

# THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

## INTRODUCTION

Theologically speaking, Hebrews is considered to be second in importance only to Paul's letter to the Romans in the New Testament. No other book so eloquently defines Christ as the High Priest of Christianity, superior to the Aaronic priesthood, and the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. This book presents Christ as the Author<sup>1</sup> and Perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Prior to studying the text, we will consider the audience to which it was written, the date of the composition, and the questions surrounding the authorship of the epistle.

## THE AUDIENCE

Of the New Testament epistles, only Hebrews and I John are without salutations. The oldest manuscript of the epistle (last quarter of the Second Century) has the heading, πρὸς ἑβραίους (*pros hebraios*), i.e. *To Hebrews*.<sup>2</sup> However, it appears that the heading was added after the original document was written.

Epistles that are not addressed to a specific audience in a specific place, are called, *Catholic Epistles* (the term, *catholic*, means, *universal*.)<sup>3</sup> James, I & II Peter, Jude, I, II, & III John, as well as Hebrews are Catholic Epistles. The Epistle to the Hebrews is labeled a Catholic Epistle because the document does not name the audience for which it was written – even though it obviously seems to be aimed at Palestinian Jews<sup>4</sup>

The content of the epistle clearly is aimed at those who were acquainted with the Mosaic writings and the ceremonies and practices exercised in the Jewish Temple. The epistle contains many quotations from the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures), which was the version of the Old Testament that was read along with the Hebrew original by most Jews of the First Century.<sup>5 6</sup>

The main content of the epistle addresses concerns that would involve those who wrestled with whether or not the requirements of the Old Covenant were required of Jewish Christians. It is apparent that the community addressed is a Jewish audience. The salvation of Gentiles never is mentioned in the epistle.

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<sup>1</sup> The Greek term rendered, *author*, is ἀρχηγός (*arkaygos*). The term refers to the one who goes first on a path, the leader, the pioneer, the originator.

<sup>2</sup> Papyrus P46

<sup>3</sup> From the Greek term καθολικός (*katholikos*), meaning, *whole*, or, *universal*.

<sup>4</sup> Epistles, such as I Peter, indicate a general audience, but such are not addressed to a specific congregation or individual - *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen* (1 Peter 1:1 NAS)

<sup>5</sup> Almost all of the New Testament's quotations of the Old Testament Scriptures are quotations from the Greek language Septuagint. This is the reason that these quotes in the New Testament are not word for word quotes of these passages in our English Version Old Testament Scriptures. Contemporary English Bibles translate the Hebrew text, not the Greek Septuagint.

<sup>6</sup> For a description of the history of the Septuagint, see ADDENDUM A

The content, therefore, explains the appellation, *To the Hebrews*, which has been the only title ever appended to the epistle. This was the label used for the document in all of the early church writings.

Individuals who spoke the Hebrew language were the only ones who were labelled, *Hebrews*, during the New Testament period. Jews who spoke other languages were *Hellenists* or *Hellenistic Jews*. The only community that spoke the Hebrew language exclusively (i.e., *Aramaic*, which was a corruption of Hebrew) lived in Palestine. These Jews used the Hebrew language Scriptures in their services.

There also were Hellenistic Jews in Palestine, even in Jerusalem (Acts 6:8ff). The Hellenistic Jews often used the Septuagint in their synagogues. A distinction was made in the early Church between the Hebrews and Hellenists (Acts 6:1; 9:27-30).<sup>7 8</sup>

Thus, based on internal evidence, and the practice of the times, the most probable audience for the epistle consisted of Jewish converts who lived in Palestine.

As noted earlier, it is evident that the author's underlying purpose in writing the epistle is to address the temptation to return to Judaism. The pull of their inherited loyalty to the Mosaic Covenant obviously remained strong in some circles of Hebraic Christianity. This was especially a challenge for the Jewish Christians living in Palestine, who were surrounded by the trappings of Judaism.

### THE DATE OF THE COMPOSITION

The recipients of the letter had been Christians for several years. This is seen in the statement that they had, in the past, experienced persecution, but had not been martyred (10:32-34; 12:4). Various scholars have suggested dates ranging from 64 A.D. to 96 A.D. The latest of these seems quite improbable.

The epistle was written before the 70 AD destruction of the Temple. This is seen in that the epistle assumes that the Temple services are still being conducted at the time of the composition (Chapter 9; 10:11; 13:11; etc.). Furthermore, the epistle was written before the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem, since the author expected to be able to visit his friends to whom he is writing, but apparently there was no time for delay (13:19, 23). Considering the various uprisings of the Jews in the Jerusalem region (the *Jewish Wars*), and the interludes between these, as well as the circumstances of the audience pictured in the epistle, the narrow window of 66-68 A.D. best fits the picture.

### THE AUTHOR

By whom the epistle was written has been the subject of much inquiry. The author does not name himself. However, in his closing remarks there are some hints of his identity.

*Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. And I urge you all the more to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.*

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<sup>7</sup> R. Milligan, *The New Testament Commentary*, Volume IX, *Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cincinnati, Ohio, The Standard Publishing Co.) page 28

<sup>8</sup> Philip Schaff *The History of the Christian Church, Volume I, The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers Inc.) 1858/ 1996 pages 813-814

*Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

*But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I shall see you.*

*Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.*

*Grace be with you all.* (Hebrews 13:18-25)

From the above statements it is evident that:

- In all probability, the epistle was written from Rome (*Those from Italy greet you*);
- The author had previously been with the audience (*that I may be restored to you*);
- Hb Timothy and the author had a close relationship (*Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I shall see you*).

From the earliest days, the Eastern Church (Greek) accepted the epistle as Pauline and a part of the Canon. Such was not true of the Roman Western Church (Latin).

The first presently known church leader to question the Pauline authorship was the late Second Century Latin writer, Tertullian,<sup>9</sup> who attributed the document to Barnabas. Both Caius of Rome<sup>10</sup> and Hippolytus of Rome,<sup>11</sup> writing in the late Second/early Third Century, questioned the Pauline authorship.<sup>12</sup>

Because of this uncertainty in the Roman western church, Jerome included the epistle in the Latin Vulgate,<sup>13</sup> but moved it to the end of Paul's writings.<sup>14</sup>

Augustine (354-430 AD) vigorously defended the epistle. However, there is some evidence that at the end of his life, he described it as being, "anonymous."<sup>15</sup>

Two of the early councils dealing with the canon of Scripture (the Council of Hippo, in 393, and the Council at Carthage, in 419) included Hebrews in the list of epistles written by Paul.

Thus, by the Fourth Century, in both the Eastern Greek and Western Latin Churches, the epistle was considered to have been composed by Paul.

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<sup>9</sup> Born 155/160 AD, died 220 AD

<sup>10</sup> Birth date unknown, died c. 296 AD

<sup>11</sup> Birth date unknown, died c. 236

<sup>12</sup> Eusebius Pamphilus, *Ecclesiastical History* Book 6, Chapter XX, (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) 1994 page 241

<sup>13</sup> Completed 384 AD

<sup>14</sup> The fact that in most versions of Scripture, the Epistle to the Hebrews is located at the end of Paul's writings, is testimony to the ongoing influence of the Vulgate.

<sup>15</sup> O. Rottmaneer, in Alexander Souter, *Study of Abrosiaster* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press) 1905 196n

## Contemporary Questions about the Pauline Authorship

The question of the authorship of the epistle was settled until the 1800's, when the historical/critical/hypothesis theory began to be applied to the biblical documents. In the 1900's it seemed in vogue, among some scholars, to challenge anything advocated by orthodoxy or tradition. The authorship of The Epistle to the Hebrews was subject to this inquiry, even among some conservative scholars.

Expressing that point of view, Walter D. Kallenbach wrote,

“No one knows who wrote the epistle. Any designation of a particular person as author is purely a matter of conjecture...Paul, Apollos, Timothy, Silas, Barnabas, Luke, and even Priscilla are some of the most prominent.”<sup>16</sup>

Among those who challenge the Pauline authorship, the literary style of the document usually has been considered to be the strongest argument against Pauline authorship. A. B. Bruce states,

“the style, temperament and the cast of thought characteristic of this epistle, are markedly different from those traceable in the letters to the Galatian, Corinthian, and Roman churches. The contrast has its source in difference of mental constitution and of religious experience. Paul was of an impetuous, passionate, vehement nature; hence, his thought rushes on like a mountain torrent leaping over the rocks. The writer of Hebrews is obviously a man of calm, contemplative, patient spirit; and hence, the movement of his mind is like that of a stately river flowing through a plain. Their respective ways of looking at the law speak to an entirely different religious history.”<sup>17</sup>

B. F. Wescott states that the style of the document is that of a ‘practiced scholar.’ He continues,

“Here is nothing of rude speech, any more than knowledge for there are no abrupt apostrophes and lively dialectics, no unfinished sentences, no marks of the unstudied conversational freedom with which Paul at once delights and tries us; and this is an epistle which accords abundant room for the exercise of these qualities of style, had the writer been Paul himself...a calculated force of the periods is sharply distinguished from the impetuous eloquence of Paul, The author is never carried away by his thoughts He has seen and measured all that he desires to convey to his readers before he begins to write. In writing he has, like an artist, simply to give life to the model which he has already completely fashioned”<sup>18</sup>

How valid is the argument that style of composition rules out Paul?” In my opinion (JWG), this is not a very convincing argument.

When I am preaching, I have a different style of address and language than when I am teaching a class or giving a lecture.

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<sup>16</sup> Walter D. Kallenbach, PhD., ThD, *The Message and Authorship of the Epistle “To The Hebrews”* (St. Paul, Minnesota, Northland Publishing House) 1938, page 27

<sup>17</sup> G. G. Findlay, *The Epistles of Paul The Apostle* (Philadelphia, Griffith and Rowland Press) 1902, page 276

<sup>18</sup> B. F. Wescott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London, Macmillan and Co.) 1920, page XLVI Introduction

When I am writing a letter to an acquaintance or to a circle of elders concerning a situation in their church, I display a different style than when I am doing a research paper, or topical study.

In different settings, I even use different vocabularies.

Someone could look at the class notes that I have prepared to be distributed to class members in a seminar, and then look at a letter that I have written and, based on the differences, argue that it must have been two different people who wrote these documents.

Also, as the years have gone by and I have matured, my writing style has changed, including my vocabulary, even in such things as seminar documents.

Therefore, I consider the argument from style, to be a very weak and debatable argument.

### **Evidence for Pauline Authorship**

The Epistle to the Hebrews was included in the writings of Paul from a very early date. For example, the late Second-Century or early Third-Century codex (175-225), *P*<sub>46</sub>, a volume of Paul's general epistles,<sup>19</sup> includes Hebrews immediately after Romans.<sup>20</sup>

A very early source asserting the apostolic authority of the document is the writing of Clement of Rome. Clement led the Roman Church from 92–101 AD. He was personally acquainted with some of the apostles, as well as having access to some of the 70 Disciples of Jesus. He usually is identified as the Clement who was discipled by Paul and was in Philippi during some of its troubles.<sup>21</sup> Clement's writings were held in such high esteem that until the Fourth Century, his various writings were accepted by some as Holy Scripture.

Clement wrote his Epistle to the Corinthians in 96 AD. He wrote the epistle because some younger leaders in Corinth were seeking to unseat the elders. In the letter, Clement appealed for a restoration of peace, harmony, and order in the Corinthian Church.

Clement quoted Hebrews at least nine times, as an authority for his statements.<sup>22</sup> He does not mention the author of the Epistle, seemingly taking for granted that his Corinthian readers would recognize the language of the Epistle and know the apostolic authorship of the quotes. Such an assumption also assumes that the Corinthians were acquainted with the epistle.

It was almost one-hundred years after Clement of Rome that the first discussion of the authorship would be made for those who needed an explanation.

The first writer who made a clear statement that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, was the very influential scholar, Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-c. 215 AD).

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<sup>19</sup> The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor was able to obtain parts of this manuscript, but most of the pages are in the Chester Beatty collection in Dublin, Ireland.

<sup>20</sup> David Trobisch, <https://www.religion-online.org/article/the-oldest-extant-editions-of-the-letters-of-paul/>; Philip W. Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts: An Introduction to New Testament* (Nashville, B&H Academic ) 2005

<sup>21</sup> Philippians 4:3 *Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

<sup>22</sup> For Clement's direct reference to Hebrews as Scripture, see, ADDENDUM B.

Alexandria was viewed as an influential center of learning, because of the world-famous library of Alexandria, established by King Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt (285-246 BC). Thus, the catechetical school of Alexandria was held in esteem in the early church.

Clement of Alexandria left a work called, ὑποτύπωσις (*hypotuposis*)<sup>23</sup>, which was quoted at length by Eusebius (c. 313 AD), to whom we are indebted for the quotes, since Clement's original document is lost.

Clement of Alexandria stated that the Epistle was written by Paul to the Hebrews in the Hebrew/Aramaic language and then carefully translated into Greek by Luke.<sup>24 25</sup>

Origen c.185– c.254 AD, is generally considered to be the greatest theologian and scholar of the early Eastern Church. He was appointed to succeed Clement of Alexandria as head of the catechetical school of Alexandria. Origen's literary output was enormous. Origen's opinion 150 years after Clement of Rome's death, was that Paul wrote the Epistle, but that he could not affirm this because he had not been an eye-witness. He could only report what had been handed down to him. He stated that the "ancients handed it down as Paul's."<sup>26</sup>

The very influential early church leader, Chrysostom, about 400 AD, took for granted Paul's authorship of the Epistle.

Although the epistle does not contain Paul's usual greeting with which he usually began his epistles, the letter closes with the words *Grace be with you all* (Hebrews 13:25), which is the same closing found in each of Paul's known letters (Romans 16:20; I Corinthians 16:23; II Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 6:18; Ephesians 6:24; Philippians 4:23; Colossians 4:18; I Thessalonians 5:28; II Thessalonians 3:18; I Timothy 6:21; II Timothy 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philemon 25). However, it should be noted that Peter closed his two epistles with similar, although not identical, language (I Peter 5:14; II Peter 3:18).<sup>27</sup>

For a chart of Parallels between Hebrews and some of Paul's writings, see ADDENDUM D

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<sup>23</sup> The term refers to a *model*, an *example*, or a *standard*.

<sup>24</sup> Eusebius Pamphilus, *Ecclesiastical History* page 233

<sup>25</sup> Eusebius elaborates: "But (Clement) says that the words 'Paul the Apostle' were probably not prefixed, because in sending it to the Hebrews, who were prejudiced and suspicious of (Paul), he wisely did not wish to repel them at the very beginning by giving his name... But now as the blessed presbyter (Paul) said, since the Lord being the Apostle of the Almighty, was sent to the Hebrews, Paul, as sent to the Gentiles, on account of his modesty did not subscribe himself an apostle to the Hebrews, both out of reverence for the Lord, and because he wrote of his abundance to the Hebrews, as a herald and apostle of the Gentiles. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History Book 6, Chapter, 14*, page. 234.

<sup>26</sup> For a sampling of Origen's comments on Paul's authorship of Hebrews, see ADDENDUM C

<sup>27</sup> *Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Christ.* (1 Peter 5:14)

*but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.* (2 Peter 3:18)

The early literary sources that mention Paul's death, state that it was during the time of Nero's persecution of Roman Christians. This would put the time of Paul's death shortly after the year 65 AD.<sup>28</sup> Some argue for 67-68 AD as the date of Paul's execution.<sup>29</sup> These dates fit with the earlier conclusion that the epistle was written 66-68 AD.

Since Pauline authorship traditionally has been the prevailing view, and what evidence there is available to us, points to Paul, I (JWG) accept Paul as the author, although I am not dogmatic in that assertion.

### THE KEY WORD IN THE EPISTLE

The key word in the epistle is, *better*,<sup>30</sup> which occurs thirteen times (also, *much more*, *more excellent*). The point made over and over again in the epistle, is that what Christians have is better than anything experienced in the generations before the birth of Christianity, including the Mosaic Covenant.

- 1:4 Christ is better than the angels
- 6:9 Better things than falling away is expected
- 7:7 The better blesses the less (an axiom)
- 7:19 A better hope made perfect
- 7:22 A better covenant
- 8:6 A better covenant
- 8:6 A better promise
- 9:23 Better sacrifices
- 10:34 We have in heaven a better possession
- 11:16 We desire a better country
- 11:35 Martyrs have obtained a better resurrection
- 11:40 We have a better thing than that experienced by the Old Testament faithful
- 12:24 Christ's blood, speaks better than that of Abel.

This concept is key to the purpose of the Epistle, which, as stated earlier, is to address the tendency of Hebrew Christians to feel the need to keep the Law of Moses, or, even, to leave the community of Christ and return to Judaism.

The result is an Epistle that is filled with important lessons for Christians of every culture, every background, and every language.

<sup>28</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.) 1977, pages 441-450

<sup>29</sup> Frank J. Goodwin, *A Harmony of the Life of St. Paul* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) 1983, page 215ff; Olaf Moe, *The Apostle Paul* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) 1968, page 505ff; J.W. Shepard, Th.D. *The Life and Letters of St. Paul* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1950, page 488

<sup>30</sup> The Greek term so rendered is κρείττων (*kreitton*) or κρείσσων (*kreisson*), the comparative form of the adjective, ἄγαθος (*agathos*), which in the normative means. *good*.

## TO THE HEBREWS: THE EPISTLE

### CHAPTER ONE

Chapters One and Two declare of the identity of the Son, His superiority, and the superiority of His message. The first two verses summarize this theme.

#### Verses 1-2

*God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.*

- The Old Testament was given through different men (Moses, Samuel, Amos, etc.),
- in different times (during Israel's time in the wilderness, in Canaan, in Shiloh, Jerusalem, Babylon, etc.),
- through different kinds of revelation (by direct revelation, as in the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai; by angels, as was done with Gideon; by dreams, visions, symbols, etc.),
- and in different kinds of literature (law, history, prophecy, and poetry).

The terminology, *in these last days* (verse 2), calls to mind the Pentecostal sermon, in which Peter cited Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32), as an explanation for the filling of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's endowment of languages.

*For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:*

*"And it shall be in the last days,' God says, That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind;*

*And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,*

*And your young men shall see visions,*

*And your old men shall dream dreams;*

*Even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit And they shall prophesy."* (Acts 2:15-18)

According to Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:30-32) and Peter's explanation, (Acts 2:22ff) the last days began with the ministry of the Messiah. Evidently, the *last days* will extend until the glorious day of the Lord, which will be preceded by cataclysmic phenomena.

*And I will grant wonders in the sky above, And signs on the earth beneath, Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.*

*The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come.*

*And it shall be, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'* (Acts 2:19-21)<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> This prophecy from Joel, concerning the *great and glorious day of the Lord* is mirrored in Revelation 6:12-17 *And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains*



Chapter One emphasizes the identity and the superiority of the Son, beginning with the statement, *His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.*,

One thing of note is that the Greek text does not contain the word, *His*, in verse 2. The Greek text states, *in these last days has spoken to us in a Son*<sup>32</sup> Translators of most English versions added the word, *His*, in order to communicate what the rest of the chapter communicates – the identity of this unique Son, which clearly is stated in verse 5,

*For to which of the angels did He ever say, "Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee"? And again, "I will be a Father to Him and He shall be a Son to Me"?*

The term, *Son*, is further emphasized in verse 8, in which the term, *Son*, is preceded in the Greek text, with the definite article, *the*, indicating the exclusive identity of this Son.

*But of the Son He says, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.*

Another point of interest in verse 2 is the statement, *made the world*, which literally, is *through whom also He did make the ages*.<sup>33</sup> Which, of course, refers to the different epochs of the created universe.<sup>34</sup>

### Verse 3

Verse 3 defines beyond doubt, the deity of the Son.

*And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

Especially relevant to the identity of the Son are the terms rendered, *exact representation of His nature*. The terms rendered, *exact representation of His nature*, literally state, *the exact representation of His essence*.<sup>35 36</sup>

The Greek terms are Χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως (*charakter tays hupostaseos*).

The first of these, Χαρακτήρ, originally meant, the person or the tool used to cut something. However, in time it came to mean the impress or mark made by the cutting tool, especially the cutting done on a coin to determine its value.

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*and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"*

<sup>32</sup> Ἐλάλλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ (*elallehsen humin in huio*) Literally, *He has spoken to us in son*.

<sup>33</sup> αἰών (*aiown*)

<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, in the Great Commission, Jesus said to the disciples, *I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age* (literal rendering of Matthew 28:20 – also, see Matthew 13:39).

<sup>35</sup> Bauer, Gingrich, Danker *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press) 1979, page 847. 9

<sup>36</sup> ὑποστάσις, *substantial, nature, essence, actual being, reality* (oft. in contrast to what merely seems to be). Liddel & Scott *Greek/English Lexicon, abridged* 2007 (Washington, DC Wallenburg Press) 2007, entry 44709

The second term, ὑποστάσις,<sup>37</sup> was used to describe the impression made on wax by a person's personal seal, guaranteeing the validity of a document.

Thus, *the exact representation of his image*, would be a literal rendering of these terms.<sup>38</sup> The physical presence of the Son, was the physical presence of the Father. Jesus was/is Divine.

Paul's Epistle to the Colossians presents this same truth, *For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form*, (Colossians 2:9)

Then, after His purpose for coming to the earth had been fulfilled,

*When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;* (verse 3b)

The rest of Chapter One demonstrates the Son's superiority to the angels. In each of the following verses, Old Testament passages are accommodated as an ascription to the Son.<sup>39</sup>

### Verses 4-13

**4.** *having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.*

**5.** *For to which of the angels did He ever say, "Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee"?* (Psalm 2:7)<sup>40</sup>

*And again, "I will be a Father to Him And He shall be a Son to Me"?*(II Samuel 7:14; I Chronicles 17:13)

**6.** *And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him."* (Psalm 97:7)

**7.** *And of the angels He says, "Who makes His angels winds, And His ministers a flame of fire."* (Psalm 104:4)

**8.** *But of the Son He says, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom."* (Psalm 45:6)

**9.** *"Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee With the oil of gladness above Thy companions."* (Psalm 45:7)

**10.** *And, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the works of Thy hands;* (Psalm 102:25)

**11.** *They will perish, but Thou remainest; And they all will become old as a garment,* (Psalm 102:26)

**12.** *And as a mantle Thou wilt roll them up; As a garment they will also be changed.*

*But Thou art the same, And Thy years will not come to an end."* (Psalm 102:26)

**13.** *But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies A footstool for Thy feet "?* (Psalm 110:1)

<sup>37</sup> ὑποστάσεως is the genitive of the noun, indicating of.

<sup>38</sup> Marcus Dodds D.D. *The Expositor's Greek New Testament*, Volume Four (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Printing Company) 1976, page 251

<sup>39</sup> For a comparison of the Greek text of Hebrews 1:5-13, with the Old Testament Septuagint verses quoted, see ADDENDUM E

<sup>40</sup> This Psalm describes the one being referenced as *His Anointed*. The term rendered, *Anointed*, is מָשִׁחַ, i.e. *Messiah*. Later, in verse 7 and verse 12, He is called, Son. All Hebrews considered this Psalm to be a reference to the anticipated Messiah, which in Greek, is χρίστος, i.e. *Christ*.

Then, in verse 14, a wonderful statement concerning the responsibility angels have for those who have been redeemed by Christ.

#### **Verse 14**

*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?*<sup>41</sup> (inferred in Psalm 103:20f)

One has to wonder how many times angels have ministered to us, when we have not been aware of their behind-the-scenes ministry.

### **EXCURSUS**

The point being made in verses 5-14 is the superiority of Christ to the angels. This is an important element in the groundwork upon which the author of Hebrews seeks to present Christ and His New Covenant as superior to the Mosaic Covenant. The author presents several Old Testament quotations as validation for his argument.

The Hebrew readers of this epistle would have been familiar with these quotations. Yet, when they read these Old Testament Scriptures, they would not have immediately understood these as speaking of Jesus. No doubt they did wonder to whom they did apply. For example, Psalm 2, speaking of Yahweh's anointed, would have raised the question, "Does this refer to David, or to someone else?" This is similar to the question that Ethiopian eunuch asked Phillip, concerning Isaiah 53, *And the eunuch answered Phillip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?"* (Acts 8:34).

Many Jewish rabbis did consider these Psalms to be Messianic, especially after the collapse and defeat of Israel by the nation's various enemies. Thus, the use of these Psalms to prove the writer's point would not have been a problem.

On the other hand, it probably would have been a problem for some Jewish Christians to accept the assertion in verse 5, that II Samuel 7:14 and I Chronicles 17:13 were referring to Jesus.

David had planned to build a house for the Lord, but while he was meditating on this plan, God sent Nathan the prophet to him to tell him that Yahweh had declared that David's son would be the one to build the temple. This clearly refers to Solomon.

#### **II Samuel 7:12-16**

<sup>12</sup> *When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.*

<sup>13</sup> *"He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.*

<sup>14</sup> ***"I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men,***

<sup>15</sup> *but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.*

<sup>16</sup> *"And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever."*

<sup>41</sup> The term, *render service*, is λειτουργικός, which conveys the idea of *holy service* – this is the Greek term from which is derived the English term, *liturgy*.

### **I Chronicles 17:11-15**

<sup>11</sup> *"And it shall come about when your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up one of your descendants after you, who shall be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom.*

<sup>12</sup> *"He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever.*

<sup>13</sup> ***"I will be his father, and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you.***

<sup>14</sup> *"But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.""*

<sup>15</sup> *According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.*

Certainly, the statement, *when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of man and the strokes of the sons of men* (II Samuel 7:14) as well as *My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you* (II Samuel 7:15), would be restricted to Solomon.

None of the Hebrews would have read these Scriptures with the understanding that the reference was to anyone other than Solomon. For that matter, neither would we.

Since these passages are used as one of the writer's arguments for the superiority of Jesus, we must wonder how much influence it had upon the Hebrew audience, since the Hebrew readers would have known that these passages referred to Solomon.

On the other hand, in both of these passages there is a promise that the kingdom would be established forever. Certainly, that did not refer to the earthly Kingdom of Israel, because that kingdom did cease to exist. No doubt the statement concerning the everlasting kingdom, would have caused most Jews to believe that these passages must have referred to a descendant of David, far beyond Solomon. Such an understanding is in sync with Isaiah 9:6-7.

*For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.*

*There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)*

As the years passed by, the Jews looked forward to the fulfillment of the promise of an everlasting kingdom, which they understood as an earthly kingdom in Palestine. That certainly was true during the earthly ministry of Jesus. Recall that, one occasion, the people were so impressed with Jesus' miraculous powers, that they tried to crown him as the king, thinking that He could destroy the Romans (John 6:14-15).

Thus, the promise of an everlasting kingdom in the II Samuel and I Chronicles passages, did give some credence to the writer's use of the passages, as evidence for the superiority of the Son.

Some biblical scholars have labeled this Scriptural practice of citing an Old Testament narrative as prefiguring a New Testament truth, *double reference*.

Robert Milligan comments on this understanding.

“And hence, the only way of explaining it properly is on the principle of double reference.

As a knowledge of this principle is essential to a proper understanding of much that is contained in this Epistle, the learned reader will excuse the following attempt to make it plain and intelligible to every mere beginner in the study of sacred literature. It is one of the very few principles of interpretation, which are peculiar to the Holy Scriptures.

Generally, the bible is to be interpreted like other books. But in the use of this principle, it is unlike any and every other document.

The nearest approach to it may be found in the instructions which a skillful educator gives to his pupils by means of pictures and diagrams. For the purpose of illustrating the unknown or the abstract, he draws a visible outline or representation of it, by means of which he is enabled to impart to his pupils a more accurate knowledge of the object to be illustrated than he could possibly communicate to them by any mere combination of words and sentences. In his verbal remarks and explanations, he may sometimes refer exclusively to the pictorial illustration; and sometimes he may refer only to the object or thing that is to be illustrated; but not unfrequently he will purposely so arrange his remarks as to make them applicable to both the sign and the thing signified. He presents the picture to the eye of sense, as a sort of medium through which the eye of the understanding may perceive more clearly and distinctly the various qualities and properties of what he wished to describe and illustrate.

Very much in this way has God explained to mankind the more abstract and recondite realities of the economy of redemption. To do this successfully in the early ages of the world, in any way and by any means was a very difficult problem; a problem which God alone was then capable of solving. But all things are possible to him. He resolved to give to mankind a revelation of his purpose of mercy concerning them; and he resolved to do it in such a way as would not only be best adapted to the purposes of instruction; but also, it would seem, in such a way that it could never be successfully imitated or counterfeited by any impostor.

For this purpose, he called Abraham out of Ur of Chaldea and made him the father of two families, the one according to the flesh and the other according to the Spirit. The related to the reality which it is designed to represent. And hence it is that many things said of the former in the Old Testament, have reference also to the latter.”<sup>42</sup>

Whether or not Milligan’s explanation of the *double reference* is a convincing explanation, we must admit that the Epistle to the Hebrews employs this device in more than one instance.

This is an example of the biblical axiom,

- The Old is the New concealed
- The New is the Old revealed

Only the Holy Spirit inspired writers have the authority to make this application. For us to exercise this hermeneutic would be very irresponsible exegesis. Some contemporary teachers have used this principle to reveal, “The Secrets of the Bible.” Those who employ this strategy have often arrived at very strange, and debatable, “truths.”

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<sup>42</sup> R. Milligan, pages 60-61

## CHAPTER TWO

Chapter Two continues to address the superiority of the message of Christ, to that which was imparted to previous generations. The opening verses emphasize the importance of adhering closely to the message of salvation, first spoken by Jesus and testified to by the apostles.

### Verses 1-4

*1. For this reason, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.*

*2. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense,*

*3. how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,*

*4. God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.*

What an obvious and very serious truth: since disobedience to the word brought by angels resulted in serious punishment, how much more severe will be the punishment for disobeying the word brought by the Son!

Concerning the statement that the Law was given through, or in the presence of, angels is affirmed in both the Old and New Testaments.

Here are some pertinent verses:

- *And he said, "Yahweh came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them. (Deuteronomy 33:2)*
- *The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; The Lord is among them as at Sinai, in holiness. (Psalm 68:17)*
- *"This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren.' "This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you. (Acts 7:37-38)*
- *Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. (Galatians 3:19)*

The Jewish people in the 1<sup>st</sup> century believed that the Law of God was presented to Moses by angels — and not directly by God himself.

Josephus, the Jewish priest/historian of the 1<sup>st</sup> century and an expert in Jewish beliefs at the time, said: *We have learned the noblest of our doctrines and the holiest of our laws from the angles sent by God.*<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *Antiquities XV:136, or XV,5:3 in Whiston's translation.*

This belief continued to be held among Jews, even in the Christian era. An example is the 9<sup>th</sup> Century, *Pesikta Rabbathi*, par. 21, "There came down with the Holy One to Sinai twenty-two thousand ministering angels like the camp of the Levites."<sup>44</sup>

Stephen reflected this contemporary Jewish view, when he rebuked the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem for going against the Law. He said that they were those *Who have received the Law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.* (Acts 7:53).

The immediate punishment for disobeying the Law and for not respecting the Law, frequently resulted in the death penalty. Here are two examples of the death penalty and one example of the pronouncing of a curse upon those who did not obey the Law:

- *Now while the sons of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering wood on the sabbath day. And those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation; and they put him in custody because it had not been declared what should be done to him.*  
*Then Yahweh said to Moses, "The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp."*  
*So all the congregation brought him outside the camp, and stoned him to death with stones, just as Yahweh had commanded Moses.* (Numbers 15:32-36)
- *"According to the terms of the law which they teach you, and according to the verdict which they tell you, you shall do.; you shall not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, to the right or the left.*  
*"And the man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the priest who stands there to serve Yahweh your God, nor to the judge, that man shall die; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel.* (Deuteronomy 17:11-12)
- *'Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'* (Deuteronomy 27:26)

Of note is the fact that the author places himself as a second-hand witness, *After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard.* This is similar to Luke's statement in the beginning of his Gospel (Luke 1:1-3). Some have used this to argue against Paul's authorship, since in Galatians 1:11-17, Paul contends that the Gospel which he preached was given to him directly by Christ.

However, the author here speaks of the earthly ministry of Jesus, which had been witnessed by those who accompanied Jesus during His earthly ministry. The author (Paul?) presents himself as one who was not one of those who traveled with Jesus and therefore was not privileged to hear directly the words when Jesus spoke them, nor did he witness the miraculous deeds performed by Jesus.

The apostle Paul was not an on-the-site witness of the ministry of Christ. Jesus had had ascended long before Paul became a believer. When he did so, it was through the direct intervention of the ascended Christ, as recorded in Acts 9:1ff.

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<sup>44</sup> *Pesikta Rabbati* *Pesikta Rabbati* (Hebrew: פסיקתא רבתי P'siqta Rabbita, "Great Sections") is a collection of haggadic midrash (homilies) on the Pentateuchal and prophetic readings, the special Sabbaths, and so on. It was composed around 845 CE and probably called "rabbati" (the larger) to distinguish it from the earlier *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* (PdRK)

Verse 4 is in keeping with the early church's profound emphasis on the evidential value of miracles. *God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.*

Paul emphasized that his authoritative role in presenting doctrine to the Corinthians was based on miraculous things done through him in their presence (II Corinthians 12:11-12).

*...for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.*

### **Verses 5-9**

*5. For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking.*

*6. But one has testified somewhere, saying, "What is man, that Thou rememberest him? Or the son of man, that Thou art concerned about him?"*

*7. "Thou hast made him for a little while lower than the angels; Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, And hast appointed him over the works of Thy hands;*

*8. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.*

*9. But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.*

The *one has testified somewhere*, was the Psalmist. Verses 6-8a are a word for word quote of Psalm 8:4-6, which speak of the glory that God gave to man, in his role of overseeing God's earthly creation.

This of course, is a restatement of Genesis 1:26

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

The literal rendering of verse 5 is, *For not to angels subjected He the inhabited earth, the coming about which we speak.* This implies that, wherever mankind dwelt, it was God's original intent for man to be the master of the region and all of the creatures within that region.

The signal honor given to mankind is stated, clearly, in verse 7, *Thou hast made him for a little while lower than the angels; Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, And hast appointed him over the works of Thy hands.*

God did not give that honor to angels.

Even though man was so appointed, he has not been able to obtain mastery over all of the inhabited earth. The fall of man, occasioned by the sin in the Garden of Eden, resulted in man's inability to fulfill this mastery.

The implication of these verses is that God's promise of sovereignty to man was fulfilled, at last, in Jesus, as man's representative – crowned with glory and honor.



This is an echo of the statement made in Chapter 1:3b, concerning the Son who, *upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

The song, *He's Got the Whole World in His Hands*, speaks the truth, and the hands that hold the whole world are marked with wounds produced by being nailed to a cross.

Verse 9 is a complex sentence in Greek. Using less complex and more flexible English syntax, verse 9 is rendered, *But we see Jesus (who was made a little lower than the angels, so that He might, by the grace of God, taste death for every man) crowned with glory and honor, on account of the suffering of death.*

NOTE: The Greek term rendered, *on the account of*, in this paraphrase, is δία (*dia*) with the accusative noun, i.e. *because of*. As a reward for His sufferings, He was crowned with glory and honor. Philippians 2:5-11 speaks more clearly of this fact.

*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, and being made in the likeness of men.<sup>45</sup>*

*And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

*Therefore, also<sup>46</sup> God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)*

In these passages, we have another glimpse into the relationship between the Father and the Son – the Son who existed before all time and by whom all things were created (John 1:1-3).

This passage displays the fact that in His Incarnation, the Son was fully man and, as such, He, subjected Himself to the will of the Father. This truth brings to mind the prayer of Jesus in the Garden, as he was facing the crucifixion.

*And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." (Matthew 26:39)*

The complex relationship between the Father and the Incarnate, but Divine, Son, defies human understanding. Throughout this epistle, we encounter a number of statements that provide a glimpse into that relationship.

The incarnation, death, atonement, and mediation, of the Son are born out of God's gracious love toward mankind.

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<sup>45</sup> The two terms rendered as *form* and *appearance*, are μορφή (*morphe*) and σκῆμα (*skayma*). The first of these refers more to one's essence. The second emphasizes outward appearance.

<sup>46</sup> The Greek terms in this passage, rendered as *therefore, also*, are, διὸ καί, which is an inferential conjunction, meaning, *for this reason*. Freiberg Analytical Greek Lexicon (Trafford Publishing) 2006 entry 6904,

- *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*
- *For one will hardly die for a righteous man. though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:7-8)*

The atonement is for every human being. However, throughout the New Testament there are stated conditions that must be met in order for a person to receive the benefits of Christ's atonement.

### **Verses 10-18**

**10.** *For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author<sup>47</sup> of their salvation through sufferings.*

**11.** *For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,*

**12.** *saying, "I will proclaim Thy name to My brethren, In the midst of the congregation I will sing Thy praise."*

**13.** *And again, "I will put My trust in Him." And again, "Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me."*

**14.** *Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil;*

**15.** *and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.*

**16.** *For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.*

**17.** *Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*

**18.** *For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.*

Once again, Hebrews quotes Old Testament passages and applies them to the Son:

- Verse 12 is a quote of Psalm 22:22
- Verse 13 is a quote of Isaiah 8:17 & 18

Note that Verse 10 literally states, *it was fitting for Him, on account of whom are all things, and through whom are all things....* This terminology describes God as both,

- the *reason for* all things (*efficient cause*) and
- the *agent/producer* of all things (*final cause*).

Everything that exists does so because God chose for it to exist. Since He created the universe and governs the universe, in a manner to achieve His purposes, so it is fitting for Him to do the same in works of providence and redemption.

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<sup>47</sup> The Greek term rendered as *author* (NAS, NIV) *captain* (KJV) *founder* (ESV), is ἀρχηγός (*archaygos*). The term signifies, *one who goes first, leader, founder, originator*.

It was necessary for the Son to experience human suffering, in order to be qualified for the role of God's agent through whom He would bring many sons to glory, This is a profound truth that our human minds cannot fully grasp.

**Note that these verses state an astounding truth** – *Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things*

- the Father not only describes those who have been redeemed as His *sons*,
- but also, as *siblings of the Christ* who partook of flesh and blood.

Throughout the New Testament there are many terms used to describe those who have been redeemed: sons, slaves, priests, joint heirs with Christ, etc. Each of these terms speaks of a truth concerning some aspect of the identity of the redeemed, and none of these negates the importance of the others. This is an illustration of the need for inductive study of the Scriptures, rather than a deductive approach. Every verse that addresses a topic must be considered in our pursuit of truth and it is dangerous to build a doctrine on only one verse or one passage.

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### EXCURSUS

Among the many Scriptural theological truths which are beyond human mental explanation are the statements made concerning the roles of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the creation.

**In the passage before us, the reference to the Creator clearly describes God the Father.**

*For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author<sup>48</sup> of their salvation through sufferings.*

*For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,*

*saying, "I will proclaim Thy name to My brethren, In the midst of the congregation I will sing Thy praise."*

*And again, "I will put My trust in Him." And again, "Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me."*

**Yet, in other passages of Scripture the Son is described as being the Creator. For example,**

- John 1:1-3, 10 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.... He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.*
- I Corinthians 8:6 *yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.*
- Colossians 1:13-16 *For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,) in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether*

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<sup>48</sup> The Greek term rendered as *author* (NAS, NIV) *captain* (KJV) *founder* (ESV), is ἀρχηγός (*archaygos*). The term signifies, *one who goes first, leader, founder, originator*.

*thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him.*

- Hebrews 1:2 NAS *in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.*

These glimpses into the relation of the Father and the Son, and their respective roles in Creation seem to indicate that the Father is the one who chose what to create and when to create. Yet, according to these verses, the Son, carrying out the Father's wishes, appears to be the agent who did the creating.

It is noteworthy that Genesis Chapter One describes the Creator as, אֱלֹהִים. (*Elohim*) i.e., God.

Two things are of interest in Genesis One that allow for their being more than one being

- First, the Hebrew term is plural. The ending, םִי (*im*) is the plural ending in Hebrew
- Second, Elohim says, *Let Us make man in Our Image* (Genesis 1:26), implying more than one being involved in the creation.

Even so, we must be cautious about becoming overly dogmatic in our understanding of these matters. The important thing is the truth that God is the creator and what He created He did so because of His purposes and in a manner chosen by Him.

The term rendered as, *tempted* (verse 18) is *πειράζω* (*peiradzo*), which refers to any sort of test or trial. The test may or may not include enticement. In this verse, the term obviously refers to Christ's suffering. However, in 4:15, the same term is used in a sense that seems to have a broader application.

*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted (πειράζω) in all things as we are, yet without sin.* (Hebrews 4:15)

Having endured the tests experienced by every human, the Son is empathetic with us in our trials and tests. Such empathy, gained through experience, has equipped Him to understand what each one needs in order to survive the test.

No one in a time of trial can shake his fist toward heaven and cry out, "You just don't know how hard it is!" To such a cry, Christ can respond, "I know.... I have been there."

The very best of Christians will be subject to many trials and temptations in this world. None are exempt. Trials and temptations bring us to the place where we need His Divine aid, in order to survive. Our Lord is willing and able to bring that aid to those who cry out to Him. He may not remove the trial, but in the midst of the trial, He will be with those who are His. This truth will be emphasized frequently in this epistle. For example,

*...for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,* (Hebrews 13:5)

Verses 14-15 declare the wonderful truth that Christ has delivered us from the *one who had the power of death* and has freed us from being slaves to the fear of death.

Some, commenting on these verses, have describe this fear as *Satan's prison-camp of fear*. We are freed from that fear because of the redemption achieved by Christ and the offer of a certain eternity with God, through that redemption – if we choose to accept it.

- In this passage the individual who had this power of death is identified as, *the devil*. The Greek, rendered, *devil*, is *διάβολος* (*diabolos*), from the term, *διάβαλλω* (*diaballow*), meaning, *an accuser*, or, *a slanderer*. The New Testament uses this name/title 19 times for this nefarious individual.<sup>49</sup>
- The New Testament also names this individual, *Satan* – *σατανᾶς* (*satanas*). He is so named 34 times in the New Testament<sup>50</sup>
- In the Old Testament the only name, used for this individual is *שָׂטָן* (*sahtahn*), referring to *one who hates*, or *one who is an enemy* (14 times in the Old Testament.)<sup>51</sup>

It is clear from Scripture that both of these terms apply to the same person:

*And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (Revelation 12:9)*

*And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, (Revelation 20:2)*

Another point of interest is that the name, *devil*, never is capitalized in the English translations because it seems to be a descriptive term, rather than a proper name. This is indicated by the fact that he always is described as, *the devil*, rather than merely, *devil*.

Satan, on the other hand, always is addressed without the definite article, such as when Jesus said, *get thee behind me, Satan* (Matthew 16:23). His name, Satan, always is capitalized, thus recognizing it as a person's name.

Some have assigned the names, *Beelzubul* and *Lucifer*, to Satan. For a discussion of these terms, see, ADDENDUM F

### CHAPTER THREE

Chapter 3 continues with the underlying proposition of this epistle: the New Covenant has replaced the Old Covenant and the Hebrew brethren need to embrace the truth of the New and not be owned by the Law and its binding dicta.

Chapter 3:1 through Chapter 4:13 are a unit.

- In Chapters One and Two, the author compared Christ with those who previously had mediated between God and man – prophets who spoke to the fathers and the angels who were instruments in mediating the Law.
- In Chapters 3:1-4:13, the author compares Jesus with Moses - the one whose name is identified with the Law, and the one in whom the Hebrews trusted. When the Pharisees were contending with the blind man whom Jesus had healed, they berated him and said, "*You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.*" (John 9:28)

<sup>49</sup> Matt. 4:1,5, 8, 11; 13:39; 25:41; Luke 4:2, 3, 6, 13; 8:12, John 6:70; 8:44; 13:2; Acts 10:38; 13:10; Ephesians 4:27; 6:11; I Timothy 3:6; 3:7; II Timothy 2:26; Hebrews 2:14; James 4:7; I Peter 5:8; I John 3:8, 10; Jude 1:9; Revelation 2:10; 12:9, 12; 20:2, 10.

<sup>50</sup> Matthew 4:10;12:26; 16:23; Mark 1:13; 3:23; 3:26; 4:15; 8:33; Luke. 10:18; 11:18; 13:16; 22:3; 22:31; John. 13:27; Acts 5:3; 26:18; Romans 16:20; I Corinthians 5:5; 7:5; II Corinthians 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; I Thessalonians 2:18; II Thessalonians 2:9; I Timothy 1:20; 5:15; Revelation. 2:9, 13, 24; 3:9; 12:9; 20:2, 7

<sup>51</sup> I Chronicles 21:1; Job 1:6, 7, 8, 9, 12; 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7; Zechariah 3:1, 2

This unit falls into two parts.

- The first part (3:1-6) emphasizes the trustworthiness of Christ.
- The second part (3:7-4:13) reminds the readers of the doom of the Israelites in the wilderness, as a result of their unbelief.

### Verse 1

*Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.*

The label that the author gives to his readers, in verse 1, is significant – *holy brethren*.

The term rendered as, *holy*, is ἅγιος (*hagios*), which signifies something that is *separated* or *set apart*. The term is used to describe both God, and those things and those /individuals that are set apart for God.

The author addresses his audience as his *brothers*. This is in keeping with what Our Lord taught His disciples - we are brothers and sisters, without the need for any title more than that.

Comparing this attitude with that of the Jewish establishment, Jesus said,

*And they love the place of honor at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called by men, Rabbi. But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.* (Matthew 23:6-8)

These holy brethren are *partakers of a heavenly calling*. Throughout this epistle an emphasis is made on the contrast between the earthly and the heavenly. The things of this world are transient, whereas those of heaven are eternal. Perhaps the author had in mind the difference between the Jews, who through Abraham and Moses focused on an everlasting earthly kingdom. In contrast, the Christian's focus should be on the heavenly kingdom which was made possible through the blood of Christ.

Two significant titles are bestowed upon Jesus in verse 1: *Apostle* and *High Priest*.

- The term, *apostle* (ἀπόστολος), refers to someone who is sent on a mission and the focus is more on the mission than the fact that he/she is sent.<sup>52</sup> Jesus is our *apostle*, because He was sent to redeem us.
- Jesus, as our *High Priest* is a major theme of this epistle, bestowing that label upon Him eleven times.<sup>53</sup> His function in that role will be described in later sections.

### Verses 2-6

**2.** *He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house.*

**3.** *For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house.*

**4.** *For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.*

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<sup>52</sup> Occasionally, someone states that the term, *apostle*, means, *sent one*. This is incorrect. Some form of the verb, πέμπω would be used to indicate *sending* or a *sent one*. *Apostle* refers to someone commissioned to occupy a particular role or to perform a particular task. For example, in Philippians 2:25 Paul used this term for Epaphroditus, whom the Philippian Church commissioned to take money to Paul while he was in prison. Epaphroditus' apostleship was carrying money to Paul. Modern English versions, thinking that a literal rendering of Philippians 2:25 would confuse readers, take the liberty of rendering the term as, *messenger*.

<sup>53</sup> 2:17; 4:14ff; 5:5, 10; 6:20; 7:26, 28; 8:1, 3; 9:11; 10:21

5. Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later;

6. but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

Again, we encounter a statement concerning the relationship of the Father to the Son.

The term rendered as, *appointed*, ποιέω (*poieoh*) literally means, *to make*<sup>54</sup> or, *do*. It is used, here in the same sense that we would speak of someone's being made a king, or making someone to be, whatever. Our Heavenly Father made the Son to be our Apostle and High Priest and thus, *appointed* is not inappropriate, even though it is somewhat of a paraphrase.

This statement about Moses' faithfulness brings to mind Yahweh's admonition to Aaron and Miriam, when they were declaring themselves to be equal to Moses.

*He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, Yahweh, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My house."<sup>55</sup> With him I speak mouth to mouth, even openly, and not in dark sayings, and he beholds the form of Yahweh. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?"* (Numbers 12:6-8)

Note the statements made contrasting Christ and Moses - emphasizing the superiority of Christ:

- Moses was faithful as a **servant**, in a house built by someone else.
- Christ was faithful as a **Son**, in the house that He built, i.e., *the Church*.<sup>56</sup>

Verse 6 expresses a theme that frequently occurs in this epistle, the consequence and tragic consequence that results from falling away from the faith -. *His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.*

This statement, as well as similar statements made throughout the epistle, contradicts the *eternal security* doctrine, "Once saved, always saved," taught by some Baptists and Reformed Churches. Note this from the Southern Baptist, Billy Graham.

## Can You Lose Your Salvation?

By Billy Graham, Tribune Content Agency on Oct 22, 2014

Q: Can you lose your salvation once you've honestly committed your life to Jesus? A friend of mine says you can, and another says you can't. This bothers me, because I sincerely believe in Jesus, but I'm afraid I'll do something wrong and maybe lose it all. -- R.J

A: I don't doubt the sincerity of your friend who believes we can lose our salvation if we sin after we've given our lives to Christ, but I respectfully disagree. Jesus said, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6:37).

<sup>54</sup> For example, this is the term used in Hebrews 1:2, *through Whom He also **made** the worlds*

<sup>55</sup> The NAS translates the Hebrew, בֵּיתִי (*beti*), as *household*. This is a loose rendering. The term means, *house*. The Septuagint renders the word as οἶκος (*oikos*) the Greek term for house. The KJV as well most contemporary English versions (with the exception of the NAS) render the Hebrew as, *house* (so rendered in the NKJV, NIV, NLT, NET, NAB, YLT)

<sup>56</sup> Matthew 16:18

Think of it this way. When a child is born, he or she becomes part of a family. Even if they rebel or do something wrong, they're still a member of that family, and nothing can ever end that relationship. And when we come to Christ, we become members of a new family -- the family of God. We are now His children, and just as an earthly child will always be part of their family, so we will always be part of Christ's family -- even if we sin and turn away from Him for a time.

But let me add two important warnings. The first is a warning against false belief -- that is, assuming we're committed to Christ when we really aren't. Many people, I'm afraid, fall into this category. They're like the plants Jesus warned about, that grew for a time but then withered and died (see Luke 8:4-15).

The second is a warning against allowing sin to control us -- even as believers. Sin cuts us off from God, and has devastating effects on our lives. Flee from sin, the Bible says, "and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness" (1 Timothy 6:11)

*(Send your queries to "My Answer," c/o Billy Graham, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, 1 Billy Graham Parkway, Charlotte, N.C., 28201; call 1-(877) 2-GRAHAM, or visit the Web site for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association: [www.billygraham.org](http://www.billygraham.org).)*

Note that Billy Graham, as well as others who hold to the once saved always saved doctrine, argue that those who think that they are saved but eventually are lost, never were saved. They were somewhat deceived in thinking that they were saved.<sup>57</sup>

### **Verses 7-11<sup>58</sup>**

These verses, continuing the theme, *if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end*, are a word for word quote of Psalm 95:7b-11

**7.** *Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says,*

*"Today if you hear His voice,*

**8.** *Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, As in the day of trial in the wilderness,*

**9.** *Where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, And saw My works for forty years.*

**10.** *"Therefore I was angry with this generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart; And they did not know My ways';*

**11.** *As I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"*

Note that the authorship of Psalm 95 is attributed to the Holy Spirit. This is in keeping with Paul's declaration to Timothy, *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness*; (2 Timothy 3:16 NAS)

### **.Verses 12-18**

Continuing to cite the example of the Hebrews who failed to enter the Promised Land because of their unbelief and lack of total trust in God, the epistle exhorts the Hebrew Christians to continue in faithfulness and mutual encouragement of one another.

**12.** *Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God.*

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.gty.org/library/study-guides/180/eternal-security>

<sup>58</sup> The KJV, NAS, and NIV differ in their verse separation and numbering in these verses



**13.** *But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

**14.** *For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end;*

**15.** *while it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me."<sup>59</sup>*

**16.** *For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?*

**17.** *And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?*

**18.** *And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?*

**19.** *And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.*

An important term is used in verse 13 - *the deceitfulness of sin*. Sin promises what it cannot deliver. Those who are captured by its deceit, usually find themselves sadly empty and in a tragic state. Certainly, they are so at the end of their life in this world.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Verses 1-11**

**1.** *Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it.*

**2.** *For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.*

**3** *For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.*

**4.** *For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh day, "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works";*

**5:** *and again, in this passage, "They shall not enter My rest."*

**6.** *Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience,*

**7.** *He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."*

**8.** *For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that.*

**9** *There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.*

**10.** *For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.*

**11.** *Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience.*

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<sup>59</sup> Psalm 95:7f

Again, using the example of the generation that left Egypt and its failure to enter the promised land, the author urges the Hebrew Christians to remain faithful to the message that they have heard. The reason cited for the Israelites' disobedience was their unbelief.

- 3:19 *And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.*
- 4:2 *did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.*

The implications of this are obvious and serious. If a person, in his/her heart, really believes the promises and warnings of God's Word, then obedience is almost a reflex action. However, if one is uncertain, then it is almost impossible to stand strong against the temptations and the destructive vicissitudes of this world.

The flow of thought in Chapter 4 presents two truths:

- Disbelief results in failure to enter into the rest promised by God.
- The arrival in the Promised Land is not the ultimate rest that awaits those who trust in God.

Verses 3, 5, 7 & 8 refer to Psalm 95:7-11 which the Holy Spirit spoke through David, approximately 400 years after Joshua's death.

*For He is our God,  
And we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.  
Today, if you would hear His voice,  
Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,  
As in the day of Massah in the wilderness; when your fathers tested Me,  
They tried Me, though they had seen My work.  
For forty years I loathed that generation, and said they are a people who err in their heart,  
Therefore, I swore in My anger, truly they shall not enter into My rest.*

When David penned this Psalm, the Israelites had occupied the Promised Land for several generations. Therefore, David's exhortation, given 400 years after Joshua's death, must have referred to something other than the Israelites arrival in the Promised Land.

The question arises, *To what rest does the author refer?*

The words of Jesus immediately come to mind,

*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.  
Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me,  
for I am gentle and humble in heart;  
and you shall find rest for your souls.<sup>60</sup>*

Also, the wonderful promise given in Revelation 14:13

*And I heard a voice from heaven, saying,  
"Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!  
"Yes," says the Spirit,  
"that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."*

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<sup>60</sup> Matthew 11:28-29

It therefore seems that the rest spoken of is two-fold:

- the restful peace that one has when he/she lives a life surrendered to and fully trusting in Our Lord,
- and the wonderful rest that awaits those who leave this life and enter into the very Presence of Our Lord. As Paul wrote, *For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*<sup>61</sup>

## EXCURSUS

### The name, *Jesus*

The King James Translators rendered Hebrews 4:8, *For if **Jesus** had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day,*

All contemporary English versions render the verse, *For if **Joshua** had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day.*

The explanation for this difference is in the origin of the name, *Jesus*, which is the result of the attempt to reproduce the phonetics of one alphabet in the phonetics of another alphabet.

Moses' successor originally was named *Hoshea* (הוֹשֵׁעַ) the same name as that of the prophet. The name means, *salvation*, or, *deliverance*.

Moses changed it to *Yehoshua* (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ), meaning, *God is deliverance.*<sup>62</sup>

English translators phonetically reproduced *Yehoshua* as, *Joshua*.

The Jewish translators that created the Septuagint, seeking to phonetically render *Yehoshua* in Greek, rendered the name as, *hieysou* (ἱησοῦ). New Testament writers did the same thing.<sup>63</sup>

When translators began rendering the Greek text into European languages, they phonetically rendered *hieysou* as, *Jesus*. Interestingly, in almost every European language, except English (English is a sub-German language), a J is pronounced as a Y – thus, phonetically, *Yesus*.

When the writers of the New Testament translated into Greek, the Aramaic/Hebrew sayings of the people of Jesus' day, they followed the practice of the Septuagint and phonetically rendered the names with the Greek alphabet.

Thus, when the angel told Mary that her son would be named *Jesus*,<sup>64</sup> and then repeated this instruction to Joseph,<sup>65</sup> the angel actually said that his name would be *Yehoshua*. Therefore, using the English rendering of *Yehoshua*, Our Lord's name is *Joshua*.

Once someone learns of these facts, he/she must face the decision as what name to use in prayer.

- Should one use the original name, *Jehoshua*, or
- should one use the English version of that name, which is, *Joshua*, or
- should one use the Greek phonetic form of the name, *Hiesou*, or
- should one use the English rendition, *Jesus*?

This, of course, is a personal, conscience- driven, decision, each person must make for himself/herself.

<sup>61</sup> Philippians 1:21

<sup>62</sup> Numbers 13:6

<sup>63</sup> In addition to Hebrews 4:8, this name occurs in Luke 3:29 and Acts 7:45

<sup>64</sup> Luke 1:31

<sup>65</sup> Matthew 1:20-21

### Verses 12-13

**12.** *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

**13.** *And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*

The question naturally arises, is the word of God referred to in this passage the Living Word, i.e. Jesus, as described in John 1:1 and Revelation 19:13?

- John 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*
- Revelation 19:13 *And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God.*

Or does the term, in this verse, refer to the *word of hearing* (literal rendering of verse 2), i.e., the spoken/written Word of God (Matthew 15:6; Mark 7:13; Luke 8:11; John 10:35; Acts 13:26; Romans 9:6; II Corinthians 4:2; Ephesians 6:17; I Timothy 4:5; II Timothy 2:15; etc.).?

Two things indicate that it is the spoken/written word.

- (1) The context points to the spoken/written word. Verse 12 begins with γάρ (*gar*) – *for*, linking this clause to the promise of rest, the topic of the preceding verses, which emphasized the importance of believing and trusting in the warnings and promises given to the people of God (verse 11). The citations given in the preceding verses were Old Testament quotations which the Hebrew Christians had heard and read.
- (2) The word is described as an instrument that achieves certain things. The word is an instrumental word, a two-edged sword. The Book of Revelation describes the word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Personal Word, as an instrumental word – a two-edged sword.
  - *And in His right hand He held seven stars; and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.* (Revelation 1:16)
  - *"And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:* (Revelation 2:12)
  - *And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.* (Revelation 19:15)
  - *And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.* (Revelation 19:21)

Isaiah and Paul both use this image for the Holy Spirit inspired utterances.

*And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of His hand* (Isaiah 49:2a)

*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* (Ephesians 6:17)

Thus, we conclude that verse 13 refers to the word delivered by the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament writers, and the New Testament word given by Jesus and the Holy Spirit-inspired revelatory apostles.

The word spoken by God is active, it is doing the work it was designed to do. The holy writings are inspired by the Holy Spirit and a power is resident in them that has been there since first sent forth from the Throne of God.

Note that when the devil came to Jesus tempting Him to relieve His hunger by turning stones into bread, Jesus responded by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, *It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'* (Matthew 4:4)

All Scripture is God's utterance, whether given through prophets, angels, apostles, or Jesus, it is the Word of God and should be read and heard with that reverence and understanding.

*Soul and spirit*, refer to the two inner aspects of humanity.

- Mary expressed this truth in her psalm of praise to God, for the blessing of being the mother of the Redeemer. *And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.* (Luke 1:46-47)
- Paul, in I Thessalonians 5:23, described the tripartite nature of humanity, in the blessing he pronounces on the Thessalonian believers: *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The point being made in Hebrews 4:12-13 is that the inspired word reaches to the very inner recesses of the human being, convicting on one hand and assuring on the other hand - depending on the hearer's spiritual state.

The figure of separating bone and marrow is a figure of speech emphasizing this truth.

Verse 13 explains how why the Word of God has this power – because of the identity of the author, from whom nothing is hidden, i.e. God Himself.

Thus, the flow of thought in these verses:

- Verse 11 warned the Christians to trust and obey God, lest they lose their heavenly rewards.
- Verses 12-13 point out that God's judgment, based on His knowledge, is impossible to escape.

### **Verses 14-16**

**14.** *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.*

**15.** *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*

**16.** *Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.*

This passage resumes the train of thought that began in 3:1 *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.....*

As the Jewish High Priest, carrying the blood of the sin offering, passed through the various forecourts of the Temple, and then passed through the veil into the Holy of Holies, where he made atonement for the people by sprinkling the blood on the Ark,<sup>66</sup> - so our High Priest has passed through the heavens and appeared in the very throne room of heaven. This truth is presented three more times in this epistle: Chapters 6, 9, and 10.

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<sup>66</sup> Exodus 30:1-10; Leviticus 16, etc.

Since we have this sympathetic High Priest, Jesus, two exhortations are given:

- *let us hold fast our confession.*
- *Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.*

This is another exhortation avoid being like the Israelites of the Exodus, who, because of unbelief, did not enter into the promised rest.. If we hold fast to our confession, believing the promises and heeding the warnings of God, we can, with confidence, approach the heavenly throne of grace and find grace to help in time of need.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Verses 1-4

1. *For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins;*
2. *he can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness;*
3. *and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself.*
4. *And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.*

Note the four important things are stated concerning God's legitimate human priests:

- Priests are appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin.
- Because the priest is aware of his own failings, he is patient with those for whom he offers sacrifices.
- In addition to offering sacrifices for the people, he must offer sacrifices for himself because of his own failures.
- No legitimate priest assumes the role of priest, but is obedient to take that role, when he is called of God to do so.

The picture is of a humble person, aware of his unworthiness, but obedient to God in fulfilling the role to which God has called him. The legitimacy of one's priesthood must be in doubt if he does not meet these criteria.

### Verses 5-6

5. *So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, "Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee";*
6. *just as He says also in another passage, "Thou art a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."*

Once again, Old Testament passages are accommodated.

- Verse 5 quotes Psalm 2:7
- Verse 6 quotes Psalm 110:4

The language of both of these Psalms makes them appropriately labeled, Messianic Psalms.

- Psalm 2 begins,  
*Why are the nations in an uproar, And the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand, And the rulers take counsel together Against Yahweh and against His Anointed.*<sup>67</sup>
- Psalm 110 begins  
*Yahweh says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet."*

Furthermore, when the Jews read verse 4 of Psalm 110, they would have puzzled over the identity of the person addressed, *Thou art a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek*. No one, since Melchizedek, himself, had been priest of the order of Melchizedek.

These elements in Psalm 2 and Psalm 10, written 1000 years before the birth of Christ, would justify the author of the Epistle's applying these declarations as referring to the Christ – the Son - Jesus.

As was true of all legitimate priests, Christ was not driven to his role because of personal ambition. He did not come in His own Name, nor did He seek to glorify Himself.

*Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'; (John 8:54)*

Christ's incarnation and His entire earthly ministry was a preparation for His mediatorial priesthood. That priesthood was to exist until its purpose had been fulfilled.

- The Hebrew term rendered as, *forever*, in Psalm 110:4, is לעולם (leolam).
- The Greek term in the Septuagint is αἰών (aiohn). Verse 6 is a direct quote of the Septuagint.

Both the Hebrew and Greek terms refer to an age or, while time endures.

The Aaronic priesthood existed for the age in which God's Covenant with His people was the Mosaic Covenant. This is reflected in the Exodus 20 account, in which God was instructing Moses in the establishment of the tabernacle, the services to be conducted therein, and the Aaronic priesthood that was to function in its role.

*and you shall anoint them even as you have anointed their father, that they may minister as priests to Me; and their anointing shall qualify them for a **perpetual** priesthood throughout their generations."* (Exodus 40:15)

The term rendered, *perpetual*, is the same term as that used in Psalm 110:4.

The duration of Christ's priesthood is the Christian dispensation. At the close of this age, when Christ will have delivered up the Kingdom to the Father (I Corinthians 15:24), He will cease His ministry as priest. His work as a mediatorial priest will have been accomplished.

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<sup>67</sup> The term, *anointed*, is Messiah (מָשִׁיחַ) in the Hebrew and Christ (χρίστος) in the Septuagint.

Christ's being a priest after the order of Melchizedek, will be discussed more fully in Chapter Seven. Suffice it to say here, Genesis 14:18 describes Melchizedek as being both a king and a priest: *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.*

### Verses 7-10

7. *In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety.*
8. *Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.*
9. *And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,*
10. *being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.*

These very emotional verses describe the agony of Jesus in the Garden, prior to His crucifixion as described by Luke.

*And when He arrived at the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."*

*And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done."*

*Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him*

*And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. (Luke 22:40-44)*

Both the Nicean (325 AD) and Calcedonian (451) Creeds state that Jesus was fully God and fully man. These creeds, of course are based on a number of Scriptures.<sup>68</sup> In these verses, and the historical record of Luke, the humanity of Jesus is displayed more fully than in any other portion of Scripture.

The term rendered, *loud crying* in verse 7, 29κρᾶυγή (*kraugeh*), describes, *bawling out loud*. It would be difficult to find a term expressing agony to a greater degree than, κρᾶυγή.

The implication of these verses is that Jesus was in such agony that He feared that He would die and not be able to complete the atoning work of the cross. In response to that fear and his outcry, an angel was sent to strengthen Him in His agony. Even though strengthened, His agony did not end, and *His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.*<sup>69</sup>

The Greek terms rendered as, *both prayers and supplications*, δεήσεις τε καὶ ἰκετηρίας (*deayseis te kai iketayrias*), further reveal the humanity of Jesus.

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<sup>68</sup> Examples of verses displaying one or the other of these identities: Humanity - Matthew 1:25; 4:1; 16:21; 21:18; 27::50; John 19:28. Divinity – John 1:3, 10; 8:54; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Isaiah 9:6, etc.

<sup>69</sup> The medical term for this phenomenon is, Hematohidrosis. This is a rare medical condition that usually is the result of extreme emotional stress.



- The first term, δεήσεις,<sup>70</sup> refers to a petition presented to a superior entity.
- The second term, ἰκετηρία<sup>71</sup>, expresses a deep sense one's helplessness.

The words, *One able to save Him from death*, brings to mind Jesus' statement to Peter, when Peter drew his sword to defend Jesus.

*"Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen this way?"* (Matthew 26:53-54)

Both an ordinary priest, and Jesus prepared themselves to present the offering:

- An ordinary priest prepared himself for presenting an offering for the people, by first, presenting an offering for himself.
- Jesus prepared Himself for the sacrificial priestly work by experiencing the agony and sense of weakness, displayed in his *prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears*.

As the ordinary priest was *beset with weakness* (verse 2), so Our Lord experienced that sense, expressed in His prayers and supplications.

As the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, we would think that He was exempt from suffering, but, as stated earlier in 2:10, such was not the case.

*For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.*

Even though Jesus demonstrated obedience to the Will of the Father throughout His life,<sup>72</sup> what He experienced as He faced the cross, was the supreme example of obedience.

*And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt."* (Matthew 26:39)

The truth declared verse 9, *And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation* is repeated often in the epistles. Here are examples:

- *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope;* (I Timothy 1:1)
- *to Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.* (Titus 1:4)
- *looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus;* (Titus 2:13)
- *Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:* (II Peter 1:1)

As stated earlier, we forgo the discussion of Jesus, a priest after the order of Melchizedek, until we explore Chapter 7, which describes this truth more fully.

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<sup>70</sup> Accusative plural of the noun, δεήσις

<sup>71</sup> Accusative plural of the noun, ἰκετηρία

<sup>72</sup> *John 5:19*, etc.

### Verses 11-14

11. *Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.*
12. *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.*
13. *For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.*
14. *But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.*

Little comment needs to be made on these verses, except to note the severe terms used in the rebuke.

We do not know how long these Hebrews had been Christians, possibly twenty years or more. They are chastised for not being diligent in their study of spiritual matters and, as a result, had not grown in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. They still were occupied with elementary matters.

Peter's Second Epistle is an exhortation to Christians to progress in their knowledge of Jesus Christ. His closing verse of the epistle succinctly exhorts, *but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

## CHAPTER SIX

### Verses 1-3

1. *Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,*
2. *of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.*
3. *And this we shall do, if God permits.*

The Greek term rendered as, *maturity*, is τελειότης (*teleioutays*), which implies being *complete*, a *finished product*.

The term rendered, *repentance*, is μετάνοια (*metanoia*) i.e., *to change one's mind*.

Thus, the author is urging the readers to no longer look to the *dead works* of the Law and its rituals as a means of justification. Jesus taught that even in Judaism, ceremonial faithfulness was not enough. Note this parable:

*Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer.*

*The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, "God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'"*

*But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!"*

*I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted." (Luke 18:10-14)*

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## EXCURSUS

### Good Works as Related to Disciples of Jesus

Not only the dead works of the Law, but all good works are dead works, as far as being a means of achieving salvation. Paul was adamant in his declaration that salvation is not achieved through good works.

- *because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, (Romans 3:20-21)*
- *For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. (Romans 3:28)*
- *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;<sup>9</sup> not as a result of works, that no one should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

However, good works should not be undervalued. In the Sermon on the Mount, Our Lord exhorted His disciples,

*"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)*

Good works are viewed as an outgrowth of salvation as well as evidence that salvation has been achieved.

- *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)*
- *But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?  
You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God.  
You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.  
And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?  
For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. (James 2:20-26)*
- *Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, (1 Timothy 6:17-18)*
- *Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments;<sup>10</sup> but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness. (1 Timothy 2:9-10)*

Concerning the appropriateness of the Church's supporting widows, Paul wrote,

*Let a widow be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man, having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work. (1 Timothy 5:9-10)*

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The foundation that the author assumes has been laid in the lives of the Hebrew Christians consisted of six elements – things that should have been established and were no longer needed to be emphasized:

- Change their minds about the efficacy of dead works
- Faith toward God
- Instructions about immersions<sup>73</sup>
- Instructions about laying on of hands
- Resurrection of the dead
- Eternal judgment.

Assuming that these foundational truths have been embraced by his readers, and intending to move on to deeper things, he first warns of the possible consequences of failing to grow in the deeper matters of faith.

#### Verses 4-8

4. *For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,*
5. *and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,*
6. *and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.*
7. *For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God;*
8. *but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.*

Verse 4 illustrates the point being made by using the analogy of person who sits down at a meal and begins to eat – just tasting the food and finding it good – but does not finish the meal. The picture is of a believer who began the Christian journey, was fully on the road to heaven, then left the path and turned back.

To this point the epistle has accumulated a list of expressions which present a picture of those who have not only professed faith, who but have fully *tasted* the rich experience of its characteristics. This clearly describes someone who is in the Heavenly Kingdom, then chooses to leave and return to the world.

Having had this rich experience, then turned away from it to reenter the former way of life, such a person has rejected the very presence of God. The picture is of one who is not merely a backslider, but one who has rejected the faith.

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<sup>73</sup> The term rendered, *washings*, is βαπτισμός (*baptismos*), which refers to immersion for purification, both in Judaism and in Christianity. See Freiberg, *Analytical Greek Lexicon*, item 4510; Gingrich, *Greek New Testament Lexicon*, item 1139; Liddell and Scott, *Greek Lexicon Abridged*, item 7956, etc.

Such persons have reached a point where it is impossible to renew them again to repentance – note that the text does not say, *difficult*, but *impossible* (ἀδύνατον *adunaton*).<sup>74</sup>

For those who seek to minister the message of Christ and to disciple converts, this presents a sad picture. Such ministers must turn their attention to other things and leave such individuals in the hands of God Himself.

We will encounter this same truth in Chapter 10.

Several passages of Scripture come to mind, at this point.

*If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.* (1 John 5:16)

*For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire."* (2 Peter 2:20-22)

*Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.* (Matthew 7:6)

### **Verses 9-12**

9. *But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.*
10. *For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.*
11. *And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end,*
12. *that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

What a wonderful turn of thought – from one of dire foreboding to one of encouragement.

- Chapter 5 verse 12 chastised them for not growing in their study of the Word and failing to progress from student to teacher.
- Even so, they had been diligent in works of benevolence. They had faithfully ministered to the saints and were continuing to do so. We do not know of the specifics of these acts, but one who manifests such an attitude and behavior, for the sake of Christ, demonstrates an indication of manifesting the heart of Christ.

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<sup>74</sup> The term, *impossible*, begins this passage in verse 4. The NAS translators moved the word to verse 6, in an effort to make clear the intent of the passage. Verse 4 in the Greek text begins, ἀδύνατον γὰρ τοὺς ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας (*adunaton gar tous apax fohτισmentas*) *for it is impossible the ones once having been enlightened ....*

The exhortation in verses 11 and 12 is to continue in these good works – don't quit and don't grow weary in well-doing. Paul gave a similar exhortation to the Thessalonians - *But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.* (2 Thessalonians 3:13)

### **Verses 13-20**

**13.** *For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,*

**14.** *saying, "I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply you."*

**15.** *And thus, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.*

**16.** *For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute.*

**17.** *In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,*

**18.** *in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us.*

**19.** *This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,*

**20.** *where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

The promise to Abraham was certain to be fulfilled because of *two unchangeable things*:

- God cannot lie
- God swore by Himself

Men swear by greater than themselves, but for God, there was/is no greater being by whom He can swear, so He swore by Himself.

Even as Abraham waited in hope to see the fulfillment of the promise, so Christians wait in hope for the fulfillment of what is promised to them – which is assured because of Jesus' entering into the heavenly Holy of Holies (beyond the veil). He is the Christian's high priest forever.

This hope is the anchor that enables Christians to remain stable and faithful, regardless of the velocity of the winds that blow against them. Come what may, heaven is the gift/reward awaiting those who remain faithful.

Paul wrote of this hope in his Second Letter to Timothy

*in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.* (2 Timothy 4:8)

Also comes to mind the experience of Stephen

*and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*

*But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears, and they rushed upon him with one impulse. And when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

*And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"*

*And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" And having said this, he fell asleep.* (Acts 7:56-60)

## CHAPTER SEVEN

In this chapter, the Epistle elaborates on the statement that the Son, Jesus, is a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

### EXCURSUS

#### Identifying Melchizedek

The name, *Melchizedek*, is composed of two words:

- מֶלֶךְ (*melech*) the Hebrew word for *king*. It in the possessive case, meaning, *my king*.
- צְדָקָה (*zedakah*) the Hebrew word for *righteousness*

*Melchizedek*, means, *My King is Righteous*, or as some would render it, *King of Righteousness*.

The episode referenced in Hebrews is recorded in Genesis 14:17-20. This account contains the only historical information that we have about Melchizedek.

After Abraham and his 318 men had rescued Abraham's nephew, Lot, by defeating Chedorlaomer and his allies, Abraham and his men were honored by the king of Sodom and Melchizedek, *the king of Salem*. *Salem* and *shalom*, meaning, *peace*, are from the same root.

Psalm 76:2 describes Salem as the site of God's Holy Tent and is used in this Psalm as a synonym for Zion,<sup>75</sup> thus identifying it as Jerusalem. *And His tabernacle is in Salem; His dwelling place also is in Zion.*

The same is true of Psalm 147:2, 12. *Yahweh builds up Jerusalem; He gathers the outcasts of Israel. ...Praise Yahweh, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!*

Josephus also states that Salem and Jerusalem refer the same city.<sup>76</sup>

In addition to being the king of Salem, Melchizedek is *a priest of God Most High* (*El 'Elyon*; עֶלְיֹן Genesis 14:18). It is this point that the Epistle to the Hebrews cites in reference to Jesus.

#### Verses 1-10

1. *For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,*
2. *to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils, was first of all, by the translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace.*
3. *Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he abides a priest perpetually.*

<sup>75</sup> Originally, Zion, referred to the hill on which had been the site of the Jebusite fortress, prior to the Jews' capturing the city. Later, the term came to be used for the Holy Mount in Jerusalem, and then for the city itself.

<sup>76</sup> Now the king of Sodom met him at a certain place, which they called The King's Dale, where Melchisedec, king of the city *Salem*, received him. That name signifies, the righteous king: and such he was, without dispute, inasmuch that, on this account, he was made the priest of God: however, they afterward called *Salem, Jerusalem*. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book I, Chapter 10, paragraph 2.

4. *Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils.*
5. *And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham.*
6. *But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham, and blessed the one who had the promises.*
7. *But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.*
8. *And in this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on.*
9. *And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes,*
10. *for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.*

It seems that the Holy Spirit cast an impenetrable veil over the birth and death of Melchizedek, as well as his parentage and his posterity. Since none of these things are revealed, he can be described as, *Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he abides a priest perpetually.*

By doing so, the Spirit has made him a type of priesthood to which Christ can be assigned.

The next item in the epistle's argument surrounds the giving of tithes. Giving tithes was a major commandment in the Mosaic Covenant.<sup>77</sup>

However, the giving of tithes pre-dated the Mosaic Covenant. Abraham's giving tithes to Melchizedek is a demonstration of this fact.

The vow of Jacob, centuries before Moses, also illustrates this truth, *And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house; and of all that Thou dost give me I will surely give a tenth to Thee.* (Genesis 28:22)

Giving tithes to a priest, as was done when Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek, is evidence that the giver recognized the priesthood of the one to whom he gave tithes.

The statement that Melchizedek's priesthood was/is perpetual is based on the fact that he did not pass his priesthood on to his descendants, nor to any other priests, as was done with the Levitical priesthood.

*Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he abides a priest perpetually.*

The Hebrew Christians would have greatly esteemed the Levitical Priesthood established through the Mosaic Covenant. Therefore, demonstrating Jesus' superiority to the Levitical Priesthood was a very important point. To establish this, the first evidence presented is the relationship between Abraham and Melchizedek.

- *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;"* (Genesis 14:18-19)

Melchizedek blessed Abraham. Therefore, based on the principle that the greater blesses the lesser, Melchizedek is established as being greater than Abraham.

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<sup>77</sup> Lev. 27:30-31; Num. 18:21, 24,26; Deut. 12:17; 14:22-28; Deut. 26:12; 2 Chr. 31:5-6; etc.



- *And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes,<sup>10</sup> for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. (Hebrews 7:9-10)*  
Since Levi was a descendant of Abraham, and *still in his father's loins*, Levi, through Abraham, paid tithes to Melchizedek.

### Verses 11-19

11. *Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?*
12. *For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.*
13. *For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar.*
14. *For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.*
15. *And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek,*
16. *who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life.*
17. *For it is witnessed of Him, "Thou art a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."*
18. *For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and a uselessness*
19. *(for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of better hope, through which we draw near to God.*

Thus, the argument in this section begins with the question, "if perfection could be obtained through the Levitical priesthood, then why did Yahweh say that another priest would arise from a wholly different order – i.e., *the order of Melchizedek*? Why would there be a need for another priestly order?"

Furthermore, since the people received the Law on the basis of the Levitical priesthood, if that priesthood were changed, then that would mean the end of the Law on which the priesthood was based (verse 12).

In verse 17, the Epistle, for the seventh time, thus far, looks to Psalm 110, *Yahweh has sworn and will not change His mind, "Thou art a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."* (Psalm 110:4) As noted earlier, this Psalm generally was viewed as a Messianic Psalm, since the statements were too extravagant to apply to David, and for that matter, David never was made a priest.

Each generation of Levitical priests received their priesthood from their Levitical predecessor. A priest *according to the order of Melchizedek* would not receive his priesthood from the previous priest, but as a priesthood unique to himself.

Jesus was not from the tribe of Levi, but from the tribe of Judah. No priests had come from this tribe. This is another fact that aligns with His being unique – *according to the order of Melchizedek*.

The Law was not able to achieve the goal of creating righteous people, because

- it required explicit obedience and,
- because of flawed human nature, no one was always able to comply with the Law.

Furthermore, outward obedience did not guarantee a proper inner condition. Jesus addressed this truth in the Sermon on the Mount.

- *"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. (Matthew 5:20-24)*
- *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28)*
- *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:38-48)*

In agreement with the statement made in verse 17, Paul declared,

*and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, (Philippians 3:9)*

In this same vein, we recall the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, recorded in John 3.

*Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Him by night, and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."*

*Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

*Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"*

*Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (John 3:1-6)*

NOTE: The Greek terms that most English versions render as, *born again*, are γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν (*gennnaythay anothēn*). The literal rendering of these term is, *born from above*.

Nicodemus, being a Pharisee, would have been scrupulous in his keeping of the Law. Yet, this was not enough for him to enter the Kingdom of God. The terms, *water and Spirit*, traditionally have been understood to refer to immersion and the reception of the Holy Spirit that one normally receives at the time of immersion, as promised by Peter in Acts 2:38.

To summarize the important flow of argument in these verses:

- If perfection could come through the Levitical priesthood, then there was no need for a new priesthood.
- Since a priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek had been prophesied, then that meant that a post-Levitical priesthood was in God's plan.
- Since the Levitical priesthood was an irreplaceable element in the foundation of the Mosaic Covenant, the end of that priesthood and the providing of another priesthood indicated the end of the Law.
- The Levitical priesthood was limited to members of the tribe of Levi, but Melchizedek was not of that tribe, neither was the predicted priest who was of the order of Melchizedek – he was a descendant of David, from the tribe of Judah (Matthew 1:1)
- The Law and the Levitical priesthood associated with it, was not able to bring perfection, but the new priesthood presented a new hope for mankind.

### Verses 20-22

**20.** *And inasmuch as it was not without an oath*

**21.** *(for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "The Lord has sworn And will not change His mind, 'Thou art a priest forever' ");*

**22.** *so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.*

The progression of the argument of this section is very intimately connected, leading to the sublime conclusion that Jesus is now a High Priest and Minister of the Holy of Holies, and also that He is the Minister of the True Tabernacle, which God pitched.

Thus far, the argument in this section has established important foundational points:

- Verses 1-10 demonstrated the superiority of the Melchizedekian order of priesthood
- Verses 11-19 the author shows that it was God's purpose, even in the time of David, to set aside the Old Covenant and introduce the New, thereby proving indirectly from Psalm 110:4 the superiority of Christ's priesthood over that of Aaron.

In verses 20-22, the author demonstrates the superiority of Christ's priesthood in the fact that it was confirmed, and its perpetuity confirmed, by an oath of God.

The Levitical priesthood began without an oath. Yahweh simply said to Moses,

*"Then bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priest to Me-- Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons. (Exodus 28:1)*

Then, after various rites and ceremonies, they took up the role and responsibilities of the priesthood – but there was no oath from Yahweh concerning the perpetuity of their priesthood.

However, concerning the predicted priest of the future, as we have frequently seen in Psalm 110:4, Yahweh swore with an oath concerning this future priest's perpetuity,

*Yahweh has sworn and will not change His mind, "Thou art a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."*

The Aaronic/Levitical priesthood was preparatory for the ultimate priesthood – the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek - the priesthood of Christ.

The statement that Jesus is made the *guarantee of a better covenant* catches our attention. The Greek term rendered as *guarantee*, is ἔγγυος (*enguos*). This is the only time that this term occurs in the New Testament. In classic Greek, it means *a surety, a sponsor, a bondsman, one who pledges his name, property, or influence that the promise will be fulfilled*.

What a striking statement: Jesus has become our bondsman of the New Covenant. This is surety is given by God for the encouragement, consolation, and unquestionable trust of His children – redeemed humanity.

### **Verses 23-25**

- 23. And the former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers, because they were prevented by death from continuing,*
- 24. but He, on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently.*
- 25. Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*

In these verses, the subject no longer is Melchizedek, but the focus is on Christ. Even though what is said in these verses applies to all human priests – all die – the following verses indicate that the contrast is between Christ and the High Priest.

When the temple was destroyed in 70 AD, Phannias was the eighty-first in the long chain of high priests, and the destruction of the temple ended that priesthood forever.

Following His resurrection, Christ, in contrast to the mortal Levitical priests, no longer is subject to death.

### **Verses 26-28**

- 26. For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;*
- 27. who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.*
- 28. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.*

*It is fitting....* We imperfect and fallen humans needed a High Priest as described here and further on – one who is *holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens*.

Such a High Priest did not exist before the priesthood of Christ. The High Priest of the Mosaic Covenant, because he was none of these things, had to first offer a sacrifice for his own sins, and then he could offer sacrifices for the people.

Such was the character of the Levitical Priests. Some were very wicked, proud, vain, and often ambitious. All of them, without exception, were subject to the common weakness of the fallen human nature. Even Aaron himself, one of the best of the High Priests, had made a golden calf and encouraged the people to worship it (Exodus 32:1-29)

None of this was/is true of the Son of God who was made a High Priest by the word of the oath, given after the Law – again referring to Psalm 110:4

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Verses 1-5

1. *Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,*
2. *a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.*
3. *For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer.*
4. *Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law;*
5. *who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "See," He says, "that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain."*

The purpose of verse 1 is not to give a summary of what has been said before, because in verse 2 he states an additional argument – the sublime fact that Jesus is now a Minister of the Heavenly Sanctuary and the True Tabernacle – which the Lord pitched, and not man.

The main point is that Jesus is not a High Priest and Minister of some temporary priesthood or of a system which is but a shadow of the real thing – but Jesus is now the High Priest and Minister of the real thing – the ultimate position of intercession, at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

The tabernacle of Moses was a real structure, formed and fashioned after the exact model that was shown to him on the mount. However, it was but a shadow of the true tabernacle, where Christ now ministers as High Priest.

Various commentaries, through the years, have speculated on the identity of the True Tabernacle.

- Some have maintained that it is another name for heaven (Moll & Kendrick)
- Some have seen it as a symbolical representation of the universe (Macknight, following the views of Josephus and Philo)
- A highest realm of heaven where the angels and the spirits of the just are dwelling (Delitsch)
- The glorified body of Christ (Hoffmann and others)
- The Church (speculated as a possibility by Milligan)

It seems best to me (JWG) to not focus on defining exactly the identity of the True Tabernacle. The important point is that Christ is in the True Tabernacle, whatever that might be, making intercession for us.

### Verses 6-13

6. *But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.*
7. *For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.*
8. *For finding fault with them, He says, "Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, When I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;*
9. *Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers On the day when I took them by the hand To lead them out of the land of Egypt; For they did not continue in My covenant, And I did not care for them, says the Lord.*
10. *"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, And I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, And they shall be My people.*

11. *"And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, And everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' For all shall know Me, From the least to the greatest of them.*
12. *"For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And I will remember their sins no more."*
13. *When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.*

In this short section of thirteen verses, the author partially digresses from the main line of argument. Having stated that the ministry of the Christ is in the True Tabernacle, he now proceeds to discuss the superior effectiveness of that ministry.

Verse 8 states, literally, *for finding fault, he said to them*. The implication of this is that God found fault:

- with the Covenant (verse 7 - *For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second*), and
- with the people, because they constantly were transgressing the laws and requirements of that covenant.

After the conquest of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, c.588 B.C., while the captives were being detained at Ramah on the way to being in exile in Babylon, Yahweh gave to Jeremiah these very encouraging promises of a new covenant. Verses 10-12 are quotes of Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Verse 8 literally states, *I will accomplish upon the house of Israel and upon the house of Judah*.

- Man makes covenants *with* his fellow-man
- but God, according to the counsel of His own will, without consulting others, bestows His covenant *upon* His people.

So, God sovereignly executes a one-way bestowal without any negotiation between the parties, as would be done in a covenant between humans.

The terms, *house of Israel and with the house of Judah*, indicate that the New Covenant will be for all who are descended from Jacob.

- *House of Israel* refers to the ten tribes that revolted from the line of David of which Rehoboam was the king, and made Jeroboam their king.
- *House of Judah* refers to those who remained faithful to Rehoboam, which included the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and some also from the tribes of Simeon and Dan.

At the time that these wonderful promises were given through Jeremiah, these tribes were those who were in covenant with God.

All tribal and family distinctions are lost in Israel and now all who enter into covenant with God become members of one household of faith, in which, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* (Galatians 3:28 NAS)

The New Testament contains a host of verses that apply to this truth. Here are two:

- *having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.* (Colossians 2:14)
- *But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.* (Galatians 4:4-5)

Verse 13 refers to the statement quoted in verse 8, *"Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, When I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.* This is a verbatim quote of Jeremiah 31:31.

By speaking of a coming New Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant was declared as Old and was destined to pass away. Thus, the Mosaic Covenant was being disparaged, even in c.586 BC, when Yahweh spoke these words to Jeremiah.

The verse 13 term rendered, *vanish away* (KJV), *ready to disappear* (NAS), *will soon disappear* (NIV), is ἀφανισμός (*aphanismos*) . In classic Greek, this term refers to *utter destruction*, or, *abolition*.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, when the New Covenant was instituted, the Mosaic Covenant was gone, totally. This was an important point to present to the Hebrew Christians who struggled with leaving behind the Mosaic Covenant with its laws and regulations.

Verse 10, *I will put My laws into their minds, And I will write them upon their hearts* (word for word quote of Jeremiah 31:33), describes an essential difference between the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant.

- The ten fundamental concepts of the Mosaic Covenant were written on two tablets of stone (Exodus 34:1, 28; Deuteronomy 10:1-5; II Corinthians 3:7). Most of the other laws and ordinances most likely were written on skins that had been prepared for that purpose (Exodus 24:7, etc. i.e. *the book*)
- Under the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit God enlightens the understanding by the inspired word and then inscribes it on the heart (Romans 10:17). This effects the will and controls the believer's life – *the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus* (Romans 8:2, 11)

As a result of this inner enlightenment, *they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' For all shall know Me, From the least to the greatest of them* (Verse 11, Jeremiah 31:34)

In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul described the conditions of one who is a partaker of the New Covenant with these words,

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit....*

*you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*

*And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness....*

*For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.* (Romans 8:1-4, 9, 14)

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<sup>78</sup> Marcus Dodds, *The Expositors Greek Testament*, Volume Four (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Printing Company) 1976, page 326

We are reminded Our Lord's statement concerning His crucifixion,

*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. (John 12:32-33)*

By Holy Spirit inspired proclamation of Christ's atoning work on the cross, Christ draws converts to the faith – He compels no one. Thus, in keeping with the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:17; etc., it is through the preaching of the Gospel – the death, burial, resurrection, etc., that lost humans are drawn unto Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit and changed from within, not from without, by a code of laws.

In this chapter we see three of the *better promises* of the New Covenant, each one introduced by the Greek subordinating conjunction, ὅτι (*hoti*), indicating, *because*.

- Verse 10 *because this is the New Covenant I will make.....*this better promise involves a new spirit, so that a person's will shall concur with the Divine
- Verse 11 is a natural consequence of the first, *because all shall know me*
- Verse 12 *because I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawlessness I will remember no more;* God will no longer remember the sins and iniquities of all who are partakers of the New Covenant.

## CHAPTER NINE

Having sufficiently considered the superiority of the New Covenant, the author proceeds to demonstrate more fully, and in many particulars, the superiority of Christ's ministry and sacrifice. He begins by discussing the structure and furniture of the Jewish Tent (i.e. *tabernacle*) where the Mosaic Covenant worship first was implemented, then, later the Jerusalem Temple.

### Verses 1-5

1. *Now even the first covenant<sup>79</sup> had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary.*
2. *For there was a tabernacle (Greek – tent) prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place.*
3. *And behind the second veil, there was a tabernacle (Greek – tent) which is called the Holy of Holies,*
4. *having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant.*
5. *And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.*

The author of the epistle now returns to the line of argument that he left behind in the 6<sup>th</sup> verse of Chapter 8, comparing the elements and practices of the Old Covenant and its High Priest, with the High Priestly work of Christ.

The epistle does not disparage the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was of Divine origin and had ordinances of worship that were established by Yahweh, Himself. The worship ceremonies

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<sup>79</sup> The word, *covenant* (διαθήκη *diathaykay*) is not in the text, but translators added the term because it made the verse easier to understand, and it is obvious that the first covenant is the subject of the verse.

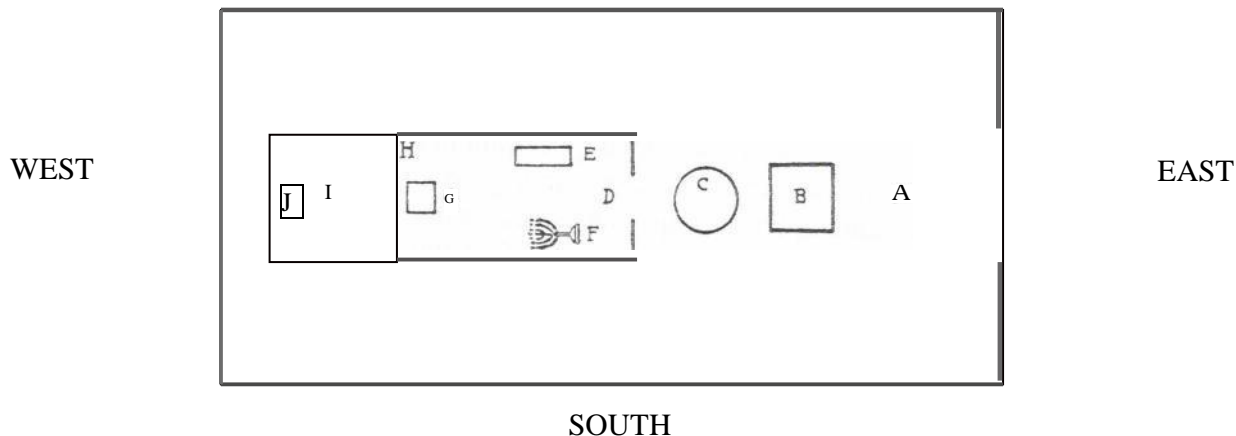


took place in a tent, and then temple, that was framed according to the pattern shown to Moses on the mountain (Exodus 26:1-27:21).

### EXCURSUS

#### The Sacred Tent

NORTH



The Sacred Tent was 150 feet, east and west, and 75 feet, north and south. It faced the east. The walls were of a linen, held up by posts of acacia wood, which were silver topped, with copper bases, and held together with silver rods.

- A. The outer court
- B. The Alter of Burnt Offering. It was 7 ½ feet square, made of acacia wood and covered with copper. It was filled with earth.
- C. The Laver was a large basin where sacrifices were immersed and washed, and where the priests were sanctified.
- D. The Holy Place was thirty feet by fifteen feet, and fifteen feet high – a perfect cube.
- E. The Table of Showbread, three feet long and 18 inches in height, was made of acacia wood, and overlaid with pure gold. On its sides were four rings through which two staves were placed so that it could be conveniently carried from place to place, as the Israelites continued on their journey through the wilderness. Every seven days, the priest placed twelve loaves of fresh unleavened bread on the table. These loaves were eaten by the priests.
- F. The Golden Candlestick had an upright shaft and six branches. On top of each one was a bowl/lamp in which pure olive oil was kept burning.
- G. The Altar of Incense was wood, covered with gold, on which rested a golden bowl filled with coals from the Altar of Burnt Offering. Incense was poured on the coals each morning and evening, resulting in a constant sweet savor in the Sacred Tent. The Altar of Incense also had four rings through which were placed two staves to facilitate its being carried.
- H. The one-piece Curtain, or Veil, divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. No one passed through the Curtain except the High Priest, and he only once a year on the Day of Atonement.
- I. The Holy of Holies, wherein rested the Ark of the Covenant, was 15 feet by 15 feet – a perfect square.
- J. The Ark of the Covenant was three feet nine inches long and two feet three inches in height and width. It was made of wood and was covered inside and out with pure gold.

The lid was solid gold and was called, *The Mercy Seat*. On the lid were two angels with outspread wings. The Ark contained the two stone tables of the Law, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod. On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies and sprinkled blood upon the Mercy Seat.

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The verse 4 statement concerning the Alter of Incense, as rendered in the NAS & NIV, has caused some controversy, since the description of the construction of the Sacred Tent does not mention an Altar of Incense inside of the Holy of Holies. Note that in the drawing of the temple (above) there is no Alter of Incense in the Holy of Holies.

The key to understanding this is the language used to describe the Ark and the Altar of Incense in verse 4.

- Note that verse 2, describing the contents of the Holy Place, states, ἐν ᾗ η̅ (*en hay ay*) in which were.
- Verse 4, concerning the Holy of Holies does not say, *in which were*, but, instead, it states, ἔχουσα (*exousa*), i.e. *having*. The Alter of Incense was located just outside of the Holy of Holies (item G in the drawing). Thus, the Alter of Incense was on one side of the veil (before it) and the Ark of the Covenant was on the other side of the veil. Thus, the Holy of Holies was *having* the Golden Altar of Incense and the Ark of the Covenant.

Some exegetes consider the Altar of Incense in verse 4 to refer to the Altar of Incense that stood outside of the Holy of Holies, on the Holy Place side of the veil.

However, there is another point of view, related to the term rendered as *Altar of Incense*. The term rendered as Altar of Incense (NAS, NIV) is θυμιατήριον (*thumiatayrion*). This term usually is rendered as, *censer*<sup>80</sup> (it is so rendered in the King James Version and the Young's Literal Translation).

In Leviticus 16:12-13, this portion of the ceremony is described.

*And he shall take a firepan full of coals of fire from upon the altar before Yahweh, and two handfuls of finely ground sweet incense, and bring it inside the veil. And he shall put the incense on the fire before Yahweh, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the ark of the testimony, lest he die.*

The Hebrew term rendered as *firepan* (NAS), *censer* (KJV, NIV, YLT), in verse 12, is מַאֲהָטָה (*maahata*), which is used to refer to any sort of a *fireholder*, including a *censer*.<sup>81</sup>

If the correct rendering of the term is *censer* (which does seem to be more consistent with the usual understanding of the Hebrew term and fits the commandment in Leviticus 16), Matthew Henry's description of this series of events seems to be an accurate description of the High Priest's actions.

“He took a censer of burning coals<sup>82</sup> (that would not smoke) in one hand, and a dish full of sweet incense in the other, and then went into the holy of holies through the veil,

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<sup>80</sup>Bauer, Gingrich, Danker, page 365

<sup>81</sup> The Septuagint renders this Hebrew with the Greek term πῦρῆιον (*pureion*). It usually occurs in the plural, referring to two sticks rubbed against one another to produce a fire.

<sup>82</sup> From the Altar of Burnt Offering in the Outer Court

and went up towards the ark, set the coals down upon the floor, and scattered the incense upon them, so that the room was immediately filled with smoke”<sup>83</sup>

Because Leviticus 16:12 commands that the coals and the incense be taken into the Holy Place (both the Hebrew and the Septuagint state this) and there is not mention of any altar in the completion of the ceremony (as described in Leviticus 16:13) it would seem that Matthew Henry’s comments accurately describe the actions of the High Priest in this ceremony.

The term, *cherub*, (plural *cherubim*) means *a gate keeper*, or *a guardian*. In addition to these two golden statues, cherubim were embroidered on the veil and the linen curtain of the Sacred Tent.<sup>84</sup>

Note that the author, in closing verse 5, says, *of these things we cannot now speak in detail*. He seems to be saying that he trusts that enough has already been said, concerning the Sacred Tent, its furnishings, and the ceremonies associated with it, so there is no reason to take more time discussing these matters at this time. His readers are prepared for more profound themes which he launches into in the following paragraphs.

### Verses 6-10

6. *Now when these things have been thus prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle, performing the divine worship,*
7. *but into the second only the high priest enters, once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.*
8. *The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed, while the outer tabernacle is still standing,*
9. *which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly, both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience,*
10. *since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.*

Having described the Sacred Tent, Hebrews proceeds to describe what the priests routinely did the Tent.

Every day, priests went into the Holy Place where they serviced the lamps and offered incense on the altar every morning and evening. Once a week, on the Sabbath, they changed the bread on Table of Shewbread.

Only the High Priest could enter the second room, the Holy of Holies, and he could enter it only on the annual Day of Atonement.<sup>85</sup>

The High Priest entered the Holy of Holies three times on the Day of Atonement.

- First, he entered with the with coals from the Altar of Burnt Offering and the incense;

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<sup>83</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible, Volume I* (Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson Publishers) 1776, 2014, Leviticus 16

<sup>84</sup> Exodus 26:1, 31; 36:8, etc.

<sup>85</sup> The Jewish calendar is lunar. The dates for the various feasts and holy days are determined by when the new moon is observed from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) takes place 10 days after the first day of *Tishrei*, which is the seventh month of the Jewish calendar. In the Gregorian Calendar, it occurs between the middle of September and the middle of October.

- Then with a pan containing the blood of the bullock that atoned for him and his family;
- Thirdly, with a pan containing the blood of a goat that atoned for the sins of the people.

With his finger, the High Priest sprinkled blood of the bullock toward the mercy seat, once, then he sprinkled the lower parts of the Ark. He was very careful to not touch the Ark. After he sprinkled the blood, he came out of the Holy Place and set the pan of blood on the floor.

Next, he proceeded to kill the goat whose blood was to be the atonement for the people. He took a pan of that blood and upon entering the Holy Place, he did the same thing with the blood of the goat that he had done with the blood of the bullock.

He then came out of the Holy of Holies, and using, first the blood of the bullock and the blood of the goat, sprinkled the outer room, the Holy Place, including the Altar of Incense and the Table of Shewbread.

Next, mixing the blood of the bullock and the blood of the goat, he put blood on the horns of the Altar of Burnt Offering.

Verse 8-9a declares that the fact that the Holy Place, and all that went on in it, were barred from the people – both their entrance of that place and their viewing it – was a sign, given by the Holy Spirit, that true access to God had not been established in the activities enacted in the Sacred Tent.

The immediate antecedent to the *which*, in verse 9a is σκηνή (*skaynay*), i.e. *tent*. Therefore, the meaning is that the outer tent (the first room, the Holy Place), which did not contain God's presence, but stood barring access to it, was/is a parable of the entire Mosaic Dispensation.

Thus, all of the religious exercises only touched the surface and could not reform the inner being. These exercises were all that the people had, until the true reformation came, through Jesus Christ, His atonement, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The rending from the top to the bottom of the veil, when Jesus died on the cross, indicates that the perfected work of Christ – the new and living way – had been opened.<sup>86</sup> No longer is the redeemed sinner barred from the very Presence of God.

Verses 9 & 10 clearly indicate that the Mosaic Covenant ceremonies were being conducted, at the time of the writing of this epistle. The Greek term in verse 9 is, προσφέροντα (*prospheonta*), which literally is rendered, *are being offered*. Verse 10 states literally, *which is a parable in regard to the present time*.

#### **Verses 11-14**

- 11.** *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation;*
- 12.** *and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*
- 13.** *For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh,*
- 14.** *how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

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<sup>86</sup> Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45

The literal rendering of verse 11 is, *and Christ being come*.<sup>87</sup> The emphasis is the historical fact – *being come*, indicating that He did and presently is, *come/here*. The author makes Christ's historical appearance the turning point in the administration of redemption.

Prior to His coming, it was right for all of the Levitical ordinances to be carefully observed – especially the High Priest's going annually into the Holy of Holies to make a symbolic atonement for the people.

However, when Christ came forward as the High Priest of a New Covenant/Institution, types and shadows no longer were needed. Therefore, He took them out of the way nailing them to the cross.

*having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.* (Colossians 2:14)

Contrasting the journey which the High Priest made into the Holy of Holies, (the Holy Place, the outer room of the tent) with that of Christ's journey to the Heavenly Holy of Holies, the author states that the "tent" through which Christ journeyed was not made with hands – not something built with the elements of this earth.

There has been much discussion, throughout history, as to the identity of this perfect tent (tabernacle), through which Christ passed. The author of Hebrews doesn't say much concerning it, but whatever route was required, it was not through a room in a tent made by human hands. It was something heavenly, as inferred from verses 23-24, which we will encounter later.

In verse 12, the author continues to compare the services of the Levitical High Priest with the services of Christ, our High Priest.

- The High Priest gained admittance into the earthly Holy of Holies by means of (the Greek is δία [*dia*] with the genitive, indicating *means*) the blood of a bullock for himself and the blood of a goat for the people.
- Christ, Our High Priest, entered by means of His own blood.
- In contrast to the Day of Atonement, whereby the High Priest yearly made atonement for the people each year, Christ entered *once for all*. (ἐφάπαξ - *ephapax*).

The term rendered, as *the holy place* (KJV, NAS), *The Most Holy Place* (NIV), referring Christ's destination, is, a plural noun, τὰ ἅγια (*ta hagia*) meaning, *holy places*. This broadens the understanding of Christ's destination, but because, to our human eyes these are unseen realms, we merely rejoice at what was accomplished, without needing to know all of the specific details. The point, is, Christ ascended into the holy places in heaven, where, once for all, He provided for our atonement.

This truth brings to mind Jesus' statement to Mary Magdalene, when He appeared to her before His empty tomb,

*Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'"* (John 20:17)

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<sup>87</sup> Participle, aorist, middle, nominative, masculine, singular.

Given all that Scripture says on this point, it must have been at the time of His ascension, described in Acts Chapter One, that He ascended from the earth and entered the Holy Places, there to complete the work of atonement for those who will receive it.

There is speculation concerning where He spent the 40 days between his resurrection and His ascension. Of course, there are several instances in the Gospels where He appeared to certain ones. Acts 1:3 refers to these appearances.

I Peter also gives us a glimpse into His activities prior to His ascension.

*For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison,<sup>88</sup> who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.*

*And corresponding to that, immersion now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him. (1 Peter 3:18-22)*

Unfortunately, the King James Version does not distinguish between the Greek terms γέεννα (*geenna*) and ἄδης (*hadays*).

- The first of these terms, γέεννα, was the name of the garbage dump south of Jerusalem, in the Valley of Hinnom. This is the term that the New Testament uses to describe the fate of the damned.<sup>89</sup>
- The second of these terms, ἄδης, refers to the location of the spirits of the dead, awaiting the resurrection and the final judgment.<sup>90</sup>

Because of the KJV's failure to distinguish between the two terms, and because of its rendering of ἄδης as *hell*, the English rendering of the Apostles Creed states that Jesus *descended into hell*. The language of this portion of the Apostles Creed is based on the KJV's rendering of Acts 2:27, 31<sup>91</sup> (quoting Psalm 16:8-11).

The Greek form of the creed, predating the English rendition, states that Christ descended into ἄδης, instead of stating that He descended into γέεννα<sup>92</sup>

The NAS renders this term correctly, as *hades* – *i.e.*, the abode of the dead.

The NIV takes liberties with these passages and renders them by paraphrase, *abandon me to the grave*.

<sup>88</sup> Greek – φυλακή, *phulakay*, referring to *a guard, a prison, a watch*.

<sup>89</sup> Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6

<sup>90</sup> Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; I Corinthians 15:55; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14

<sup>91</sup> *Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. (Act 2:27 KJV) He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. (Act 2:31 KJV)*

<sup>92</sup> *The Apostles' Creed: Its History and Origins (faithlife.com)*

The statement in verse 13, concerning the ashes of a heifer, refer the situations described in Numbers Chapter Nineteen, in which a person was declared to having become unclean by:

- having touched a dead body
- entering into a house in which a corpse was lying,
- touching a bone
- touching a tomb

Such a person was barred from entering the Sacred Tent and cut off from the people of Israel. In order to remove the uncleanness, there was to be provided a vessel of water containing the ashes of a red heifer, which would be sprinkled on the unclean person, thus rendering that person fit for entrance into the worship of God.

In debate, the style of the argument of verse 14 is what is called, *minori ad majus*, i.e. from the less to the greater.

- The author does not deny that by the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer the Hebrews received a purification and sanctifying of the flesh.
- However, based on the qualities of the spotless Christ, His blood offering was far more efficacious than that of animals.

The blood offerings of the Mosaic Covenant were temporary and symbolical. They emphasized the polluting nature of sin and were a foreshadowing of the perfect sacrifice that occurred when Christ was crucified.

In His offering of Himself, Christ served as

- the priest,
- the altar,
- and the sacrifice.

His Divine Nature sacrificed his human nature, which was/is the only sinless human nature to have lived on this earth.

Much discussion has taken place among various scholars, attempting to identify explicitly the meaning of the expression, *through the eternal spirit*. Points of view as to the meaning of the expression have been:

- The Divine nature of Christ
- The Holy Spirit
- The Divine influence (whatever that might have been) by which Christ was moved to offer Himself

Each of these has some value, but the important point being emphasized it that it was the result of a choice – certainly by an obedient Christ (as seen in the garden plea),<sup>93</sup> and by the Will of the Father.

The closing phrase, *cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God*, describes the difference between those who are cleansed by trusting the blood atonement of Christ, and those who sought forgiveness through obeying all of the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law.

- Those who sought cleansing through dead works, focused on their works.
- Those who receive cleansing under the New Covenant focus on the living God.

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<sup>93</sup>Matthew 26:39ff

### Verses 15-24

15. *And for this reason, He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*
16. *For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it.*
17. *For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.*
18. *Therefore, even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood.*
19. *For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,*
20. *saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you."*
21. *And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood.*
22. *And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*
23. *Therefore, it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*
24. *For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;*

The statement that introduces the truth in verse 15, *And for this reason*, refers to the truth of verse 14,

*how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

Verse 15 declares that as a result of the sacrifice of Christ (*And for this reason*), the sins of those who were faithful to participate in the sacrifices ordained under the Mosaic Covenant, will be removed. They were faithful in following the revelation and commands that Yahweh had given during that dispensation.

Thus, *those who have been called*, included not only the Hebrew brethren to whom the epistle was written but also to the ones who were faithful to the Mosaic Covenant.

The picture is similar to what takes place when a person rakes the leaves from a lawn – a pile of leaves results. Then, a flame is applied to the pile of leaves, and they are burned up – they are gone. In the same manner, the sins of the people covered under the First Covenant were accumulated, awaiting the atonement achieved by the perfect sacrifice of Christ.

The verse 16 Greek terminology rendered in the NAS as, *For, where a covenant is* (ὅπου γὰρ διθήκη - *hopou gar dithaykay*), has caused considerable discussion. When the creators of the Septuagint looked for a Greek term that they could use to render the Hebrew term בְּרִית (*berit*), which refers to a *covenant*, they could not find a term that exactly conveyed the sense of *covenant*.

They decided to use the Greek term, διθήκη, to render the Hebrew term. They used διθήκη for this purpose, 280 times. Only in four instances did they not do so.



The problem arises from the use of this term in Greek literature. In Greek literature, *διθήκη* is the term that is equivalent to our English term, *last will and testament* - the document that determines the distribution of one's assets after the death of the maker of the will.

The author of Hebrews has created a bit of confusion by:

- consistently quoting the Septuagint, in which *διθήκη* refers to the Covenant,
- THEN
- abruptly and without any explanation, in verses 16-17, he used the term with its Greek understanding, as last will and testament.

The NAS continues to use the term, *covenant*, to render *διθήκη* in these verses, which hides what the author has done.

Other English language versions, even though they followed the Septuagint's use of the term, *διθήκη* (i.e., *covenant*), in earlier sections of the epistle, recognized what the author of the epistle did in these verses. These versions use terms that are consistent with the Greek understanding of the term, *διθήκη*. Here are some examples:

KJV - *For where a **testament** is, there must also of necessity be the **death of the testator**. For a **testament** is of force after men are dead: otherwise, it is of no strength at all while the **testator** liveth.*

NIV - *In the case of a **will**, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a **will** is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living.*

NKJ - *For where there is a **testament**, there must also of necessity be the **death of the testator**. For a **testament** is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the **testator** lives.*

NLT - *Now when someone leaves a **will**, it is necessary to prove that the person who made it is dead. The will goes into effect only after the person's death. While the person who made it is still alive, **the will** cannot be put into effect.*

Related to this issue is the use of the Greek term, *φέρεσθαι* (*pheresthai*) in verse 15, which the Greek literally states, *for where a will and testament is, the death of the testament-victim to come in is necessary*. *φέρεσθαι*, i.e., *to come in*, was a term used in the courts for the presentation of evidence.<sup>94</sup>

The sense of this passage is that, before the inheritance alluded to in verse 15 could be received, Christ must die. In this passage, Christ is presented as the testator and Christ's people (which included the faithful followers of the Old Covenant) could inherit the promises only on the condition of His death.

Verses 18-22 state that in a secondary sense, even though the sacrificial animals were not the testators, the death of these animals, upon which the Old Covenant depended, is an application of this principle. Had the sacrificial animals not died in its inauguration (Exodus 24:3ff) and in its implementation, the Old Covenant could not have provided any expiation of sins.

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<sup>94</sup> Marcus Dodds, page 335

Also noted in verse 23, the various elements of the Sacred Tent and the sacrifices related to it were but copies of the real thing. These Old Covenant elements were given in order to prepare/program the people to accept and relate to the real thing, when it was presented through the atoning work of Christ.

How thankful the Hebrews could be, and we as well, that Christ did not merely perform the rites in a man-made Sacred Tent, but *into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*. The full implications of this truth are too much for the human mind to grasp.

The only apparent exception to the law that *without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*, is in the case of a person who is too poor to bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons for a sin offering.

*'But if his means are insufficient for two turtledoves or two young pigeons, then for his offering for that which he has sinned, he shall bring the tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering; he shall not put oil on it or place incense on it, for it is a sin offering.*

*'And he shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take his handful of it as its memorial portion and offer it up in smoke on the altar, with the offerings of Yahweh by fire: it is a sin offering.*

*'So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin which he has committed from one of these, and it shall be forgiven him; then the rest shall become the priest's, like the grain offering.'* (Leviticus 5:11-13)

Even so, it seems that the atonement could not be made without blood. God said, *'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.'* (Leviticus 17:11)

The Jews considered this requirement to be so absolute and universal that they wrote in the Talmud, *There is no atonement except in the blood* (Yoma 5'). Because of this, some surmise that priest was required to make an atonement for the sin of the poor man at the public expense.<sup>95</sup>

The statement in verse 24, *now to appear in the presence of God for us*, echoes the statement made earlier in 7:25 *Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them*.

Paul stated this truth in his Epistle to the Romans: *who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us*. (Romans 8:34)

### **Verses 25-28**

**25.** *nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood not his own.*

**26.** *Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*

**27.** *And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,*

**28.** *so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.*

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<sup>95</sup> Milligan, page 262

In these verses, the author cites a major difference between the Levitical services and those enacted Christ as the Great High Priest of our confession.

- The Levitical High Priest had to enter the Holy of Holies every year to offer the blood atonement on the Mercy Seat.
- Christ's blood was offered once as the atonement for sin.
- This one-time sacrifice is in sync with the fact that each person dies one time and after that comes judgment. No one gets to come back to physical life and give it another try. So, Christ does not return to sacrifice Himself again. It was done once, and it is done.
- Even as He was sacrificed once to bear the sins of many, so He shall appear a second time to complete the results of His sacrifice – the eternal blessings for those who eagerly await His reappearance.

The *judgment* (without the definite article) in verse 27 would refer to the judgment, which is pronounced on every person after death, rather than the general judgment which will take place at the close of this present age. Revelation Chapter 20 describes that final judgment and the fate of those whose names are not in the Lamb's Book of Life.

*And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. (Revelation 20:12)*

*And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:15)*

The judgment that happens immediately after death is inferred from those portions of the New Testament that speak of the post-death fate of those who are in Christ. For example,

*But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. (Philippians 1:22-24)*

Jesus said to the repentant thief on the cross,

*And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43)*

This contrasts to the fate of the rich man in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

*"Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.*

*And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

*And he cried out and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame."*

*But Abraham said, "Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.*

*And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us." (Luke 16:22-26)*

There is much about this that cannot be defined with preciseness, but it is apparent from these and other sections of Scripture that those who die in the Lord will enter a portion of Hades (the

abode of the dead) and dwell with Christ. Whereas those who do not belong to the Lord will enter a portion of Hades where they will await the final judgment in a state of despair.

The use of the term, ὀψθήσεται (*opsithaysetai*), rendered in verse 28 as, *shall appear*, is significant. This is the future, passive, third person, singular of the verb, ὁράω (*horaoh*), meaning, *to see*. This emphasizes the truth declared in Revelation 1:7

*Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.*

One of the mysteries about the coming of Christ emerges from his statement made to His disciples concerning the impossibility of predicting the hour of his return.

*"I tell you, on that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken, and the other will be left.*

*"There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, and the other will be left.*

*"Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left." (Luke 17:34-36)<sup>96</sup>*

When Christ returns, it will be at different times of the day for people on different parts of the globe:

- for some it will be night-time – some will be sleeping;
- for some it will be at the end of the day, when the women grind the meal for the next day;
- for some, it will be in the middle of the day, when men are working in the field.

When Christ comes again, how will people on different sides of the globe see Him? This is a question that we cannot answer and so we must be content with the important point that He was making, as recorded in Matthew's record of this statement,

*Therefore, be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. (Matt. 24:42)*

Even so, what a glorious event toward which the people of God look with anticipation.

*But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope.*

*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.*

*For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.*

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.*

*Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

*Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

*Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.*

*For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:2)*

As stated in these verses, and others as well, no one knows the day nor the hour, so we must be ready.

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<sup>96</sup> Also in Matthew 24:40-42

## CHAPTER TEN

### Verses 1-4

1. *For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near.*
2. *Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?*
3. *But in those sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins year by year.*
4. *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*

Two interesting terms are used in verse 1:

- σκῆια (*skia*), a *shadow*, is used to describe the Law as only a faint outline of the good things of the Kingdom of Christ.
- εἰκόν (*eikohn*), rendered as, *the very form*, refers to the true bodily shape which belongs to the good things of that Kingdom – which the Law was not.

If these bloody animal sacrifices would have been efficacious in taking away the sins, then there would have been no reason to repeat them with reference to the same sins. If they had thoroughly cleansed the worshippers, then they have no consciousness of sins that had been forgiven.

For certain sins, the Law required special offerings:

- For sins an individual committed in ignorance, but later realized that it was sin, a she-goat was to be offered (Numbers 15:27-28; Leviticus 4:27-28)
- A priest who sins should sacrifice a bull to atone for his sin (Leviticus 4:3)
- When the entire congregation sins in ignorance, but then later realizes what has been done, then a young bull is to be sacrificed (Leviticus 4:13-14)
- When a ruler sins, unknowingly, then someone points out to him that he has sinned, he shall bring a male goat as an offering (Leviticus 4:22-23)
- Besides these specific offerings, others were offered daily (Exodus 29:38-46); weekly (Numbers 28:9, 10); monthly (Numbers 28:11-15); at each of the three great annual festivals (Leviticus 23).

Even though these offerings were presented as prescribed, each year on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month (the Day of Atonement), all of the sins were once again called to remembrance and atonement was made as noted in the earlier section.

If all of these sacrifices had effectively atoned for the sins for which they had been offered, there would have been no reason for the sacrifices made on the Day of Atonement.

On the Day of Atonement, one more thing was done. The ordinance of the Scape Goat had to be performed.

*When he finishes atoning for the holy place, and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall offer the live goat.*

*Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel, and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness.*

*And the goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness. (Leviticus 16:20-22)*

What the sacrifices throughout year, and the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, could not accomplish, was symbolically achieved by the goat, on whose innocent head were laid all of the sins of the nation in the previous year. The goat then was led into the wilderness – into a land of separation - and abandoned.

The Holy Spirit this signifying (9:8) that in due time, Christ would bear all of our sins and carry them into a state of everlasting oblivion – never to be seen or spoken of again.

### Verses 5-10

5. *Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired, But a body Thou hast prepared for Me;*
6. *In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast taken no pleasure."*
7. *Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (In the roll of the book it is written of Me) To do Thy will, O God.'*
8. *After saying above, "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast not desired, nor hast Thou taken pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the Law),*
9. *then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Thy will." He takes away the first, in order to establish the second.*
10. *By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Verse 5 is a citation from Psalm 40:6: *Sacrifice and meal offering Thou hast not desired; My ears Thou hast opened; Thou hast not required.*

In the Psalm, David states that his ears have been opened – God has given him a correct understanding of what God does not desire: *Sacrifice and meal offering- Burnt offering and sin offering*. Even though these are the offerings that Yahweh commanded in the Mosaic Covenant, they were but substitutes for the real thing, that was to come in the incarnation of Christ.

Note that in verse 6, the author has thrown together all of the various kinds of Levitical offerings (*whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin*), in order to make the strongest possible contrast between all of them and the one offering of Christ.

Not just the Levitical sacrifices were taken away (verse 9), but the whole arrangement under which they were offered - *He takes away the first, in order to establish the second.*

The term rendered as, *takes away*, ἀναίρεω (*anaireoh*), in Koine Greek literature is used as, *to kill, to put to death*. In classical Greek, it is used in a legal sense to express, *the repeal of laws, governments, customs, etc.*

This is the same truth that was expressed in 8:13, *When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear* (ἀφανισμός)

*Behold, I have come to do Thy will* (verse 9), echoes the words of Jesus in the garden, prior to His crucifixion, *And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt."* (Matthew 26:39)<sup>97</sup>

The sacrifice of Christ was the will of God. As Peter declared on the Day of Pentecost, *"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves*

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<sup>97</sup> Also, Luke 22:42

know--<sup>23</sup> *this Man, delivered up by **the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God**, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. (Acts 2:22-23)*

Verse 10 - *the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all* is the same terminology that we encountered in 7:27, *who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.*

#### **Verses 11-14**

11. *And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;*
12. *but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God,*
13. *waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet.*
14. *For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.*

These verses, in different words, state the same truth we encountered in 7:27, and 10:10 – *once for all and once for all time.*

Christ is described as no longer standing and ministering, but having totally finished His work, He *sat down*. He patiently waits for the day in which both friend and foe will confess Him and bow at His feet.

In his letter to the Romans and in his letter to the Philippians, Paul declared this same truth (both Hebrews 10:14 and the following quotes are referring to Psalm 40:1).

- *For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God." (Romans 14:11)*
- *Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)*

By the one offering, He has perfected, forever, those who are sanctified. Who are these?

No doubt, those referenced in 2:11 *For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,*

These are those who have by faith and obedience,

- put on Christ -  
*For all of you who were immersed into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:27)*
- risen with Him from the watery grave to walk in newness of life -*Therefore we have been buried with Him through immersion into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)*  
*having been buried with Him in immersion. in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Colossians 2:12)*
- faithfully seek the things above,  
*If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. (Colossians 3:1)*

**Verses 15-18**

15. *And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,*  
 16. *"This is the covenant that I will make with them After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, And upon their mind I will write them," He then says,*  
 17. *"And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."*  
 18. *Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.*

Once again, in verses 15-17, the author of the epistle refers to the Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures to prove and illustrate his point. As he has done before (8:10-12), he quotes Jeremiah 31:33-34. Note that the Holy Spirit is described as the author of Jeremiah 31. The author uses this quote to demonstrate that even under the Mosaic Covenant, it was God's ultimate plan to initiate a New Covenant.

In this New Covenant, there would be absolute forgiveness and no further need for a sin offering. This, of course, is in contrast to the repeated offerings of the Old Covenant.

**Verses 19-25**

From this point on, in the epistle, the tenor of the material changes:

- In the first six chapters of the epistle, exhortation followed exposition and argument in quick succession.
- In Chapter seven, through chapter ten, verse 18, there is a continued discussion of the priesthood of Christ, the covenant of which He is the Mediator, and the one great atoning sacrifice of Himself, which He made one time for the sins of all of humanity.

Beginning with 10:19 the doctrinal portion of the epistle ends and most of the remaining sections are matters of exhortation, consolation, and encouragement.

19. *Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,*  
 20. *by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,*  
 21. *and since we have a great priest over the house of God,*  
 22. *let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*  
 23. *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;*  
 24. *and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,*  
 25. *not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.*

NOTE: As was done in 9:12, the NAS, renders the Greek in verse 19, τῶν ἁγίων (*tone hagiown*), as, *holy place*. This is a poor rendering. The terms are plural. Literally, the text says, *having therefore brethren confidence into the entrance of the holy places by the blood of Christ*. The Holy Place was the first room of the Sacred Tent. The terms here declare that those redeemed by Christ enter into the *holiest places*, not just the first room of the tent. It is obvious the author is referring to heaven, which is how Greek commentators understand the term.



In the preceding section, the author has shown:

- The way into the Holiest of Holies, which was hidden from those of the Old Covenant (the first room of the tabernacle, the Holy Place, stood between the people and the Holy of Holies), has now been manifest through the blood of Christ.
- Christ Himself entered the true Holy of Holies by means of His own blood, with which He made atonement for the whole world.
- In contrast to the High Priest who entered the Holy of Holies once a year, Christ continues to live in the Holy of Holies, as a priest to intercede for us and bless us.
- By virtue of His blood, we are allowed to follow Him and be with Him as joint heirs of the eternal inheritance.

All of this being true, as stated in verse 19, all who are in Christ are able, with reverent boldness, to enter into the holiest places. He has made a way for us to enter the very throne room of heaven.

Symbolically, His flesh was the veil, and through His torn flesh on the cross, He has opened the heavenly places to those who are His.

Because the epistle pictures our High Priest as being, *over the house of God*, and not just ministering in that house, we get another glimpse of His being of the order of Melchizedek, who was both king and priest. Thus, like Melchizedek, He sits as a priest upon His throne, while He presides over the house of God.

What is the *house of God*? I Timothy 3:15 immediately comes to mind,

*but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God,<sup>98</sup> which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.*

Perhaps the term *house of God*, refers to the church on earth as well as the church in heaven.

The *let us draw near*, of verse 22, is an echo of the exhortation in 4:16,

*Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.*

When the High Priest approached the veil and prepared to enter the Holy of Holies, it was a time of mystery and fear. However, when we approach the throne of grace, even though we must do so in reverence and awe, we do not do so in terror. As Paul wrote to the Romans,

*for you did not receive a spirit of bondage again into fear, but you did receive a spirit of adoption in which we cry, 'Abba -- Father.'* (Romans 8:15 literal translation)

Yet, we must come with a *true heart* (literal translation) – not just an external or symbolic approach, but with the engagement of the inner being, which constitutes true worship.

Furthermore, realizing that *nothing is hidden from His sight* (4:12-13), we must approach that throne, free from guile, deceit, and honesty – naked as it were, before our High Priest. The true heart is cognizant of sin and is aware of the fact that it is by God's grace that one can approach His throne of grace.

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<sup>98</sup> Both the NAS and the NIV, render the terms, ἐν οἴκῳ θεοῦ (*en oikow theou*) as, *household*. The literal rendering of the terms are, *in the house of God*, as these terms are rendered in the KJV.

The statement, *Let us draw near.... having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water*, is symbolism referring to the preparation of the priests, before they began their ministry.

- *"Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting, and wash them with water. (Exodus 29:4)*
- *when they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, that they may not die; or when they approach the altar to minister, by offering up in smoke a fire sacrifice to Yahweh. (Exodus 30:20)*
- *And he placed the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it for washing. (Exodus 40:30)*

The term rendered, *hope*, in verse 23 *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful*; is the Greek term, ἐλπίς (*elpis*).

- Usually, when the term, *hope*, is used in our everyday conversation, it is used in the sense of a wish – *I sure do hope that this works out.*
- This term in the New Testament always refers to something that we look forward to with certainty, not just something we wish for. Of course, in this passage we are reminded that we can hold fast to our confession of this hope because, *He is faithful who promised.*

Verses 24-25 address the importance of Christians' frequent gatherings and the importance of attending those gatherings. For one reason or another some Hebrew Christians had made it a practice to not be consistent in attendance at the gatherings of the church.

Incipient to this exhortation is the fact that Christians are responsible for being a good influence on one another, especially in stimulating one another to good works. When Christians are together in an atmosphere of mutual fellowship and in the presence of the Holy Spirit, there is an encouragement and stimulation, mutually given and received.

To what day does the author refer in the statement, *and all the more, as you see the day drawing near*? Of course, the ultimate day is that referred to in the closing verse of the preceding chapter

*Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (Hebrews 9:28)*

There also is a second *day* that must have been on the minds of the Jerusalem Hebrew Christians. This epistle was written a year or two before the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. No doubt the clashes that were occurring at this time caused restlessness, and fear of the coming disaster, which were heralds of the coming great war. War clouds were on the horizon.

Christ foretold that event (Matthew 24:15-21; Mark 13:14-20; Luke 21:20-24), and He warned Christians to flee the city when the predicted signs occurred.

Here is Luke' account of Jesus' warning.

*But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled.*

*Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (Luke 21:20-24)*

Both Matthew and Mark record one more element that Jesus included in this discourse,

*"Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; (Matthew 24:15-16; Mark 13:14)*

### EXCURSUS

#### Jesus' comments in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21

When Jesus told the disciples who were admiring the ornate Temple that the day would come when not one stone would be standing on one another, they asked Him when these things would be. They, unknowingly asked Him two questions:

- When will these things be, and
- What will be the sign of your coming?

Jesus answered this query as two different questions. He described the time when not one stone would be left upon one another (the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans) and then the second question, concerning His second coming.

Sadly, some Bible teachers have not recognized Jesus' answering two questions and have developed an end-times drama that enfolds both answers.

The Jerusalem Christians understood Jesus' answer and so when they saw the Romans beginning to surround the city, many fled to Pella, in Perea (a region east of the Jordan River and northeast of the Dead Sea). This fact is stated in a number of ancient documents.<sup>99</sup>

### Verses 26-31

26. *For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,*
27. *but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.*
28. *Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.*
29. *How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?*
30. *For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge His people."*
31. *It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

The important point of these verses is that

- The risk of falling back into sin is a very present potential.
- Faithful attendance at church gatherings is a prophylactic against this happening.
- Therefore, Christians should be dedicated to faithful attendance at the gatherings of the local church.

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<sup>99</sup> Eusebius – *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.5.3; Epiphanius -*Panarion*, 29:7:7-8; 30:2:7; *de Mens. et Pond.*, 15; as well as others.

A key element in verse 26 is, *sinning willfully*. This is a sin which the sinner knows is sin and does it anyway. These verses are another statement of the warning seen earlier in 6:4-6.

Verse 28 refers to Deuteronomy 17:1-6, in which a person accused of apostasy, on the bases of two or three witnesses, was to be stoned to death.

The horrible tripartite result of the sin committed by such a willful sin is described as having

- Trampled under foot the Son of God
- Regarded as unclean (i.e. a common thing) the blood of the covenant by which he had been sanctified
- Insulted the spirit of grace

The spirit of grace is the direct antithesis to the Moses Law of verse 28. It is the distinctive gift of the New Covenant. To blaspheme this gracious spirit is to renounce everything that the New Covenant employs to achieve the redemption of sinners.

Verse 30 quotes Deuteronomy 32:35-36.<sup>100</sup> God's judgment is true and certain and *It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. Therefore, as an insurance against willful sin, all believers are exhorted to take advantage of the opportunity to meet regularly with one's fellow saints.

#### Verses 32-34

- 32.** *But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings,*
- 33.** *partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.*
- 34.** *For you showed sympathy to the prisoners,<sup>101</sup> and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one.*

Having just warned the Hebrew Christians about the awful doom of those who fall back into willful sin, he suddenly writes words of encouragement, by reminding them of their noble history.

They were not subjected to being attacked by lions and bulls, as happened to many, but they were subjected to public disgrace through one means or another. Obviously, in some settings they were made outcasts.

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<sup>100</sup> Deuteronomy 32:36 is another instance in which the NAS has rendered the text differently than other versions (i.e. *vindicate His people*, as contrasted with, *judge His people*). The Hebrew term clearly means *to judge*. The Septuagint uses the Greek word, κρινεῖ (*krinei*), to render the Hebrew term. Κρινεῖ is the future, active, 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular of the verb, κρίνω (*krinow*) which means, *to judge, to decide*. The reason the NAS rendered the term as *vindicate His people*, is because the following phrase states that God will *have compassion on His servants; When He sees that their strength is gone, And there is none remaining, bond or free*.

<sup>101</sup> The KJV in verse 34 states, *For ye had compassion of me in my bonds*. This difference is the result of the KJV's using the so called, *received text*. This is the text that was produced by Erasmus in 1516. Erasmus had a limited number of manuscripts to use in constructing his Greek text, most of them were of late origin. Since his time, many older manuscripts have been discovered and the textual basis of all versions of the past two centuries have been based on a more reliable textual basis. In these texts, the Greek reads, *on the prisoners*, rather than, *me and my bonds*.

We do not have details of the sufferings described herein, but they were both things that they experienced themselves and the pain caused by their being in sympathy with others who suffered.

The details of when their property was seized is unclear, however, as Ebrard stated, *When a Jew shows himself determined to become a Christian, he is disinherited by his relatives; his share of the property is withheld from him/ his credit and every source of gain, withdrawn; and he falls into a state of complete destitution.*<sup>102</sup>

Our Lord predicted this would be the fate of many who chose to follow Him.

*"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.*

*Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:10-12)*

The certainty of a heavenly reward outweighed any material loss incurred in this life, caused by their devotion to Our Saviour.

#### **Verses 35-39**

**35.** *Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.*

**36.** *For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.*

**37.** *For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay.*

**38.** *But My righteous one shall live by faith; And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.*

**39.** *But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.*

The language in verse 35 reflects the culture of that day, concerning weak and cowardly soldiers. When the Laodicean women presented shields to their sons, before they went into battle, they said to them, *Bring this back, or be brought back upon it.* Tacitus, writing about Germanic tribes of that century, wrote, *to lose or cast away the shield in battle, was a matter of the greatest dishonor and those who acted so were not allowed to be present at the sacrifices nor to attend the public assemblies of the people.*<sup>103</sup>

In the same way, the author states, do not throw away your *confidence* (Greek – *παρρησία* [*parraysia*] literally, *boldness*). This boldness/confidence, is the result of their faith, which Paul describes as the shield in the Christian's armor (Ephesians 6:16)

Those who maintain their boldness will receive a great reward for doing so, as Our Lord stated in the earlier cited quote from Matthew 5:10-12.

To what did the author refer when he wrote, *in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay?*

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<sup>102</sup> Milligan, page 290

<sup>103</sup> Milligan, page 291

This is not an easy question to answer. The choices are:

- the immediate return of Christ;
- He will soon come to them at death, and put an end to all their sufferings, and give them a crown of life. The Christian's present conflict may be sharp, but it will be soon over;
- some providential act to remove them from the persecutions to which the Jerusalem Jews were subjecting them.

Whether or not the author referred to the immediate return of Christ, we must take into consideration the apostles' view of whether or not His coming was to occur in the lifetimes of these Hebrew Christians.

Although they were to live as if every day were the day of Christ's return, Paul indicated in his Second Letter to Thessalonica, that certain things had to happen before the return of Christ. Because in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians he had written so enthusiastically about Christ's return (I Thessalonians 4:13-5:3), some in Thessalonica assumed that the return was immediate. Some even quit work and sat down on the curb, so to speak, waiting for Jesus.

One of the motivations for Paul's Second Letter to Thessalonica was to correct this misunderstanding. He informed them that certain things had to happen before Christ's return.

*Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him,*

*that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.*

*Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (II Thessalonians 2:1-3)*

Then he told those who were not working to go get a job, and that those who would not work, should not eat (II Thessalonians 3:6-14).

An important consideration in seeking the answer to our question, concerning the identity of the *coming*, is the Greek terminology of verse 37.

ἔτι γὰρ μικρὸν ὄσον ὄσον, ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἥξει καὶ οὐχρονίσει (*eti gar mikron oson ho erksomenos hayksei kai ouxronisei*).

The first five words are significant - ἔτι γὰρ μικρὸν ὄσον ὄσον. Note the doubling of the term, ὄσον. The literal translation of this verse is, *for yet, a very, very, little, He who is coming will come and not tarry.*

The doubling of the term, ὄσον, is emphasizing that very little time will pass before the fulfillment of the promise, *He who is coming will come, and will not delay.*

Based Paul's statements in II Thessalonians, noted above, it seems that the emphasis on the extreme nearness of time of the promised event could not have referred to the personal coming of Christ.

Of further significance is the fact that with the exception of the addition of a definite article, this verse repeats the exact words of Habakkuk 2:3 in the Septuagint, and the next verse (38), repeats the closing clause of Habakkuk 2:4.

The Jerusalem Hebrew Christians were in a situation similar to the situation faced by Habakkuk.

- Habakkuk saw a system in which the courts were corrupt, and the wicked and dishonest of Jerusalem were making life difficult for those who sought to be righteous.
- Habakkuk cried out to God, asking why He was allowing it.
- God replied that He was going to do something that Habakkuk could not believe. So, Habakkuk was to watch and see how God, through the amazing manipulation of nations would achieve his purposes.
- Yahweh revealed to Habakkuk that He was going to use the Chaldeans (who would become the Babylonians) to come and destroy everything, thus ending the injustice perpetrated by the Jerusalem establishment and the godless conduct of its citizens.
- Then, in time, God would judge the Chaldeans for their cruelties.
- Habakkuk chaffed at this revelation, but, in time, he came to accept God's will.

Given the quotes from Habakkuk used by the author of Hebrews, we see a striking similarity to the situation faced by the Jerusalem Hebrew Christians. As God used the Chaldeans in Habakkuk's day, very shortly, in a similar manner, God was going to use the Romans.

- The Romans would come against Jerusalem, surround it, destroy it,
- and, prior to this, because of the warnings of Christ, the Christians would flee to Pella.

Although we must admit some speculation concerning the matter, it seems that verses 37 and 38 refer to the coming of the Romans and their destruction of Jerusalem - about two years after the writing of the epistle. This understanding is in keeping with the comments we made on verse 25.

In verse 39, the author, as he has often done throughout the epistle, shifts from discussing a very threatening situation, to words of encouragement, *But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.*

The term rendered, *faith*, is πίστις (*pistis*), which embodies both the sense of *belief*, and the sense of *trust*.

The author, identifying with the Hebrew Christians, declares that neither he nor they are among the timid and fearful, but are that they are examples of the trust that survives all challenges.

He makes this his main theme in the following section, beginning with Chapter Eleven.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

There is no need for detailed comment on this chapter, except for a few questions that arise concerning the specific examples cited by the author.

### Verses 1-3

1. *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*
2. *For by it the men of old gained approval.*
3. *By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.*

The term rendered, *assurance*, ὑπόστασις (*upostasis*), literally is *that which stands under*, i.e., *the foundation* on which one builds hope. The term rendered, *conviction* (KJV *evidence*) is ἔλεγχος (*elenchus*), regularly means, *proof*. Note that the KJV is closer to the usual use of the term.

Faith is that which causes us to treat as realities, things which at this time are unseen. The words thus become a description of what faith does.

The author begins with the beginning – what faith causes us to grasp concerning the very creation itself.

This verse stands in stark contradiction to those who have some sort of a naturalistic and non-theistic view of the universe. One of these theories is the *big bang theory* (that the universe began with an infinitely hot, infinitely dense singularity, then inflated at unimaginable speed). Indeed, there is astronomical evidence of the expanding universe, but there still has to be some explanation for the origin of that *dense singularity*.

As some have commented, *It takes more faith to believe in a non-theistic origin of the universe and the human race, than it takes to believe in a Creator.*

Verse 2, inserted between the thought in verse 1 and verse 3, is a prelude to the rest of the chapter.

#### Verses 4-6

4. *By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.*
5. *By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.*
6. *And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*

An immediate question arises as to the difference between the offering brought by Abel and that of Cain. As we read the account in Genesis 4:1-5, there is no hint as to why God had regard for the offering brought by Abel and that brought by Cain. It is not until this verse in Hebrews that we have information, which still is somewhat vague.

Some have contended that Abel's offering was accepted because he brought a meat offering, whereas, Cain's offering was not accepted because it was a vegetable offering.

The major weakness in this argument is that Hebrew, uses the term, מִנְחָה (*minchah*), to describe both Cain's offering (Genesis 4:3) and Abel's offering (Genesis 4:4).<sup>104</sup>

Thus, it would seem that neither the contents of the offering, nor the worth of the offering, is the issue. Furthermore, there is no record of God's giving a command to these men, concerning the bringing of an offering, or for that matter, the nature of what was to be offered.

So, there are a number of questions concerning this matter that we must leave unanswered. However, one thing is clear – based on this statement in Hebrews, the heart of the one bringing the offering is a key to God's acceptance or rejection of what was offered.

Solomon wrote, *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to Yahweh, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.* (Proverbs 15:8)

Many similar statements are found in the Scriptures.

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<sup>104</sup> Leviticus 2:1-16 describes the *minchah*, which is an offering of the same nature as that of Cain – a grain offering and an offering of first fruits.



Verse 6 is one of the most important verses in the Bible, *And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*

### Verses 7-31

7. *By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.*
8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.*
9. *By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;*
10. *for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*
11. *By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised;*
12. *therefore, also, there was born of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.*
13. *All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.*
14. *For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.*
15. *And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.*
16. *But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.*
17. *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;*
18. *it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called."*
19. *He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type.*
20. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.*
21. *By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.*
22. *By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.*
23. *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.*
24. *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;*
25. *choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin;*
26. *considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.<sup>27</sup>*
27. *By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.*
28. *By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the first-born might not touch them.*

29. *By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.*
30. *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been encircled for seven days.*
31. *By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.*
32. *And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,*
33. *who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,*
34. *quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.*

As stated at the beginning of the chapter, this catalogue of faith requires no comment, except to say that all of these should encourage us to believe the promises of God and trust in Him to fulfill what He has promised.

#### **Verses 35-40**

35. *Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection;*
36. *and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.*
37. *They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated*
38. *(men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.*
39. *And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,*
40. *because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.*

Here, the author sets forth of several examples of those whose faith did not deliver them from suffering, pain, and sorrow, but because they believed in the promises of God related to the future, they held fast in their faith.

As noted in 9:15, those who were faithful in the previous dispensations, will receive all of the blessings and promises associated with the present dispensation. We will share heaven with these saints, and in many ways, they may be more worthy of that reward than are we.

## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

#### **Verses 1-3**

1. *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*
2. *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
3. *For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.*

The question arises, does verse 1 mean that those who are departed can see us in our efforts to run the race, including our stumbling and falling? Or, does it mean that considering all of the examples described in the preceding chapter, we are to run the race as they ran – the scene described is a metaphor? Each of these views is advocated by responsible exegetes.

Because there is no other indication in Scripture that the departed are aware of our lives on this earth, I (JWG) am not able to embrace the view that the departed saints are watching us. One thing that opposes the view that the departed are watching us is the meaning of the Greek terms used. The Greek term for *spectator* is θεαταί (*theatai*), the word from which we derive the English word, *theatre*.

As Marcus Dodds has written,

“It is impossible to take μάρτυρες (*martures*)<sup>105</sup> as equivalent to θεαταί. If the idea of ‘spectator’ is present at all, which is very doubtful, it is only introduced by the words, τρέχωμεν....ἀγώνα (*trekohmen...agohna*).<sup>106</sup> The idea is not that they are running in the presence of spectators and must therefore run well; but that their people’s history’s being filled with examples of much-enduring but triumphant faith, they also must approve their lineage by showing a like persistence of faith.”<sup>107</sup>

The Greek term, μάρτυρες, referenced by Dodds, refers to one who has seen something and is ready to bear witness. The example of the lives described in Chapter Eleven, certainly bears witness to the ultimate victory of those who live by faith. In that sense, the term fits what Dodds concludes.

As any runner would do, it is important for us to be aware of any weight that we are unnecessarily carrying – habits and relationships that hinder our faithful pursuit of the goal. Sometimes, this takes a revelation from God, to identify what these might be.

The overwhelming example before us is the example of Jesus. Therefore, being in constant remembrance of His example is one strong motivation for our faithfulness in our personal journey.

Again, as pictured in 10:12, Jesus, having finished His race and His work of atonement, *has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* (verse 2)

#### Verses 4-11

4. *You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;*
5. *and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him*
6. *For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives."*
7. *It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*

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<sup>105</sup> The Greek term for *witness*

<sup>106</sup> τρέχωμεν....ἀγώνα The first of these terms refers to running; the second refers to struggling or fighting.

<sup>107</sup> Marcus Dodds, page 365

8. *But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.*
9. *Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?*
10. *For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.*
11. *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*

Again, we are in a section that requires little comment. The truths presented are obvious.

We do note that the Hebrew Christians to whom this epistle is addressed had not experienced the martyrdom of death. Their afflictions, including the persecution that they were enduring, had spiritual benefit – it was a form discipline to form them more perfectly into the image of Christ. If God did not provide a discipline to achieve this, then that would be an indication that He did not consider them to be His children. The discipline that He was allowing, was evidence of His fatherhood.

#### **Verses 12-17**

12. *Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,*
13. *and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.*
14. *Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.*
15. *See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;*
16. *that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.*
17. *For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.*

In this series of exhortations, the author gives a prescription for successfully running the race.

Verse 12 cites Isaiah 35:3, *Strengthen ye the feeble hands, Yea, the stumbling knees strengthen.* (literal translation)

- Isaiah's prophecy had reference to the Jews on their return from Babylon to Jerusalem.
- In the epistle, the exhortation refers to the Christians on their way to the heavenly Jerusalem.

Isaiah, Chapters 40 – 46 described the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem. On that journey, some will be lame, weak, and much disheartened by the many obstacles along the way. The stronger and more courageous are encouraged to make the paths straight and smooth so that those who are weak and feeble kneed might be encouraged.

The same exhortation is given to the Hebrew Christians in their journey to the heavenly Jerusalem. Each Christian has a responsibility to help his brother/sister succeed in reaching the goal. Paul exhorted the Galatians, *Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.* (Galatians 6:2)

It is unfortunate that the creators of the English version added the term, *men*, in verse 14.

Verse 14 states, literally, *peace pursue with all, and the separation, apart from which no one shall see the Lord.*

Since the context has to do with the relationships in the Christian community, it is more natural to understand the exhortation to involve relationships within that community. Many classic commentators<sup>108</sup> add the term, *brethren*, instead of the term, *men*.

The term rendered as *sanctification* (NAS), *holiness* (KJV), *holy* (NIV) is *ἁγιασμός* (*hagiasmos*), which carries the idea of being *consecrated – separated unto God*.

The example of Esau echoes the warning of 3:13 *But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest anyone of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* Sin always promises what it cannot deliver.

### Verses 18-29

18. *For you have not come to a mountain that may be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind,*
19. *and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word should be spoken to them.*
20. *For they could not bear the command, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned."*
21. *And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I am full of fear and trembling."*
22. *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,*
23. *to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect,*
24. *and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.*
25. *See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven.*
26. *And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven."*
27. *And this expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.*
28. *Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;*
29. *for our God is a consuming fire.*

Verses 18-21 refer to the description of events recorded in Exodus 19, when the people came to Mount Sinai and Yahweh gave the Law to Moses. This physical mountain, and the holy terror that the people experienced at that mountain, is compared to the Christian's coming to a mountain that is far more holy than Sinai.

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<sup>108</sup> Michaelis, Storr, Tholuck, Bleek, Ebrard, Delitzsch, Alford, et al. Milligan, page 353

To emphasize the difference, the author contrasts Mount Sinai with Mount Zion. In Scripture, Zion occasionally is used as a designation for the place in which God manifests His Presence. Here are two examples from Psalms:

- *Sing praises to Yahweh who dwells in Zion; Declare among the peoples His deeds.* (Psalm 9:11)
- *In Judah God is known; his name is great in Israel. His tent is in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion.* (Psalm 76:1-2)

Rather than encountering these physical manifestations of God's power, as happened at Sinai, Christians enter into a relationship with eternal realities. Although not seen with the human eye, nor known by experience, Christians are in a true relationship with this heavenly gathering.

Based on the literal translation of the Greek (most English translations have added terms) the statement in 22-24 reads,

- *But, ye came to Mount Zion, and to a city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem,*
- *and to myriads of angels, public festal assembly and assembly of the first-born in heaven enrolled,*
- *and to God the judge of all,*
- *and to spirits of righteous men made perfect,*
- *and to a mediator of a new covenant -- Jesus,*
- *and to blood of sprinkling, speaking better things than that of Abel!*

Those who are in Christ, are in this wonderful relationship.

Verses 25-26 emphasize the superior gravity and respect due to the New Covenant, in comparison to the awe associated with the Old.

The term rendered as, *once more*, in verses 26, 27, is ἅπαξ (*hapahkx*), meaning, *once for all*.

In verse 27, the author explains that this means that all that can be shaken will be shaken until Judaism and all false systems of religion will be taken away. When that is accomplished, Christ's kingdom will endure forever and those who remain faithful to the end will abide in that kingdom forever.

*Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (II Peter 1:10-11)*

Overwhelming gratitude (verse 28) is the only appropriate response to this wonderful promise.

Verse 29, quoting Deuteronomy 4:24, furnishes an additional reason to serve God with *reverence and awe - for our God is a consuming fire.*

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The author has accomplished his main object in writing this unique epistle. He has presented Jesus in many varied subline relationships and roles. He has traced the leading features of the New Covenant and its qualities of redemption. He has shown the infinite superiority of Christianity to Judaism and impressively has illustrated the obligations of all Christians to be faithful in discharge of their various social and personal duties. After these deliberations and exhortations, the author brings the epistle to a close .

### Verses 1-7

1. *Let love of the brethren continue.*
2. *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.*
3. *Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.*
4. *Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.*
5. *Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,"*
6. *so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?"*
7. *Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.*

The term, *love of the brethren* (verse 1), is φιλαδελφία (*Philadelphia*) which in classic Greek literature referred to the natural love which siblings have for one another. In the New Testament, the term refers to the love which all Christians should have for one another.

Paul lists love as the first characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* (Galatians 5:22)

Such love was manifested in the first days of the Church, the example of which impressed the surrounding community.

*And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.*

*And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people.*

*And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.* (Acts 2:44-47)

The exhortation to show hospitality to strangers cites the example of Abraham as one motivation for doing so. Those whom Abraham thought were but travelers, turned out to be angels on a mission from God. (Genesis 18)

They already had been commended for showing sympathy to those in prison (10:34) and they were exhorted to continue.

Verse 4 addresses the Jew's toleration of polygamy and concubinage. Also, all sorts of immorality was practiced in the Gentile culture, often with the approval of their legislators.

The two significant terms used in this verse are

- πόρνος (*pornos*) – referring to any sort of sexual sin
- μοιχός (*moichos*) – referring to sexual infidelity in marriage

The Christians were to not allow culture or tradition to influence their behavior. The dire warning, *fornicators and adulterers God will judge*, should be a major prophylactic to such behavior. This reminder is very appropriate for Christians of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, in which things

that in former years were looked upon with horror and disgust, now are commonly accepted behavior.

Verses 5-6 mirror what Our Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount.(Matthew 6:24-34)

*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

*For this reason, I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?*

*Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?*

*And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span?*

*And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin,*

*yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these.*

*But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith?*

*Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?'*

*For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*

*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.*

*Therefore, do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

We also are reminded of the phrase in the model prayer, *Give us this day our daily bread.* (Matthew 6:11)

Literally, the Greek of Matthew 6:11, is, *the bread, the daily, be giving us through a day,* referring to God's supplying, throughout the day, the bread needed for that day.

The reference to those who led you, in verse 7, would include, among others, Stephen, James the brother of John, James, the half-brother of Jesus, who had formerly proclaimed to the Hebrews the good word of God. Some of these early leaders had paid the price for their faith, but in doing so they had experienced a triumphant death. The Hebrew Christians should look to their example and seek to emulate it.

### **Verses 8-16**

- 8.** *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever.*
- 9.** *Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were thus occupied were not benefited.*
- 10.** *We have an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.*
- 11.** *For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp.*
- 12.** *Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.*
- 13.** *Hence, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.*
- 14.** *For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.*



**15.** *Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.*

**16.** *And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

Verses 8 and 9 form a single warning. Many strange doctrines already were circulating and were contaminating the Church. In his many epistles, Paul addressed a number of these. The exhortation in these two verses is that what is established, is established, and no new doctrines or teachings about Christ should be tolerated.

Again, the author contrasts the Old Covenant and its practices with the practices and blessings of the New Covenant. Those who served at the altar in the Sacred Tent ate the flesh of what was offered at the altar. Jews who served in the tent did not consider anyone else able to eat of that flesh.

The author declares that Christians have their exclusive rights and privileges. Christians also have a sacrifice of which to partake and those who served in the tent cannot partake of it. Partaking of the benefits of this sacrifice is restricted to those who are recipients of the New Covenant.

An exception to the right to eat of the flesh offered in the tent was the flesh of a sin offering whose blood was carried into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. The bodies of these animals had to be carried outside of the camp and burned (Leviticus 6:30).

The location of the cross was north of Jerusalem. Jesus suffered, *outside the gate*. Also, Christ took His body into the heavenly Holy of Holies at His ascension.

Therefore, if the Hebrews wanted to be partakers of the benefits of Christ's death, they must leave the camp of Judaism behind and take upon themselves the reproaches that were heaped upon Jesus, and upon them by their Jerusalem neighbors.

Verse 14 harks back to 11:10-16, which spoke of the people of faith who sought a city whose builder and maker was God.

In contrast to the sacrifice of animals and doves, the Hebrew Christians are exhorted to offer two kinds of sacrifice that are well pleasing to God (verses 15-16)

- a sacrifice consisting of outbursts of praise and the giving of thanks to His Name.
- doing good and sharing

### **Verses 17-19**

**17.** *Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.*

**18.** *Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things.*

**19.** *And I urge you all the more to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.*

The leaders were the Elders, whose responsibility was to oversee and shepherd the flock. Thus, Paul exhorted the Ephesian elders,

*And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, ...Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among*

*which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (Acts 20:17–18, 28)*

The author therefore exhorted to Hebrews to honor the elders and obey them, because the elders would have to give account to God for the health of the flock and whether or not they had contributed to the flock's health. One thing that elders would have to be on guard against, was false doctrine. As Paul warned the Ephesian elders,

*I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, ... (Acts 20:29-31)*

Not only did they have a responsibility to respect and obey their leaders, but also to remember the apostles and evangelists who had gone out from them to evangelize the Gentiles.

The author wanted to make clear to them that his admonitions to them, and his opposition to the oppressive Jews came from no selfish or sinister motives, but from a desire to discharge conscientiously the duties that God had assigned to him (verses 18-19).

Furthermore, his eagerness to have them pray for him was so that he soon could visit them. This is one of the verses that make it clear that the author knew the Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem. We are not told what hindrances might have prevented his visit, but he felt assured that by their prayers these hindrances would be removed.

### **Verses 20-21**

**20.** *Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord,*

**21.** *equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Note that God the Father is named as the force that raised Jesus from the dead. By raising Jesus from the dead, Jesus was declared to be God the Father's Son. Paul wrote to the Romans,

*who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, (Romans 1:4)*

Having written of the under-shepherds in verse 17, he now, in verse 20, labels Christ as the Great Shepherd of the Sheep.

Note that the Covenant established by the blood of Jesus Christ, is an eternal Covenant – in contrast to the Old Covenant, which had been abrogated.

The term rendered as, *equip*, in verse 21 is *καταρτίζω* (*katartidzoh*). This term means, *to fit into place, or to prepare for some purpose*. The author prays that the Father would fit or prepare the Hebrews, in whatever manner was needed, to fulfill His will.

Note that in this passage, it is the Father who equips them.

Interestingly, in Ephesians 4:10-12, Jesus is the one who gave to the Church the ministry gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd/teachers. These then are to equip each member of the Church to find his/her place in the body and to fulfill that function. The same word, *καταρτίζω*, is used in Ephesians 4:12 as is used in Hebrews 13:21.

The closing description of Jesus Christ, *to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen*, is a fitting conclusion to all that has been said concerning Him in the epistle.

**Verses 22-25**

**22.** *But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.*

**23.** *Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I shall see you.*

**24.** *Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.*

**25.** *Grace be with you all.*

We might take issue with the term, *briefly*, in verse 22, for it seems quite extensive.

We commented on verse 23 in the introduction. The details of Timothy's incarceration are not known to us.

With these personal words, from the author and his associates from Italy, this magnificent and somewhat complicated epistle comes to a close.

## ADDENDUM A

### The Septuagint

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Adapted and edited from

- [\*A Brief History of the Septuagint - Associates for Biblical Research\*](#) ([biblearchaeology.org](http://biblearchaeology.org))
  - [Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton, \*English Translation of the Septuagint, Introduction\*](#) (originally published by Samuel Bagster & Sons, Ltd. London) 1851
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The earliest translation of the Scriptures from Hebrew into another language was the translation into Greek during the latter years of the Third Century BC.

After Alexander the Great brought Egypt under Macedonian rule, the newly founded city of Alexandria, on the northern coast of Egypt, became the home of many Jews. The Greek spoken in Alexandria was known as the Alexandrian dialect, which is the idiom in which the Septuagint is written.

According to tradition, King Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt (285-246 BC), desiring to have the world's largest and best-known library, commissioned the royal librarian, Demetrius, to purchase a copy of all of the books of the world. Because there were many Greek-speaking Jews in his domain, he commanded that the Hebrew Scriptures be translated into Greek.

The earliest writer who gives an account of the composition of the Septuagint Version is Aristobulus, a Jew who lived at the beginning of the Second Century BC – just a few years after the Septuagint had been created. Because he states that Demetrius had been involved in the work of translating, and the fact that Demetrius died near the beginning of the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, it has been inferred that the translation actually began under Ptolemy Soter and was completed during the reign of his successor, Ptolemy Philadelphus.

The next oldest account, the Letter of Aristeas, presents Demetrius as being responsible for and overseeing the entire project, from beginning to end.<sup>109</sup>

According to all traditions, Demetrius wrote to the high priest at Jerusalem, requesting six elders of each tribe (a total of seventy-two men), men of exemplary life and learned in the Torah to travel to Alexandria and translate the Scriptures. The Latin word for seventy is, *septuaginta*, hence, the name of the translation, *Septuagint*.

On arrival, the translators were greeted by the king and given a sumptuous banquet. They then were closeted in a secluded house on the island of Pharos, close to the seashore, where the

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<sup>109</sup> The Letter of Aristeas, called so because it was a letter addressed from Aristeas of Marmora to his brother Philocrates, deals primarily with the reason the Greek translation of the Hebrew Law was created, as well as the people and processes involved. The letter's author alleges to be a courtier of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (reigned 281-246 BC).

Over twenty Greek manuscript copies of the letter are known to survive, dating from the 11th to the 15th century. The letter is also mentioned and quoted in other ancient texts, most notably in *Antiquities of the Jews* by Josephus (c. 93 AD), in *Life of Moses* by Philo of Alexandria (c. AD 15), and in an excerpt from Aristobulus of Alexandria (c. 160 BC) preserved in *Praeparatio evangelica* by Eusebius.

celebrated Lighthouse of Pharos was located. This lighthouse, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, had just been completed.

According to the Letter of Aristeas, the translation was completed in seventy-two days and when the Alexandrian Jewish community assembled to hear a reading of the new version, the translators received lavish praise, and a curse was pronounced on anyone who should alter the text by addition, transposition or omission. Then, according to Aristeas, the work was then read to the king who marveled at the mind of the lawgiver. The translators were then sent back to Jerusalem, endowed with gifts for themselves and the high priest Eleazar.

Later generations embellished the story. Philo of Alexandria, writing in the first century AD, says that each of the seventy-two translators were shut in a separate cell, and miraculously all the texts were said to agree exactly with one another, thus proving that their version was directly inspired by God.

It is difficult to know how much credence to give to these accounts. However, if the stories relating to the origin of the Septuagint are not true in all the details, it seems likely that Ptolemy Philadelphus at least instigated a translation of the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, and, in later years, others completed the translation of the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The translators faced several difficulties in producing this translation. One difficulty was expressing theological ideas which only had proper terms in Hebrew. They had to use many Greek words and phrases, with new meanings from that which had been those meanings in classical Greek.

Clearly, some of the translators obviously were very careful in their translation. The Pentateuch in the Septuagint displays this care. On the other hand, Isaiah, appears to be the least carefully translated.

Liberty is taken in passages such as Proverbs 6:8b, in which, following the proverb of the ant, the Septuagint adds a Greek proverb, *Or go to the bee and learn how diligent she is, and how earnestly she is engaged in her work; whose labors kings and private men use for health, and she is desired and respected by all, though weak in body, she is advanced by honoring wisdom.*

Because of this difference in style and varying degrees of preciseness, some scholars see evidence of how different translators, in different settings, rendered the various documents of the Old Testament.

The significance of the Septuagint translation can hardly be overestimated. The Septuagint translation made the Hebrew scriptures available both to the Jews who no longer spoke their ancestral language as well as to the entire Greek-speaking world. The Septuagint became the Bible of the Greek-speaking early Church, and it is the text usually quoted by New Testament writers. Glean Archer and G C Chirichingo, found the 340 times where the New Testament writers quoted the Septuagint and only 33 times where they quoted the Hebrew.<sup>110</sup>

The Jews eventually abandoned the Septuagint, because it became the version of the Old Testament that had been adopted by the early Church.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Gleason L. Archer & Gregory Chirichingo, *Old Testament quotations in the New Testament* (Chicago, Moody Press) 1983

<sup>111</sup> An example of the conflict between the Jews and the early church was their citing the Septuagint's use of *παρθένος* (*parthenos*) meaning *virgin* in Isaiah 7:14, rather than the Hebrew term in Isaiah 7:14, *עַלְמָה* *almah*, i.e., *a young woman of marriageable age*. Matthew, for

## ADDENDUM C

### A Sampling of Origin's Comments on the Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews

*De Principiis 1:*

And therefore I think it sufficient to quote this one testimony of **Paul** from the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which he says [Heb 11:24-26], "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the Egyptians."

*De Principiis 3.2.4:*

And **the apostle Paul** warns us [Heb 2:1]: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest perhaps we should let them slip."

*De Principiis 4.1.13:*

In another Epistle also, when referring to the tabernacle, **he [the reference is to Paul]** mentions the direction which was given to Moses [Heb 8:5]: "Thou shalt make (all things) according to the pattern which was showed thee in the mount."

*De Principiis 4.1.13:*

Moreover, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, discoursing of those who belong to the circumcision, **he [Paul]** writes [Heb 8:5]: "who serve for an ensample and shadow of heavenly things."

*De Principiis 4.1.24:*

For **Paul** openly says of them [Heb 8:5], that "they serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things."

*De Principiis 2.7.7:*

And **the apostle [Paul]** says with reference to the law [Heb 8:5], that they who have circumcision of the flesh, "serve for the similitude and shadow of heavenly things."

*De Principiis 2.3.5:*

I will show, however, from what **statements of Paul** I have arrived at this understanding. He says [Heb 9:26], "But now once in the consummation of ages, He was manifested to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

*De Principiis 3.1.10:*

To show more clearly, however, what we mean, let us take the illustration employed by **the apostle Paul** in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where he says [Heb 6:7-8], "For the earth, which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, will receive blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."

*Against Celsus 7.29:*

And it is in reference to this Jerusalem that **the apostle [Paul]** spoke, as one who, "being risen with Christ, and seeking those things which are above," had found a truth which formed no part of the Jewish mythology. "Ye are come," says he [Heb 12:22], "unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels."

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example, quoted the Septuagint's Isaiah 7:14, using the term, *parthenos*, rather than the Hebrew, *almah* (Matthew 1:23).

*Against Celsus 3.52:*

For the word is used **by our Paul** in writing to the Corinthians, who were Greeks, and not yet purified in their morals.... Now the same writer, knowing that there was a certain kind of nourishment better adapted for the soul, and that the food of those young persons who were admitted was compared to milk, continues [Heb 5:12-14]: “And ye are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

*To Africanus 9:*

For **the author of the Epistle** to the Hebrews, in speaking of the prophets, and what they suffered, says [Heb 11:37], “they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were slain with the sword.” ...some one hard pressed by this argument may have recourse to the opinion of those who reject this Epistle as not being Paul’s; against whom I must at some other time use other arguments to prove that **it is Paul’s.**”

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Commenting on these quotes, David Alan Black has written,

”These examples are sufficient to show that Origen, in his extant works, ascribes the authorship of Hebrews to the apostle Paul. He knew that the ancients had handed Hebrews down as a Pauline epistle, and it was on the strength of that tradition that he constantly cited the letter as Paul’s and declared his readiness to prove his convictions by arguments. Origen was aware of two conjectures, one identifying the assistant as Clement of Rome, the other identifying him as Luke. Nevertheless, on the strength of the ecclesiastical tradition that he had inherited from the “men of old,” Origen consistently cited the epistle as Paul’s.”

([http://www.daveblackonline.com/origen\\_on\\_the\\_authorship\\_of\\_hebr.htm](http://www.daveblackonline.com/origen_on_the_authorship_of_hebr.htm) )

## ADDENDUM D

### Parallels between Hebrews and Paul's writings

(<https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-wrote-the-book-of-hebrews>, is the source of this chart and its accompanying comments)

Many of the thoughts of Hebrews are similar to those found in writings in which Paul is the undisputed author. The following chart contains some examples.

HEBREWS	PAUL'S WRITINGS
Hebrews 1:3 <i>And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; (Hebrews 1:3 NAS)</i>	Colossians 1:15-17 <i>And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:15-17 NAS)</i>
Hebrews 2:4 <i>God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.</i>	I Corinthians 12:11 <i>But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.</i>
Hebrews 2:14 (-17) <i>Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil;</i>	Philippians 2:7-8 <i>but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.</i>
Hebrews 8:6 <i>But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.</i>	II Corinthians 3:6 <i>who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant - not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.</i>
Hebrews 10:14 <i>For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.</i>	Romans 5:9; 12:1 <i>Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.... I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.</i>

The soteriology of Hebrews is quite consistent with Paul's own teaching. For instance, the statement in Hebrews 10:14 that those who have been "made perfect" are in the process of being "made holy" sounds very much like Paul's teaching on justification (e.g., Rom. 3:21 – 5:9) and sanctification (e.g., Rom. 8:1 – 17). Moreover, both Paul and the author of Hebrews thought of Abraham as the spiritual father of Christians in similar ways.



## ADDENDUM E

### Parallels between the Greek in Hebrews 1:5-13 and the passages cited in the Septuagint.

NOTE: The verse numbers in the Septuagint are not the same as in English Bibles. It also should be noted that the translators of the Septuagint did take some liberties in how they rendered the Hebrew). In the following citations, the relevant Greek text is displayed in bold letters.

**Verse 5a.** *For to which of the angels did He ever say, "Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee"?* (Psalm 2:7)

- **Greek text of verse 5a** Τίτι γὰρ εἶπεν ποτε τῶν ἀγγέλων· υἱὸς μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε;
- **Psalm 2:7** διαγγέλλων τὸ πρόσταγμα κυρίου κύριος εἶπεν πρὸς με υἱὸς μου εἶ σύ ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε

**Verse 5b.** *And again, "I will be a Father to Him, And He shall be a Son to Me"?* (II Samuel 7:14; I Chronicles 17:13)

- **Greek text of verse 5b** ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν
- **II Samuel 7:14** ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν
- **I Chronicles 17:13** ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν

**Verse 6.** *And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him."* (Psalm 97:7)

- **Greek text of verse 6** ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγη τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην, λέγει· καὶ προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ.
- **Psalm 96:7** αἰσχυνθήτωσαν πάντες οἱ προσκυνοῦντες τοῖς γλυπτοῖς οἱ ἐγκαυχώμενοι ἐν τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν **προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ**<sup>112 113</sup>

**Verse 7.** *And of the angels He says, "Who makes His angels winds, And His ministers a flame of fire."* (Psalm 104:4)

- **Greek text of verse 7** καὶ πρὸς μὲν τοὺς ἀγγέλους λέγει· ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πυρὸς φλόγα,
- **Psalm 103:4** ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πῦρ φλέγον<sup>114</sup>

**Verse 8.** *But of the Son He says, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom."* (Psalm 45:6)

- **Greek text of verse 8** πρὸς δὲ τὸν υἱόν· ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος, καὶ ἡ ράβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος ράβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου.
- **Psalm 44:7** ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος ράβδος εὐθύτητος ἡ ράβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου

<sup>112</sup> There is a one-word difference between Hebrews 1:6 and the quoted Psalm. The Greek text of verse 6 says, *Worship Him, all angels of God.* The Greek text of the Psalm reads, *Worship Him, all angels of His.*

<sup>113</sup> The Jewish scholars who produced the Septuagint, rather than strictly following the Hebrew text in this verse, rendered the Hebrew **אֱלֹהִים** (*Elohim*), *gods*, as *ἄγγελοι* (*angelo*), i.e., *angels*.

<sup>114</sup> **πυρὸς φλόγα** (Hebrews 1:7) and **πῦρ φλέγον** (Psalm 104:4) are different forms of the same terms: **πῦρ** (fire) and **φλόξ** (flame)

**Verse 9.** *"Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee With the oil of gladness above Thy companions."* (Psalm 45:7)

- **Greek text of verse 9** ἠγάπησας δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἐμίσησας ἀνομίαν· διὰ τοῦτο ἔχρισέν σε ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεὸς σου ἔλαιον ἀγαλλιᾶσεως παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου.
- **Psalm 44:8** ἠγάπησας δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἐμίσησας ἀνομίαν διὰ τοῦτο ἔχρισέν σε ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεὸς σου ἔλαιον ἀγαλλιᾶσεως παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου

**Verse 10.** *And, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the works of Thy hands; (Psalm 102:25)*

- **Greek text of verse 10** καί· σὺ κατ' ἀρχάς, κύριε, τὴν γῆν ἐθεμελίωσας, καὶ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου εἰσιν οἱ οὐρανοί·
- **Psalm 101:26** κατ' ἀρχάς σύ κύριε τὴν γῆν ἐθεμελίωσας καὶ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου εἰσιν οἱ οὐρανοί

**Verse 11.** *They will perish, but Thou remainest; And they all will become old as a garment, (Psalm 102:26)*

- **Greek text of verse 11** αὐτοὶ ἀπολοῦνται, σὺ δὲ διαμένεις, καὶ πάντες ὡς ἱμάτιον παλαιωθήσονται,
- **Psalm 101:27** αὐτοὶ ἀπολοῦνται σὺ δὲ διαμενεῖς καὶ πάντες ὡς ἱμάτιον παλαιωθήσονται

**Verse 12.** *And as a mantle Thou wilt roll them up; As a garment they will also be changed. But Thou art the same, And Thy years will not come to an end."*(Psalm 102:26-27)

- **Greek text of verse 12** καὶ ὡσεὶ περιβόλαιον ἐλίξεις αὐτούς, ὡς ἱμάτιον καὶ ἀλλαγῆσονται· σὺ δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς εἶ καὶ τὰ ἔτη σου οὐκ ἐκλείψουσιν.
- **Psalm 101:27-28** καὶ ὡσεὶ περιβόλαιον ἀλλάξεις αὐτούς καὶ ἀλλαγῆσονται σὺ δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς εἶ καὶ τὰ ἔτη σου οὐκ ἐκλείψουσιν

**Verse 13.** *But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies A footstool for Thy feet "? (Psalm 110:1)*

- **Greek text of verse 13** πρὸς τίνα δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων εἶρηκέν ποτε· κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου;
- **Psalm 109:1** τῷ Δαυὶδ ψαλμὸς εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου

## ADDENDUM F

### LUCIFER AND BEELZUBUB/BEELZUBUL

Do these names refer to Satan, or to some other being? The question is difficult to answer, but the evidence seems to deny these titles to Satan.

#### Beelzubub/Beelzubul

This was the name of Philistine god, worshipped at Ekron. The name is related to the Canaanite god, Baal. He is known in demonology as one of the seven princes of Hell. The *Dictionnaire Infernal*<sup>115</sup> describes him as Yahweh of Flyers or, Yahweh of the Flies. The Ugaritic text<sup>116</sup> depicts Baal expelling flies, which are understood as the source of a person's sickness.

Beelzebub, as the idol/god worshipped by the Philistines, occurs in II Kings 1:2-3, 6, 16.

The Septuagint renders the name in II Kings as, *Baalzebub* (Βααλζεβούβ) – i.e. *Lord of the Heavenly Dwelling*.

Through the years, various fanciful ideas and traditions about Beelzebub have arisen. For example, the 16<sup>th</sup> Century occultist, Johann Weyer, states that Beelzebub led a successful revolt against the devil, and became the chief lieutenant of Lucifer, the Emperor of Hell, and he presides over the Order of the Fly.

It is obvious that the Jews believed that such a demonic person existed. The nonbiblical Hebrew document, Melachim II 1:3, 6, 16,<sup>117</sup> describes an event in which King Ahaziah of Israel seriously injured himself in a fall. After his fall, he sent messengers to Ekron to inquire from the Philistine god, inquire of Ba'al Zebub, as to whether or not he would recover – much as one might inquire of tarot cards or a word from a fortune teller.

Other evidence of the fact that the Jews believed in such a being, is displayed in their accusations against Jesus and, accommodating their beliefs, His ad hominem response.<sup>118</sup>

- *It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher, and the slave as his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household! Matthew 10:25*
- *But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebub the ruler of the demons." Matthew 12:24*
- *"And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Consequently, they shall be your judges. Matthew 12:27*

It is important to note that Jesus' comments are an ad hominem response, neither affirming nor denying the existence of such a being.

Although this being is sometimes equated with Satan, in my opinion (JWG) the evidence for that conclusion is weak. The only thing that is certain is that the name refers to one of the gods that the Philistines of Ekron worshipped. Whether or not such a being even existed is open to speculation.

<sup>115</sup> <https://publicdomainreview.org/essay/defining-the-demonic>

<sup>116</sup> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27924890>

<sup>117</sup> [WWW.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pto9fo1.htm#2](http://WWW.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pto9fo1.htm#2)

<sup>118</sup> These incidents are recorded also in Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15, 18-19.

## Lucifer

The name, *Lucifer*, found its way into biblical literature through Jerome's rendering of, הַיְלָל (*haylale*), in Isaiah 14:12. This is the only occurrence of this term in Scripture.

The Hebrew term simply means, *shining one*.<sup>119</sup> Jerome translated the Hebrew term literally, as *lucifer* (uncapitalized). The Latin term for light is *lux, lucis*. Thus, *lucifer* simply means, *light bearing*, i.e., *shining one*.<sup>120 121</sup>

Instead of translating הַיְלָל, the King James translators used Jerome's Latin term, which they capitalized, making it a proper name, rather than a descriptive term.

Modern English versions, following the example of Jerome, translate the term literally, as *shining one*, or, *morning star*.

The title, *Lucifer*, occurs in Latin mythology, as a name for the planet, Venus. Venus was the Latin name for the Greek goddess, *Aphrodite*, the goddess of sexual love and beauty. The planet often was worshipped as a god. Curiously, even though the planet was named after the love goddess, Venus often was personified as a male figure bearing a torch, i.e. *bringing light*.

Being the brightest of the planets, Venus can cause shadows on the earth. On rare occasions, the planet can be seen with the naked eye during broad day light. Thus, it is not surprising that a term/name conveying the idea of bringing light (*lucifer*) would be applied to this planet.

Isaiah 14 clearly deals with the King of Babylon, not some spiritual being. The King of Babylon was a very proud, haughty, cruel conqueror of surrounding nations. Yahweh commanded Isaiah to take up a taunt against this haughty monarch.

Here is the very lengthy taunt that Yahweh commanded to be uttered against the King of Babylon speaking of his total destruction and denigration.

*And it will be in the day when Yahweh gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which you have been enslaved, that you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon, and say,*

*How the oppressor has ceased, And how fury has ceased! Yahweh has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of rulers which used to strike the peoples in fury with unceasing strokes, which subdued the nations in anger with unrestrained persecution.*

*The whole earth is at rest and is quiet; They break forth into shouts of joy.*

*Even the cypress trees rejoice over you, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, "Since you were laid low, no tree cutter comes up against us."*

*Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth; It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones.*

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<sup>119</sup> *William Gesenius, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, translated by Edward Robinson, Francis Brown, DD D:ott. S. R. Driver, DD, LittD and Charles A Briggs, DD DLitt, (Oxford, Clarendon Press) 1975, page 237

<sup>120</sup> *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*, revised by J.R.V. Marchant, MA and Joseph F. Charles, BA (New York, Funk & Wagnalls Company) 1953, page 323

<sup>121</sup> The *fer* added to *lux*, has the same function as it has in English – a vehicle or conveyer of some element. For example, the English term, *aquifer* refers to an underground source of water.

*They will all respond and say to you, "Even you have been made weak as we, you have become like us. Your pomp and the music of your harps Have been brought down to Sheol; Maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you, and worms are your covering."*

*How you have fallen from heaven, **O star of the morning**, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."*

*Nevertheless, you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit.*

*Those who see you will gaze at you. They will ponder over you, saying, "Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, Who made the world like a wilderness And overthrew its cities, Who did not allow his prisoners to go home?"*

*All the kings of the nations lie in glory, each in his own tomb. But you have been cast out of your tomb like a rejected branch, clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword, who go down to the stones of the pit, like a trampled corpse.*

*You will not be united with them in burial, because you have ruined your country, you have slain your people. May the offspring of evildoers not be mentioned forever.*

*Prepare for his sons a place of slaughter because of the iniquity of their fathers. They must not arise and take possession of the earth and fill the face of the world with cities.*

*"And I will rise up against them," declares Yahweh of hosts, "and will cut off from Babylon name and survivors, offspring and posterity," declares Yahweh.*

*"I will also make it a possession for the hedgehog, and swamps of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction," declares Yahweh of hosts.*

*Yahweh of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand, to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains."*

*Then his yoke will be removed from them, and his burden removed from their shoulder.*

*This is the plan devised against the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations.*

*For Yahweh of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?*

*In the year that King Ahaz died this oracle came: (Isaiah 14:3-28 NAS)*

Clearly, the term, *lucifer*, in Isaiah 14:12, does not refer to Satan, but is a term describing the King of Babylon's boastful view of himself.