

## **Hebrews Chapter Thirteen**

In chapter thirteen we find that believers under the New Covenant have a better altar than what was available under the Old Covenant (Law of Moses). The chapter also contains a variety of teachings on different subjects.

### **Our responsibilities (verses 1-6)**

In verse one we are instructed to let brotherly love continue. This illuminates our responsibility to our fellow citizens in the kingdom of Christ. Having love for one another is a way to witness to an unbelieving world that Jesus is the Christ (John 13:35). We are also encouraged to make our love toward one another increase and abound (1 Thessalonians 3:12) and commanded to love one another (1 John 4:7).

In verse two we find our responsibilities toward strangers. Peter commands us to be hospitable without grumbling (1 Peter 4:9). We can easily see the actions of angels in the lives of humans throughout the Bible, but especially in the lives of the early Christians (Mark 1:13; Acts 5:19; Acts 12:7; Acts 27:23). Angels are still actively assisting us today (Hebrews 1:14). Because of this fact, we should always be ready to assist strangers, since we cannot tell if the stranger is an angel or not.

In verse three we are commanded to help the unfortunate. The best teaching on this issue is found in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). In this parable, a man on a journey runs into unfortunate circumstances. Two religiously inclined individuals pass the man, look at his condition, and pass by without assisting him. Then, a Samaritan, who would be expected to simply ignore the problem, sees the man and assists him. Jesus said, "he had compassion on him". This is our example.

Verse four tells us about pure living, with particular reference to marital affairs. Marriage is said to be honorable. But, fornication and adultery places a person under the judgment of God. The marriage contemplated here does not include what passes for marriage in some parts of current society. God and the church have never accepted same-sex marriage. Marriage is between a man and a woman and is for life. Adultery and fornication destroy a marriage and should never be found in the church.

Verse five gives us instructions about being content with what we have. Covetousness is forbidden in the lives of Christian people. The Old Testament quotation in verse five comes from two sources (Deuteronomy 31: 6-8 and Joshua 1:5). We must learn to depend on God instead of ourselves. The Old Testament quotation in verse six comes from Psalm 118:6.

### **Various teachings (verses 7-19)**

In verse seven we find our responsibilities to the elders of the church. We are instructed to remember them. These are the individuals who have spoken the word of truth to us and also lead Godly lives as an example to us. I believe this also refers to those officers of the church also known as bishops, pastors, and overseers. Also in this chapter are two other references to these individuals. In verse seventeen we are told to obey these individuals and to be submissive to them. Their job description is also found in that verse. They watch out for our souls and must give account for the members of the congregation. We are told to let them do this with joy rather than grief in light of our conduct. Also, in verse twenty-four the writer specified that the elders were to be greeted, along with all the saints, clearly showing a distinction between the shepherds of the congregation and those whom they watch over.

Verse eight shows that Christ is eternal, contrary to the views of some who believe that Christianity must change and modify in order to suit the current times in which we live. Verse nine flatly contradicts this mistaken idea. We are told to keep from being carried away with various and strange doctrines. Once again the idea is put forward that the laws and ceremonies of the Old Covenant are not for us today. It amazes me to find people who want to live under the stipulations of the Law of Moses, when the Bible clearly shows that our hearts must be established by grace, not by observing ritualistic laws and ceremonies that have not profited anyone. This is a clear warning to anyone who insists that we are under the Law of Moses today, no profit can be found under that law!

This thought is continued in verse ten where the better altar is described. Under the Law of Moses, the priests partook of the sacrifices that were brought to the altar and the sacrifice was burned outside the camp (Leviticus 4:11-12). Under the Law of Christ, these priests have no right to partake of that which is upon the altar. Jesus suffered outside the camp (John 19:20). He sanctified us with His own blood (Revelation 1:5; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Matthew 26: 28).

We are instructed to also go out of the camp, which is a reference to leaving behind the Law of Moses with its ceremonies, rituals, and laws and to bear the reproach of Christ (1 Peter 4: 12-17). We are again informed that we have no continuing city, but that we seek the one to come, New Jerusalem (Revelation chapter 21).

Through Jesus we are told to offer the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips. This is a reference to the singing, praying, and praising that make up our public and private worship to God. The fruit of our lips is also mentioned in 1 Peter 2:9 and is an indication

that singing and praising God is expected on our part. Another sacrifice mentioned in verse sixteen is that of doing good and sharing what we possess. God is looking for such spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5).

Prayer for the author of the book is enjoined upon the readers in verse eighteen. The purpose of this prayer is that the author would have a good conscience, live honorably, and be restored to the readers as soon as possible.

### **Conclusion (verses 20-25)**

The closing verses of this epistle include a benediction (verses 20-21). Jesus is described as the Great Shepherd and His blood is described as the blood of the everlasting covenant. The everlasting covenant available through Jesus underscores the fact that the Old Covenant (Law of Moses) has been taken away and replaced by something better.

Timothy is mentioned in verse twenty-three. We know that he was a close associate of Paul. This has led many to conclude that Paul was the author of this book. Italy is also mentioned; showing that the gospel had already spread over much of the Roman Empire by the time this letter was written.

And so the book of Hebrews closes. The book is written to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus over any other religious system. Christianity has a wonderful message for those who seek to serve God. That message is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that we can live through Him. Praise God for the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf!