

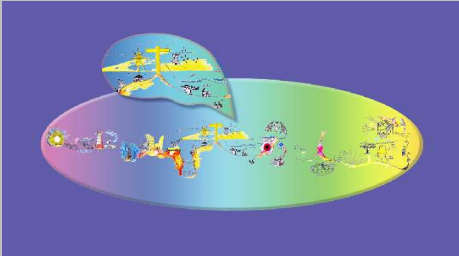
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We believe in one GOD, in three persons; FATHER, SON and HOLY SPIRIT. We regard the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) as the only infallible authoritative WORD OF GOD.

HULDAH MINISTRY aims to return to the Word Of God, founded on Hebrew background and to interpret it from Hebraic perspective, acknowledging that Jesus is a Jew and the Jewish-ness of His teaching as a continuation from the Hebrew Bible. The Ministry also aims to put His teaching into practice, to have a closer relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, and to regularly have a Christian fellowship so that this-worldly kingdom of God will materialise in the midst of the followers of Jesus here and now, as well as earnestly seeking Christ's Return to establish the otherworldly Kingdom of God on earth.

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HULDAH MINISTRY

LETTER TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

【 SABBATH-REST 】

It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honour and put everything under his feet." In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. ... Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.... For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest, whom we confess. ...Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, ...Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.... We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first....Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua

had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no-one will fall by following their example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.
HEBREWS 2:5~4:13.

In the Bible, there are various ways in which the deity of Christ is depicted. As I briefly overviewed "The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews" in the last letter, the book of Hebrews is very unique in that the author begins the Epistle with a comparison of Jesus Christ with other heavenly beings and other Old Testament prophets and thereby stressing Christ's utmost superiority to anyone else.

In these last days God has spoken to us by His very Person, through whom God made the universe and also through whom provided purification for our sins and who has been from the very beginning of the universe...sustaining all things by His powerful Word, at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. Thus, now that God directly speaks to us in the fullness of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Creator of all things, the author of the Epistle stresses the importance of believing in the revelation given concerning Christ. The great salvation is now no longer deniable, which was first proclaimed by the Lord Himself and which was later confirmed by His apostles and to which God also testified by signs, wonders and various miracles wherever the Word was preached and also by the gifts of the Holy Spirit that were distributed to Christ's followers. Accordingly, **there is nowhere else for Jewish believers to turn, but to faith in Christ**, and they have to abide in Christ firmly by holding fast to what they had initially heard. This was the first warning message out of five given to the then wavering Jewish Christians in the midst of the temptation of being driven back to Jewish ritual traditions, national sentiments and religiously pious emotions. Up to that time when the Epistle was written, the church had increasingly been characterised by the Gentiles.

The second warning is **against unbelief in the sufficiency of God**, which I would like to explore in this letter. In the second part of the outline of the Epistle, from 2:5 to 4:13, the author focuses on the humanity of *the Son of Man*, having emphasised the great truth of the divinity of *'the Son of God,'* in the first part. God's angels, who were a little greater than man in power and might, have been used by God as His messengers to serve or minister to man. For example, the law was put into effect through them and the people of Israel were led in the wilderness by them. But God did not purpose His angels to rule over humanity in **"the age to come"** (*'the world to come, about which we are speaking'* in the quoted text at the beginning, however, the word **'age'** is preferable, rather than **'world'**), i.e., the millennium kingdom, but for it to be ruled by the Lord. As the author points out, it is obvious at present since the fall of man that we do not yet see everything subject to *'the son of man,'* apart from *'the Son of Man,'* Christ Jesus. The circumstances around us are far from the redeemed condition that God had initially intended for us and we are still witnessing rebellion against God, ignorance of the Word of God, rejection of the Holy Spirit, violation of the law and God's creation order, under the influence of evil in this world. Even Christ's authority is not being fully exercised so far. Despite this, by faith in Him we see that what was prophesied concerning the salvation of man has perfectly been accomplished by Christ, the Son of Man. If Christ had remained in the heavenly realms, it would have been impossible for Him, the immortal deity, to die in place of a mortal and sinful man. That is why He had to become man, and be made **'a little lower than the angels'** so that He could die as man for every sinful man as well as for all creation that had been victimised since man's fall. Thus, He can now deliver "all" under the curse from the bondage of corruption.

Leviticus 14 illustrates an interesting example of ceremonial cleansing from infectious skin diseases, which was done after a person was cured, as a proclamation of purification by the priest: ***"These are the regulations for the diseased person at the time of his ceremonial cleansing, when he is brought to the priest: The priest is to go outside the camp and examine him. If the person has been healed of his infectious skin disease the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop be brought for the one to be cleansed. Then the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in a clay pot. He is then to take the live bird and dip it, together with the***

cedar wood, the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, into the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. Seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the infectious disease and pronounce him clean. Then he is to release the live bird in the open fields (14:2-7). The birds used here typify “**death**” (bird killed outside the camp) and “**resurrection**” respectively. Through this rite the person concerned was effectively made free and publicly pronounced clean from diseases and disorders as a result of ‘sin’ through faith in the blood that is symbolised in ‘**scarlet**’ and also through the cross symbolised in ‘**wood**’. In the Old Testament, skin diseases (usually leprosy) were often seen as symbols of sin, which gradually and progressively undermines man’s whole body. The nature of leprosy surprisingly parallels that of sin. According to the interpretation by H.A. Ironside, the two ceremonially clean birds, one of which was to be killed in a clay pot (an earthen vessel) over fresh- (running-) water and the other, which was to be let loose in the open fields after being dipped in the blood of the dead bird, both typify one Christ. The dead bird symbolises one aspect of salvation, how Christ, the heavenly One entered into “the earthen vessel” of humanity in order to die. The other bird that was set free in the end symbolises Christ as the risen One who has made us sinners free from the yoke of bondage by His precious blood and triumphantly returned to the heavens. It is fascinating to note that ‘**fresh water,**’ i.e., ‘**living water**’ and ‘**blood**’ meet in this ancient ritual, in the light of the factual and observant account of Christ’s death on the cross that a stab in His side with a spear by a Roman soldier brought a ‘**sudden flow of blood and water**’ and also in the light of the apostle John’s teaching about Christ’s identity: ‘**This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and they are in agreement. ... And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.**’ (1John5:6-11). ‘**Water**’ typifies Jesus’ baptism and ‘**blood**’, His **death** on the cross. The former initiated Christ’s ministry on earth and the latter completed it, and both at His baptism and His death the Spirit testified that Jesus was the Christ. All three—the Spirit, the water and the blood— were harmoniously involved as witnesses in Christ’s most important moments and events and they significantly point to one single act of God in Christ for man’s salvation. The mystical and ancient Hebrew rite indeed seems to symbolise that after justification (corresponding to “cleansing out of diseases (a symbol of sin), followed by presenting his- or her-self before the priest for the ritual”) he or she who confesses his or her belief in Christ through the ritual of baptism would be set free solely owing to God-man Jesus’ sacrificial atonement, once-for-all sufficient redemption for everyone. A purified life corresponds to life with Christ and in Christ.

Thus, Jesus Christ, through His own suffering enabled ‘**many sons**’ to be brought into glory and thus all the sanctified ones by Christ who first set Himself apart to be holy, are gloriously to be all one with Him as God’s family. It was in order that He ‘**might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God**’ and also in order that He might be the prototype of what all men should be, that Christ entered into all human experiences from temptation to suffering like His brothers, apart from sin. Accordingly, Christ is not only superior to Aaron, the high priest in the ancient priesthood but also to Moses, the great apostle of faith and deliverer of Israel. While Moses was faithful in all God’s house, Christ is a faithful Son over God’s household and yet also the builder of the house. If Christ is Son over His Father’s house, by virtue of His Son-ship the house is His and accordingly we, holy brothers of Christ, who ‘**share in the heavenly calling**’ but not in an earthly calling, of which the people of Israel were partakers, will be His house. Moses was the great human mediator of the old covenant, but his work just pointed forwards to that which should come after him and actually, the kind of work to which Moses witnessed was accomplished by Christ. In other words, Christ is the fulfilment of what Moses had foreseen and prophesied: ‘**The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly...The LORD said to me: ...I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth...**’ (De.18:15-18). Moses pointed to none other than Christ Himself at that time beyond the ages.

Christ is the Mediator of the new-covenant in the place of Moses and He is worthy of more glory and honour. While to be ‘**God’s house**’ is a great privilege for the Christian church, however, the author of the Epistle warns us of the danger of exclusion by indicating that God’s promise is conditional: ‘**And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast**’ (Line added).

Ironside comments on 3:6: ‘The **if** in this verse is a test of progression. It was very possible then, and it is still, that men might mingle with a Christian company and find a certain amount of gladness and joy springing from an intellectual acquaintance with Christianity, who after all are not truly born of God. Continuance proves the reality of our confession.’ The author’s warning turns solemn by exemplifying the past failure of the Israelites from 3:7 onwards. It was a stern fact that a great majority of the Israelites, who had been delivered out of the hands of the Egyptians, then failed to enter the Promised Land, Canaan, but instead, perished in the wilderness because of their faithlessness. The warning to the wavering Jewish Christians who were stranded between the new and old covenants, and who were being drawn to the idea of the need for continuous repetition of sacrifice for their sin, was not a mere quotation from the Hebrew Scriptures but it was prompted by the Holy Spirit and it still speaks to us ‘today’. Even after witnessing God’s mighty works in the wilderness for ‘**forty years,**’ the majority of the Israelites still hardened their hearts and turned away from the living God. In the same way, the book of Hebrews was written probably after around ‘forty years’ since the proclamation of the gospel by the Lord Himself, which means that the readers themselves would have witnessed Christ’s earthly ministry, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, ascension and His apostles’ powerful ministries, and so there would have been no escape from God’s judgement for those who turned away from the Lord. By the same token, today when there is still plenty of opportunity for everyone to hear God’s Word, its refusal means rejection of God. The author’s solemn warning to all Christians is based on the fact that even the Israelites who had shared the joy and blessing of God in their deliverance from Egypt failed to enter the Promised Land because of unbelief and disobedience, that is, sin.

In Chapter 4, the author exhorts Jewish Christians to enter into rest: ‘**Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.**’ (4:1). God’s promise of entering into His rest, i.e., salvation still stands open today. There are four different rests: ‘**creation rest**’, ‘**Canaan rest**’, ‘**Calvary rest**’ and ‘**eternal rest**’ in terms adopted by Ironside. The ‘**rest**’ standing available, mentioned in 4:1 is not our present enjoyment in Christ (Calvary rest) at all, but our end-purpose, ‘eternal rest’. The majority of the Israelites had heard the Word but it was not combined with faith and so it had no value. The result was for them an irredeemable loss and a permanent missing of God’s best. By the same token, we, who have heard the gospel of Christ and responded have already entered God’s rest (Calvary rest), however, it is still possible for us to fail to reach His eternal rest unless our confession in Christ is combined with continual faith and obedience. However it should also be reminded that although God proclaimed that the unfaithful Israelites should not enter in (Canaan rest), by virtue of Christ, human history has witnessed that the remnant of His people who believed in Jesus as their long awaited Messiah and Lord were entering in His rest (Calvary rest).

On the seventh day after His creation activities, God entered into His Sabbath rest. In His Word in Psalm 95:11, ‘**They shall never enter my rest**’, where He expressed His rest in terms of the future, this rest could refer neither merely to ‘creation rest’ nor to ‘Canaan rest’, because at the time this was written, the Israelites had long since entered Canaan, and consequently it must refer to another better rest, i.e., ‘eternal rest’ prepared for those for whom God preserves the rewards (God’s own ‘**Sabbath-rest**’) in the future. As Israel’s great leader, Joshua led the people of God who were obedient to Him into ‘Canaan rest,’ so Jesus whose Hebrew name is also Joshua led those who believed in Him into the present ‘Calvary rest’. Further, Jesus Christ will still lead only those who remain faithful to Him to the end into eternal rest at a later time. In this regards, ‘**a Sabbath-rest for the people of God**’ still remains available. Those who have just entered ‘Calvary rest’ in the present, therefore, are required to cease to do their own works because we cannot earn our own salvation by works but by faith alone. Even now, we can share in God’s own Sabbath-rest by simply trusting in Him, fully assured of our salvation and not to strive to earn it. However, the ultimate ‘eternal rest’ lies beyond life in this age and is yet to be fully consummated in the Lord’s Second Coming.

In the end the author reminds the believers of the most powerful weapon required to complete the race to get a prize, ‘**so that no one will fall by following their (the Israelites’) example of disobedience.**’ It is the Word of God, which alone is the supreme standard of judgment and which clearly distinguishes between what is outward, revealed and what is inward, hidden. As the Psalmist proclaimed, God’s Word is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path. As long as we are instructed by His Word, and remain faithful to it, we will be on the right track to ‘eternal rest’. Otherwise, as ‘**(N)othing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight,**’ we must stand and face the living Word of God, Jesus Christ and give account of all our deeds, thoughts, and will exercised by our own physical body and soul. Therefore, Paul taught, ‘**judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts.**’ (1Co.4:5).