

Ministry on Hebrews

Part 3

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[00:00:00] Chapter 8, the end of verse 4. Priests offer gifts according to the law, who serve unto that the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle. For see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount. Chapter 10 and verse 1. For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. Verse 34.

[00:01:07] For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and unenduring substance.

If we are to read the epistle to the Hebrews intelligently and receive full gain from it, we will need at least two qualifications. As to the first one, most of you were present when we looked together in March 1985 at the person and [00:02:06] work of the Holy Spirit. And I remember on one of those nights, two sisters who are here tonight came to me after the meeting and said, now you used a word last night which we hadn't heard before and we've looked it up and we can't find it in our dictionary. I hope those sisters now have a more modern dictionary because I'm going to use the same word again. One qualification in understanding the epistle to the Hebrews is the quality of empathy. Now it's not such a modern word as you might think, but it's something, whether we know the word or not, it's something we know about. Putting ourselves into somebody else's shoes, getting under their skin, able to [00:03:14] think as they think, able to understand what makes them tick and so on. And really, unless we have a reasonable understanding of the position and the thought processes and the background of the Hebrew Christians in the middle of the first century AD, it will be difficult for us to get full value from the epistle to the Hebrews. Now, because of that, a second qualification which will help tremendously [00:04:01] is a reasonable acquaintance with Old Testament typology. Some of the types and the images and figures that come into Old Testament teaching. Now, it was for that reason that on Saturday we began our studies by looking at one major aspect of Psalm 110, and that was this. God has in reserve a king whom he has anointed, who was worthy in every respect to govern on God's behalf. And in tribute to that, even before the time when the kingdom proper starts, God has his anointed king [00:05:04] in a place of exaltation at his own right hand. And as Psalm 110 says, quoted several times in part or in full in the epistle to the Hebrews, sit thou at my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool. And hopefully without laboring it, that was the major burden of our first study, that that which God had said hundreds of years beforehand will come to pass because as Isaiah was able to record of God, God says, I have purposed it, I will do it. Now, it wasn't the direct burden on Saturday. If the Lord spares us, it will be the intention tomorrow to look at the [00:06:05] other major burden of Psalm 110. And that is that if a king is to rule in righteousness as he will, it can

only be on the basis of every righteous claim of God having been met. And this is such a sacrifice that God's mighty king could delegate this to no one else. This is something that he had to do for himself. And this is why God's king will be a priest as well as king. And if the Lord will, tomorrow night, we look at the burden of that. Established a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. But tonight, in between those relatively straightforward sessions, we have [00:07:07] what to me is more difficult. I hope that doesn't put anybody off. Tonight, we are going to consider a vital concept, a thought process, and we are going to look at words in Scripture to try to arrive at what they mean. But I am assured that once we get this concept in our minds, in our understanding, once and for all, it will make all the difference to understanding the truth of God in general and the truth in the epistle to the Hebrews in particular. If we are to empathize [00:08:04] with converted Jews, like those to whom the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews addressed himself, we will have to come to this basic understanding. There has only ever been one God-initiated, God-introduced, God-sustained religion on this earth, and that is the Hebrew religion. Orthodox Hebrews brought up in that environment held their heads high. How great their favor, being born into such a nation. They had heard the gospel of the grace of God preached. [00:09:04] They had repented of their sins. They had trusted Christ as Saviour, and they had to learn that Christ personally, and the value and the worth of his mighty work at Calvary, which was the basis for all blessing, that Christ personally, on the basis of his work, is the fulfillment of all that the Hebrew religion looked forward and anticipated from the hand of the blessed God, in part and in whole, in every detail, as to the blessing that they looked for, as said in another book in the [00:10:09] New Testament, all the promises of God are yea and amen in him. And these Hebrew believers had come to appreciate this, that in Christ, all that was foreshadowed in the teaching of the Hebrew religion found its utter, perfect, complete, entire fulfillment in Christ. And Paul, or whoever the writer was, I withdraw that. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, it's rare for me to say that, the writer was God. In addressing himself to the Hebrew believers, the one who was used to hold [00:11:06] the pen to write the text of the epistle to the Hebrews, had this to say to them. If, having abandoned the Hebrew religion, because you've come to realize that everything that your religion and the canon of Holy Scripture, what we call the Old Testament, because it all looked forward to him, and its message prepared the hearts of his earthly people, so that at his advent, when he came into the world, that they were attracted to him as the fulfillment of all that God had ever said to them. If, having rightly been weaned away from that, to Christ personally, if subsequently you turn back [00:12:09] to that law, back to that Old Testament system, in effect you are turning away from Christ and abandoning the promises of God to which you've been brought. And he uses strong language on occasion, and if the Lord will, on Friday evening, we look at some of the burden of the strong exhortations that he's given. But another way that he speaks is this. He said, when Christ came, demonstrating that in him is the reality, the substance, all that went before, by comparison, is by way of being a [00:13:03] shadow. With the coming of Christ into the world, the shadows have passed and the substance has arrived. And I've read verses from chapter 8 and 10 which remind us that the terms shadow and substance are not mere theological terms thought up by men, however clever or wise they might be. These are words that the Holy Ghost teaches. I visit many Christian homes, happy to do so. In many of them, well, invariably, I look at the bookshelves to see what books you have. Very often, I see a book which [00:14:01] may well be an excellent book with excellent substance inside. May well be that the writer is a very reliable expositor. I don't know, I haven't read any of his works. But the title of the book offends me in the light of the epistle to the Hebrews. It's by a writer, I think his name is Henry Drummond, and the title of the book is The Natural Law in the Spiritual World. When I see that title, I wince. Because while I might agree with what the writer says in the book, I cannot accept the title because it gives me the impression from the title that the writer seems to think that the primary world, the important world, the fundamental world, the real [00:15:04] world, is the natural world. And the copy, the secondary world, is the spiritual world. Now, for reasons we will

see, I cannot accept that as a proposition. I'd be very happy if the title of the book was The Spiritual Law in the Natural World. We sometimes get deceived in our thinking by considering what comes first in time and the first time we recognize it as being the real thing and anything after that a copy. God has implanted within creation, God has implanted in the Old Testament, many concepts, many images, which show, give indications of things that God has [00:16:09] ever had in mind, in his will, in his purpose, before time began. I must say that I learned from Scripture that the primary world is that which God has ever had in mind, the world of spiritual, heavenly, eternal realities. That is the substance. The natural world, which is secondary, and from which we can get indications of what God has ever had in mind, contains these copies. But being the secondary world, instead of being concerned with that which is heavenly, it is [00:17:06] concerned with that which is earthly. Instead of being concerned with that which is eternal, it's concerned with that which is temporal, relative to time. And instead of being concerned with that which is spiritual, it is concerned with that which is material and sensual. Now, that is the major lesson of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Hebrew religion, right in its place, at its stage in the development of the revelation of God, was concerned with that which was earthly, temporal, and sensual, related to the five senses. Christianity, being God's primary world, [00:18:10] primary thought, is concerned with that which is eternal, and spiritual, and heavenly. If we get that from our sessions together this week, we've learned perhaps the major lesson that we need to learn. And Hebrew believers, who seem to be indicating that they were being prepared to turn their backs on Christianity and go back to Judaism, were abandoning, again, let us say, they were abandoning the eternal, spiritual, heavenly substance, and they were going back to the temporal, sensual, material, earthly, secondary shadow. Now, that is the major lesson of the [00:19:08] Epistle to the Hebrews. Now, one other question, a major question, which I think I will tackle on this matter of shadow and substance. The Epistle to the Hebrews takes up, in a major way, lessons to be learned from the tabernacle system. I've often wondered, I think I've often asked in Bible readings, I'm not sure that I've ever had an answer that satisfies me, but I've come to certain conclusions myself. Why is it the concept of the tabernacle and not the concept of the temple [00:20:11] that's introduced so much in the Epistle to the Hebrews? Well, one thought that comes to mind is, the tabernacle was God's thought from the outset. God's mind, God's instruction, God's pattern, God's servants carried it out. When you read carefully, the temple was constructed in deference, in deference by God, to David's specific request. Check in 1st Samuel and 1st Chronicles, I think you'll find that is so. Yes, God was gracious, and he said, right, [00:21:03] I will allow men to build me a material structure which seems to be appropriate, and I will allow men to do it, but he said to David, now you're a man of war. You can collect the materials, but you can't make it, but your son can. What is the difference in the major teaching between the tabernacle and the temple? Which again, to me, confirms how appropriate it is that the substance is conveyed by the tabernacle and not by the temple. Now, I may use another word. This, to me, is a paradox. Not easy to understand. The facts seem to suggest [00:22:01] one thing, but the scripture says something different. Difficult to understand. The tabernacle, physically, in material terms, was a temporary structure. You could put it up, you could take it down. It was a camp, and every time they moved on, they took it with them. But it wasn't a permanent building, and yet the paradox is that when we learn the teaching in the epistle to the Hebrews and the rest of the New Testament, we find that this temporary structure that the nation of Israel used in the wilderness to signify to them that God was amongst them, dwelling amongst [00:23:03] them, that it is the tabernacle which directs us in the ultimate to God's eternal, spiritual, heavenly realities. The temple, on the other hand, was a permanent building. Solid stone, magnificent in its design and execution. And yet, in interpretation and application, the temple doesn't set forth God's eternal thoughts, God's great thoughts, God's magnificent thoughts, relative not to eternity but to the world to come of which we hope to speak on Saturday. If I were asked to distinguish between major differences between the tabernacle and the [00:24:11] temple, one

distinction I would draw is this. The tabernacle signifies God's desire to dwell among his people eternally. It is the dwelling of God, an eternal concept. Turn to Revelation 21, see that in eternity God's desire is to dwell among men. The temple depicts the display of the glory of God not in eternity proper but in the millennium, the world to come. Now, I think that's entirely in line with the epistle to the Hebrews which supports that concept, [00:25:07] doesn't it? Because the substance, what God has primarily in mind, is suggested in tabernacle terms and not in temple terms. There are flashes here and there which might well be indicative of features that come out in the temple but in the main it is the tabernacle that comes out. So if God is going to display his glory in the millennium, he is certainly going to dwell among his people not only in the world to come but throughout eternity. Now, I would suggest that it is when we get so many of these features of the tabernacle system introduced into the [00:26:05] epistle to the Hebrews, it tells us both things. It is the tabernacle which directs us to God's eternal thoughts and purpose and it is a confirmation that everything in that system, the materials used, the way it was constructed, the functions that were performed within its boundaries, all direct us to the real substance of eternal spiritual heavenly blessing to which we and the converted Hebrew saints were brought in their day. Now, I would suggest that's the major lesson in the epistle to the Hebrews. Now, I'd like to use the rest of the time tonight. I [00:27:06] would be satisfied if we all search the scriptures and come to conclusions in line with what I've said tonight. Really, if we've learned that lesson tonight, it's not only an entree into all the rest of the week but as long as we are here in the flesh, we have the secret of the understanding of the epistle to the Hebrews, I would suggest. Now, I've quoted in my heading for the meeting, shadow and substance. But I'd like to direct you to other concepts, other figures of speech which are used in the epistle, which all add up to what I've previously said up to now. [00:28:05] And as we read the verses, we perhaps read them all first and then we'll go back and collect a few of the things together. Now, the first one is in chapter 4. Words to take away, words the Holy Ghost speaketh, that we can take away and meditate upon and will add up in the aggregate to this distinction between shadow and substance. Chapter 4, verse 11, let us labor therefore to enter into that rest lest any man fall after the same example, example of unbelief. This is one of the words that the writer is constrained to use by the Holy Ghost. Verse 15, we have not an high [00:29:09] priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin. Like as we are, there is a similarity between what was contained in the Hebrew religion and Christianity proper. There is a similarity like as we are. And in order, and we'll come to this tomorrow if the Lord will, there are things that the Lord Jesus experienced similar in part to what we experience that fitted him for his present function as high priest.

[00:30:04] Chapter 5 and verse 12, when for the time ye ought to be teachers ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat. Notice the words principles, notice the word oracles which are concepts that we need to think about in understanding how God has taught his people over the ages. And then two metaphors that are used towards the end, milk, ye have need of milk and not of strong meat. Again words worthy of study. Verse 13 again uses the word milk for [00:31:01] everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness for he is a babe. The word milk, the word babe, do not mean actual, physical, material milk or an actual babe. It's speaking, it's using the words metaphorically using the terms of condition. Verse 14, but again strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age. It needs a good fully developed digestive system to be able to accept and put to use within the body strong meat. Chapter 6 and verse 1, therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ let us go on unto perfection. Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God of the doctrine of baptisms [00:32:07] and of laying on of hands and of resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment. Doctrine. Doctrine is good. Doctrine is essential.

Doctrine is teaching. Of course we have to make sure it's good doctrine haven't we? Scripture speaks of good doctrine, the doctrine of the Lord, the doctrine of God our Savior, the Apostles doctrine. Paul speaks to Titus of sound doctrine and to Timothy of good doctrine. Now that's all excellent but of course the Lord Jesus himself warned of the peril of paying heed to the doctrine of the Pharisees, the doctrine of the Sadducees, the doctrine of [00:33:05] men, the doctrine of evil men, strange doctrines and so on. Well doctrine is good but we need to make sure it's good doctrine. Well chapter 6 verses 1 and 2, surprising really not easy to understand. If you look at it closely you find that the writer is speaking about fundamental universal concepts, everlasting truths, true in every day and dispensation. That's why these general terms like washings, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, eternal judgment, things that were true in Judaism, things which are abidingly true are setting forth the truth of God provided it's [00:34:03] seen in its proper context. Chapter 7 verse 15, and it is yet far more evident for that after the similitude of Melchizedek there arises another prophet. Another good word, similitude. God has not only taught plainly in doctrine which he has, he has not only given examples or illustrations, he has injected, implanted into his holy record the history of real people who are intended to signify in their person, in their qualities, in the work they did, things that we need to learn about the Lord Jesus Christ. Like Psalm 110, Genesis 14, telling us about this person Melchizedek, [00:35:11] we need to consider him in some detail tomorrow night, but in Melchizedek we see a certain similarity, a similitude, a representation of what God wants us to learn about Christ. Now, this comes out in many places, but more detail you must read tomorrow. Chapter 7 verse 16, who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. Here he says, contrasting the shadow with the substance, he said not a law, a set of rules imposed from the outside, but [00:36:01] prompted, empowered by an inner, the inner life that God brings in. He says shadow and substance compared. Chapter 8 verse 5, which we read, the priests serve unto the example, and here's this actual word shadow, of heavenly things as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle, for see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount. Example, shadow, pattern. Chapter 9 verse 9. The first tabernacle was a figure, another good word, a figure for the time then present in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience. [00:37:05] We learn an idea in one thing or one person which makes it easier for us to transfer the thought to someone else, in this case Christ. Verse 23, it was therefore necessary, well verse 19, sorry, when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, and so on. Verse 23, it was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better things than these. Now here we are beginning to get to statements of scripture which give me assurance in the conclusion that I've arrived at. [00:38:02] Earthly things are the shadow, the heavenly things are the substance, the heavenly things themselves, better things than these. Verse 24, for Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands which are figures of the true, but into heaven itself. Again, the material structures in the wilderness were figures, the realities are connected with heaven. If you're using a Darby translation, you'll be happy to see, no doubt, his marginal note about chapter 9, verse 24, and this word figures. I was being very pleased to find at least someone who agrees with me on this. I think the note says, the heavenly things were the original, and the pattern is the copy. [00:39:10] There it is. Heavenly, spiritual, eternal things are God's reality. The things that are not seen are eternal, as we learn elsewhere. The things that are seen are temporal and earthly and only abide for a time. Chapter 10, verse 1, the law having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things. When I was at school, there was an object which was real, there was an image which wasn't real. It was a reflection in a mirror, quite often. What we learn when we are young stays in our minds, but in Scripture, certainly in the New [00:40:06] Testament, the term image is used for what is real. The Lord Jesus is the image of the invisible God. One of the first things we need to learn in Bible readings

or studying the Scripture, difference between image and likeness. Image, representation, likeness, resemblance. Colossian truth. Here, putting it in easier words to understand, the law is the shadow and not the real thing, not the very image. Yes, the good things are coming. The law having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the thing. The coming good things have been realized [00:41:02] in Christ. Fundamental message in the epistle to the Hebrews. Chapter 10, verse 34, ye had compassion of me in my bonds, took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. The substance is related to heavenly things and not to earthly things. What a hard lesson for those Hebrew believers to learn. Having geared in their thinking all their lives that these things they could touch and handle and see and smell and hear were God's divinely appointed religion and so they were until Christ came. 1119, Abraham accounted that God was able to raise Isaac up even from the dead. From whence [00:42:08] also he received him in a figure. Consider that one. The fact that Abraham had come to terms with the idea that he'd given Isaac up to God was willing for him to be offered in sacrifice. He was as good as dead and when God said you've got there in your heart that's sufficient for me, look at the ram, take the ram. He received, it was resurrection in a figure. The thought is transferred from Isaac, well from the ram to Isaac and from Isaac to Christ. And a final word of exhortation, chapter 13 and verse 9, be not carried about with strong or strange and diverse [00:43:01] doctrines. Now there must be about 15 different words but may I commend to your study and I'll give you them in alphabetical order just so that I'm not attempting to put a priority to them. Consider those verses which speak of doctrine, chapter 6 verse 1, chapter 6 verse 2, chapter 13 verse 9. Example, chapter 4 verse 11, chapter 8 verse 5, where God illustrates the truth, these difficult eternal spiritual heavenly concepts by giving us things we can see in our own sphere of existence which exemplify the truth of God. These things are illustrations, [00:44:02] examples. Figure, three times used, 9 verse 9, 9 verse 24, 11 verse 19, where there is a form, an outline, where the idea is transferred from one object to another. I love that term in chapter 10 verse 1, the very image. Speaking of God's reality, the very image of the things. Pattern, chapter 8 verse 5, 9 verse 23. A pattern, and they did cast things in those days, a pattern, now it's worth thinking about this, a pattern is a model of an object which is to be made. Now in order to produce the pattern, the model of the final thing, the originator knows in his [00:45:08] mind and has produced a plan in order that the pattern might be produced. And then from the pattern, the mold of the final object is cast. Now that's a very good concept implanted in the Word of God. God's thoughts didn't start with the pattern, the shadow. He had in mind what he was going to do finally. And then he said, make a model on this pattern according to the pattern that I will show you, bearing in mind that that itself, itself is not the reality. The reality is the substance and that is the thing which will finally emerge. The word shadow, we read the two [00:46:04] occasions, 8 verse 5, 10 verse 1. I'll allow you to define a shadow. To me, a shadow, I suppose, is the shade which has no reality or substance of its own, but takes its outline from the reality whose shadow it is. Well, you make up your own form of words. But it is the object, the reality, which casts the shadow. Now, so it is, shadow and substance. The substance is the reality. The substance is the real thing. The substance is the principle that was in the mind of the originator right from the outset. And the writer said to the Hebrew believers, and he says to us, [00:47:03] if having trusted Jesus as your Savior, wonderful thing, if subsequently you turn to anything else, if you copy an Old Testament theology, things that are based upon material, sensual things, things which depend upon ornate buildings and fancy clothes and things that you can smell like incense, whether you realize it or not, God says you're departing from the substance which is Christ, and you're giving every indication you're going back to the shadow, which had its purpose for the nation of Israel. The shadow has given place to the substance. Christ, personally, [00:48:07] and his work constitute the reality that God has ever had in mind.