

 **RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD** - Read Hebrews 6:13-20 again. Note the connection in God's faithfulness and our confidence (verse 18). Have you thought about that? The ground of our salvation can't be found within us, because we are weak and often fail. Confidence can only be found in knowing God will keep His word - for example, forgiving our sins when we ask. This is an "anchor for the soul" and gives real "hope" (verse 19)!

 **IN THE MINIVAN** - This is the week to talk about animal sacrifices. The Bible is filled with sacrificing but sometimes we assume kids "get it" without ever really talking about why sacrifices were required. Help your children see that sin kills and that a just God can't and won't pretend sin didn't happen. Sin costs! In the Old Testament that cost was an animal's life. Ultimately that was not sufficient and so Jesus dies for our sins, the one time sacrifice (10:1-12). Many today ask "Why did Jesus have to die for my sins?" That question makes clear that they don't understand the sacrificial system in the Old Testament that was designed to teach us the horror, pain and cost of our own sin.

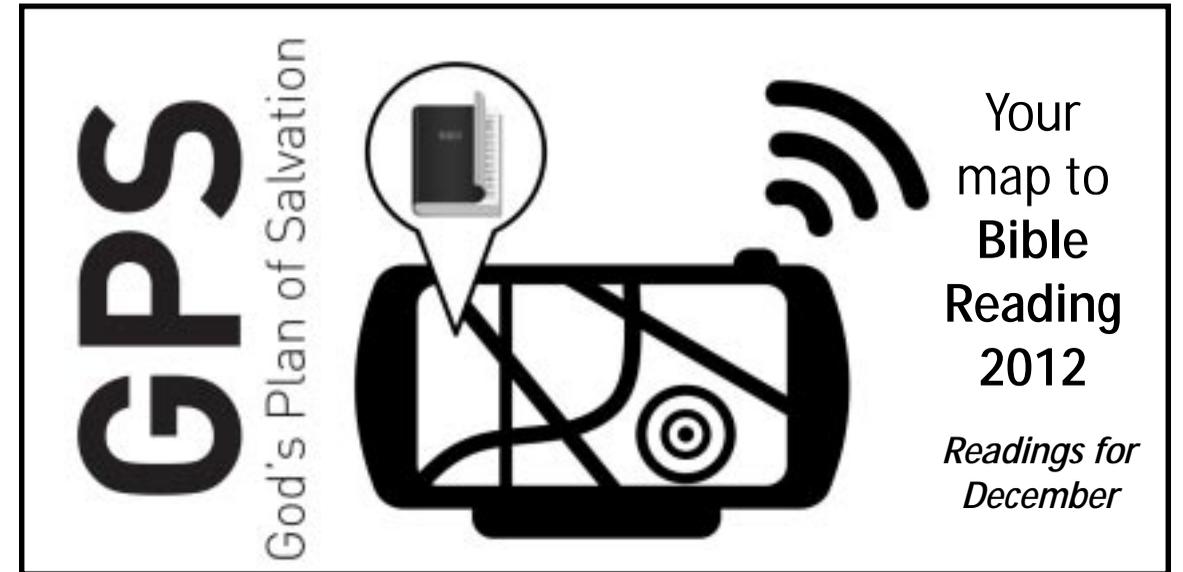
Week 52 - Dec 23-29 - Heb 11 Rev 4 Rev 5 Rev 21 Rev 22

 **SNAPSHOT - Hebrews 11** uses the Old Testament heroes to urge us to keep running and not give up (Heb 12:1ff). Their faith in God is just like our faith (verse 6) and we can learn from their perseverance and faithfulness. After reading in Hebrews for the last two weeks, we turn our attention now to Revelation. An extensive discussion of this great book's signs and symbols is obviously beyond the scope of these brief guides. What we want to see here is how Revelation ties the story of the Bible up. In **Revelation 4** we see the throne of God, a scene that is full of Old Testament allusions and quotations. These pictures are drawn from Daniel 7, Ezekiel 1 and Isaiah 6. **Revelation 5** centers our attention on the Lamb that is a Lion (verses 5-6), clearly tying Jesus to the Passover lamb and/or the lamb of Isaiah 53 and the tribe of Judah (see Gen 49:9; Isaiah 11:1). There is a heavy emphasis on people of every race and tribe participating in God's kingdom (verses 9, 13) here. **Revelation 21** stresses the victory of God's people, again with many allusions to Old Testament imagery. Here we read of the city of God, the new Jerusalem as being the eternal home for God's people. The idea of restored or new Jerusalem figures prominently in the prophets, especially Isaiah. Its foursquare dimensions (verse 16) recall the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle. All the gold and precious jewels also remind us of the Tabernacle and Solomon's temple. But this isn't a temple, it is Heaven, the very home of God (verse 22). **Revelation 22** closes out the New Testament with a beautiful scene of the Tree of Life (verse 2). The last time we saw this Tree was in Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve sinned and were driven from the Garden, losing access to it. Now that access is restored by the work of Jesus Christ! We truly have come full circle.

 **RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD** - The focus in these scenes of Heaven is always God and worshiping and praising Him. We don't know everything about our eternal home but it certainly doesn't look like the "retirement home in the sky" that many make Heaven out to be, where we can enjoy carnal pleasures forever. Such seems far afield from what Scripture is showing us. How do you think about Heaven? How does Revelation remodel that thinking?

 **IN THE MINIVAN** - Heaven is the driving force in the Christian's life, because we were made to want God and to be with God for all eternity. Use this week's readings to light a fire in your child's heart of how great and incredible and beautiful and awesome Heaven will be. Help your kids see that there is nothing that can compare to Heaven, and that it is most literally worth everything to get there!

The GPS Reading Map is provided by the **Westside church of Christ**
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What a trip! Just eleven months ago we embarked on a journey through the Scriptures with the goal of seeing the Bible's one story with greater clarity and understanding. In our reading this year we have focused again and again on God's plan to redeem sinful people. That is truly what the Bible is about. It's not the only thing in the Bible - there is poetry and proverbs and more - but it is the Bible's overriding theme that ties everything else together. As we conclude our reading this year, it is important to remember that the Word of God has a very forward look to it. It begins with creation and all being good. Then sin enters the world, ruining everything (Gen 3). The Bible then records the story of Abraham's promises (Gen 12), that ultimately give birth to the nation of Israel (Exo 20) from which the Messiah will come. Then Jesus comes and does what only He could ever do. The book of Acts records the next act in this divine drama, as the church continues Jesus' work once He ascends back to Heaven. That leads us to the Epistles. These books do look forward to the time of Jesus' return, teaching God's people how to live in the meantime. In these last four weeks, we will spend some time sampling some of these epistles, and watching how they use Old Testament ideas to help New Testament Christians serve God.

Week 49 - Dec 2-8 - Ephesians 2 Eph 3 Eph 4 Eph 5 Eph 6

 **SNAPSHOT** - The church at Ephesus was experiencing some Gentile-Jew tensions. In **Ephesians 2** Paul works to cool those problems by reminding them how they are all one in Christ (verse 17). Note the language of strangers and aliens (verse 19), "prophets" (verse 20) and "temple" (verse 21). These are all concepts thoroughly rooted in the Old Testament. **Ephesians 3** contains Paul's great explanation of the "mystery" that so many Jews missed when they read the Scriptures: that Gentiles were to be included *equally* in God's family (verse 6). This was God's *eternal* purpose (verse 11). It is a central part of the Bible's major theme. **Ephesians 4** urges the application of the truths Paul has been explaining so that there will be unity in Ephesus, keying off of Psalm 68 to do so (verse 8). **Ephesians 5** continues those admonitions, using Genesis 2:24 as the basis for understanding roles in the family (verse 31). **Ephesians 6** opens with a quotation from Exodus 20 and the Ten Commandments (verse 2). The chapter concludes with stirring calls to spiritual warfare against our adversary, the devil (verses 10-20).



RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD - Ephesians 4-6 help us see that knowing about God’s plan to save sinful people isn’t enough. We have to live differently as a result of being saved, and becoming part of the story of redemption. Make a list of the admonitions in these chapters. Circle two or three and resolve to pray over these and work to make them part of your every day walk.



IN THE MINIVAN - The theme of Ephesians is unity in Christ. It is important to discuss church unity with your children so they will understand their part in “maintaining the unity of the Spirit” (Eph 4:2) someday. Talk about how to get along with people who are different than we are. Discuss what happens when someone has to have their way all the time. Read carefully through Ephesians 4 and single out those verses that show how bad behavior “in church” isn’t something for the assembly, but how brethren weren’t doing right and it was disrupting their ability to work and function together. You may want to talk about what wrecks a family’s unity and then make comparisons to the family of God, the church. These are not easy chapters to read with small children but learning the value and importance of church unity is so very important.

Week 50 - Dec 9-15 - 1 Pet 1 1 Pet 2 Heb 3 Heb 4 Heb 5



SNAPSHOT - In **1 Peter 1** Peter announces that he is writing to the churches found in north Galatia (verse 1). Verse 2’s allusion to sprinkling blood recalls the covenant ceremony of Exodus 24. The holiness of God that stands at the center of the Old Law (especially books like Leviticus) is invoked in verses 15-16. The chapter ends with discussion of Jesus as a sacrifice (verse 19), God’s eternal plan (verse 20), and God’s indestructible word (verses 24-25 cite Isaiah 40, calling on God’s people to trust in God). **1 Peter 2** is remarkable because it encourages its readers to seek the Scriptures (verse 2). Yet some in Peter’s audience were Gentiles, who had not grown up reading the Bible (note 1:18). Peter wants them to study the Bible! Heavy use is made of stone imagery in verses 6-8, a metaphor common in the Old Testament (see Isaiah 8:14; 28:16; 51:1; Psalm 118:22; Daniel 2:34). The “cornerstone” is the most important stone in a building. Note that Christians are a chosen race (i.e. Abraham’s children), and priests (verse 9), a holy nation and God’s special people (echoing Exo 19:5-6). The chapter concludes by tying everything to Jesus, the suffering Messiah of Isaiah 53 (verses 21-24). From here we turn to what may be the most thoroughly Old Testament book in the New Testament, Hebrews. Hebrews was also written to Christians “under fire” (note Heb 10:34; 12:4). Its readers’ lives would become much easier if they would abandon Christianity and go home to Judaism. The Hebrew writer repeatedly argues that the Old Testament has been pointing to Jesus and that to forsake Christ is to go backwards. That theme is well argued in **Hebrews 3**. Jesus is set out as better than Moses (verses 3-6). Then the example of hard-hearted Israel in the wilderness is cited to remind the disciples not to be like their forefathers before who died in the wilderness (verses 7-19). **Hebrews 4** builds on chapter 3 with the concept of “rest.” Rest is important in the Old Testament. Under the Old Law rest defined the week, each Sabbath day, based on God’s rest from creating the world (verse 4). “Rest” becomes the key word to mean all the blessings of God, the good things God has for His people. But old Israel missed that rest, the land of Canaan (verse 8). So the rest God offers hasn’t been claimed, the Hebrew writer says. We can therefore enter that rest (verse 11), and our High Priest, Jesus, will help us (verses 14-16). Here “rest” means the Christian’s Promised Land, Heaven. In a powerful way the Hebrew writer knits the Old Testament to the New, using rest as the connecting link. **Hebrews 5** calls Melchizedek to center stage. For more on who Melchizedek is see “Under Construction” below. Jesus is our High Priest (an idea that began in 4:14) but what kind of priest is He? He is appointed High Priest after a different order than the order of Aaron (verses 6-10). The Hebrew writer wants to say more but suddenly pauses. His audience isn’t ready for that kind of “meat” yet (verses 11-14).



UNDER CONSTRUCTION - Who is Melchizedek? Melchizedek is an enormously important Old Testament character who appears only in Genesis 14. There Abraham meets this unusual man who is not an Israelite (he isn’t related to Abraham) but knows and serves the One true God. Indeed, he is both a king and priest (Gen 14:18)! Melchizedek is cited in Psalm 110, a Messianic psalm that is repeatedly referenced in the New Testament as being fulfilled in Christ, who is King and Priest (see Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:34-35). While we don’t know any details of Melchizedek’s life or his genealogy (he is “without father and mother” meaning his genealogy isn’t important), we know what he is: a type of Christ because he served as king and priest.



RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD - Hebrews 5:11-14 find itself in an appropriate place in our Bible reading this week. Sometimes Hebrews can be difficult, and its argument requires careful thought to trace out. Will we give up because it provokes us to some deeper thinking? Are we just babes who can’t handle the meat of the Word, or will we press on to learn the greater things of God as we see His plan working out across the ages and how we should live now?



IN THE MINIVAN - Hebrews looks like it would be tough to read with kids. But the many references to the Old Testament story provide plenty of places for parents to lean on the stories our children are familiar with. From **Hebrews 3 and 4** talk about why so many of the Israelites (all the adults but Joshua and Caleb!) didn’t enter into the Promised Land. From there talk about how we could end up similarly missing our “rest,” Heaven.

Week 51 - Dec 16-21 - Heb 6 Heb 7 Heb 8 Heb 9 Heb 10



SNAPSHOT - The Hebrew writer wants his readers to grow up, and strongly says so in **Hebrews 6**. Note the use of land language in verses 7-8, so reminiscent of the blessings and cursing section of Deuteronomy (see Deut. 28:12). Then the text plunges forward to show God as the Keeper of Promises (verses 13-20). The promises to Abraham are front and center here (verses 13-14). **Hebrews 7** returns to Melchizedek, picking up the thought that was broken off in 5:10. The argument here centers on the idea of superiority. Chapter 7 argues that if Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek and was blessed by him then Melchizedek must be greater than Abraham (verses 1-10). By extension, that would mean priests of the order of Melchizedek are also superior to priests from Abraham’s family, the order of Aaron (verses 11-24). Remember, Jesus couldn’t be a priest in Aaron’s order because He wasn’t a Levite. He was from Judah (verse 14). But God has promised that Jesus would be a priest (verse 21 citing Psalm 110) and so Jesus must be a priest. He *is* a priest, a Priest of a better order and a better covenant (verse 22-24). Further, Jesus is also far superior to Aaronic priests (verses 25-28). **Hebrews 8** is one of the most important chapters in the Bible. It brings together the figures and types of the old covenant to explain the new covenant in a powerful way. The Hebrew writer reasons that we have a better priest (than human, Aaronic priests) who is ministering in the *true* Tabernacle, Heaven (verses 1-6). Moses’ Tabernacle was important but it was simply a shadow of the genuine article (verse 5). Jesus is serving under the new covenant, a better covenant, the very covenant Jeremiah had prophesied in Jeremiah 31 (quoted in verses 7-12). In **Hebrews 9** the Tabernacle talk continues. In Moses’ Tabernacle priests, and only priests, went once a year before God to sprinkle blood and make atonement for sin (verses 1-10). Now, the greater High Priest, has gone to the genuine holy place (Heaven) to offer His own blood for our sins (verses 11-24). What Moses built so long ago in the Sinai desert was only a model of what Jesus would do someday at Calvary! **Hebrews 10** completes the argument, showing how Jesus’ sacrifice is far superior to those animal sacrifices. Note the strong practical admonitions that are built upon these truths, beginning in verse 19. Understanding what Jesus has done changes how we live! The Hebrew writer charges his readers not to give up and forsake Christ (verse 31-39). While we may not be tempted to go back to Judaism his point remains: we must not forsake Jesus who has done so much for us and makes forgiveness of sin possible!