971: 4 churches, 57 sermons 1977: 3 churches, 87 sermons
1972: 8 churches, 128 sermons 1978: 7 churches, 82 sermons
1973: 7 churches, 62 sermons 1979: 2 churches, 42 sermons

Congregations in Ontario that C. G. McPhee served during this period, 1968-1979, include: Blair, Harding Ave (Toronto), Fenwick, Griersville, Heathcote, Ice Lake, Meaford, Newmarket, Omagh, Pine Orchard, Ontario St (St. Catharines), Port Colborne, Smithville, Strathmore Blvd. (Toronto), Tintern; and also, Halifax, Mill Village, NS, and Lachine, Que. (The preaching of these sermons – each required travel from his home base in St. Catharines.)



During the twelve years of C. G. McPhee's "retirement," he preached an average of 77 times a year, to an average of seven different congregations per year.

"C. G. and Grace McPhee, at the celebration of their lives and service, May 25, 1970."

1970 was a special year for C. G. McPhee. A celebration of his life and ministry was held May 22, at Great Lakes Christian College in Beamsville, attended by 275 people. The gathering was reported in the *Gospel Herald*, Aug. 1970, issue, p. 12. It was remembered when McPhee was the only full-time evangelist for the Churches of Christ in Ontario. The next month, a colleague of McPhee's, Walter Dale, wrote a tribute to McPhee, entitled "Well Done," tracing

McPhee's fifty-five years ministry in Canada (*Gospel Herald*, Sept. 30, 1970).

Gordon broke his ankle, Jan. 31, 1976, and didn't preach until April 11.

"Gordon and Grace McPhee, in their "golden years."

Grace McPhee passed away July 23, 1972, (born Nov. 23, 1893), age 79. (Her obituary is in the *Gospel Herald*, Sept. 1972, p. 17.)

Charles Gordon McPhee at the end of his life, said: "My whole heart has been involved in preaching the Gospel. I believe the Gospel is the power of God. Always have I felt that it is my responsibility to preach the word of God. My responsibility is to the Lord and I pray that I may never fail him."

"On Sunday, November 25, 1979, he preached his final sermon in Smithville, Ontario. Two days later – at age 87 – a fatal heart attack took him to be with his Lord." – Paul Dale



C. G. McPhee passed away, Nov. 25 1979, age 87 years. He had preached 65 years, (cf. beginning at River John, NS, in 1913; when his preaching was announced in, *The Bible Student*, “Evangelist.”) Roy Merritt wrote in the *Gospel Herald*, “The Passing of a Prince.” His obituary is in the *GH*, Jan. 1980, p. 4, 5.



“The McPhee family, with daughters Ruth and Rosalie.”

Ruth married Jim Wilson, and lived in St. Catharines; Rosalie married William Kosick, and lived in Colorado. The McPhees had six grandchildren.

“For most of his life he has been a mainstay of the work among Churches of Christ in Canada, mostly in Ontario; but he also served in Carman, Manitoba, and for a few

years in the United States in his early years. He is known and loved by literally thousands.”

“Parents and son, interred, Mt. Osborne Cemetery, Beamsville, Ontario.”

ADDENDUM

Appreciation is expressed: to Murray Hibbard and the board of the Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society for making the McPhee files available for this study; to Paul Dale for sharing his repeated researches in the life and ministry of C. G. McPhee; to Ralph Tallman for sharing his 1977 taped interview with C. G. McPhee, and for arranging with Sandy McBay for its recent transcription, with a huge applause for Sandy’s work in her careful transcription of the tape; to my son, Mark (Georgia) for guiding me through the intricacies of Mac computing; to Dave Knutson, editor of the *Gospel Herald* (online), for his helpfulness in bringing this study to the *GH* readership.



The five chapters of *Charles Gordon McPhee: Canadian Preacher* are available in book form. To secure a copy, contact *GH Books*.

Finally, the unnamed person who shared the unidentified picture at the beginning of this study, was Dave Carruthers, Thorold, Ontario.



John Allen Bell

Written on: October 1, 2022

Article by: admin

Allan Bell passed away due to a cardiac event on Sunday, August 21, 2022, in Regina, Saskatchewan, at the age of 99 years old. Allan is predeceased by his wife Edna; his daughter Elizabeth Perry, his son Samuel Bell, and his infant son Joseph; his parents John and Eliza Bell; his sisters Sarah Bell, Katherine (Amy) Fowler, and Margaret Forman. Allan is survived by his sons John of Toronto, James (Pauline) of Lethbridge, and David (Cheryl) of Saskatoon; his daughters Ruth Kaiswatum of Regina and Sarah Bell of

Regina; fifteen grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren.

Allan worked for his father on the family farm until Allan changed course to become a teacher. At teacher training in the summer of 1948, he met his future wife, Edna Lee. He spent over forty years as an educator in Zambia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. While living in Calgary, Allan obtained his Bachelor of Education Degree. Teaching ESL students, like those in Africa, in northern Saskatchewan, and in Hutterite colonies, was what he found most rewarding. He was a missionary with the Church of Christ in Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia) in the 1950s, again in the 1960s, and briefly in the 1970s. For most of his time there, he was at Namwianga Mission. Even though Allan left the farm, the farm never left him. For a few years in Africa, he was responsible for the community's cattle; and whenever possible, he raised poultry, and the family kept a vegetable garden. In the latter years of Allan's life, he became very attached to his beloved dog, Bodacious, who was his constant companion.

The Funeral Service and remembrance of his life was held on Friday, September 2, 2022, at 1:00 PM, at W. J. Jones and Son Funeral Home, 474 Hochelaga St. W., Moose Jaw. Allan's oldest son, John Bell, PhD officiated. Interment followed at Rosedale Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, please make donations to the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Submitted by John Bell