Good and Better

One passage in the book of Hebrews seems to teach that the spirits of just men went to heaven when they died. In this lesson we will put this standard Protestant view of the passage to careful scrutiny in order to determine if that interpretation is correct. Here is the passage with some explanatory notes of the verbs in the passage:

“But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel” (Heb. 12:22–24, NIV).

The writer of the book of Hebrews was dealing with a specific problem—Jews who had embraced Christianity were about to give it up and return to what they considered the riches of Judaism. With nostalgia they remembered that they once had the glorious city of Jerusalem with its resplendent temple, the priesthood, the fathers, the covenants, and the promises. And now what did they have? Nothing but opposition and persecution!

The writer of the book attempted to persuade the Hebrews to persevere. He pointed out that although the Old Testament system was good, the New Testament was better.
Read Hebrews 11 and 12:18–24 from the translation of your choice. Write out Hebrews 12:18–24. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw Arrows to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in Hebrews 11; 12:18–24. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

How are you now experiencing the blessings of the future?

What is your reaction as you approach the cloud of imperfect witnesses of faith in Hebrews 11 made perfect?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/dead10-3
After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks seem to point to overall?

What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

How is the blood of Jesus perfecting you?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/dead10-4
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Deuteronomy 34:5, 6 with Jude 9
Hebrews 5:7–9
Hebrews 9:9–12
Hebrews 10:1–4, 11, 12, 14
Romans 3:25, 26

What other verses come to mind in connection with Hebrews 11; 12:18–24?

How does seeing behind the scenes of salvation history deepen the profundity of God’s plan and devotion of God’s heart to save humanity?

What is He saying to you through these texts?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?

Meditate on Hebrews 11; 12:18–24 again and look for where Jesus is.
Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of the chapter, what hit you personally?

What can be applied to other areas of your life?

Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at www.inversebible.org/dead10-7
# inQuire

Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

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What is the meaning of the word *perfect* in Hebrews, and why couldn’t the old sanctuary service make persons perfect?

How is a biblical definition of perfection better than its popular understanding?

In what sense were the “spirits” of these just persons made perfect when Christ died on the cross?

How does the “perfecting” of Jesus in Hebrews help us understand the “spirits made perfect”?

Romans 3:25, 26 tells us that God “passed over” the sins that were committed during the Old Testament period. How does this help us understand the “spirits made perfect”?

According to Hebrews 10:40, God provides something better for those who live in the New Testament period than for those who lived before. What is the “something better” (see Heb. 9:11, 12; 10:4)?

*The Spirits of Just Men*